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STOP HARPER



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Facts & figures

13
Years that the Canadian government let Omar Khadr languish in US military prison for a crime he didn’t commit

\$15
Hourly minimum wage recently won in Los Angeles, and which the NDP government has promised in Alberta

253
Number of affordable rental housing units offered during the Pan Am games, despite billions spent on the event in Canada’s biggest city

4,500
Number of workers who Bombarier has laid off in the past year, in which time the CEO has made \$7.9 million

14,000
Members of Quebec’s left alternative, Quebec solidaire, which has doubled since the 2012 student strike

400,000
Number of manufacturing jobs destroyed by economic crisis and austerity in the past decade in Canada

1 million
Number of climate jobs demanded by campaigns in the UK and South Africa

\$1 billion
LNG offer to Kw’alaams nation that band members rejected in favour of defending their land

\$2.5 billion
Amount wasted on the Pan Am games, after we’ve been told there’s no money for jobs and public services

In their own words

“It is no disgrace to be a teacher, or a social worker, or a laborer, or a student. But these are not the occupations from which capable political leaders generally emerge.”

--*The National Post* reacting to the composition of the NDP government in Alberta, revealing the corporate press’ contempt for ordinary people

“I was asked in Guantanamo a number of times, ‘Why is Canada not doing something for this young man?’ You’d have to ask Mr. Harper. My view is very clear; Mr. Harper is a bigot. Mr. Harper doesn’t like Muslims. It’s perhaps, also political. He wants to show he’s tough on crime and who does he pick on? A 15-year-old boy who was picked up and put in a hell hole in Guantanamo.”
--Dennis Edney, Omar Khadr’s lawyer

“They will come to realize things are going to be just A-Ok over here in Alberta.”
--NDP premier Rachel Notley reassures Big Oil its profits will be fine



Lax Kw’alaams

First Nation rejects \$1 billion offer for LNG port

by MICHAEL T FENN

Members of the Lax Kw’alaams band in the Skeena River region have unanimously rejected a \$1 billion proposal by Pacific Northwest LNG to build a LNG port on at the mouth of the Skeena River, which threatens sensitive salmon runs and an eel grass estuary vital to the regions ecology.

“This is not a money issue: this is environmental and cultural,” said the band. “It was a proud moment for our people. We stood our ground,” said band member Donnie Wesley.

Capitalism vs indigenous rights
The offer promised \$1.15 billion over 40 years (the equivalent of \$319,000 per person), and the transfer of 2,200 hectares of crown land (estimated at \$108 million). The plan includes several port terminals along the Northwest coast of BC, that will receive via pipelines the bulk of all BC sources of LNG from Northern BC. The Prince Rupert site on Lelu Island being the most strategic as construction costs for the facility are far

more viable than alternative sites and is the shortest route to Asian markets (China and India).
But the plan would turn Lelu Island into an industrial site, and bar access to Lax Kw’alaams members to its traditional plants and medicines. It would also threaten salmon runs and an eel grass estuary. As the band’s press release stated, “The Skeena River is the second largest salmon producing river in BC. The significance of the Skeena River estuary to area First Nations cannot be overstated. Lax Kw’alaams is bound by the traditional law of all Tsimshian and up-river communities to protect the fisheries resource—including the salmon and all other species—for future generations. This is a first line of defense in respect to the aboriginal food fishery, a fishery which has sustained coastal and upriver first nations through the millennia...Only Lax Kw’alaams have a valid claim to aboriginal title in the relevant area—their consent is required for this project to proceed.”
The Province might ignore the decision by

arguing it is on “Crown land,” which would also ignore last year’s Tsilhqot’in legal victory—affirming that First Nations have “the exclusive right to decide how the land is used.”
LNG: not green, not sustainable
The recent vote throws another serious wrench into the BC Liberals’ “economic plan” to become a world powerhouse in LNG export. Despite the Liberals’ claim to doing the planet a favour by cultivating the “cleanest of fossil fuels” to power global capitalism and economic growth, the reality is that anything short of a complete elimination of all fossil fuels (almost 80 per cent reduction of fossil fuel consumption by 2050 and 100 per cent by end of century) will push humanity over the cliff of ecological cataclysm. A not so generous bestowment to humanity by the LNG industry and BC liberals after all.
The Liberals claim huge economic benefits for these ports and the industry: billions in investment and tax revenues, generating more than \$100,000; 39,000

construction jobs annually over a nine year period and approximately 75,000 once plants are operationally by 2021. But LNG depends on controversial royalty tax rate cuts to make them “viable” (profitable) to private investors, and the promise of good jobs is a mirage. While the labour leadership has supported LNG, there are increasing demands for a just transition for workers to climate jobs, and a growing climate justice making these demands.
What is obvious at the local level for First Nations trying to block colonial “extractivism” from plundering and destroying their land, is also true for the entire planet and its inhabitants. Capitalism threatens humanity’s very survival. Time to join first Nations in their fight, as it is ours as well, and to demand climate job alternatives. This can be part of a movement towards building a rational economic system that provides for human needs rather than the profit margins of corporations and capitalism.

Missing women: Tories blame communities

by VALERIE LANNON

Alberta RCMP announced in April that the remains of yet another missing Indigenous woman had been found near Edmonton.
Perhaps Harper is concerned by the fact that it is the CBC, and not his government, that is undertaking an inquiry of sorts into the crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women. We will never know. But what the CBC inquiry revealed in April was that families of these women still want a public inquiry.
CBC was able to reach more than 110 family members (from the 1,180 women identified by the RCMP earlier this year) and asked them to assess the quality of police work associated with investigating the murdered or missing women in their lives. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being “excellent”, the average score was 2.8!
Family members frequently recounted that either because the woman was Indigenous and/ or was in a “high risk” situation (involved with addictions and the street),

the police did not take the case seriously. To drive home the point, many of those contacted said this was the first time they had been contacted about their relative.
The numbers tell it all. A Manitoba police task force has solved one case in the last five years. Project Kare in Alberta has had three convictions since 2003. For BC’s Highway of Tears task force, there has been one solved case and one arrest since 2005. The causes of these low rates are both individual racism and institutional racism, as some police detachments have alleged, “we... were not given the resources necessary to accomplish the job, by someone up the chain of command.”
The Tory response
It is bad enough that the Harper government has consistently refused to hold a public inquiry into this crisis (promising instead to “take action”, which never happens). Even worse, Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, Bernard Valcourt, stated that “First Nation men have a lack of

respect for women and girls on reserve”, accounting for the high level of violence against Indigenous women. This classic case of blaming the victim—or, in this case, Indigenous communities—is all the more invalid for its lack of basis in simple numbers.
Well-known Indigenous activist, Pam Palmater, wrote about all this in Indigenous Nationhood in April 2015. She begins by dissecting the RCMP statistic of 1,180 unsolved murdered and missing Aboriginal women, provided in 2014. She points out that even the RCMP admitted to a methodological flaw when it stated “a high number of homicide reports where the identity of the victim (and/or accused) remained unknown.” This is on top of the problem of under-identification of Aboriginal crime victims generally.
But when the RCMP decided to release statistics after Valcourt’s infamous statement about Aboriginal men, it said that “70 per cent of offenders were Aboriginal.” The RCMP also stated that “Aboriginal females were killed by a spouse, family member or

intimate relation in 62 per cent of the cases.” To say “70 per cent of offenders were Aboriginal” assumes that most Indigenous women are partners with Indigenous men, but Palmater argues this is not the case. She examines “out-parenting” rates (in this case, First Nations people having children with non-First Nations people) are moderate to high.
She notes: “It is safe to say that no less than half of First Nations are in spousal or familial relationships with non-Aboriginal people. So, even if 64 per cent of Aboriginal women are murdered by their spouses, it does not follow that those spouses are ‘Aboriginal.’ Statistically, they are just as likely to be non-Aboriginal.”
This crisis must be addressed by a government committed to a public inquiry and to addressing the root causes of the violence against Indigenous women (and men), neither of which will happen under Harper. All the more reason to kick him out the door in October.

PCs not progressive

by CHRIS ROGERS

As Stephen Harper once said, “the term Progressive Conservative will immediately raise suspicions in all of your minds. It should. It’s obviously kind of an oxymoron.” Here in New Brunswick the youth wing of the PC Party want to rectify that problem, by removing the word “progressive” from the party’s name.

The reason they gave for wanting to change the name is that The Progressive Conservative Party of New Brunswick is “too clunky” and to shorten it would make it easier for people to remember. Even though the party has been going by that name for decades.
But one of the supporters of the motion, which will be debated at the upcoming convention, let the cat out of the proverbial bag—stating that the word progressive does not represent the ideas of the party. Also the youth wing wants to move the party closer to the federal Conservatives.
They correctly claim that the word progressive “belongs more on the left end of the political spectrum” and should not be part of any rightwing movement. Once again showing that the youth are the most radical wing of a political party—even if in this case they are reactionary in their outlook.

The leadership of the party is against this motion, trying to claim that the party is a “socially progressive” party, while being fiscally conservative. The truth is that they are neither socially progressive nor fiscally conservative. After all, this is the party that to this day, even in opposition, is fighting against a woman’s right to choose. Adam Pottle, a youth executive member, explained how the name change in driven by a reactionary desire to go back a century: “We wanted to bring the party more in line with history—before the early 30s.”As for fiscally conservative, they ran up the biggest debt the province has ever seen.
In the end it does not matter what the name of the party is. The fact of the matter is that it is a rightwing reactionary party that does not deserve the vote of any person who has the ability to think for themselves.

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One of these people is a war criminal. The other is Omar Khadr



The state vs Omar Khadr

The Supreme court of Canada has ruled that Omar Khadr is a juvenile offender, meaning that all the protections usually reserved for young people must be followed in his case.

This was just the latest in a string of legal losses for the Harper government. They have done everything in their power to keep him behind bars and to deny his rights as both a child soldier and a Canadian citizen. They had also fought to stop him from being granted bail and lost that case on May 7.

Why have they gone to such lengths? For Harper, Khadr has become a symbol of the evils that have descended on the world. For him it is an ideological fight designed to whip up a frightened and angry base in the lead up to a federal election. The bogeyman of terrorism is a convenient distraction from scandal and a lagging economy.

Most importantly, however, is that they want to keep Khadr quiet because he can expose human rights abuses that the governments of Canada and the US are working so hard to conceal.

Khadr is now working with his lawyers to have his forced confession overturned. The trial in that case would likely expose the bankruptcy of the military tribunal process in the US and Canadian complicity in torture.

These would be unwelcome additions to the discussion of security and militarization in Canada.

The sham trial

The legal process to convict Khadr would not stand up to legal scrutiny in a civilian trial. The conflicting reports of the initial incident that had Khadr arrested are enough on their own to overturn a conviction.

Khadr is accused of throwing a grenade that killed a US Special Forces Medic in Eastern Afghanistan. It is argued that he was the only one alive within a walled compound at the time that the grenade was thrown which makes this an open and shut case.

The reality is that there are numerous eyewitness reports from the soldiers involved in the firefight that contradict the official testimony. Soldiers have spoken publicly about the fact that there were numerous people alive in the compound where Khadr was found. Some have admitted to killing wounded Afghans after the fight—a clear war crime—but none have been prosecuted.

They also relate that at the time they were all throwing grenades that could have caused the injuries. Crucially, the medical experts for the defense have said that the injuries that caused the death of the medic were consistent with those from a US made grenade. Khadr was accused of throwing a Russian

made grenade that had a very different wound pattern.

All of these facts and more were covered up. Instead, the prosecution would have us believe that Khadr, a 15 year old with three massive bullet wounds could somehow get a hold of an enemy grenade and—while lying on stomach and nearly unconscious—throw it at the US soldier.

Why then did he confess? The problem is that the trials at Guantanamo bay are not designed to get at the truth. They are designed to justify torture and war.

The torture and Canadian Complicity

Despite assurances from the US military brass that they did not use torture against Omar Khadr, the men who did the torturing have spoken out. One soldier, Damien Corsetti admitted to torture of Khadr, including frequent use of sleep deprivation for as long as 3 weeks, while at Guantanamo.

That was not the worst of the abuse. Kahdr was tortured at Bagram airbase in Afghanistan by a notorious US interrogator Joshua Claus. Claus was later convicted of assault and prisoner maltreatment in a case where an innocent Afghan detainee was tortured to death.

Khadr told of being submitted to stress positions for hours, was hung from the ceiling while still suffering wounds to his chest and shoulders and was kept in a refrigerator like

solitary confinement cell for a month.

It is now known that visits from Canadian officials were used to interrogate Khadr despite the fact that he had been tortured just prior to the interrogations. In separate decisions rendered in 2007, 2008 and 2009 both the Federal Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court of Canada said that Canada had acted illegally in the case and had violated international law.

In 2010, the Supreme Court ruled that the Government of Canada had violated Khadr’s charter rights.

Next Steps

Omar Kahdr is currently awaiting an appeal in the US for his conviction. He has stated that he only confessed to the killing to allow for him to be moved to Canada.

This is in keeping with the new modus operandi of terrorism cases. People who are accused of crimes are told that they may be kept in black hole prisons like Guantanamo for as long as the authorities wish. If they want any leniency they need to confess.

While that process continues, we should expect to see the Government of Canada continue to use the case to whip up fear and racism. For Khadr the ordeal isn’t over. For those who support peace and justice, his release is a victory but there is a long path to tread yet.

wrong. A year of Western bombs on Iraq, including from Canada, have done nothing to stop ISIS—which recently took the city of Ramadi. ISIS’s failure to take the Kurdish city of Kobane was because of Kurdish resistance not Canadian bombs.

The only solution is stopping the war, supporting self-determination and welcoming Iraq War resisters.

Egyptian regime jails workers

We, the signatories below, announce our complete solidarity with the justified workers’ demands, especially in ending privatization and the return of the privatized factories to the public sector after winning a judiciary verdicts to do so.

Also, we stand along with their right to demand the return of production at financial-troubled factories, and to enact the law the protects the right to organize and unionize, as well as reforming the minimum and maximum wage law.

These are the demands that tens of thousands of workers have struggled for including the leading labor activist from Mahalla Textile Factory Kamal El Fayoumy.

Because of his activism, El Fayoumy has been sacked on 16 April 2015 by the board of directors at the holding company together with the administration of Mahalla Textile Company, whom are the driving force for privatization and losses in the business sector.

And two other labor organizers, Nagy Heidar and Gamal Gad, were also sacked in April for the same exact reasons.

Kamal El Fayoumy is one of the strikes leaders at Mahalla Textile Factory, 20,000 workers, which played a major role in the toppling of Hosni Mubarak, starting with the 2006 and 2007 Mahalla Textile Factory workers strikes and later the 6 April 2008 Mahalla uprising. Then he mobilized with his colleagues to achieve the social justice demands of the revolution demanding SCAF, the Muslim Brotherhood, and now Sisi.

The administration of the factory penalized Fayoumy and two of his colleagues, Gamal Gad and Nagy Hedar, for agitating others to strike hoping that it will silence the rest in demanding their rights and in an attempt to prevent mobilization for organizing for a strike like they had done last January to rid the company of corruption and to receive the profit shares.

The signatories demand from the Egyptian government to quickly reinstated El Fayoumy, Heirdar and Gad and to immediately stop managerial abusive practices against all leading labor activists in work places.

Signatories: Campaign for a Just Labor Law; Independent Union Committee of the Giza Labor Ministry for Civil Servants; Khalid El Balschy, Head of Liberty Committee at the Press Syndicate; Egypt Gas Workers Independent Union; Axceed Workers Independent Union; The Permanent Alexandrian Workers Conference; The Popular Movement of Protection Support and Development of the Public Sector; The Workers Bueru of the Revolutionary Socialists; Osman Mostafa of the Constitution Party; Kreem Reda of Petro Trade; Ayman Abdel Moatti – Journalist; Souad Omar – Trade Unionist; The Labor Committee at Strong Egypt Party

This is republished from the Revolutionary Socialists: global.rev soc.me

War on Iraq: wrong in 2003, wrong now

In the lead up to the US presidential election, Republican candidates have been falling over each other to distance themselves from the Iraq War.

Even Jeb Bush, brother of George Bush whose 2003 war killed a million Iraqis, had to say that in hindsight he would not have gone into Iraq.

This debate is not only of historic value. “Your brother created ISIS,” a 19-year old student said, challenging Jeb Bush in front of reporters.

The war and occupation of Iraq, and Western-backed counter-revolution against the Arab Spring, led to the reactionary backlash of ISIS—which has been used to justify yet another war on Iraq.

As Obama claimed, “I know that there are some in Republican quarters who have suggested that I’ve overlearned the mistake of Iraq, and that, in fact, just because the 2003 invasion did not go well doesn’t argue that we shouldn’t go back in,”

But just as time proved the 2003 anti-war movement correct, it is also proving how the current war is

The anti-war movement

The recent release of Amir Amirani’s documentary We are Many tells the story of the global Stop the War march on February 15 2003 against the war in Iraq. The protest in London, England, with around 2 million participants, was joined by approximately 30 million people in about 800 cities, on every continent, in the largest protest in history.

With hindsight, of course, we know only too well that the war did happen and that the bloody repercussions of Western intervention in the Middle East continue to this day, with the creation of ISIS and the continued Western and Western-backed bombing in countries such as Syria and Yemen. But We are Many is a necessary antidote to movies like Clint Eastwood’s recent despicable American Sniper, which attempts to tell a history of lies about the Iraq war, that dovetail with the lies we were told by world leaders like George W. Bush and Tony Blair when they went into Iraq.

Anti-war movement

If you were involved in any of the marches and rallies leading up to the Iraq war, and particularly the mobilizations on February 15 2003, We are Many will remind you of that heady feeling, as the marches grew in number and scope, that we could actually affect the outcome of world history, that our voices mattered. Here in Canada, thanks to the large mobilizations of February 15 and thereafter, particularly in Quebec, the peace movement was able to prevent the government of then Prime Minister Jean Chrétien from participating.

The anti-war movement also helped pave the way for the Arab spring several years later. There was a real cross-pollination of anti-war movements in the West building solidarity for their sisters and brothers in places like Egypt and Palestine, and of the struggles in those places feeding back into the peace movement globally. For several years, starting in the early 2000s, anti-war activists from around the world converged in Cairo, Egypt for an international peace conference, which also acted as a support for anti-Mubarak protests and strikes within Egypt, which later erupted in revolution.

There is a tendency now in some sections of the left to claim that these movements never really existed, or if they did, that they were in any case doomed to fail because the forces ranged against us were too powerful. The proof is in the pudding, they will say. Look at the reinstatement of the military dictatorship in Egypt, the failure of the other uprisings in the Arab world to break through, the activists in Egypt who are being sentenced to death, tortured or put in jail again for daring to continue to speak out for democracy and freedom.

The process of resistance

But if we want to be true to those who continue to struggle in extremely difficult circumstances we need to remember what Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky said about the course of revolution and revolutionary change in society:

“The history of a revolution is for us first of all the forcible entrance of the masses into the realm of their own destiny.... The masses go into a revolution not with a prepared plan of social reconstruction, but with a sharp feeling that they cannot endure the old regime. Only the guiding layers of a class have a political program, and even this still requires the test of events, and the approval of the masses. The fundamental political process thus consists in the gradual comprehension by a class of the problems arising from the social crisis—the active orientation of the masses by a method of successive approximations.”

In that sense the anti-war movement documented in Amirani’s film is not the end, but the beginning of a process, in which ordinary people have resisted their respective governments to say no to bloody imperialist wars.

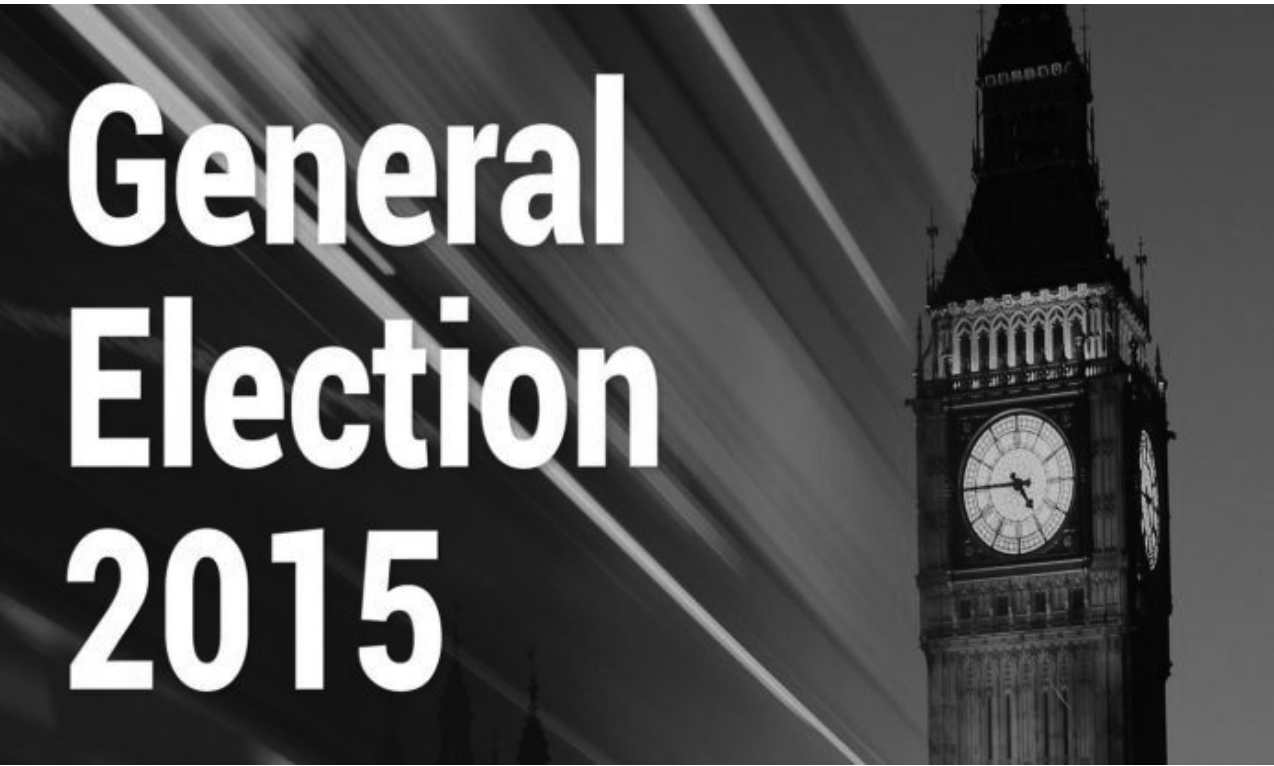
Here at home Stephen Harper is happy to use Canadian soldiers when he wants to drape himself and his government in patriotic colours, in the hopes he can convince people to vote him back into power. However, as veterans have been learning the hard way, the Tories have no qualms about denying benefits to soldiers and closing Veterans Affairs offices across the country. This is how little the “sacrifice” of young lives the Tories wax on about actually means to them in concrete terms.

But the lies and the liars have been shown up recently by a young man who Harper and his ilk have demonized over the last 13 years. Harper has been desperate to deny Omar Khadr’s rights and desperate to keep him locked up, because he is an intelligent, gentle, humble young man who is the antithesis of everything that Harper has claimed about him.

Everyone who marched for Omar, the high school students who formed defence committees for him, the peace groups who fundraised to help pay for his legal costs, should all feel proud today. They are the ones who have upheld democratic principles and our governments the ones who have trod on them.

In the same way, we must keep faith with that movement which brought out over 30 million of us on February 15, 2013. When Egyptian democracy activists are arrested and imprisoned we will march for them; when Canadian bombs fall in Syria and Iraq we must organize against this violence perpetrated by our own government’ when Muslim Canadians are attacked because of the racism whipped up by cynical politicians we need to show solidarity.

Our movement has not yet achieved what is necessary to make the world a safe and peaceful place but we are on that road and there is no turning back.



Inside the UK election

The general election result was a bitter blow. The rich cheered and the jubilant Tories are gearing up fast for a new class war. They want to drive through the worst of the cuts straight away, hoping voters will forget the pain by the 2020 election.

Millions of people disgusted at five years of Tory austerity and racist scapegoating are asking, “How could they have won?”

Labour

Media commentators claim the vote expresses people’s inherent selfishness, or that it shows that the working class is no longer a progressive force.

The defeat has thrown the Labour Party into turmoil. It would have lost even if it held Scotland, though its losses there were historic. It’s a sick joke for Tony Blair and his cronies to argue that this happened because Ed Miliband was too left wing. Labour under Miliband aped Tory arguments that said austerity is necessary and politicians must crack down on immigration. It should be no surprise that some people ended up voting for the real thing.

Pandering to racism has also led to growing confidence of the racist Ukip party, which in turn is dragging the mainstream even further to the right. Anti-racists will still have to be ready to mobilise against racism and Islamophobia wherever it appears.

But there is also a danger that the endless arguments that Labour needs to shift even further to the

right will lead to people sowing illusions in any candidate who stands against a Blairite. Remember that Ed Miliband was painted as a turn away from Blairism. He was the favoured candidate of the trade union leaders, who must also carry some responsibility for Labour’s defeat.

Unions

Union leaders have squandered several massive opportunities during the last five years to deal the Tories a body blow. After the mass strike of 2.6 million public sector workers over pension rights in November 2011 the majority of union leaders staged a wholesale retreat within days. Struggles generate confidence and unity, yet time and again this has been thrown away.

It’s not good enough for union leaders to say workers should hold back so they don’t jeopardise Labour’s chances. Holding back has undermined workers’ belief that austerity can be stopped—and still Labour lost. Where do we go from here?

Parties

Simply waiting another five years to try and get a Labour victory in 2020 is not an option. Miliband failed, but the Labour leadership also betrayed its supporters under Tony Blair and Gordon Brown. There is no sign that a new leader is going to change course.

All mainstream parties have failed the working class. The Scottish National Party’s success was in part because it was able to pose as an

opponent of austerity.

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) has fought to build a left electoral alternative to Labour. Despite some excellent campaigns it was unable to make electoral breakthroughs.

But socialists have to challenge the pessimism of those who argue that the working class can no longer fight. When given a lead and a serious campaign workers have shown they will resist.

Resistance

The Marxism 2015 event will be the place to thrash out debates about class, nationalism and the role of Labour. But we also have to use every opportunity to build resistance and solidarity with all groups of workers who struggle.

The People’s Assembly demonstration on 20 June is a chance for everyone appalled by the prospect of five more Tory years to get out onto the streets.

While being honest about our weaknesses, socialists have to see that our enemy is not all powerful. The Tories’ majority is narrow and the economy is shaky. Cameron has to push through a referendum on the European Union, which divides his side.

The next few years may not be plain sailing for the Tories. They want a class war—let’s give it to them.

This is republished from Socialist Worker (UK)

Ireland’s fight for equality

We have won Marriage Equality—let’s fight for more!

The YES vote is an historic moment for Irish society and internationally, with Ireland being the first country ever to introduce marriage equality by popular vote.

This is a great step forward from the Ireland of Church domination, Magdalene laundries and sexual repression, and it sends a message to LGBTQ people that they are accepted and loved for who they are.

Now we have won marriage equality, it’s time to fight for more. We have the bigots on the run let’s not waste this opportunity.

Ireland is a country full of inequalities, from the lack of female bodily autonomy to the cost of third level education, not to mention the high levels of income inequality.

The next steps must be to:

- Repeal the 8th: We must fight for the right of women to make deci-

sions about their own lives, including abortion rights. Repealing the 8th amendment is crucial to women’s equality – as well as their health and well-being.

- Fight for Trans Rights and Gender Recognition: The proposed Gender Recognition Bill does not give adequate rights for Trans people, with forced divorce, age restrictions and doctors’ approvals creating obstacles for some of the most oppressed people in society.

- Separate Church & State: The Catholic Church is completely out-of-touch with the majority of the population, but they are still allowed to run schools and medical services and discriminate against LGBTQ teachers.

- Fight against economic inequality: Fine Gael, Labour and Fianna Fail have campaigned for ‘equality’ while having been responsible for the most horrific austerity measures deepening

economic inequality.

Anyone supporting equality must join the resistance to austerity and particularly the campaign against water charges.

Socialists have always, and will continue, to fight against all inequality and oppression. We want you to join us in fighting for these things and for an alternative to capitalism.

This is republished from Socialist Workers Party (Ireland): <http://www.socialistworkeronline.net>

To hear more about the fight for equality in Ireland, join a discussion Wednesday June 10. Visit socialist.ca/events for more information.

Alberta’s orange wave

Thomas McKechnie examines the emergence of the NDP victory in Alberta, the challenges and contradictions of the new government, and the road ahead

Albertan voters have elected the provincial New Democratic Party to a majority government in their May 5 provincial election. It was a such a surprise to the political establishment that the news was covered by the Guardian, the BBC and other major international news outlets.

Although the NDP was not considered a real contender to take the legislature until a month before the election, the process began much earlier. Rachel Notley, the leader of the provincial NDP, was first elected in Alberta in 2008. The election was notable in that it featured the lowest voter turnout in the province’s history at 40.58 per cent. This was emblematic of the political situation of the time.

Oily politics

Big Oil had poured vast financial resources into the Conservative party in exchange for exceptionally low corporate taxes and royalty rates. They had also partnered on an ideological level, tying the success of both the Albertan economy and individual Albertans directly to the health of the oil and gas industry. An essential part of this ideology was that the oil and gas industry could not afford any increases in taxation.

In exchange ordinary Albertans saw nominal, paternalistic rewards for their participation as voters. In January 2006 each Albertan citizen regardless of age received a cheque for \$400 called a “prosperity bonus” by the Progressive Conservatives. The money, nicknamed “Ralph Bucks” by Albertans after then-premier Ralph Klein, represented 20 per cent of the government surplus that year. Given the financial clout of the oil and gas companies and the reasonable, short term, success of the Alberta economy people remained disengaged from politics. I came of voting age that year and it was already an accepted truth that any vote other than Conservative was a wasted vote.

Notley was first elected in Edmonton Strathcona as one of only two NDP candidates elected. The other, then party leader Brian Mason, was elected in Edmonton-Highlands—the second lowest income of an electoral district in the province, and also one of the most culturally diverse. Retroactively this can be seen as the beginning of the NDP’s resurgence.

The Alberta Liberals had been ineffective as an opposition party and lacked a platform that differentiated them from the New Democrats. Nonetheless the Conservatives were still seen as undefeatable and the NDP seats were seen as urban anomalies and not the beginning of a groundswell. Nonetheless the Alberta NDP continued to develop a small but loyal following amongst Albertans as an alternative to the PC’s.

Right-wing infighting After Ralph Klein stepped down in December 2006 the Progressive Conservatives had a rolling crisis of leadership for several years. Klein’s successor



Ed Stelmach, nicknamed Steady Eddy for his don’t-rock-the-boat model of governance, continued pandering to Big Oil. When, under pressure from Albertans and the political left, he pushed for a review of royalties paid by oil companies, the companies responded by pulling funding from the PC’s and throwing it behind the fledgling Wildrose Alliance Party which offered an alternative to what was seen as fiscal liberalism from the Conservative party.

With the monetary support of Big Oil, the WRP was considered by many to be the frontrunners of the 2012 election but failed to take the legislature. Instead they formed the official opposition. Due to the surge of the WRP the PC’s replaced Ed Stelmach with Danielle Smith. Smith’s tenure was the briefest of any elected premier in Alberta’s history after allegations of corruption caused her removal. The Conservatives chose as her successor Jim Prentice, former Federal Conservative MP and, at that time, Vice President at CIBC. On the opposite side of the legislature the WRP was facing its own internal problems with WRP MLAs leaving the party to sit as independents. The floor crossing culminated in then leader Allison Redford crossing the floor with seven other members of the WRP to join the PC’s.

Then came the downswing of oil prices and the once mighty Alberta economy, with all of its eggs in the oil and gas basket, swung down with it. This led to widespread concern by Albertans about the future. The beginning of the end for Jim Prentice’s Conservatives began with the announcement of the provincial budget. This budget cut services while raising taxes on everyone except corporations and the very rich. Prentice then unleashed a minor social media firestorm by telling Albertans that their own reckless spending was to blame for the crisis.

Orange wave

It seems that the comments crystallized for Albertans the contempt shown by the political establishment. Notley and the NDP positioned themselves as a populist party unlike the arrogant “establishment” parties of the WRP and PCs. Furthermore the NDP capitalized on the flaws in the budget, promising to balance the budget by increasing taxation on corporations and on the wealthiest members of the province and use the money to maintain schools and hospitals—major targets for Prentice’s cuts—along with promising a \$15 minimum wage.

Both Notley’s popularity and the desperate reaction to it of both right wing parties and their voters led to a dramatic resurgence of election participation. Voter turnout was 58 per cent, the highest it has been since 1993, and numerous people I interviewed spoke about watching the election with interest.

People saw this election as a possibility for real change and the established order and their supporters rose up against it. Although the story of this election is, to a degree, about being in the right place at the right time one cannot speak about the NDP victory without noting years of diligent work that positioned them as the alternative to the two conservative parties.

The provincial NDP’s win has also positively benefited the federal NDP, as recent polling has seen them pull ahead of the federal Conservatives and Liberals. This could change tdebates about “strategic voting,” especially after Justin Trudeau’s party joined Harper in passing the draconian Bill C-51. Previously those on the left were told to vote for the corporate Liberals to defeat the corporate Tories; but anger at the Liberals and an example of the NDP defeating the Tories could pull voting in a direction that is actually strategic: voting against the twin parties of corporate Canada.

NDP contradictions

But despite the hope in the orange wave, the Alberta NDP will immediately face their contradictions. Notley’s official position is not—as it is often implied or believed—to stop the construction of the Northern Gateway pipeline; the position of her party is simply to not actively assist in its development.

There is also no specific intent to shut down tar sands operations, and in fact a part of Notley’s platform was an interest in building oil and gas refineries in Alberta in order to make the bitumen industry more profitable for Albertans. The difference between the perception of the NDP and their actual platform means it is possible that the provincial NDP will spend much of the term facing accusations from the right that their socialism is ruining the province while the left cries out its disappointment at the failures to institute dramatic reforms.

This is made more challenging given that she was elected to majority government with only 41 per cent of the vote. During their term the NDP will likely face substantial opposition from both of the right wing parties in Alberta and has inherited an economy in a downturn.

Left to their own devices the NDP—based on their history across the country and the logic of social democracy—will seek to lower expectations and compromise on their promises. The NDP exist to manage capitalism not challenge it, and Notley’s first call was to reassure Big Oil that things would be “A-OK.” This will not only undermine their reforms, but will disillusion their supporters and encourage the right-wing attack. The real hope from the orange wave is the confidence it can give to the labour and climate justice movements, which can shift the balance of forces outside the legislature—undermining the right-wing and pushing the NDP to the left.

FAULTLINES IN LEFT ALTERNATIVES



Greece: resisting Syriza’s compromise

by Costas Pittas

The electoral victory of Syriza in Greece on January 25 created huge optimism. After five years of struggle – with strikes, occupations and demonstrations in the squares – the government of the austerity Memorandum collapsed and a left party came to office. The Syriza ministers’ first declarations boosted this optimism: redundant civil servants would get their jobs back, privatisation would stop and the immigrant detention camps would be closed.

Two months later things look different. The agreement reached by the Syriza government with the Eurogroup on February 20 is an extension of austerity and an abandonment of even the minimum promise to give justice to workers’ demands. This creates disappointment among Syriza supporters. But it is wrong to assume that what dominates is a mood of passive waiting. The experience, confidence and radicalisation of the working class movement that created the electoral victory by the left are too strong to be dissipated quickly and easily.

People voted for Syriza not because the party had a pro-euro line, but because they wanted back what was stolen from them in the past five years. This hope is still huge, in spite of the compromises. So the more pressure the Troika exert, the more people get angry. This anger is translating into support for Syriza.

The forces of austerity are in a rage because the message of the Greek elections is a left turn that can embrace other countries. So they are doing their utmost to erase this message, pressurising the Syriza government to carry on with austerity. In discussions on the implementation of the measures agreed by the Troika the demand was even made for the government to stop paying salaries and pensions for one or two months!

Compromise

What came out of the negotiations were the following: instead of a moratorium, the government accepted a four-month extension of the Memorandum subject to relentless surveillance by the Troika; the government signed up to paying all its debts “in time” to its creditors; any discussion about a conference on debt was cut; and no unilateral action on any issue would be taken.

Far from satisfying the Troika, this has only increased the pressure from German chancellor Angela Merkel and co. A second Eurogroup meeting has brought privatisation and “structural adjustment”.

All these compromises translate into concrete concessions. In September Tsipras had promised that the first, basic, measures to deal with the humanitarian crisis would cost 2 billion Euros. The bill now brought to parliament speaks of measures costing 200 million Euros. At the same time, to pay the installments of the debt to the IMF in March, the government took money from the reserves of the workers’ pension funds.

The bill laid before parliament for the reopening of the ERT (the state broadcasting service) is far from what the workers and the trade union movement are asking for. The bill says that “ERT will reopen on a zero-basis”.

This means that it will treat all personnel with the same criteria – the big majority that occupied, demonstrated, kept broadcasting under workers’ control and in practice supported the movement that pushed Syriza into office, will be treated as the same as the scabs who applied for work in the new state TV of the Memorandum governments.

Restoring the minimum wage to 751 Euros (the first measure that Syriza promised it would immediately implement) is postponed to the end of 2016.

Conclusion: there is no relaxation of austerity. Quite the contrary, there is pressure on Syriza to demonstrate in the next three months that it can maintain tight budgetary discipline and open the doors to privatisation.

Left pressure

The left dynamic of the movement has not been exhausted since the elections; on the contrary it has strengthened. This is expressed by the fact that the Tsipras leadership has been under pressure from the left from the beginning. During the Eurogroup negotiation thousands gathered in Syntagma Square opposite parliament. Almost from the outset the mobilisation in the squares was characterised more by pressure on the government not to give way on its promises than by support for Syriza.

When Varoufakis signed the agreement, it was the revolutionary left coalition Antarsya that organised the first protests against the compromise, followed by the KKE (Communist Party). Within Syriza itself disagreements opened up on the left of the Parliamentary Group around the Left Platform and in the central committee.

There is a big difference between the members or supporters of Syriza in workplaces, universities, and so on, and the “official” internal opposition of the Left Platform. The difference is not ideological, although the Left Platform holds a very “left patriotic” attitude on many issues. The real difference is that the Left Platform avoids everything that might identify them with the political forces to the left of Syriza and to any left opposition to the government. So it says a lot (though very modestly and carefully) but refuses to take action.

A good example was the March 21 rallies against racism. The pressure from the Unity Movement Against Racism and the Fascist Threat (Keerfa) was too high for Syriza and the Left Platform to ignore. But in Athens, on the same day, Syriza called people to another square, two hours earlier – though it only attracted some 500 people, while the Keerfa march saw tens of thousands.

Joint action

On the other hand, in Patras in western Greece youth and workplace organisations of Syriza are organising with Antarsya, Keerfa and SEK (the Socialist Workers Party sister organisation in Greece and a part of Antarsya) and at a local level. In my union executive the KKE, Syriza and Antarsya all supported the Keerfa rally.

In the teachers’ union leadership Syriza members in the Left Platform voted in favour of Syriza’s own rally, but many local branches of the union in Athens voted unanimously to support Keerfa’s rally, with Syriza, KKE and Antarsya supporters voting together.

By applying the united front strategy both from above and below, socialists can avoid condemning Syriza all the time (as the KKE does), and instead attempt to build joint action on every issue with Syriza members.

The mood for action is clear in workplaces and in the organised labour movement. The laid-off teachers decided they would protest and besiege parliament after a minister announced that their reinstatement “would take a long time”. In the hospitals there have been workers’ assemblies, some of which organised work stoppages and a demonstration outside the Ministry of Health on March 11. The dock workers’ union threatened to go on strike if the privatisation of the port of Piraeus continued. On March 19 Athens metro workers held

a three-hour strike in order to have a general assembly about bad conditions on the trains. No metro train moved for three hours.

This mood of assertiveness is not limited to the public sector, where trade unions are stronger. The first week of March saw strikes in the private mobile telephone companies (Wind, Vodafone, Forthnet) demanding new collective agreements and an end to employer tyranny. Sailors on some ships carrying passengers to the Aegean islands went on strike because pay was months in arrears. Protests against lay-offs have taken place in supermarkets, while struggles against factory closures, such as at Coca Cola, which began before the election, have continued.

Conditions

This dynamic is not limited to economic demands. There are also the issues of racism and the fascist threat. After the rebellion of the Amygdaleza immigrant camp in Athens, Syriza was forced to declare that it would close it down, but the rate of release of detainees is very slow and is subject to many conditions. No promises have been made for the other camps.

A month before the murder trial of the leadership of the Nazi Golden Dawn, the president of parliament and a leading member of Syriza said that the presence of the imprisoned Golden Dawn MPs in parliament was legitimate “because it is legal political party.” All this has caused great anger.

After the elections the Keerfa organised protests outside the immigrant camps and in the centre of Athens. But the mood to escalate the confrontation with racism and the fascists can be seen by the massive support shown by workers and young people for the rallies organised by the anti fascist movement on March 21 in Athens and three other Greek cities.

Left opposition does not mean constant condemnation of the compromises of Syriza. There are three clear steps. The first is a clear policy giving a perspective to the struggles of the working class and its hopes. Such a policy means the following immediate measures: debt relief and cessation of payments; rupture with the EU, the ECB, the euro and the IMF; nationalisation of the banks under workers’ control; stopping privatisation and renationalising all the large state enterprises that have been privatised; prohibition of sackings; smashing racism and the fascists.

Second, a left opposition seeks cooperation in every economic and political battle with workers who have illusions about the role of the left government. Common action with the thousands of militants who voted for Syriza is vital, and today many of them see Antarsya as the political force that can support them against the retreats and the compromises of the government.

Finally, in order to achieve this, a left opposition needs an independent organisation that can respond to the opportunities and challenges that are opening up. It must be able to take initiatives that support workers’ struggles and highlight the demands of the anti-capitalist programme. This is the role that Antarsya and SEK wish to play. This has nothing to do with political sectarianism. It flows from the real need for clear answers and action against the Troika and austerity.

Left opposition doesn’t mean just talking – it means activity to win back jobs, reopen public services, fight racism, and so on. It also means clear anti-capitalist politics raising the issue of workers’ control – something which frequently arises in the high-level political debates taking place in workplaces across Greece.

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Quebec solidaire and the independence movement

By Benoit Renaud

On May 15, the members of the Parti québécois not only chose a boss as leader, they chose THE boss who has done the most damage to Quebec society over the last 20 years.

The multinational Québecor, run by Pierre Karl Péladeau, was responsible for the lock outs of Vidéotron, the Journal de Québec and the Journal de Montréal, three of the hardest and longest struggles of our era. Moreover, the final results of PKP’s plans was the construction of a media empire specializing in the dissemination of the worst cultural mediocrities and reactionary commentary as substitute for information.

The idea that such a man would be the best to lead the people of Quebec towards its national liberation, against the threats of the Canadian state and the blackmail of the financial markets, is absurd.

This isn’t a break for this party, but the logical conclusion of a long path. After tolerating a significant left wing during its first year of existence and adopted a series of progressive reforms during its first term, the PQ of René Lévesque turned brutally against public sector workers when during the difficult economic situation of the early 1980s.

It was also Lévesque, the mythical founder, who proposed an alliance with the federal Conservatives of Mulroney that led to free trade. Today, Mulroney is president of the administration of Quebecor.

QS response

The temptation for Québec solidaire in this situation would be to take the “path of least resistance,” and to present itself to the disappointed PQ members as a better version of the PQ, a reincarnation of the mythical progressive party of the 1970s. This would be a monumental error and a prelude to a major existential crisis for the party.

First, such a party never existed. It’s only because of the social movements were massively mobilized and inspired by radical ideas that the PQ was pushed to put in place the last wave of reforms of the Quiet Revolution.

Second, the current global economic context does not permit to reconcile significant social reforms with the financial markets and the international economic institutions. The conversion of social democratic parties to various versions of neoliberalism is systematic enough around the world to allow us to recognize that it’s not a conspiracy of problem of personalities but a structural problem.

The program of Québec solidaire, beneath the agreeable formulations of our communications experts, is a programme of rupture. The independence of Quebec is the mother of all other ruptures, be it extractivism, imperialism, patriarchy, etc. It’s precisely because of the dangers that such an institutional rupture poses for the Canadian state that the leadership of the PQ, from Levesque to PKP and all the others in between, always sought to negotiate “a new agreement,” a compromise with the ruling class of Canada.

For Québec solidaire, it serves nothing to continue the illusion of a “big sovereigntist family,” PKP and those who wish to follow him aren’t going at all in the same direction as us. We want the people to fight for themselves, to affirm their right to decide what kind of society we’re going to build, that they stand against all the dangers, real or imagined, that they’ll encounter on their path. The PQ, as always, is afraid of making people afraid and want above all want to reassure the

1%.

What we need, first, is to unify all the social forces opposed to the policies of austerity of the Liberal government of Couillard. Before winning against the Canadian state and its capitalist class, we need first to win against our own government, its authoritarianism and its determination to defend the interests of the rich. It’s through this struggle, on condition that it’s fully engaged, that Québec solidaire can continue to develop and grow. It’s not by accident that, after a long plateau around 7000, it was in 2012 that QS attained 14,000 members.

At the same time, we have to put forward our proposition of constituent assembly and invite sovereigntists to get out of the endless debate on the moment or methods of the next referendum, the conditions for winning, and the other mirages of the PQ. Let’s invite them to lead a campaign on the ground for collective self-determination. The Quebec independence movement, like it or not, has crossed paths. It’s up to us to play our role in proposing a path that can lead to a new country of which we can be proud.

“Those who went searching for a solution, who promised another country, another sun to those who follow, promise that they will be thousands, and thousands...when they return.” –Pierre Calvé, Living in this country

This is translated and republished from the blog blogueur solidaire, original version below

Le 15 mai 2015, les membres du Parti québécois ont non seulement choisi un patron comme chef, ils ont choisi LE patron ayant fait le plus de tort à la société québécoise au cours des vingt dernières années.

La multinationale Québecor, sous la gouverne de l’héritier Péladeau, a été responsable pour les lock out de Vidéotron, du Journal de Québec et du Journal de Montréal, trois des conflits de travail les plus durs et les plus longs de notre époque. Plus encore, le résultat ultime du plan d’affaire de PKP a été de construire un empire médiatique intégré spécialisé dans la diffusion des pires médiocrités culturelles et de commentaires réactionnaires spontanés comme substitut à l’information.

L’idée qu’un tel homme soit le mieux à même de mener le peuple québécois vers son émancipation nationale, face aux menaces de l’État canadien et au chantage des marchés financiers, est d’une absurdité sans nom.

Il ne s’agit pas d’une rupture pour ce parti, mais bien de l’aboutissement logique d’un long cheminement. Après avoir toléré une aile gauche significative pendant ses premières années d’existence et adopté une série de réformes progressistes durant son premier mandat, le PQ de René Lévesque s’est tourné brutalement contre les travailleuses et les travailleurs du secteur public lorsque la situation économique était difficile au début des années 1980.

C’est aussi Lévesque, le mythe fondateur, qui a proposé l’alliance avec les Conservateurs fédéraux de Mulroney qui devait mener au libre-échange continental, entre autre. Aujourd’hui, Mulroney est président du conseil d’administration de Quebecor

Et QS dans tout ça?

La tentation pour Québec solidaire dans cette situation serait de prendre la voie de la facilité, du « chemin de moindre résistance », et de se présenter aux québécois déçus comme un meilleur PQ que le PQ, comme la réincarnation du mythique parti progressiste des années 1970. Ce serait une erreur

monumentale et le prélude à une crise existentielle majeure pour le parti.

Premièrement, un tel parti n’a jamais existé. Ce n’est que parce que les mouvements sociaux étaient massivement mobilisés et inspirés par idées radicales que le PQ (comme le PLQ et même l’Union national avant lui) a été contrainte de mettre en place la dernière vague des réformes de la révolution tranquille.

Deuxièmement, le contexte économique mondial actuel ne permet pas de concilier des réformes sociales significatives avec les bonnes grâces des marchés financiers et des institutions internationales de régulation économique. La conversion des partis sociaux-démocrates à diverses versions du néolibéralisme est assez systématique à travers le monde pour qu’on reconnaisse qu’il ne s’agit pas d’une conspiration ou d’un problème de personnalités ou de volonté mais d’un phénomène structuré.

Le programme de Québec solidaire, derrière les formulations agréables de nos experts en communications, est un programme de rupture. L’indépendance du Québec, d’ailleurs, est la mère de toutes les autres ruptures qu’il annonce, que ce soit avec l’extractivisme, le néolibéralisme, l’impérialisme, le patriarcat, etc. C’est précisément à cause des dangers que pose une telle rupture institutionnelle avec l’État canadien que la direction du Parti québécois, de Lévesque à PKP et passant par tous les autres, a toujours cherché à négocier « une nouvelle entente », un compromis quelconque avec la classe dirigeante du Canada.

Pour Québec solidaire, il se sert à rien continuer à entretenir l’illusion d’une « grande famille souverainiste ». PKP et ceux et celles qui veulent le suivre ne vont pas du tout dans la même direction que nous. Nous voulons que le peuple se prenne en main, qu’il affirme son droit de décider quel genre de société nous allons bâtir, qu’il se tienne debout face à tous les dangers, réels ou imaginaires, qui se dresseront sur son chemin. Le PQ, comme toujours, a peur de faire peur au peuple et se veut surtout rassurant pour les possédants.

Ce dont nous avons besoin, d’abord, c’est d’unifier toutes les forces sociales opposées aux politiques d’austérité du régime Couillard. Avant de gagner contre l’État canadien et sa classe capitaliste, il faut d’abord gagner contre notre propre gouvernement, son autoritarisme et sa détermination à défendre les intérêts des plus riches. C’est à travers cette lutte, à condition d’y être pleinement engagé, que Québec solidaire pourra continuer à se développer et à croître. Ce n’est pas un hasard si, après avoir longtemps plafonné autour 7000, c’est en 2012 que QS a atteint les 14 000 membres.

En même temps, il faut mettre de l’avant notre proposition d’assemblée constituante et inviter les indépendantistes à sortir une fois pour toutes du débat sans fin sur le moment ou la manière du prochain référendum, les conditions gagnantes, et autres mirages péquistes. Invitions-les à mener une campagne de terrain pour une véritable autodétermination collective. Le mouvement indépendantiste québécois est, qu’on le veuille ou non, à la croisée des chemins. À nous de jouer pleinement notre rôle en proposant un chemin qui peut mener à un nouveau pays dont nous pourrions être fiers.

« Ceux qui sont partis pour chercher une solution, qui ont promis un nouveau pays, un nouveau soleil à qui les suivront, jurent qu’ils seront des milliers, des millions ... quand ils reviendront.», Vivre en ce pays, Pierre Calvé

Ceci est republié du blogueur solidaire: <http://leblogueursolidaire.blogspot.ca>

Pan Am be damned

by Michael Jamal

As the summer vacation approaches, many of us are eagerly planning outings with our families and loved ones. One obvious option is the heavily promoted 2015 Pan Am Games and the Para Pan Am games, which will be hosted by Toronto and neighbouring municipalities July 10-26 and August 7-15, respectively.

The elites of the city are only too eager to promote what is a very modest sporting event to the people of this city and the few tourists that may vacation in the city during these periods.

While there do exist a few benefits to the city, such as the addition of more sports complexes and the creation of a few thousand temporary jobs, the numerous costs and challenges to city residents posed by the hosting of these events far outweigh any potential benefits.

No austerity for the rich

At a time when all three levels of government mercilessly slash services and social programs, the lavish costs of the Pan Am games is a slap in the face.

Even though the games haven't yet started, current estimates for the Pan Am games are already staggering. According to the Government of Ontario, the multi-sports events are expected to cost at least \$2.5 billion.

This amount also includes a \$247 million budget for event security alone, which is more than double its original estimate. Another large component of this expense is the pay out in salaries to the Organizing Committee, projected to exceed \$21 million in 2015, including over 66 members making over \$100,000.

At the top of this pyramid stands CEO Saad Rafi, currently earning an annual salary of over \$428,000, plus a severance package that will effectively double his earnings at the end of the year. At a time when many workers in both Ontario's public and private sectors face frozen wages and stagnant incomes, this trend is quite alarming.

Two-tiered transit

If the above financial impact isn't alarming enough, the impact on travel during the summer certainly will be. Last November, the provincial government unveiled it's so-called transit plan for the greater Toronto area, which called for the expansion of 235 km of temporary HOV lanes on major Ontario highways—including highway's 427, 404 and 401, the QEW and Gardiner Expressway.

These special lanes will be reserved for athletes, delegates and vehicles carrying at least three persons. This will effectively make one lane in each direction of these highway's a "VIP" lane for the aforementioned groups, blocking them off from regular traffic 24 hours a day for the duration of these games. Considering the fact that due to the provincial government's decades-long neglect of public transit in the GTA (we already experience among the highest average commute times in north America), this decision is reckless and short-sighted.

We can only guess the devastation that further increased delays will have on the psyches of tens of thousands of workers who must use these highways to commute to their workplaces.

Perhaps the greatest irony of all is that successive Conservative and Liberal governments in Ontario cancelled and delayed mass transit projects—supposedly due to a lack of money—only to have the same policy makers happily sign cheques to contractors for projects for the games.

Whose city?

Today tens of thousands lack affordable housing and affordable daycare placements as the federal Conservatives and provincial Liberals claim that there's no money for them. Yet, these same bureaucrats gladly commit to billions of dollars for a regional sports event. It is no wonder that cynicism of the political process is at an all time high!

The Ontario and Toronto governments have arrogantly and unilaterally imposed these games without public consultation or open discussion. We did not ask for these games, when countless historical examples show that international sporting events such as these leave a legacy of empty stadiums and public debts. At the same time, a few privileged pockets in the construction, real estate and tourism sectors cash in huge windfalls of taxpayer-financed profits.

The Pam Am games will be preceded by the Climate Summit of the Americas, which will commit to more failed market strategies. Keynote speakers include Quebec premier Phillip Couillard and Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne, who will be congratulating themselves on their useless cap-and-trade plan while they both continue to support ecocidal tar sands pipelines. There will also be a Pan American Economic Summit that Harper will attend to continue austerity.

But protests against the games have already begun—from physicians who interrupted Amateur Sport Minister Bal Gosal's announcement of the games in 2012 to protest government cuts to refugee health, to anti-poverty march this year denouncing the lack of affordable housing.

As well as boycotting the games, there will be a number of opportunities to reclaim the city this July—including the March for Jobs, Justice and the Climate, a climate counter summit, a protest of the Pan-American Economic summit on July 8, amongst others.

The Pan Am games and the Climate Summit of the Americas expose the priorities of the system, and provide a wide audience to make demands that put people and the planet above profit.

ANALYSIS



#PoorLivesMatter

by DAVID MEAGHER

On April 17, the community of Davenport in Toronto lost Jose Eduardo Rivera Gomez from among its poor population.

It was a week after his 43rd birthday. After three months in hospital, he died of complications to his liver and pancreas; he was unable to find an organ donor. This is the same community that was focused on earlier this year, when bitter cold took Sergio Escobar (El Tio) in a parked trailer under a railroad overpass.

"It is easy to see that if someone dies while they are homeless how that is a tragedy and completely preventable, but there are a number of our Community Members who have passed away who were in some sort of housing and it seems as if it is easier to overlook their deaths which are just as much attributable to poverty as those we have lost while on the street." This was the response of The Advocacy Office at The Stop, which is an information and referral resource for Community Members, dealing with all sorts of issues, attempting to find the right information that people need in a way that encourages and empowers people to speak for themselves.

Preventable deaths

Sharon Anderson is a senior advocate and a mentor to advocates in the Stop's Peer Advocacy Office, which collects the lists of available housing every two weeks and counsels community members with referrals, encouraging clients to then seek housing from among the limited resources available and to advocate for themselves. "A big part of the work involves housing; because social assistance rates are so low that people can't afford to pay for their food and rent, this has some pretty serious effects on people's lives."

In the words of Pauline Bryant, Community Engagement Worker at the Stop, "With this gentleman and the other folks who passed this winter, the need for better supports for the poor needs to be addressed all year round; not just when there is a need for heating and cooling centres. It needs to be addressed all year round."

"We don't get to hear what these community members want to talk about and what they have to say. And it's important..." began Sharon Anderson before becoming quite emotional about this case. "I want to live in a province that supports and includes everyone because all our lives matter, all our voices deserve to be heard. Every time a Community Member dies we lose that person's hopes and dreams, their knowledge, and their perspective on things. This hurts all of us as a society."

Community member David Bishop says that, "First and foremost, it's a

big problem to solve and should be handled on a case by case (situation) basis...not lumping all cases together and putting everyone in one category."

It is clear that poverty is a social problem that deeply affects this community. Eduardo is the fifth death so far this year. Angel Vats, the Civic Engagement Co-ordinator at the Stop, said that, "Eduardo's passing affects the whole community. Not just in our relationships to him, but also because we can all relate to his situation. So we can relate to the situation; and the fact that any citizen is homeless and can die from the associated impacts of homelessness sends a strong message to many of us about our value within society. Homelessness should flat out not be accepted and we should work together to create the change where everyone is housed."

Austerity shell games

According to the Realizing Our Potential: Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy, "A long-term solution requires that we continue to transform how we approach homelessness and move away from short-term solutions in favour of finding and addressing the root of the problem. It means doing more to prevent homelessness in the first place. It means spending money in the right way and on the most effective programs and services. In short, it requires us to invest in the right things now so we are not forced to pay a lot more later."

Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy for 2014-2019 showed a decline of Federal Investment from \$900 to \$600 millions between 2011 and 2012, and shifts to exclusive investments in Affordable Housing in 2019-20, when the Homelessness Partnering Strategy and the Social Housing Funding are fully phased out.

These are old numbers, when Ontario was projecting a \$400 million investment in the five years to come. There are promised repairs and the building of 10,360 units in the province, but we are already talking about one tenth of the amount committed from 2003-2004, or an 80 per cent decrease in funding!

The City of Toronto, which administers Ontario Works and the street allowance, but is dependent on federal budgets to determine rates, is also responsible for housing initiatives. This is why poverty advocates were shocked when the decision was made last year to invest only in building and not in repairs to existing units.

The shell game between the three levels of government is already quite familiar. Even in this report, we find that the province "will continue to work in partnership with the federal government" and "continue to urge the federal government to return to the

table."

The Pan/Parapan American Games will provide only 253 units of affordable rental housing and only up to 100 additional affordable ownership units in the Athlete's Village after the Games.

The role of the City of Toronto is crucial, since financial assistance to the poorest Ontarians is administered by the city, even though it is highly dependent on Federal Funding. The City has embarked on a poverty reduction strategy of its own, consulting with affected organizations and people with lived experience of poverty. This might loosen federal pockets in ways that the Liberal-Conservative divide has not been able to do, but there is also the great fear that where profits are to be made, those least likely to benefit are those who actually need it.

John Clarke of The Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (OCAP) has revealed the plan to move more and more homeless out of the city's core and to close more and more shelters when more need to be built. "We are dealing with an exercise in social cleansing that would be nothing less than tragic. Four homeless men died in this city during January and the Toronto Homeless Memorial continues to chart an appalling toll of homeless people perishing. Removing people to fend for themselves in the outlying parts of the city would increase the risk of such deaths considerably."

Health for all

According to Rachel Gray, Executive Director of the Stop, "Being poor is really bad for your health and people die sooner...I think it is important that we should value each other enough so that people can live with dignity."

The Stop believes that "healthy food is a basic human right." According to their website, "we recognize that the ability to access healthy food is often related to multiple issues and not just a result of low income. At The Stop, we've taken a holistic approach to achieve real change in our community's access to healthy food. We strive to meet basic food needs and, at the same time, foster opportunities for community members to build mutual support networks, connect to resources and find their voices on the underlying causes of hunger and poverty."

This is an occasion to build community, solidarity with the working class, and among the poor within the working class. OCAP marched with OPSEU on April 23 to defend public services, indicating the kinds of coalition building and solidarity we need moving forward.



The politics of Mad max

MOVIE

Mad Max
Directed by George Miller
Review by Faline Bobier

Mad Max: Fury Road is the fourth of the Mad Max films, all directed by Greek-Australian George Miller. It has more in common with the first pared-down 1980 movie starring Mel Gibson, without some of the bloated action and sentimentality that marred the next two installments: The Road Warrior and Beyond Thunderdome.

It’s also an updated 21st century version in terms of themes and sensibility. In the post-apocalyptic dystopia of Fury Road we’re clearly dealing with a world that has felt the ravages of catastrophic climate change. Access to Aqua Cola (water), as it’s referred to in the movie, is carefully controlled by Immortan Joe, who runs an empire built on slavery, sexism and demagogery. Max in the new movie is played by Tom Hardy. But he is more sidekick than hero. That role is taken by Charlize Theron who plays Imperiator Furiosa, the real road warrior of this movie, a woman with a buzz cut, piercing eyes and a prosthetic arm, who is a truly formidable foe. She is valued by Immortan Joe for her bravery and ability to fight the warring

hordes to get what Joe needs for his colony, The Citadel. It turns out that under the guise of serving Joe she is actually planning a kind of underground railway and getting five women (used as breeders by Joe) to safety. In this venture Max becomes an unwilling participant. He has been enslaved by the colony to act as a human blood bag for one of the War Boys and is taken along for the ride when Joe and his varied minions ride out after Furiosa to get back what Joe refers to as his “property.” The movie is straightforward in terms of the minimal plot and story-line but it’s really the action and the heroism of Imperiator and her band of women that keeps us engaged, along with their male sidekicks—the taciturn Max and one of the War Boys (actor Nicholas Hoult), who eventually realizes what a dupe he has been to follow blindly after Immortan Joe. In fact, there are echoes here of the follies of war and imperialism, which should have a resonance with the audience after the disasters of Iraq, Afghanistan and the ongoing crisis of ISIS and bombing campaigns in Syria and Yemen. The strong feminist plot is also a welcome addition to the action genre. Particularly Charlize Theron, but also the women she is rescuing who morph from a scantily clad band that look

worryingly like a Playboy shoot at the beginning of the movie, to a group of women determined to control their own fates. This is a movie that’s not afraid to put women in the driver’s seat, both literally and figuratively. On the road they encounter a group of older women, the Vuvalini, who help them give Immortan Joe a taste of his own bad medicine. No wonder so-called ‘men’s rights’ groups have been blogging about this movie, calling for a boycott. One of the prominent men’s right blogs called Fury Road “feminist propaganda posing as a guy flick.” Horrors! Men might be tricked into going to a kick-ass action movie where women play a leading role in trying to save the world for ordinary people. It seems, however, that the blustering by the reactionary men’s rights folks is having the opposite effect: women (and men) are going to see Fury Road in droves. This is a movie that delivers on several levels: effective and non-CGI generated action sequences, the creation of a credible and frightening brave new world not that far from our own, and the hope offered by the rag-tag band of women and men who go hurtling through the desert with their guzzoline-fuelled salvation machines, hoping to find the “Green place” and another better future.

MUSIC

Music and vibrations of struggle

To Pimp a Butterfly
By Kendrick Lamar
Review by John Bell

In the 1960’s the fight for civil rights in the US spawned new musical expression. Struggle was not only expressed lyrically, but in new forms. From roots in rhythm & blues, jazz and gospel, pioneers like Sam Cooke, Aretha Franklin, James Brown and George Clinton found new grooves and broke new ground in soul and funk. Now the new wave of struggle, epitomized by the “Black Lives Matter” movement against racist police violence, is being channeled through the traditions of Black music by breakout artists like Robert Glasper, D’Angelo and most recently Kendrick Lamar. Lamar’s To Pimp a Butterfly is jaw-droppingly powerful. In turn comical, anguished and angry, it is a soul-baring meditation on what it means for a young black man to “succeed” in racist America, an autobiography of a kid from Compton dealing with the illusions of fame and fortune. While it weaves in the threads of

funk, soul and jazz (thanks to some brilliant contributions from pianist Robert Glasper, Snoop Dogg, The Isley Brothers and more) this is unapologetically rap music. It is a recording worthy of, and fueled by the fight against the New Jim Crow. The unity of purpose, music and lyric here exposes the shallow eclecticism of so many big-name rappers. From the opening cut—Wesley’s Theory—Lamar explicitly ties past to present. He is joined by funk god-father George Clinton and prodigy bassist Thundercat for a loopy take on sudden success and the seduction of fast money and consumerism, egged on by Uncle Sam: *But remember, you ain’t pass economics in school And everything you buy, taxes will deny I’ll Wesley Snipe your ass before thirty-five.* Beyond the brash beats and alternating gritty and witty rhymes , what sets Lamar apart is a fearless honesty. He confronts his own damage, being manipulated and his manipulation of others, broken relationships, bouts of depression and survivor’s guilt. Being conflicted

and championing the conflict are inseparable: the caterpillar and the butterfly. Because of that, when he finally angrily confronts the racist hypocrisy of “post racial” America—as in The Blacker the Berry—the power is undeniable. *Church me with your fake prophesyzing that I’mma be just another slave in my head Institutionalize manipulation and lies Reciprocation of freedom only live in your eyes You hate me don’t you? I know you hate me just as much as you hate yourself* Lamar ends the recording with a “conversation” with 2pac Shakur. He seamlessly weaves his questions and rhymes into an interview the late, great rapper, talking about the music and vibrations of struggle. From anybody else this would be impertinence; but by the end of To Pimp a Butterfly Kendrick Lamar earns the right to stand beside rap’s greatest.

LEFT JAB
John Bell

Tories: ridiculous but no joke

In 1996, a couple of creepy young dweebs named David Frum and Ezra Levant organized a conference called “The Winds of Change.” The goal was to re-unite the Canadian right-wing in the wake of the disastrous (for them) disintegration of Brian Mulroney’s Progressive Conservatives. The 1993 election that saw the PCs go from one of the largest majorities in parliamentary history to just two seats also saw the emergence of Preston Manning’s Reform party—which took over 50 seats in the west.

Axis of Evil

Reform was a mashup of faux anti-establishment prairie populism with anti-Quebec and anti-First Nations bigotry. As such it seemed doomed to languish as a western protest party. Remember young Stephen Harper making virtue of necessity, arguing for “firewalls” between Alberta and the rest of the Canadian state? Back then I laughed at the “unite the right” brigade. I remember joking with friends about the stinky winds of change blowing in from Alberta. I thought characters like Frum and Levant were what you found when you turned over rocks, and that nobody would ever take them seriously.

While I was right about the former, I was sadly mistaken about the latter. Frum went on to be an advisor and speech writer for George Bush, instrumental in selling the lies that justified the invasion of Iraq—coining the phrase “Axis of Evil.” And Levant has played a significant role in shifting the political discourse in this country dangerously to the right. I was right to ridicule positions that these characters took, and continue to take, but I was wrong to treat them as a joke.

Patrick Brown

Patrick Brown has just won the leadership of the Ontario PC party. Many joked about how the Liberals couldn’t have chosen a better Tory leader. After the failure of former PC leader Tim Hudak, due to repeated gaffes and a reputation as being too far to the right, why would the Tories pick someone whose record is even more extreme? There is much to ridicule in Patrick Brown’s political record, but it would be a mistake to treat him as a joke. Brown is a child of private school and privilege who seems to have three passions in life: hockey, the Tory party and getting ahead. After years of learning the ropes—organizing, identifying new constituencies to exploit, glad-handing and currying favours—he realized that the road to a seat in parliament led to Barrie. A combination of right-wing social policies—anti-abortion, anti-gay marriage—and carefully connecting with conservative sections of immigrant communities resulted in a job in Ottawa. As an MP Brown’s attendance record has been one of the worst in Parliament. He frequently misses important

votes and is absent from the committees he has been appointed to (and gets paid for). Where is he if not in Ottawa representing the people of Barrie? Often he is playing hockey, at charity fundraisers organized by fellow Tories, or attending the annual Wayne Gretzky Hockey Fantasy Camp in Las Vegas where he fostered connections with hockey celebrities who, in turn, endorsed his Ontario leadership campaign. Or he might be jetting around the world, with special interest groups paying part of the fare. He was careful to stay just within the limits set by Parliament’s ethical watchdogs, yet he managed to rack up \$57,000 in free travel in seven years. His most frequent port of call was to India, where he made connection with Narendra Modi, the far-right Hindu nationalist leader who was elected Prime Minister in 2014. When Modi made an official state visit to Canada earlier this year, he made a point of traveling to Ontario to add his endorsement to Brown’s leadership campaign. In Ontario, Brown has adroitly applied the same tactics used by Jason Kenney to identify socially conservative sections of immigrant communities and bind them to the Tory party machine. So, when the Ontario Liberal government introduced the same updated sex education curriculum that has been implemented without a problem in almost every other province, Brown saw a wedge issue and created a thinly veiled homophobic hysteria. Brown used his connections to create an alliance between the far-right Christians extremists, like Charles McVety, and socially conservative sections of newcomer communities, specifically Muslims. The same social media jokesters laughing off Brown’s ascension through the Tory ranks heaped insults on the “backward” parents. The jokes carried more than a whiff of Islamophobia. Building the anti-war movement in the early 2000s, many of us visited mosques and Islamic centres in the suburbs surrounding Toronto. Now Tory operatives like Brown are whipping up homophobia and signing up people to Tory party memberships at the same time. Following Tim Hudak’s failures to win seats in the greater Toronto area, the Ontario Tories were a moribund, rural rump. The conventional wisdom was that the way out of the wilderness lay with Christine Elliott and a Tory-Lite approach. She had the support of the party machine and the pundits. Brown blew her out of the water, signing up literally thousands of new Tory members in communities and ridings where that party had never before succeeded. We should be making use of the important relationships built in opposing war and Islamophobia, to build solidarity with LGBT activists rather than the Tories. If we leave our anti-war to make common cause with the Tories, federally or provincially, we will rue the day. If we treat Patrick Brown as a joke we are playing into his hand.

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.



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movement events

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ACTION FOR JOBS, JUSTICE
AND THE CLIMATE

July 4 across Canada

organized by 350.org

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MARCH FOR JOBS,
JUSTICE AND THE
CLIMATE

July 5 in Toronto

jobsjusticeclimate.ca

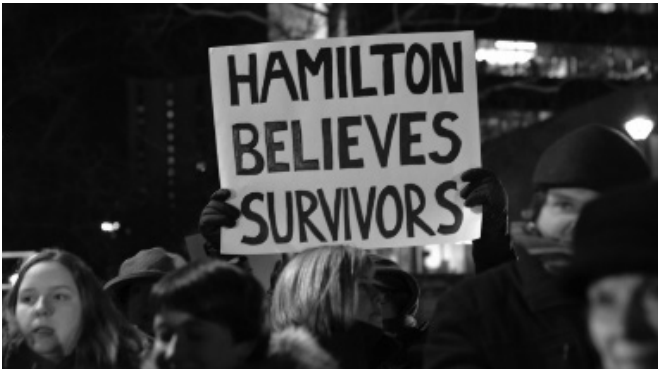
International Socialist events



Ireland fights back

Wednesday June 10 in Toronto

Guest speaker from Ireland
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How do we end rape culture?

Saturday June 13, 6pm

Oak St Housing Co-op
120 Oak St, Toronto

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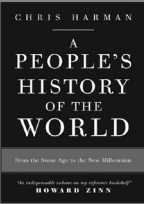
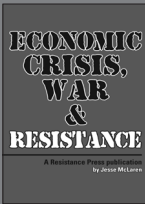
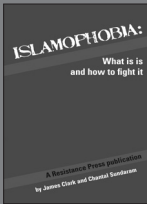
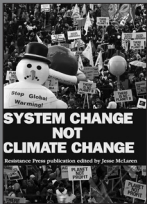
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TEACHERS STRIKE

by ALLAN WOOD

Ontario Secondary School Teachers’ Federation (OSSTF) are currently on strike, with teachers’ autonomy and class size being two of the most contentious issues. Socialist.ca visited a picket line in the Region of Peel and spoke to two striking teachers.

Teachers and support staff in 35 OSSTF districts have been without a contract since August 2014. Their most recent contract was imposed by the Ontario government in 2012 through Bill 115—repressive legislation that stripped away bargaining rights and gutted a number of other provisions.

One striking teacher in District 19 Peel said: “The school boards met with our union only four times in the 4½ months before we announced we were going on strike. And they were short meetings, nothing much was accomplished. As soon as we announced that we were going on strike, they were negotiating every day. It was only by striking that management came to the table. . . . Right now, the board is proposing that principals have the authority to dictate every minute of the teachers’ day. What we do during our prep periods, what we do after school – to have that questioned, that we’re not using our time effectively, it’s really hurtful. We need the respect that we can make our decisions concerning our time.”

Another striking teacher said: “They are trying to set it up so that administrators can assign duties to teachers during prep time, duties which may have nothing to do with their lessons or may not even have anything to do with teaching. Not having that time results in a loss of quality for the students’ education. And we have a real serious problem with that. . . . The province also wants to remove the cap on class size. Numerous studies have shown that an increase in overall class size results in a direct loss of education quality. Students receive less one-on-one time, less progressive assessment. As a result, they’re not getting the standard of education that they and their parents expect.”

ALTOGETHER TO FIGHT RACISM



by VALERIE LANNON

The first week of May included anti-racist events from Toronto to Winnipeg—challenging anti-Black racism, colonialism and Islamophobia.

Within days of the appointment of Mark Saunders as Toronto’s first black chief of police, several hundred, mainly young activists, Black and non-Black, rallied in front of Toronto’s police headquarters demanding justice. Organized by Black Lives Matter-Toronto Coalition, the rally on May 2 featured rousing speakers, who then led the participants on a spirited march to the American Consulate, to show solidarity with Black Lives Matter activists in the US in the aftermath of the Baltimore police killing of Freddie Gray.

As well as solidarity with the fight against racism in the US, the Toronto protest challenged anti-Black racism in Toronto including police murders and carding. The cousin of Jermaine Carby spoke about his murder at the hands of Peel police in September 2014. The family is still calling for justice. As they explain in www.justice-forjermainecarby.com, “He was pulled over at 10:00pm about ten minutes down the street from where he lived. Jermaine was in the passenger seat of a Black Volkswagen Jetta and his friend was driving. Video from the incident shows Jermaine exiting the vehicle and walking towards two officers with his hands outstretched. Officers are heard saying ‘Drop the Knife!’” No knife is visible in the video and every

witness who has come forward so far reported they saw no weapon in his hand. Jermaine was heard saying “What?” to the officers and was more than a car length away from them when he was shot several times. The medical report shows three bullet wounds in the chest and one in his left inner forearm. More officers arrived at the scene and were seen cuffing Jermaine’s lifeless body.”

Well-known journalist Desmond Cole denounced “carding” (euphemism for racial profiling), having gone through this demeaning experience several times. Cole led the rally in a chant of “If I’m free to go, just tell me so.” New Chief Saunders is committed to continuing the practice of carding, but as one protest sign said, “A Black face doesn’t make it less racist. #stopcarding.”

Divided no more

Just a week after the Toronto rally, a fantastic coming together of oppressed groups took place at a meeting in Winnipeg. The Spur Festival (a regular festival of arts and social justice) included a discussion entitled “Divided No More: Bridging the Gap Between Racialized Communities.” The meeting featured the keynote speakers Cornel West (well-known and respected American black scholar), Clayton Thomas-Muller (renowned Indigenous environmental rights activist based in Ottawa) and Shahina Siddiqui, the highly-regarded spokeswoman for Winnipeg’s Muslim community.

Each spoke about

the injustices facing their respective group. West focused on the ongoing murder by police of young Black men, and the resistance movement building in the US. Thomas-Muller pointed out how it is no coincidence that the worst environmental degradation takes place on or right beside traditional indigenous territory, something that Idle No More and other groups are successfully challenging. Siddiqui criticized the characterization of Muslims as terrorists and the scant attention paid to Muslim victims of imperialism. She said “When President Obama has to go on national TV and apologize for two white men who were killed as part of a drone attack and says not a word about 200 Pakistani children that have died in the drone attacks, and called collateral damage, we know we live in a world that is divided.”

The speakers and crowd agreed that only a united movement for change will bring justice, a movement that does not rely on elected officials. Thomas-Muller said, “It’s our young people and especially our young women, who are going to show us the way. But a whole lot of you non-native folks are going to have to be willing to get arrested.”

With the imminent passage of Bill C-51 and Tory talk of making Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions campaigns (in solidarity with Palestine) hate crimes, those arrests—and the need for solidarity—might not be too far away.

STICKING WITH THE UNION

Carolyn Egan

Climate jobs now

A march for “Jobs, Justice and the Climate” is being organized in Toronto on July 5 before the Pan Am Games, with other lead up actions being planned in the city and across the country.

The organizers make it clear that there does not have to be a contradiction between jobs and protection of the environment. This is a false choice being put forward by governments and corporations whose goals are to make profits at all costs, destroying the environment and exploiting workers and communities.

350.org brought together a coalition in Toronto building a network of environmentalists, trade unionists, indigenous peoples, representatives of racialized communities, and young people. It calls for governments to make significant investment in mass transit, affordable housing and infrastructure projects which will create climate jobs.

Labour for the climate

“We want an economy where workers win, communities have more democratic control, and those most impacted and impoverished are the first in line to benefit. Which honours indigenous peoples’ rights and recognizes their role in protecting the land, air and water for everyone. Which respects the limits of the environment made clear by climate science.”

A Pan American Climate Summit and an Economic Summit will be taking place in Toronto at the same time as the games and corporate elites from across the Americas will be gathering, putting forward their neo-liberal propaganda.

The organizers of the march are clearly linking climate change and austerity and are joining the millions across the globe who are fighting back against these attacks. They are calling for a justice-based transition to a new economy and state clearly that a mass movement must be built.

The fact that the Toronto and York Region Labour Council and other unions have joined the organizing is very important. For many years labour and environmental organizations had been at odds but there have been significant efforts to break

this down in recent times and its paying off. There is a federal election in Canada in the fall and the international climate meetings are taking place in Paris in November. Working people and indigenous communities must make their voices heard. The Pan Am games offers an important opportunity to build alliances and make the political demands that can rally the majority to a platform that takes on the destruction of the environment and the austerity agenda at the same time.

This changes everything

Another important symposium on the issue was called together by Naomi Klein and Avi Lewis stemming from her recent book “This Changes Everything”. Representatives from across the country gathered at the University of Toronto in May to discuss common goals for building an ongoing movement for climate justice.

Delegates came together from First Nations who have been long involved in this struggle, environmentalists, labour and community organizations. They listened to each other and discussed strategies for future work together. Building for July 5 was part of the agenda

Something is happening at this juncture that has never happened before, and it is taking place within an anti-capitalist framework. A climate justice movement is developing, building on the recent history of Idle No More, Occupy, and the Quebec student strike. What will come from it is not totally clear at this moment but the fact that workers are joining forces with indigenous peoples and environmentalists is tremendously important.

The slogan “Climate Change is Union Business” is being taken seriously. Workers are understanding that here are no jobs on a dead planet. Building a broad mass movement will increase the confidence of working people everywhere and make it clearer that we have the power to create a better world. Today we have the opportunity to do so and must work to build strong union involvement in the July 5 march and the ongoing organizing that will flow from it.



FAIR PHARMACARE

by CATHERINE GENDRON

With the Harper Government rejecting its role of strengthening and renegotiating the expired Canada Health Accord, the promised national pharmacare plan has too been dodged.

Yet reports have recently explained that Canadians and provincial insurance plans would save billions of dollars by introducing a national pharamcare plan – \$7.3 billion per year to be exact. What a relief it would be to the millions of people who require medicine and

yet cannot afford their medical needs.

As of 2012, one in four people across Canada who do not have drug insure are unable to afford their prescribed medication; even with insurance, one in ten are still unable to afford their medicine. Even with insurance, the cost for dispensing fees, co-payments and deductibles adds up.

And the future do not look bright - most people attain drug insurance through their workplace, yet with a growth in precarious employment across the nation, this option is becoming less and less feasible.

What this means is that millions are not getting the assistance they need to ensure good health, and/or many are cutting costs by skipping doses – all of these options are dangerous to peoples’ health.

And what happens when people are not getting the medical assistance they need? Other areas of the healthcare system rise in cost.

The current disordered and inequitable system of provincial drug plans plans does little to prevent skyrocketing drug costs. Every year, spending on prescription medications increases by 8 per cent above inflation - this is not

sustainable.

A large factor for these high costs owes to the Mulroney government’s gift to pharmaceutical companies: they were promised extended monopolies over their drugs in exchange for research, yet this decision has proven to be a terrible one.

By extending patents, pharmaceutical companies are able to make record profits while placing higher burdens on the people who need prescription drugs.

We need to ensure the Canada Health Accord is renegotiated and expanded with a guaranteed national pharmacare program.

SocialistWorker

JOB+JUSTICE+CLIMATE

On May 21 in the heart of Toronto's financial district, representatives of the growing climate justice movement launched the mobilization for the July 5 March for Jobs, Justice and the Climate.

Indigenous environmental activist Clayton Thomas-Muller hosted the May 21 press conference to announce the massive July 5th rally for Justice, Jobs and Climate.

Indigenous

To ground the event in Indigenous tradition, he sang a customary calling of the spirits and waved a smoking sweetgrass braid before introducing Idle No More campaigner Wanda Nanabush. She reminded the crowd that Toronto sits on indigenous land and is home today to over 90,000 Indigenous people.

She said "All the land in Canada is indigenous land, shared with all who come here." She emphasized that Indigenous peoples need to be at the forefront of this movement because they are the first to experience the negative effects of climate change and also because they are the sources of strategies for future sustainability, because of their intimate knowledge of the land. Indigenous peoples are putting their bodies on the line every time they have to deal with floods from hydro dams or cancer from tar sands extraction. 70% of uranium is located on indigenous territories. She noted, "Idle No More has included women, two-spirited people and youth, whose voices have not always been heard before... Indigenous people are here for you; will you stand for us?"

Jody Chan from the



University of Toronto's Fossil Fuel Divestment campaign pointed out that over 300 schools in North America take part in the campaign and that its demands are increasingly being taken up in places like the UK. She stated "Students want equality... Give power to the people and show solidarity with indigenous groups."

Hasan, from No One Is Illegal, emphasized that the struggle has to be grounded in indigenous struggles, decolonization and opposition to capitalism. He noted that indigenous struggles take place every day around the world, clearing a path of resistance.

Alternatives

Melina from the Lubicon

Cree, and also a Greenpeace campaigner, spoke about the devastating pipeline oil spill that devastated her community in 2011. There was insufficient emergency preparedness on the part of the provincial and federal governments, and it took five days after the election that year for the spill to be announced to the general public. "In the future, First Nations can no longer be sacrificed. We need a green, just economy. Stop the tar sands" she stated. In defence of a just transition for the working class she noted, "Workers shouldn't have to leave their families for three weeks at a time. We do have alternatives and lots of skilled workers who could be employed in the solar industry, like in

Germany." This summer, a solar installation will be made in Lubicon territory. She said, "We should aim high, for a 100% renewable energy economy. (Solar) Panel by panel we will show the government what true leadership is."

Movement

Well-known activist author Naomi Klein cheered the fact that the coalition organizing for the July 5th march represents marginalized people, Indigenous peoples, the largest private sector union -- all united by what we have in common. This is a new kind of movement that recognizes that time is short and what unites us is more important than what divides us. She said

Canadians are tired of many things: "of seeing dollars for social programs being cut whether industry profits go up or down; tired of extreme weather; tired of exploding trains and pipelines; tired of Indian Affairs extinguishing indigenous rights; tired of the department of Foreign Affairs allowing Canadian mining companies to violate human rights worldwide; tired of the Harper lies of the 'choice' between jobs and social programs vs. the environment." She pointed to Germany, which has a huge amount of renewable energy and has created 400,000 jobs in the sector.

The last speaker was Jerry Diaz, president of UNIFOR, whose membership includes, among many others, workers in the oil and gas

industries. He reiterated the assertions of other speakers that "we don't buy into the false choice between jobs and the environment... We need a sustainable strategy for renewable energy. There will be no justice unless solutions are worked through with Indigenous people worldwide." He castigated Canada's abysmal environmental reputation, pointing out that emissions targets set for 2020 have now been moved back to 2030. He commended the Ontario government for a recent commitment to convert a coal plant to a factory to make solar panels.

Participants at the press conference/rally also had lots to say. Ruth Gill from the Scarborough Bitumen-Free Future group said she supports the need to increase educating the public about climate change and about Enbridge's Line 9 "which goes through Toronto across many rivers that feed our drinking supply. Equipment for water treatment cannot tackle benzene (in dilbit), leaving the water toxic. In the event of a pipeline spill we would see an evacuation like they had in Kalamazoo."

Emmay, from the People's Climate Movement said now is a critical moment in our history, to move forward to build a clean economy. "I want to see solutions that match the scale of the problem instead of the dearth of leadership we are seeing by the government now." She hopes that July 5th will see lots of people take to the streets, and that the day will see a brighter future, one that is inclusive and equitable.

All out July 5!

Visit jobsjusticeclimate.ca for more information.

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Bombardier: we need mass transit, not mass layoffs

Due to reduced demand of business jets, Bombardier is laying off 1,750 workers—including 1,000 in Montreal and nearly 500 in Toronto—at a time when we need thousands of climate jobs.

Bombardier has laid off 4,500 workers since last year, and the new firings have been justified to deal with profits falling in the first quarter.

But the company still made \$100 million and is not cutting from the top. According to Bloomberg, CEO Alain Bellemare has salary of \$881,250, a million dollar bonus and total compensation of \$7,981,681 since 2014. Chairman Pierre Beaudoin get \$1,268,500 salary and has a total compensation of \$5,157,600 since 2014.

Instead Bombardier is maintaining its bloated CEO salaries and corporate profits on the backs of workers, and contributing to the destruction of manufacturing. As NDP Industry critic Peggy Nash said, "Canada has lost more than 400,000 good jobs in the manufacturing sector since the Conservatives came to power."

Bombardier is pushing mass layoffs despite receiving mass government investment. Even the right-wing Fraser Institute called out their corporate welfare, writing last year:

"Bombardier Inc., which recently announced it would lay off 1,700 people, has been a chronic seeker and a regular recipient of such taxpayer assistance. The Montreal-based aerospace company is thus a useful example of corporate wel-

fare in action, the tax dollars at stake, and the regular, inflated claims about the beneficial effects of such subsidies. Bombardier's corporate welfare began, at least federally, in 1966 when it received its first disbursement of \$35 million from the federal department, Industry Canada. In the decades since, various Bombardier iterations received over 1.1 billion (all figures adjusted for inflation) in 48 separate disbursements from just Industry Canada... That \$1.1 billion does not include tax dollars received from any other federal department or other governments, including in Ontario, Quebec and even Great Britain."

While there is reduced demand for high-carbon jets for the 1%, there is an urgent demand for low-carbon mass transit for the

99%—which Bombardier is capable of building. Its Thunder Bay facility employs 700 people to build mass transit. But at the height of WWII, the facility (then operated as Canadian Car and Foundry) employed 7,000 people as one of the biggest producers of military aircraft.

When the state prioritized global war it ensured companies employed thousands. But now that we need to prioritize mass transit to avert global warming Harper is doing nothing while Bombardier fires workers who could offer climate solutions.

This is another reason to join the march for Jobs, Justice and the Climate and to demand Harper redirect tax cuts, tar sands subsidies and military spending into climate jobs.