

Is Trump a fascist?

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Liberals are Canada's natural war party

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RESISTANCE BUILDS TO CLIMATE CHAOS



Nurses march in Washington on April 29.

Photo: Jocelyn Augustino

The Trump presidency has inaugurated mass resistance globally. On Earth Day, April 22, the March for Science took place in 500 cities around the world. And on April 29, Trump's 100th day in office, people around the world marched for jobs, justice and the climate.

- In the US, an estimated 200,000 marched in Washington in record-high temperatures, including large contingents of union members. Another 100,000 joined hundreds of sister marches across the US.

- In Edmonton, 200 marched on the Legislature to demand action from the NDP government that has so far chosen tar sands over Indigenous rights and green jobs.

- In Vancouver, 500 people endured rain and cold to rally and march through the

downtown core. Chants of "Hey Trump, Trudeau, Kinder Morgan's got to go" echoed through the city. Nour Enayeh, Syrian and Muslim community activist described the devastating drought that has impacted the Middle East in the last two decades. Grand Chief Stewart Phillip stated, "We have to come together in solidarity [...] and push back against this corporate agenda once and for all."

- In Ottawa, 100 people marched from City Hall to the US consulate. Speakers addressed the science of climate change and its accelerating impacts, and the importance of Indigenous leadership in the fight for climate justice. Organizers led chants of "Hear our cries, waters rise, no more lies, it's action time!"

- In Toronto, several thousand people took to the streets. Indigenous people are taking the lead in this struggle because everything is at stake for them, their communities, their futures and their very lives. Beze Gray from Aamjiwnaang First Nation spoke of the devastation that the oil economy has imposed on her community. Myeengun Henry spoke about the COTTEN Supreme Court challenge to Line 9 and the need to continue the fight regardless of the legal decision. John Cartwright, president of Toronto and York Region Labour Council called for a just transition for workers and good green jobs for all—to address the triple threat of economic crisis, environmental crisis and inequality.

It was a young crowd, but there were also trade unionists from the Ontario Public Service

Employees Union, the Canadian Union of Public Employees, the Elementary Teachers Federation and the United Steelworkers.

To stop Trump, stop Trudeau

Trump came to office a year into Trudeau's term, and has exposed his real agenda: supporting pipelines and war while closing the border to refugees.

Stopping Trump means stopping Trudeau. Climate justice activist Bill McKibben writes, "Trudeau says the right things... but those words are meaningless if you keep digging up more carbon and selling it to people to burn, and that's exactly what Trudeau is doing... pushing for new pipelines [...] to carry yet more oil out of Alberta's tarsands, which is one of the greatest climate disasters on the planet."



Critical support for NDP Platform

by **Adrian Long & Bradley Hughes**

The BC NDP has taken a few steps to the left, pointing out the class nature of the contest between themselves and the party of the 1%, the BC Liberals.

“The rich have had their premier. It’s time you had a premier that’s working for you,” said NDP leader John Horgan at a recent rally in Vancouver.

The NDP policy solutions include a \$15/hour minimum wage in their first term, a \$10 a day childcare plan, and building 114,000 “affordable rental, non-profit and co-op” housing units over 10 years.

They also propose a cap on tuition increases and eliminating interest on current and future student loans. But given that tuition has nearly doubled in the past decade, this is only progressive compared to the Liberal record.

Housing crisis

Landlords exploit an infamous “fixed term lease” loophole to raise rates upwards of 30% on renters who wish to remain in their homes after a lease has ended.

The NDP has committed to closing this loophole and promised a \$400 yearly “renter’s rebate.” They also propose a tiny yearly 2% absentee speculators’ tax to crack down on empty residences.

What BC renters need are strict rent controls that limit increases, and greater deterrents for absentee landowners.

The NDP also pledges to immediately raise all income assistance and disability rates by \$100, and to reverse the Liberal’s cancellation of the BC Bus Pass program so that people with disabilities can once again ride for free.

BC’s overdose crisis

The province suffered 914 overdose deaths in 2016, a nearly 80% increase on 2015.

The BC NDP needs to do more to address this crisis. Their platform focuses too much on expanding “police efforts” and “advocating for increased penalties.”

Mandatory minimum sentences for some drug-related offences intensify fear of prosecution for witnesses of drug overdose and increase rates of

preventable overdose deaths.

The NDP needs to support every effort to make access to harm reduction services – such as those from Insite and Crosstown Clinic – more accessible.

A progressive agenda treats addiction as a public health issue, not a criminal one.

Environment and energy

The NDP is attempting to navigate the tension between those opposed to resource projects (such as mines and liquefied natural gas pipelines) and the workers whose livelihoods depend on them.

But sustainable growth cannot include climate destroying projects like LNG.

The best alternative is public spending to create good paying, union climate jobs. The NDP is taking their first hesitant steps down this road, promising to create 96,000 construction jobs replacing and repairing schools, hospitals, and transit.

But only a stronger, more class-conscious climate movement will be able to push them the rest of the way.

The NDP have promised to reverse

some Liberal tax cuts for the rich and their corporations.

Combined with other changes this will raise revenues by \$1 billion to \$1.4 billion a year.

This is much too timid.

By returning corporate taxes to the 1999 rate, and by increasing income tax on those earning more than \$100,000 a year to the 1999 rates, a new government would have \$5 billion a year to start to fix the damage done by the Liberals.

Vote NDP to unseat the corrupt Liberals

As limited as the NDP platform is, it is much better than the platforms of the Greens or the Liberals.

But there is a much more important reason to vote for the NDP. No matter the politics of its leadership, the people who fundraise, knock on doors and do all the other work to win a campaign are working class people – often activists in their union or in other progressive organizations.

Let’s unseat the party of the 1%, and work to build militant unions and a vibrant climate movement that can win against any government.

The BC Greens are open for business

by **Bradley Hughes**

The BC Greens present themselves as neither right nor left, and as always happens when people take this position, they end up on the right.

On climate change, the Green platform is mostly wishful thinking. Oddly, it starts by complimenting the Liberal government of Gordon Campbell: “In 2008, BC became a global leader in climate action.”

This refers to the half-hearted attempts by the BC Liberal government to deal with climate change by implementing a carbon tax, and forcing public sector institutions to buy into carbon offset scams.

Their pro-business priorities continue through the platform document: “Acting on climate is about positioning BC to succeed in the emerging economy of the future.”

Acknowledging the failure of the

BC Liberals to meet their own targets, the Greens propose an interim target that allows 20% more GHG emissions than the Liberal plan by 2020, and catches up to the Liberal target by 2050.

Their plan to get there includes increasing the regressive carbon flat tax. Fortunately, they plan to abandon the requirement that public sector agencies be required to buy carbon offsets, and instead will require them to become truly carbon neutral.

Their platform includes four “pathways” to reducing GHG emissions:

- Lifestyle changes: incentives for purchasing electric vehicles – i.e., subsidies to car manufacturers, and continuing to rely on personal vehicles; distance-based car insurance and road pricing, both of which have little effect on the wealthy and penalize workers who cannot afford to live in the centre of the Vancouver region

and must commute; and promises to increase funding for transit, but there are no dollars attached.

- Phasing out diesel and gasoline urban delivery vehicles: this plan has a very long time frame – the end to new registrations won’t come until 2025.

- Better use of forests as carbon sinks: as they admit, “due to the mountain pine beetle infestation, fires and over-harvesting, BC’s forests are currently net emitters of carbon.” It is not clear how or if that can be changed.

Their platform on income security has the same pro-business bias that the climate platform has. A major plank is moving toward a basic income. This is a strategy to subsidize businesses who won’t pay proper wages and to slash funding to public services.

However, their first steps on this road are good. They propose increasing the rates for persons with disabili-

ties, the income assistance rates, and the shelter rates. But they are careful to reassure business that “financial disincentives to work are avoided.”

The Greens do not commit to a \$15 an hour minimum wage. Instead, they will convene a “fair wages commission,” where the profits of minimum wage employers like McDonalds will be given equal weight to the needs of minimum wage workers who live below the poverty line.

The Greens do not see the market as the cause of climate change, homelessness, unaffordable housing, poverty wages and so on. Instead, they look to the market for solutions. This is a failed strategy.

In the extremely unlikely event that BC Greens form government, or are in a position to join a minority Liberal government, the 1%, their profits, and their corporations will be looked after. The rest of us? Not so much.

Senator’s racism: Tories can’t help themselves

by **Valerie Lannon**

On March 7 2017, Tory Senator Lynn Beyak told her fellow senators that residential schools were actually of benefit to Indigenous peoples. She stated,

“I speak partly for the record, but mostly in memory of the kindly and well-intentioned men and women and their descendants...whose remarkable works, good deeds and historical tales in the residential schools go unacknowledged for the most part and are overshadowed by negative reports.”

Senator Murray Sinclair, who led the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s review of residential schools, rejected Beyak’s disgusting assertion. There was immediate opposition to Beyak from both grassroots activists and elected politicians, calling for her removal from the Senate.

Open letter

In an open letter to Beyak, an Anishinaabe woman from Ottawa, Danielle Lanouette wrote, “I’m writing to you as the granddaughter of a residential school survivor... We are still living with the trauma that the residential school system has inflicted on my family... The job of the Indian Residential School System was to ‘kill the Indian in the child,’ as said by Indian Affairs Deputy Superintendent Duncan Campbell Scott... You can’t deny that the Indian Residential School System was built with the goal of eradicating my culture, and ultimately, my people.”

Despite these denunciations, Beyak refused to apologize for her comments. She told the CBC that she doesn’t need any more education about the institutions, that she “suffered” alongside the survivors, and dismissed coverage of her comments as “fake news.”

Even leaders of the Anglican Church of Canada, which administered schools that took in hundreds of students, penned a forceful letter to Beyak to declare “there was nothing good” about institutions rife with physical and sexual abuse, that stripped children from their families and denied them their heritage.

She was finally booted off the Aboriginal committee of the Senate on April 9. But before that, all the Tory leadership had to say was that Beyak’s views did not represent the Tory party and that “she sent the wrong message.” So it’s all about messaging and not about stopping the extraction of resources on Indigenous territories or respecting the calls to action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

While the Senate is a useless institution, Beyak should have been kicked out all together. All we would say is “Good riddance. Let the door hit you on the way out.”

Thousands protest Le Pen

Within hours of the first round of elections, tens of thousands of students took to the streets of France in opposition to both the fascist Le Pen and the neo-Liberal Macron. Schools were shuttered and demonstrations spilled out into cities across the country. This follows a massive uprising against police violence in the Parisian *banlieues* earlier this year. In fact, a recent poll found that 63 per cent of French youth were in favour of a “large scale revolt”. And on May 1, thousands of workers demonstrated against Le Pen in the annual May Day marches. These events point the way forward in the fight against racism and austerity.

Below, **Benoit Renaud** reports from Paris on the first round of the presidential elections.

On April 23, 47 million citizens of the French republic had the opportunity to cast a ballot for one of 11 candidates for the first round of the presidential election. Ten million of them elected not to vote. Of the remaining 37 million, 24 per cent voted for Emmanuel Macron, former star Minister of the economy in the previous social-liberal government, and 21 per cent for Marine Le Pen, leader of the far-right Front National.

These two will face off in the second round of voting on May 7.

Very close behind, with a little more than 19 per cent each, came the candidate of the conservative party and former Prime Minister under Sarkozy, François Fillon; and the former Socialist Party Minister and leader of the ecosocialist Left, Jean-Luc Mélenchon. The race was so tight in the last few days of the campaign that no one new, of these top four candidates, who would make it to the second round. In fact, Mélenchon came only 1.5 per cent shy (or 620,000 votes) of beating Le Pen to a spot on the final ballot.

For the first time in the 5th republic, none of the candidates from the historic two parties of government (Gaullists and Socialists) made it to the second round. Macron came first as the candidate of a tailor-made political movement which he personally controls from the top. He has never occupied elected office, having come directly from the banking world to a cabinet position at the invitation of current president François Hollande. Socialist Party candidate Benoît Hamon only received 6.3 per cent and came fifth, a scathing condemnation of the policies of his party over their past five years in government. That although Hamon himself was a dissident and critic of the Hollande government and beat the former Prime Minister Manuel Valls for the nomination of the party of



Mittérand.

As for the candidates of the radical left NPA (former LCR) and Lutte ouvrière, who once garnered up to 10 per cent of the vote between them, they barely got about 1 per cent each, despite the egalitarian media coverage between the 11 candidates during the last three weeks of the campaign. Those who sought an alternative to the Left of the Socialist Party went massively with Mélenchon and his France insoumise movement, which had the support of parties formerly involved in Front de gauche, including the old Communist Party.

What now?

The big debate on the Left, coming out of the first round, is what to do in the face of a choice between the candidate of the neoliberal extreme-center and one of the far right.

Many point out the fact that the policies of the neoliberal governments, from the time a coalition of Socialist and Communists under Mittérand gave up changing society and created social-liberalism, have created the rotten social conditions favorable to the rise of the neo-fas-

cists. This being true, it doesn't mean that there is no qualitative difference between a continuity of the current policies under a Macron presidency and the shift towards radical anti-immigration measures, repressive attacks against minorities and dissenters, and anti-Europe isolationism under a possible FN government.

The Right is also divided between the dangerous minority willing to work with the Front National and those ostensibly favouring a “republican front” against Le Pen. Of the voting base of Fillon, about a third would be willing to vote Le Pen. Many voters of the candidate who came sixth, Dupont-Aignan, who agrees with FN on immigration and security issues but not on Europe or the economy, will also vote for Le Pen. This easily brings her in the 30% range from the get go.

This is much higher than what her notorious father Jean-Marie got in 2002—the last time a candidate from FN made it to the second round—and a clear indication that her goal of “dédiabolisation” of FN has been at least in part achieved. But her second place was in fact a disappointment for a party that had dubbed itself the First party in France over the past few years, following unprecedented results in European and local elections.

With the unpredictability of a modern campaign and the fracturing of old political families, it is not out of the question that Le Pen could win. So, people on the Left, radical or not, should not be complacent and count on other people to do the unpleasant work of voting for her only opponent in a strictly tactical way.

But voting for Macron is not a strategy for opposing the rise of the far right. For that, as many supporters of Mélenchon are currently arguing, it is imperative to build social movements against austerity and fight against the racist ideas of the FN everywhere.

Anti-war protest targets Trudeau

by Isabelle Rowe-Codner

Hundreds gathered in Vancouver on short notice on April 11 to protest the bombing of Syria by the United States.

Demonstrations also happened around the world in the days following Donald Trump's decision to escalate the conflict in Syria by launching 59 tomahawk missiles at an airfield controlled by the Syrian government.

This was supposedly a moral act of punishment in response to the horrific chemical attack that happened on April 4.

The protest in Vancouver was led by an anti-war coalition of StopWar, the Vancouver International Socialists and the Young Communist League, among many other endorsers. It was held in front of the US consulate and called for “Hands off Syria! No Canadian support for US bombing!”

Although relatively small in terms of a protest, the action in Vancouver was essential in building anti-war activism, something which could prove to be more and more necessary in the coming months.

Challenges

What's more, the rally proved to be a valuable lesson in organizing in response to imperialist forces, which in the context of the complex Syrian war poses a challenge to us as organizers.

Because of the convoluted ongoing conflict, many people take a pro-Assad stance (as some of the organizers did).



We as the International Socialists are against the Syrian government, as we are against all imperialist forces stifling the self-determination of the Syrian people.

We do not believe in falling behind a brutal regime in the name of “anti-imperialism,” because it is not simply a matter of one government versus another. This poses the question: how do you properly organize if the people you are rallying are split on an issue?

The key to building this resistance is to focus on what we can change: the policies and practices of our own government. It is no use rallying against or for Assad, or Russia, or Turkey for that matter, because we cannot do anything to change those regimes from Canada.

Anti-war movement

What we can do as an emergent anti-war movement is hold our own ruling elites accountable for their own barbarism.

Mumblings of pro-Assad rhetoric bubbled to the surface during some of the speeches and chants at the Vancouver protest. Nevertheless, there was a clear attempt to specify and focus the messaging to a clear and unifiable end, one that addresses the change we can evoke, and not the squabbling between factions.

To build a strong anti-war movement going forward, this will have to continue to be a point of discussion and convergence, and must be applied further.

UNITED STATES



Tens of thousands marched in cities across the United States on May 1st, celebrating May Day and giving voice to immigrant workers who are under intense attack by the Trump administration. In California, workers struck and joined rallies. Hundreds of Boston residents rallied outside the Massachusetts Statehouse. In Seattle, a coalition of immigrant rights, labour and faith organizations converged on Amazon's campus in solidarity with security guards trying to form a union. In Minneapolis, retail janitors rallied at Home Depot. Julio Hernandez, a construction worker in Minnesota, said: “We are standing up against the attacks on our communities today. We are coming to show Trump and others that we will stand united against their agenda.”



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FIGHTING RACISM IN THE AGE OF TRUMP

'We have to get out of our echo chamber'

Donald Trump's election sent shock waves around the world. An open racist, misogynist and unashamed greedster of the 1%, Trump campaigned on banning Muslims from entering the US, fueling xenophobia and racism. In response, there have been mass mobilizations around the world. In a recent panel discussion in Toronto, three speakers looked at some of the key issues in the struggle against racism and Islamophobia today.

Nigel Barriffe, President of the Urban Alliance on Race Relations:

I am a school teacher in the Toronto District School Board and I teach at an elementary school in Rexdale, more broadly referred to as Ford Nation. And organizing there, we organize around civic participation, and how we get the community more involved politically, electorally to increase voter turnout, and also to the fight against austerity, classism, policy brutality and the disproportionate negative educational outcomes of marginalized and racialized youth, and the criminalization of many Black youth in these neighbourhoods. All of these problems stem from capitalism and the neoliberalization that has been at play in this country and in these communities for over 40 years.

We know that most of the people that are hurt in an economic downturn are the people who are racialized or class marginalized, working in non-unionized positions.



Nigel Barriffe



Chantal Sundaram

In Toronto, 1 in 4 children are living in poverty, 1 in 5 adults are living below the low-income cutoff rate. It's important to reflect on what is happening, but also how do we take action. We're trying to rethink how we talk to people because we have to get out of our echo chambers.

Chantal Sundaram, International Socialists:

The right uses islamophobia in such a profound way to build an agenda for war, imperialism, and slaughter internationally, and also to feed the agenda of austerity at home. The left was paralyzed because it was a war against Islam, against a religion that was effectively demonized. Islamophobia is the thing that disarmed the left, and the right is capitalizing on it today.

You can't build unity if you don't take on the thing creating divisions in the first place. There are amazing fights against austerity that pose the possibility of breaking down racism and building unity. But it's not automatic. If there is not something specific and direct that challenges racism and Islamophobia, we can't assume these ideas will disappear.

We need to find ways to challenge racism that bring solidarity and clarity. When it comes to islamophobia, there can be no equivocation. The biggest threat to women here is not the niqab or the hijab, but the Canadian state that denies justice for missing and murdered Indigenous women.

'Racism comes from the top of society'

Weyman Bennett is Co-convenor of Stand Up to Racism in the UK.

Trump is an equal opportunity hater. He hates everybody – Mexicans, Black people, the LGBT community, he's anti-semitic, he's sexist, he's a misogynist. In that sense, the one thing he's done is unite everybody against him. I've been on more demonstrations this year than I have been in the last four years.

It shows the crisis inside of the system that someone like him represents the ruling class. It is a failure of the system. He's not their guy – in many ways, it is a sign of weakness in what's taken place in neoliberalism.

We have to talk about the limitations of Trump. He didn't get away with what he wanted to do with the Muslim ban. There were mass demonstrations against him. He postponed his visit to the UK. It was the threat of half a million people coming out. The plan was to shut down every part of London. He sparked a mass movement which has been able to resist him.

We have to understand that Obama and Clinton lost the election – it's not true that Trump easily won, or got mass support. Clinton lost a big core of working class votes because she proposed the continuation of neoliberalism.

This crisis around racism and islamophobia that we see with the rise of Trump is part of the politics of divide and rule. Marx said there was a weakness inside the British working class – it was divided between Irish and English workers. The ruling class knew that trick. That's what



Weyman Bennett

we're getting now, over refugees, over the question of EU workers.

There is a polarization taking place all over world. We see it with Le Pen, with Geert Wilders. In the UK, May called an election, and she's stolen the clothes of UKIP. The Tories incorporated their anti-immigration and racist policies.

We have to think how to bring our collective strength to bear. The Nazis in Bethnal Green wanted to burn down a mosque. A mass demo of 4,000 people defended the mosque. But the Nazis never got there, because the train drivers switched off the trains. A mass movement of Black, white, Muslims, Jews, gay and straight connected to this collective power, and it gave a sense of the power to change society.

Racism comes from the top of society. Every time they talk about racism, they talk about white workers. Actually, Donald Trump is not from a working class background – but he's a racist. The people at the top of our society are the ones who perpetuate and benefit from those ideas.

The situation can change very quickly. It is so unstable that there is going to be a break in it. We have to connect up the issues, and show how oppression is rooted in capitalism. We start by fighting today, but have an idea that wins at a bigger level. The right are throwing down big ideas about what type of society we should have. The left has to have an idea about the future of humanity, and do it unashamedly, because the scale of the problem is that dangerous.

Is Trump a fascist?

In order to resist fascism today, we need to break through the widespread confusion about what it is.

by Faline Bobier

The reason it's important to look at the question of fascism today is the alarming rise of the right internationally.

If we look to Europe, we see the success of parties such as France's Front National under the leadership of Marine LePen. It has taken to mainstream parliamentary politics but it is building its popularity in the main on anti-Muslim racism and its roots are in Holocaust denial.

The last decade has seen the emergence of two "pure" fascist organizations, complete with street squads and openly anti-Semitic, as well as being anti-immigrant and anti-refugee: Golden Dawn in Greece and Jobbik in Hungary. This raises fears of a repeat of the 1930s: abolition of democracy, scrapping of civil liberties and a wave of racist terror.

Economic crisis

Fascism cannot fundamentally be explained by referring to the inherent racism of human beings, although it definitely uses the tools of racism, anti-Semitism, homophobia and extreme nationalism to build its street-fighting cadre.

Fascism is actually an outgrowth of capitalism itself. Capitalism is a system prone to cyclical crises, which throws vast numbers of ordinary people into unemployment, despair and war.

The most fundamental cause of the rise of fascism in the 1930s was the international economic crisis triggered by the stock market crash in the US.

In Germany the process was especially violent and anarchic. None of the traditional parties of the Weimar Republic, including the social democratic SPD, seemed able to deal with the crisis. In an atmosphere of mounting chaos, the Nazi Party was able to present itself to the swelling ranks of the desperate and disoriented as the movement which had what others lacked: the energy and courage to impose drastic solutions.

Fascism orients to the petit bourgeoisie, the middle classes – small business owners, petty functionaries who are squeezed between capital (the bourgeoisie-the owners of the means of production on a large scale) and the working class.

Fascism creates a street fighting mass movement, autonomous from the existing state but serving big capital, and its role is to smash working class organization.

As Russian Revolutionary Leon Trotsky explained in an article entitled National Socialism, one year after Hitler's coming to power: "German fascism, like the Italian, raised itself to power on the backs of the petty bourgeoisie, which it turned into a battering ram against the working class and the institutions of democracy. But fascism in power is least of all the rule of the petty bourgeoisie."

"On the contrary, it is the most ruthless dictatorship of monopolist capital. Fascism succeeded in placing

them in the service of capital.

Such slogans as state control of trusts and the elimination of illegitimate profits were thrown overboard immediately on the assumption of power."

Another world was possible

The situation was all the more tragic since it was not inevitable that Hitler came to power. In the 1920s Germany had the most powerful trade union movement in the world, the largest Social Democratic Party and the largest Communist Party outside Russia.

During this whole period from 1928 until the eventual takeover by Hitler in 1933 Trotsky wrote furiously from exile, arguing primarily with the German Communist Party, that it was possible to stop the rise of Hitler, if they would only abandon the ludicrous position of calling the SPD "social fascists" (following Stalin's line) and form a United Front with the SPD leadership and thereby the millions of workers who were members of the party.

In that way there was at least the possibility of confronting the rise of fascism, both physically in the streets and ideologically through puncturing the racist, anti-worker, elitist politics the Nazis represented.

Through being the most vigilant fighters against fascism they would also be able to expose the collaborationist and weak Social Democratic leadership for what they were and put forward a compelling argument that the only way to end fascism finally would be to replace capitalism with a socialist society where the wealth would be owned and controlled by workers themselves.

Unfortunately this did not happen. Trotsky, isolated as he was (having been expelled by Stalin in 1927) and exiled, had no organization that could put his ideas to the test of practice. But his ideas, and the lessons of history, are increasingly relevant today.

Fighting racism & fascism today

The re-emergence of fascist organizations like Golden Dawn and Jobbik, and the electoral success of a



STEELWORKERS CONVENTION

A determined mood in wake of Trump win

by Carolyn Egan

Almost six thousands delegates and observers arrived in Las Vegas to attend the United Steelworkers convention in April as the union celebrates its 75th anniversary.

The United Steelworkers was one of the original CIO (Congress of Industrial Organizations) unions organizing workers who were not in the skilled trades believing that every working person had the right to a union. The Great Depression in the United States and Canada had taken a terrible toll on the working class and the poor.

Unions such as the United Autoworkers, the Rubberworkers, Steelworkers and others had committed organizers, many of them socialists and communists, travelling across the country signing up members to take on the boss.

It was the robbers and the robbed battling it out for union recognition. People died and were seriously injured in the battles that took place.

1946 Hamilton

The historic strike of 1946 in Hamilton, Ontario was an example when an entire city rallied alongside the striking Steelworkers at STELCO.

The workers won and showed the employer that working men and women were prepared to stand up and fight for the dignity and respect that they deserved.

Unions are under attack again in the US and with the election of Donald Trump and his promise to bring in federal "right to work" for less legislation, among a range of other right wing policies, trade unionists are well aware that they are once again in a fight for their lives.

It is no secret that the Steelworker activists were by far supporters of Bernie Sanders. His class perspective drew them and they wanted something more than the Democratic Party operatives were prepared to offer.

When Clinton became the nominee her message did not resonate and many rank and file members unfortunately were drawn to the right wing populism of Donald Trump.

Solidarity

In spite of all this, the mood at the convention was one of determination. Many of the speakers who addressed the delegates gave inspiring messages and the theme was "Power in Unity". One after another told us that alone we are weak but together, Black, Hispanic and white, no matter our gender, sexuality, or ability, we are a force to be reckoned with.

The Reverend William Barber who is a political leader in the Black community in North Carolina blew the roof off the convention centre. Everyone in the room was on their feet as he implored us to get beyond any divisions and take on the fight. He was clear that we can't organize against class exploitation with out taking on racism in all its manifestations.

He has built a statewide multiracial coalition in the south that has not been seen since the civil rights days. He talks about the rise of a new justice movement that can bring poor Blacks and whites together so that they can see through the lies of Donald Trump and his ruling class cronies.

He said that unions will make the difference between victory and defeat for the poor and the working class and that we must join together with movements for change to come.

Delegates allowed themselves to be inspired but the task is not easy. There are tough strikes on and fights around healthcare, Islamophobia, anti-immigrant attacks, anti-Black racism, reproductive justice and more.

The struggle for unity is critical because the one percent is doing everything it can to divide us. The working class globally is in an ongoing struggle against the forces of the right and the working class must organize itself into the fighting force that is necessary to win.



Reverend William Barber.

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 transgender 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.



Liberals are Canada's natural war party

Justin Trudeau has decided to follow President Trump in supporting regime change in Syria.

This may have been surprising to some, but not if we look at the history of the Liberal party when it comes to war. Far from being a party of peace, the Liberals have rarely met a war they didn't endorse. So Trudeau is just carrying on the brutal tradition of his predecessors.

Canada has been, whenever possible, bomber number three in the trans-Atlantic alliance. The US may be the dominant superpower – and they can always rely on the UK to follow in a vainglorious attempt to revisit the murderous empire of the past. But Canada is never far behind.

It was Liberal Prime Minister Wilfred Laurier who took Canada to both the Boer War and WWI in support of British imperialism.

During the Second World War, Mackenzie King did initially oppose the war. Not on humanitarian grounds – but because he was completely enamoured with Adolf Hitler, commenting that the world would "yet come to see a very great man—mystic in Hitler".

Lester Pearson did officially keep Canada out of Vietnam, but made sure Canada played a role supporting the US invasion diplomatically, as well as overseeing the sales of \$2.5 billion in weapons including Agent Orange and

napalm to the US forces.

Canada and the War on Terror

In January 2003, then Defence Minister John McCallum stood on the lawn of the White House beside George Bush and declared that Canada would be a member of the "coalition of the willing". After massive demonstrations on February 15, 2003, the Liberals slightly changed their tune and decided that they would support the war only if the UN endorsed the actions.

They then proceeded to try and develop a "Canadian Compromise" at the UN to secure that endorsement. The compromise was to extend the search for non-existent weapons of mass destruction and, if unsatisfied, the UN would then support the war.

It was not a compromise at all but rather a slightly longer timetable to invasion. It didn't work, and the UN didn't endorse the invasion.

The final nail in the coffin was the massive 250,000-strong anti-war demonstration in Montreal on March 15, 2003 which was followed quickly by Chretien's announcement that Canada would not go to war in Iraq.

Many hailed that as a smart decision and the Liberals certainly like to play up this position to bolster their perception as a party of peace, but we know that wouldn't have happened without the anti-war opposition in Canada.

The attempt to bring the UN on board with the war shows us that the Liberals tried everything in their power to join the war. They just lost the battle for public opinion.

It is also worth noting that when they announced that they would not send troops to Iraq, they simultaneously sent thousands more troops to Afghanistan to free up US troops to be re-deployed. That's not an anti-war position.

And speaking of Afghanistan, it is important to remember that it was Paul Martin's Liberals who decided to shift Canadian troops to a combat role in Kandahar, Afghanistan. According to former Canadian diplomat Richard Colvin, it was under the Liberals that the practice of sending Afghan prisoners to torture began.

And again it was Paul Martin who was PM when he appointed General Rick Hillier to Chief of Defence staff. Hillier famously described the Afghan mission in less than peaceful terms, saying that Canada was going to kill, "detestable murderers and scumbags, I'll tell you that upfront, they detest our freedoms. They detest our society, they detest our liberties."

From Haiti to Yugoslavia to Afghanistan, and now Iraq and Syria, the Liberal party has always carried on the tradition of being Canada's natural war party.



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Vimy Ridge anti-war project



Union members mobilize against hate.

Fighting hate in the GTA

By John Bell

Racists and Islamophobes in Peel Region, the part of the GTA that includes Mississauga, have been working overtime to stir up trouble and hatred. The latest target is space set aside in Peel District School Board high schools for kids to attend Friday prayers.

For about 20 years, Peel schools have hosted Jummaḥ–Friday prayers—without problem or incident. They are legally required to do so by the Ontario Human Rights Code. But a recent change of policy, letting kids volunteer to write and deliver the short weekly sermon, was pretext for local white supremacists and Islamophobes go on the offensive.

Bigots mobilized to swamp school board meetings, denouncing Islam in vile terms and in at least one case ripping apart the Koran. A spokesperson for the PDSB told the *Globe and Mail*: “They used language and comments that were the most hateful that I have ever seen in my career. I was actually deeply shaken by what I heard. I’m not sure I’ve ever in my life seen this level of hatred.”

Racist graffiti

Racism and white supremacy is at the root, emboldened by the rise of Trump in the US, of Modi’s far-right government in India, of Marine Le Pen in France, and neo-nazi groups elsewhere. Some have tried to disguise and re-brand themselves as “alt-right”, and hypocritically pose as champions of free speech. What they really want is freedom to use hate speech, and to legitimize attacks on others based on race, ethnicity of religion. Others have stuck with the bullying violence that accompanies attempts to revive fascism.

In Peel, racist graffiti has appeared near schools, and an imam has faced death threats. Similar campaigns have happened before. Many of the same racist players came together several years ago to stop the construction of a new mosque.

Fake news

In a fake news campaign worthy of Breitbart, the *Mississauga Gazette* ran stories claiming young Muslim men were assaulting young women at a Mississauga high school. Moreover, it claimed that the PDSB was refusing to investigate the assaults. It was all a lie.

The majority of Mississauga’s municipal government have opposed the racists. Mayor Bonnie Crombie has denounced them: “Racism and flat-out lies have no place in Mississauga.”

Brampton Mayor Linda Jeffrey described a deliberate campaign of “recent misinformation and hateful speech surrounding the accommodation of Muslim prayers.”

Iqra Khalid, the Liberal MP who proposed Bill M-103, represents part of the region. A virtually identical bill decrying growing Islamophobia passed the Ontario Legislature with the support of Patrick Brown’s Conservative caucus. The political clout of immigrant communities in the GTA is keeping the latter in line rather than any superiority over their federal counterparts; these are the seats the Tories will need to steal if they want to win the next election.

Even more important will be the response from anti-racists on the ground. Union activists have attended PDSB meetings to make sure bigots aren’t able to derail the agenda. And whenever white supremacists announce plans to rally in public, we have to meet them with greater numbers and organization.

The bigots are in a minority in Peel, as elsewhere, but our side has been complacent. If we do nothing their numbers will grow along with their morale. The rise of Trump has raised their morale, and they have organized under new names hiding the same old racist politics. Now it’s up to us to tell them they aren’t welcome in Peel or anywhere else.

On April 9, to mark the 100th anniversary of the First World War battle of Vimy Ridge, people across Canada read from the war plays *Motherhouse* and *Bolsheviki* by Chalmers Award-winning playwright and socialist, David Fennario.

Both plays are based on first-hand accounts of resistance to war, in the trenches of France and in the British Munitions Supply Factory in Verdun, Quebec. These plays were read to counter the myth of Canada’s “birth as a nation” in this battle and remember the horror of militarism. Far from unifying Canada, WWI exposed the divisions. Conscription riots broke out in Quebec and soldiers returning home facing no jobs, protested in Halifax and Toronto.

Fennario grew up and still lives in Verdun, a working-class community that saw the single largest proportion of World War I casualties of any place in Canada. The British Munitions and Supply Co, also located in Verdun employed thousands of women making the weapons of war in unsafe conditions.

“Verduners went overseas to fight for democracy but those that survived came back and found out they had to fight for democracy where they lived,” states Fennario. “Verduners played a key role in the organizing of unions in the CPR, Bell Telephone, Nortel, and also for welfare rights, medicare and housing. The first community clinic in Canada was organized down in Verdun in the 1930s with the help of Doctor Nor-

man Bethune.

“That’s the kind of victories we should be celebrating, and not the slaughter at Vimy Ridge where thousands of young working class men, German and Canadian, died in defence of profit.”

“In 2003, thousands of people opposed to the war in Iraq read from the ancient Greek war play *Lysistrata* on the same day,” said Ottawa organizer Chantal Sundaram. “We wanted to recreate that anti-war chorus, a commemoration that does not glorify war or the militaristic ‘birth of a nation’. We remember those who paid the price to prevent it from happening again.”

Readings took place in Montreal, Ottawa, Kingston, Toronto, Halifax, Charlottetown, and Huntingdon, QC.

No bailout for people like us

by Kevin Taghabon

Hell or High Water is a crime drama about the rage simmering below the surface of America’s sacrifice zones.

The surprisingly class-conscious film is aptly directed by David Mackenzie from Taylor Sheridan’s script.

The story follows two brothers in small town West Texas who engage in amateurish bank robberies in an effort to free their family from debt peonage.

Sheridan, who received a Writers Guild of America nomination for Best Original Screenplay in 2015 for the excellent *Sicario*, delivers a dialogue-sparse script that is dense with political commentary.

This pairs especially well with Chris Pine’s (playing Tanner Howard) understated performance most characters’ palpable hatred for banks.

The film opens with preparatory shot for the audience. A dirty white wall displays graffiti reading “3 TOURS IN IRAQ BUT NO BAILOUT FOR PEOPLE LIKE US”. Single story houses with cars three decades old fill the vicinity. The camera pans over to the only modern structure in sight.

A Texas Midland Bank branch is soon forcefully liberated of its money by our protagonists, themselves departing in an ancient Camaro.

The parties with resources are the banks and the state, whose law enforcement agents drive brand new

Dodges and can snap deploy SWAT teams to the middle of nowhere.

Reminders of this disparity are constant. Signs reading “IN DEBT?”, “FAST CASH”, and “BANK OWNED” litter the roads across West Texas. The only wealthy character is an obnoxious gun toting teenager who harasses the brothers from a brand new vomit green Challenger SRT8, a car worth double Tanner’s own land. The teen’s fake machismo swiftly meets reality.

The brothers Toby (Ben Foster) and Tanner take the stolen cash to casinos in Oklahoma, and get cheques made out to Texas Midlands Bank, effectively robbing them twice.

They consciously steal only from tellers’ tills, \$20 bills and under – the bank’s money. A masked Tanner explains to one of the bank patrons, “we ain’t stealing from you, we’re stealing from the bank.”

This choice also makes them untraceable, meaning Tanner is not at risk tipping a kind diner waitress \$200. When Texas Ranger Marcus Hamilton (Jeff Bridges) and his partner Alberto (Gil Birmingham) visit this diner, Marcus demands the tip from the waitress as evidence.

Marcus and Alberto (who is half Mexican and half Native American) are not unlikable, moustache twirling villains either. From the beginning it’s clear that Bridges is no fan of eviction profiteers. While interviewing a terrified young bank teller, he looks over to a hefty old man in a

clean suit.

The permanent emergency of poverty grips all those who come across the rangers’ and the brothers’ travels.

The script is not only an indictment of the foreclosure crisis in the US and the defeated dream of upward mobility for working class Americans, it is also a commentary about racial tensions.

Marcus and Alberto’s casual racism has them constantly engaging in lopsided bickering about their differences. “This is what they call white man’s intuition,” Marcus says when en route to where the robbers are supposed to be.

“Sometimes a blind pig finds a truffle,” Alberto retorts. While Marcus’ insults are indeed offensive, it becomes clear that he is lonely and in physical pain as he approaches retirement. Alberto makes up his only friendship.

Fittingly, it is Alberto who succinctly delivers the film’s message outside the vacant restaurant with the hostile waitress. Marcus and Alberto sit across from a Texas Midlands branch on the downtown strip of a forgotten town.

“150 years ago this was all my land this was all my ancestors’ land. Everything you could see. Everything you saw yesterday, ‘till the grandparents of these folks took it. And now it’s been taken from them. Except it ain’t to army doing it. It’s those sons of bitches right there,” he points at the bank.

Basic income is a Trojan Horse

by Pam Frache

In response to the rise of precarious employment, austerity and economic inequality, many are calling for a Basic Income (BI) scheme.

The best-intentioned BI supporters imagine a scheme where those unable to engage in paid work are provided with a decent income without the stigma associated with social assistance. Such people want to end the means testing regime associated with the Ontario Disability Supports Program (ODSP) and Ontario Works, including its enforcement via the poverty police. Others imagine a world where the state provides income enough for workers to withhold their labour in pursuit of higher wages.

Unfortunately, until we are on the verge of an anti-capitalist revolution, this will not be the vision implemented. Simply put: no capitalist state will provide workers with the resources to go on indefinite strike.

Basic income problems

In an excellent article, Michal Rozworski sets out the cost of a modest Ontario BI proposal based on \$15,000 in annual income—a sum that is far below the poverty line: “To implement a \$15,000 basic income, while getting rid of welfare, but keeping things like education, health-care and higher education, would still mean raising an additional \$200 billion in revenues. That’s more than double the \$91 billion Ontario is able to raise in taxes today (Ontario has total revenues of \$130 billion).”

Thus, we must assume that any implemented BI scheme will be neither universal (available to everyone) nor adequate. And if it is not universal then it will certainly be targeted, necessitating some form of means testing and with it, con-

tinued financial scrutiny, including variations of the poverty police.

Meanwhile, BI will leave the structural sources of precarious employment intact, and go further by subsidizing cheap labour strategies. BI presents itself as a solution to labour market precarity, while obscuring the actual role of the state in enforcing the legislative regime that maximizes employers’ ability to extract surplus value from workers.

In practice, BI schemes will reward low-wage employers and undercut companies offering decent wages. This will intensify downward pressure on wages and conditions everywhere and subsidize profits at the expense of the social safety net. It’s no accident that under the terms of the BI pilot project in Ontario, more BI recipients are in precarious employment than on social assistance. This alone should make us skeptical of the government’s intent.

It’s also no accident that the BI pilot was announced prior to the release of the final recommendations from Ontario’s Changing Workplaces Review. That Review has been the focus of the Fight for \$15 and Fairness, where labour and community groups have been organizing to raise and repair the legislated floor of wages and working conditions for all workers. Ontario’s corporate elites are campaigning for BI in direct opposition to these demands.

Fight for \$15 and Fairness

Meanwhile, two-thirds of Canadians now support a \$15 minimum wage and in Toronto—where the campaign is most developed—more than 70% support a \$15 minimum wage. Nothing is more threatening to employers than effective, working class campaigns that start to win even modest goals like a \$15 minimum wage,



May Day action at Toronto’s Pearson airport. Photo: Tracy Rowan

paid sick days, or easier access to unions. Such accomplishments can have a transformative impact on peoples’ confidence to fight.

The magnificent victory of food service workers at York University is a case in point. By tying their collective bargaining demands—including an end to anti-Black racism and Islamophobia in the workplace—to the Fight for \$15 and Fairness, UNITE HERE Local 75 members were able to leverage broader class forces to help win a strike that achieved a groundbreaking contract.

These workers won extended dental coverage and equal benefits for part-time and full-time workers. From an average wage of just over \$12 an hour, all UNITE HERE members will

be earning \$15 within one year, and more raises will follow over the life of the collective agreement. This victory transformed those workers, galvanized the movement, and opened up new avenues for labour, student and community solidarity across Ontario.

The risk is that the promise of a BI scheme will confuse and disorient the decent work movement, just as it gains enough momentum and coherence to give confidence to workers to fight—and at a moment when the Liberal government is so politically weak that it might be preparing to make some modest concessions to the Fight for \$15. It would be tragic if the 1% were able to recover their footing and derail the movement by offering up a BI Trojan Horse.

Support striking Canadian Hearing Society workers

by Laura Kaminker & Melissa Graham

The 227 members of CUPE Local 2073, Canadian Hearing Society workers, have been on strike since March 6. They have been without a contract—or a salary increase—for four years.

Full-time staff has been reduced by almost 30 per cent over three years. In that same period, the salaries of the president and CEO increased by a shocking 75 per cent.

The Canadian Hearing Society is funded primarily by the Province of Ontario—that is, by taxpayers. Tax dollars that could be used to fund vital services are instead being funnelled into lavish executive salaries.

The services these CUPE workers provide are vital, including sign-language interpretation, social and community support, assistance for newcomers, counselling and audiology assistance.

The community has been shocked to learn that staff cutbacks and salary freezes coincide with outrageous executive salaries. Canadian Hearing Society CEO Julia Dumanian earned almost \$269,000 in 2016, \$115,000 more than her predecessor earned in 2013.

Dumanian was appointed CEO in 2015, after

being fired from her previous position at Cambridge Memorial Hospital for “outstanding and ongoing governance and management matters,” according to then-minister of health David Caplan. Dumanian has declined to speak to the media and has made no public statements about the strike.

Disability

This team is in an unusual position, in that much of its membership requires the same accessibility that they provide to the community. The services they provide to the D/deaf and hard of hearing community, are needed by many employees as well. This provides a unique perspective on the impact of the strike, but also impacts the bargaining process.

According to the CUPE 2073 website, the employer has shown a lack of regard for this accessibility requirement.

“[A] lack of respect for the bargaining process has been consistent throughout the contract talks with the employer team routinely dawdling, wasting time and showing up late to run out the clock on the interpreters who are needed to facilitate talks. Extended bargaining days are not



a reality for this group because of the physical and mental demands required when bargaining with interpretation.

“We’re not like other bargaining teams and we operate within set bargaining hours. This ensures accessibility and equality for our team, something we thought the employer would re-

spect, but clearly does not,” says CUPE national staff Barbara Wilker-Frey.

“For CHS to attack sick leave provisions that enable us—a mostly female workplace with many deaf and hard of hearing employees—to do our jobs, is heart wrenchingly difficult to accept. We are role models in our community. We had no choice but to strike,” says Stacey Connor, president of Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) 2073.

Many members of CUPE 2073 were not involved in their union prior to the recent actions of the employer. The solidarity shown by other workers, unions, and the community is having an impact, and changing some perspectives on accessibility within the labour struggle.

Solidarity

The members of CUPE 2073 are standing strong, fighting for a fair deal for themselves and quality services for the people who use their services. They need our support. Picket lines are active in 21 Ontario locations, and donations to the strike fund are greatly needed.

For info: CUPE strike page <http://bit.ly/2oQJtdf>