

# The Agitator

Carleton University supplement to Socialist Worker

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## KEEP FIGHTING THE LEFT VOTE RISES

The real news of the election is the stagnant combined popular vote of the two main corporate parties and rising support for the NDP. Five years ago the NDP got a dismal one million votes. Now they have 2.59 million and we can thank the millions of Canadians who have participated in the anti-globalization and anti-war movements. In this election, the NDP gained 420,000 votes and ten seats. The results confirm the continued shift to the left by the Canadian working class.

The Liberals got a good beating and rightfully so after an awful twelve years of vicious cutbacks, corruption and imperialism abroad. We can also relish the defeats of Foreign Minister Pierre Pettigrew, key architect of the Haiti coup, and Anne McLellan, who was a Justice Minister who endorsed the Security Certificates of several Muslim men.

As for the Conservatives, their victory is not that spectacular, as their popular vote is down from the combined tory vote (PC, Reform, Canadian Alliance) of 1997 and 2000 and only 0.6% above 1993. Their low vote in 2004 can be chalked up to the party's disorganization, considering they were formed six months earlier. Even their Quebec success, touted by the corporate media as something amazing is nothing new. As recent as 1997, Joe Clark's Progressive Conservatives gathered 22.2% of the Quebec popular vote and five seats. This time around, the Conservatives got 24.6% and ten seats, thanks to concentrated votes in greater Quebec City where the right-wing provincial party, ADQ, has its most support and endorsed the Conservatives

Even in supposed Conservative heartlands like British Columbia, they gained 37.3% of the vote. This is only one percent higher than 2004, and a far cry from the combined tory votes of 43.1%, 49.3% 56.7% in 1993, 1997, 2000.

In essence, there is *no rightward shift* in

Canadian politics. The NDP gained its popular vote in ten of the thirteen provinces and territories, losing only in Newfoundland, PEI and the Yukon. BC saw a massive NDP surge, and here in Ontario, three downtown Toronto ridings went NDP, as well as all Hamilton and Windsor ridings. One amazing gain was east London, a solidly working class riding that has never elected an NDP MP.

More close to home, the NDP have also gained thousands of votes while holding Ottawa-Centre with a solid lead. In the other four Ottawa ridings and two closest Quebec ridings, the NDP vote increased by at least a thousand, and nearly doubled to over nine thousand in Ottawa-Orléans. In Ottawa-Vanier, candidate Ric Dagenais came a close third with over 12,000 votes.

NDP support, though, has to be critical. When in power, the NDP has carried out awful policies and attacked the working class as they did most infamously in Ontario and British Columbia. Nor do they always have good policies outside of power, such as their position on Quebec and their silence on Canada's imperialist foreign policy.

We can't rely on MPs in this system to carry out the reforms we need. Neither can we rely on them to stand up to Harper's minority government. After all, the NDP did nothing to stop the 2005 Liberal budget which included the largest single increase in military spending since the Korean War. This NDP failure is paying off in body bags coming from Afghanistan, not to mention Canadian Forces patrolling streets for a warlord-ridden, corrupt puppet-government "elected" under an occupation.

Nevertheless it is clear that NDP success breeds confidence in the working class, but the real change and fight has to come through organizing at the grassroots and building the movements that are required to bring about real change.

**reports from the  
World Social Forum  
in Venezuela**

**with Paul Kellogg,  
editor of Socialist Worker  
& Ottawa delegates at Caracas  
SATURDAY, FEB.4, 6pm  
Tory 238, Carleton**

**LATIN  
AMERICA  
RISING**



**student union  
election coverage  
on the back page**

**MARCH 18  
END THE  
OCCUPATION  
OF IRAQ**

# The NDP, Quebec and the Clarity Act

by Abbie Bakan

In the last federal election campaign in 2004, NDP Leader Jack Layton announced to a Quebec audience that if elected, his party would repeal the Clarity Act. But now, in the campaign for the January, 2006 election, Layton has reversed himself, indicating his support for the Clarity Act. This is a shameful move to the right.

The Clarity Act in fact has nothing to do with advancing "clarity" about relations between Quebec and English Canada. But it has everything to do with the federal Canadian state's refusal to recognize Quebec's right to self-determination.

## Changing the Rules

After the narrow defeat of the Quebec sovereignty referendum of 1995, Chrétien shuffled his cabinet and started to change the rules of the game. Political scientist Stéphane Dion was brought into cabinet as Intergovernmental Affairs minister, specifically to craft a new hard-line strategy. The plan included three parts. First, there would be a challenge in the Supreme Court to Quebec's right to separation. Second, in the event of a third referendum that met with a successful vote for separation, the government threatened partition. Third, a proposal was made to legislate a requirement that any new referendum question be approved by the federal Parliament rather than the elected government of Quebec, and that more than a simple majority would be required for separation.

On December 13, 1999, the Liberals introduced the "Clarity Bill", Bill C-20 for First Reading. The Act that was eventually passed was titled: "An Act to give effect to the requirement for clarity as set out in the opinion of the Supreme Court of Canada in the Quebec Secession Reference."

The federal government could refuse to recognize any referendum where

Parliament had not approved the question in advance. And they could stonewall negotiations if the outcome of the vote was a simple majority in favour of Quebec sovereignty or sovereignty association. Quebec, the only province in Canada that has never signed on to the Canadian Constitution, was once again reminded of its oppressed status in the federation.

## NDP

Where was the NDP during this debate? With Alexa McDonough as party leader, the NDP supported the passage of the Clarity Act when it came to a vote in House in 2000. But it was hotly debated and many longstanding NDP supporters loudly objected, including NDP MPs Libby Davies and Svend Robinson.

When Layton stated his opposition to the Clarity Act during the 2004 election campaign, he offered a glimmer of hope that the NDP could re-build a base of support in the workers' movement and among social justice activists in Quebec. As Socialist Worker stated at the time:

*"Jack Layton for one brief moment put the NDP on the map in Quebec. He stated the obvious – that the so-called 'Clarity Act' was divisive, and that he would repeal it if elected to office. This is a position that can break the logjam of Canadian politics. Give Quebec workers a choice – to vote for the party of the trade union movement, and know that party will defend their right to self-determination. And it could begin a debate in English Canada about the danger posed by the Clarity Act – a harsh intervention into the right of Quebecers to determine their own future."*

## Under Fire

But Layton immediately came under fire for his position. Predictably, Liberals like Stéphane Dion condemned him. But shamefully so did the old guard inside the NDP, like Bill Blaikie and Ed Broadbent.

Apparently, the heavyweights were successful.

When challenged by Bloc Québécois leader Gilles Duceppe in the federal leaders' debate, Layton refused to come back to the subject. The NDP prospects for building support in Quebec declined dramatically with Layton's silence. And now, in the current election, that silence has turned to open support for the reactionary legislation.

Many in the workers' movement in Quebec will vote for Gilles Duceppe and the Bloc Québécois (BQ). But this is a vote that comes almost by default. And it is a tragedy – not because of the implications for national unity, but because the BQ was founded in a split from the bosses' Tory party. Its counterpart provincially – the Parti Québécois – has proven to be a party that governs in the interests of Quebec business, not Quebec workers.

Solidarity between Québécois and English Canadian workers has risen when the class issues are clear. When the FTAA summit met in Quebec City in April, 2001, tens of thousands of activists from Quebec and the rest of Canada united in opposition to the bosses' deal. When workers have been involved in labour disputes against common employers – like Canada Post, Air Canada or the CBC – Québécois and English Canadian workers have stood together, and they are all the stronger for it.

The urge for class solidarity could find expression at the polls if the NDP would take a clear stand in opposition to reactionary, chauvinist laws like the Clarity Act. The increased NDP vote in Quebec is in spite of its incorrect position on Quebec. We should demand that the NDP change course and stand firmly for the right of Quebec to determine its own future.

*originally published in Socialist Worker*

## Moving Left: Rejecting Corporate Parties

	NDP votes	NDP pop.vote	Corporate pop.vote*
1993	939,575	6.9%	76.0%
1997	1,434,509	11.1%	76.7%
2000	1,093,868	8.5%	78.5%
2004	2,127,403	15.7%	66.3%
2006	2,590,808	17.5%	66.5%

## Ottawa Voters Moving Left

Riding	2004 NDP votes	2006 NDP votes
Centre	25,734 (41.0%)	24,611 (36.9%)
Vanier	9,787 (18.5%)	12,145 (21.8%)
West/Nepean	7,449 (13.0%)	9,626 (16.2%)
South	8,080 (13.6%)	8,138 (13.2%)
Orléans	5,905 (10.1%)	9,339 (15.1%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>56,955 (20.2%)</b>	<b>63,859 (20.9%)</b>

\*combined vote of Liberal, Conservative, Reform, Canadian Alliance, PC

Carleton's New Postering Policy:

## Another attack on freedom of speech

by Doug Nesbitt

On November 4, Carleton's numerous clubs and societies received an email from CUSA informing students that there were drastic new changes in the campus postering policy. The passage in question read,

"...It was brought up at the last meeting [of the signage committee] that *excessive posting is becoming a problem on campus*. Now, I know how little space there is on campus for posting, and while CUSA would love to buy more boards, the new boards that the university would make us buy are very expensive. This is just notice to all clubs that the university is planning to start charging all groups or even individual students who are posting outside of posting areas. This won't be good for anyone. I would remind all groups that you can bring posters to the CUSA office and we will stamp them and even put them up on our board for you. We should all make an effort to keep our campus from looking like a downtown street corner. Poster Responsibly." (emphasis and italics appear in original email)

On October 26 our club had already received an email from a Steve Blais (Steve\_Blais@pigeon.carleton.ca) but

Blais did not identify the authority for which he was speaking. Attached to his email was the new postering policy. It reads that only one authorized poster, per event, can be on a single bulletin board - and only bulletin boards. Failure to comply with this would result in :

1) *Being charged for costs associated with the removal and/or damage caused to campus property;* 2) *Receipt of formal notice to cease and desist in posting in unauthorized locations* 3) *Suspension of posting privilege;* 4) *Any further action as directed by the Signage and Wayfinding Committee.*

Several questions arise, the first of which is who sits on the "Signage and Wayfinding Committee" and how is it elected, if at all and how is it held to account? And second, who determines what costs are associated with the damage that a poster can do? The entire document is dangerously vague.

When *The Charlatan* covered the story three weeks later, they reported that the postering policy was ostensibly instituted because of a campaign in October run jointly by several Christian student groups. The article read,

*"Doug Wotherspoon, director of communication at Carleton, said the*

*policy improves campus aesthetics by limiting postings to designated areas on campus..."* Wotherspoon went on *"The 'I Agree With Percy' thing went over the top...It was way too much and it's that which we have to defend against."*

Blaming the 'I Agree With Percy' campaign is simply covering a crack down on free speech. The real problem is the administration. There are only eighteen official postering areas operated by the university - hardly enough for students to build their events. And, as the Nov.4 email explains, CUSA can't provide students with more boards because the university has made them too expensive. The university is responding to a problem they created in the first place while simultaneously carrying out their campaign to rollback student rights on campus as they did last year with the conflicts at OPIRG-Carleton, the Oliver's Pub patio and Baker's Lounge.

Free speech is at risk, not Carleton's aesthetics. "Excessive" postering has never been a problem on campus. If the administration is really concerned about aesthetics, they should bulldoze the new athletics facility, replace their student slum housing and stop building gravel parking lots in green fields.

## From Resistance To Revolution a one-day educational conference

### Schedule

- 12:30: Marx and the class struggle**  
with Abbie Bakan
- 2:00: Explaining the crisis of today's Capitalism**  
with Paul Kellogg
- 3:30: The revolutionary party in liberal democracies**  
with Abbie Bakan
- 5:15: vegetarian and vegan dinner**
- 6:30: Latin America Rising**  
with Paul Kellogg and Ottawa delegates  
to the World Social Forum in Venezuela

**full day: \$10 / one session: \$4**

### with special guests

Abbie Bakan, Prof. of Politics, Queen's University  
Paul Kellogg, editor of Socialist Worker

### hosted by the

International Socialists at Carleton  
carleton.ca/socialists  
iscarleton@yahoo.ca  
to register contact: iscarleton@yahoo.ca

**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 4**  
**Tory Building, Room 236, Carleton University**



## CUSA Election: Vote for political activism

### Tuition fees and student space are the key issues

The Carleton University Students' Association, representing over 20,000 undergrads, is electing a new executive and council on February 1 and 2. The outcome will have a serious impact on the ability of students to resist the neo-liberal attacks of Premier McGuinty and gain ground on the student space issue. A politically conscious and active student union can make a real difference in how well we resist these attacks.

Two years ago, in the 2004-05 school year we had an example of what a politically active student union can do. Our elected student leaders took the administration head on during their attacks on student space, notably the illegal seizure of the patio at Oliver's Pub. Several dozen students occupied the patio around the clock for days at the initiative of the CUSA executive. When the administration took the patio with the help of the police, our best student leaders went so far as getting arrested by refusing to leave their property.

Also that year, the executive bused dozens of students to Toronto for a rally at Queen's Park for lower tuition. They also organized protests at the Carleton Board of Governors, an unelected body that was behind much of the student attacks (actually, student reps to the BOG are elected, but nobody else is). All these militant actions won us the promise of a student-owned building which will be built for Fall 2007.

#### Carleton Needs A Plebiscite

This year we have had a good student union but there have been significant problems. Across Ontario, student unions have been holding plebiscites to demonstrate to their universities that students want the tuition freeze to stay. At Trent, 90% of students opposed the lifting of the freeze. At Laurentian in Sudbury, it was 94% and at Ryerson, 96%. Even conservative Western it was 94%. At each of these universities the votes for *lower tuition were higher*. At UofT, Canada's largest university, the question asked students if they preferred fees to be either

reduced, frozen at current levels or raised. Eighty-five per cent voted for lower tuition, and another 13.5% supported the continuation of the freeze.

CUSA should have held a plebiscite but a lack of confidence prevented it. And for the first time in years, CUSA has failed to hold a rally for lower tuition. CUSA has also largely ignored the revitalized student anti-war movement in Ottawa, best exemplified by the growth of SCAW. These are serious mistakes.

#### Pressure from below

The fault lies with the nature of elected leaders who become separated from their constituents in the everyday administrative work they must carry out. The problem is certainly not the Carleton student body. Carleton has a long history of activism which continues to this day. When upwards of twenty thousand marched against Bush's Ottawa visit in November 2004, hundreds, probably thousands were Carleton students. What this school year has shown is that elected officials are not consistently active on key political issues. Constant pressure from below is the only way we can ensure our elected officials will stand and fight for students.

These problems show how important it is to be engaged in the union but to also have an active executive. After all, pressure from below is much more successful with left-wing leaders than right-wingers.

The CUSA election is offering a wide-range of candidates, but many are inexperienced and have not been involved in activism. Students concerned about tuition and student-controlled space can weed out the right-wingers by asking tough political questions at the upcoming candidates debates (see "Debates" column to the right). Questions should address the issue of an anti-tuition rally, a plebiscite to keep the freeze and who will be willing to mobilize students for strike action as Quebec students did in the spring of 2005. Candidates should be asked which rallies and protests they have attended and what clubs and societies they participate in. Let's expose the right, and vote for action.

### CUSA Election Debates

**Saturday, January 28th, 2:00pm**  
Fenn Lounge (Residence Commons)  
**Monday, January 30th, 8:05am**  
On CKCU 93.1FM  
**Tuesday, January 31st, 6:00pm**  
Rooster's (4th floor Unicentre)

### Socialist Meetings

**Wednesday, Feb.1, 7pm, Tory 215**  
Student Issues fraction of IS Carleton  
contact: mnelles@connect.carleton.ca

**Wednesday, Feb.8, 7pm, Tory 215**  
IS Carleton General Meeting

#### About the Agitator

*The Agitator* is the Carleton University supplement to *Socialist Worker*, the bi-weekly newspaper of the International Socialists. *The Agitator* is published every three weeks by IS Carleton. If you would like to write for either of these publications, please contact the addresses below.

**Socialist Worker**  
sworker@sympatico.ca  
**The Agitator**  
iscarleton@yahoo.ca

**International Socialists at Carleton**  
[iscarleton@yahoo.ca](mailto:iscarleton@yahoo.ca)  
[carleton.ca/socialists](http://carleton.ca/socialists)

**International Socialists at UOttawa**  
[isufo@yahoo.ca](mailto:isufo@yahoo.ca)

#### JOIN THE SOCIALISTS

P.O. Box 339, Station E,  
Toronto, ON, M6H 4E3

name: \_\_\_\_\_  
address: \_\_\_\_\_  
city/province: \_\_\_\_\_  
phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
email: \_\_\_\_\_