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Cuts fuel climate crisis

Wildfires are raging in populated areas from Ontario to Greece.

The Liberal government in Ottawa, one touted as a “climate leader” has once again taken a step backward when it comes to reducing carbon dioxide emissions. The already inadequate carbon pricing scheme has been changed to lower carbon pricing requirements from industry. This, after meetings with big oil and related businesses who always have a veto on any environmental programs under pipeline builder Trudeau.

Meanwhile, Doug Ford’s new Tory government in Ontario is cutting all the green programs it can find. They have cut green energy programs which provided retrofits for homes,

schools and public housing. These program cuts are likely to cost the province tens of millions of dollars but Ford doesn’t care as long as he gets to ‘put environmentalists in their place’.

All this while the world is facing unprecedented heat waves and wildfires. Hundreds have died from Canada to Japan to the Middle East while temperature records have been smashed. Lets look at some numbers.

Ouargla, Algeria set the record for the highest temperature with a mark of 51.3 C this summer, Montreal hit a record high of 36.6 C in July and 70 people have died from the heat. Across Europe records have been set

in the UK, Finland, France, Sweden and Denmark. Japan and the Koreas have hit new records resulting in more than 100 deaths. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric survey in the US says that 41 heat records have been set this last month.

Deaths from wildfires have also spiked, with record dry and heat starting fires in populated areas from Ontario to Greece.

The neoliberal economic model makes things even worse. In Greece, wildfires have burned before – but the scale of the disaster this year is different precisely because of the neoliberal austerity imposed on the country. The Greek government has still not

rehired more than 4000 firefighters who were cut in 2011 due to austerity programs imposed by the troika.

The *New York Times Magazine* has devoted an entire issue this month to the subject of climate change. The thrust of the article titled “*Losing Earth: the decade we almost stopped climate change*” is that we had a chance to tackle climate change in the late 80s, when there seemed to be a broad consensus that the climate was warming and humans were to blame. The article then argues that it was our individual greed that stopped the process from going forward. This is absurd. It wasn’t the actions of the masses of people that slowed the pro-

cess of addressing climate change. It was the aggressive work of capitalists, politicians and the media who pushed the narrative that the needs of business should trump all other considerations.

These aren’t natural disasters. They are the product of a system that values profits above all else, even if that means we will watch the planet burn while politicians spend their time worrying about oil company profits.

But there is hope. Indigenous-led protests against the Trans Mountain pipeline in BC show that a real militant movement can oppose our political leaders and point a way to the fossil-free future we urgently need.

Transport capitalism: profits over safety

by Kevin Taghabon

On July 9, Greyhound Canada announced that it would end all bus services running for all prairie provinces. There will be no service in Northern Ontario beyond Sudbury. This is in addition to canceling all internal routes in BC. This will cost over 400 drivers and maintenance workers their jobs, and could cost more Indigenous women their lives.

For Greyhound vice-president Stuart Kendrick the issue is simple: “the routes in rural parts of Canada — specifically Western Canada — are just not sustainable anymore.” The obvious question that most are not asking is: why is this so? Why does the profit margin of a private charter bus company dictate the ability of 2 million people to travel affordably between communities in Canada? Why does a country this wealthy leave the well-being of its people to the whims of capitalists? And why is “sustainability” defined by corporate profit margins, not people’s lives?

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women

Greyhound pulled out the rug from these people in the middle of the night. No government was consulted. The alarming decision was denounced by the Native Women’s Association of Canada, which said, “lack of safe transportation in and out of communities creates more vulnerability for Indigenous women, girls and gender-diverse people by encouraging travelers to resort to less safe means of transportation such as hitchhiking or walking unsafe highways...it will exacerbate the epidemic of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls.”

Grand Chief Arlen Dumas of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs lamented, “it is already well documented that our citizens have to ride the bus for hours, some longer than 14 hours, in order to see a doctor. How will they get access to adequate health care now?” Universal healthcare is a joke if the society around it makes healthcare inaccessible.

The cuts are highly racialized and gendered. Manitoba and Saskatchewan are the most dangerous provinces in the country for Indigenous women. Forcing them to choose between being stranded, riding with strangers, or

spending exorbitant amounts of money to fly or drive is adds to the danger.

Justin Trudeau ran on a platform of reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, yet there does not seem to be political will for it when push comes to shove. The Liberals seem to be hoping that private providers fill the void.

The NDP’s half-hearted response

What is disappointing is the NDP’s response: more money for the profit-driven company. Federal leader Jagmeet Singh penned a letter to Trudeau advocating that Greyhound should simply be bailed out with public funds. The NDP’s transportation minister Robert Aubin is



Nationalize Greyhound: put people before profit

toeing the same line, as well as Alberta NDP Premier Rachel Notley. This betrays the NDP’s lack of political consistency and principle as well. Kinder Morgan is an easy villain, and an easy bailout to oppose.

We have seen already — repeatedly with Bombardier, and the big auto-makers — that looting public funds to give companies a boost is nothing but welfare for corporations. Remember, GM and Chrysler were bailed out, at a cost of \$3.5 billion dollars of public funds.

The road to just transition

Another response would be to nationalize Greyhound or at least set up an alternative crown corporation. This would ensure that all communities are not isolated by the next flavour-of-the-month capitalist transport service.

The Saskatchewan Transportation Company

(STC) was a crown corporation which provided transportation services (buses as well as freight) for 70 years. In 2017 the right-wing Saskatchewan Party under Premier Scott Moe announced it would sell the public asset for parts. Dismantling this service has similarly left many communities isolated in Saskatchewan. The STC serviced 700 communities across the province, dozens of times more service than the private providers which now operate in Saskatchewan.

This idea is not relegated only to Saskatchewan. In 2012 BC’s Missing Women Commission recommended that new services should be set up to transport people between communities. One of these now operates at \$5 for a three hour trip

through BC’s infamously dangerous Highway of Tears. Ontario also once operated a public transportation company, TTC’s Gray Coach Lines, but deregulation killed it.

There are solutions to this because buses and roads are nothing new. The limitations are imposed only by the narrow imagination of our governments. The project could be an actual step towards a just transition to an environmentally sustainable economy. The creation of a federal or provincial project to put people to work and refurbish or replace the existing vehicles would be a boon for employment. It would, however, require a concerted effort to alienate capitalists in the name of public service—something that the current government, and even the NDP, is unwilling to do. Pressure must come from below if our society is to make a real, sustainable choice.

SALT OF THE EARTH

Victory in Goderich

by John Bell

After nearly 3 months on strike, workers at the Compass Minerals salt mine in Goderich, Ontario, had reached their limit.

The members of Unifor Local 16-0 were sick of seeing scab workers—many recruited and flown in from as far away as New Brunswick—bused across their picket lines. Compass wanted to institute forced overtime and 12 hour shifts. Union organizers pointed to Compass’s Louisiana operation, where 60 and even 72-hour work weeks were the norm. Compass bosses were refusing to return to the bargaining table.

It became clear that the goal was to break the power of the union.

The salt mine, on the shore of Lake Huron, is the biggest in the world. After 3 months on strike the entire, close-knit community was suffering. So when workers decided to barricade the mine entrance with wooden pallets, a big contingent came out in solidarity. Miners’ families, Unifor leaders, and members of the community rallied and successfully stopped the bus carrying scabs. Scabs that were at work inside had to march out through a gauntlet of shame, past the jeers and insults of the people whose jobs they tried to steal.

Compass went to Ontario Superior Court and got an injunction that the barricades had to be removed. The workers complied, but called for a community party and barbeque outside the gates to the mine. The turnout was huge. As the Unifor members dismantled their barricades, local people casually parked heavy farm equipment in the way.

The final straw must have been when workers on lake freighters refused to handle the scab-mined salt.

Compass returned to the bargaining table and an agreement was soon reached.

In the end the workers ratified a 3-year contract that turned back attempts to impose concessions on pensions and benefits, and won pay raises of 2.5%, 2.5% and 3%. The company won some rights to change work schedules and assignments, but the mandatory overtime demand was scrapped.

Although a majority voted to accept the deal not everyone was satisfied with it, and there remains a lot of anger towards a ruthless company that clearly wants to bust the union. The victory and tremendous solidarity, from other Unifor workers, from other unions and especially from the community, shows that corporations like Compass can be beaten.

Quebec: a 2018 election primer

by Chantal Sundaram

On October 1, the people of Quebec will face the same dismal choice at the polls as across the global North. A liberal centre not worth saving, except out of desperation and fear of the right. A right that is capturing the discontent and channeling it towards scapegoating and more austerity. And a left that hasn’t been able to capture that anger enough to keep the right out of government.

In Quebec, the relatively new Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ) is playing a fake populist card but actually aims to gain power by stoking bigotry.

A decaying economic and political system is causing extreme reactions to the traditional centre. But while they are playing out in Quebec in familiar ways, there are some differences.

Two events dominate Quebec’s political landscape: the 2012 student strike that inspired the left, and the introduction of racist legislation that fed the right.

Quebec saw the single most sustained movement against austerity in the global North in the ‘Maple Spring’. It created a politically-con-

scious generation and a new bar for resistance, from public schools and affordable daycare to successful fights against fracking and the Energy East pipeline, a mass movement for a \$15 minimum wage, and a rebellion by doctors and nurses against cuts.

The competing political reality in Quebec is the attempt to divert this anger towards Islamophobia and racist scapegoating of asylum seekers. While this is hardly unique, it took a turn with the Parti Québécois’ Charter of Values: a cynical appeal to an explicitly racist notion of Quebec identity. The CAQ followed suit, but so did the Liberals with a law denying public services to Muslim women who wear the niqab.

This has benefited both mainstream racism and the far right. Quebec’s virulently anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant movement, La Meute, (“the Pack”), has expanded beyond street thuggery to a manifesto aimed at attracting that mainstream racism. They almost ran candidates in this election.

After momentarily benefiting from the Maple Spring, the PQ paid the price for an austerity budget, oil exploitation, the failure of the Char-

ter, and finally a leader who was the most notorious anti-union boss in the province. They continue to sink in the polls in the lead-up to this election.

Enter the CAQ

The CAQ, founded in 2011 by business mogul Charles Sirois and former Air Transat CEO François Legault, the party’s leader, currently holds 22 seats to the Liberals’ 70 and the PQ’s 30. A mix of Quebec nationalists and Canadian federalists, what unites them is that whatever Quebec’s status, it will belong to Quebec’s 1% and will embrace an ethnocentric identity. They opposed the student strike and support the Charter of Values.

The ruling Liberals represent a 15-year history of neoliberal devastation and austerity. While they paid lip-service to opposing the Charter, they not only introduced the anti-niqab law but failed to implement a promised inquiry into systemic racism in Quebec and introduced an “anti-terror” hotline.

The CAQ is benefiting from this. A CROP poll in June gave them 39%, their highest polling ever, against the Liberals’ 33% and 14% for the PQ,

a historic low. The poll showed a stark split between the francophone vote, dominated by the CAQ with 48% (23% for the Liberals) and the non-francophone vote, dominated by the Liberals at 68% - the CAQ only scored 8% among non-francophones.

The CAQ has also shown its true colours on class issues, including education — calling for a two-tiered university system to allow universities with international influence to charge higher tuition fees.

It was within living memory that the Québécois were deemed unworthy of quality public education in their own language and accessible to working class people. It will be a travesty to see a party that stands for further dismantling of post-secondary education and other public institutions elected by appealing to any kind of Québécois pride, let alone one that equates it with a racist identity.

What is the alternative?

Québec solidaire (QS) has sought for 12 years to capture the imagination of the Québécois people for progressive social change both at the ballot box and in the street.

With 3 seats in the National Assembly, QS is polling at 9-11%, and slightly higher in the 18-34 year-old range. The party does not have a leader, but rather two co-spokespeople, Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois and Manon Massé — a well-known social justice activist who will represent QS in the leaders’ debate on September 13.

QS has pledged to “do politics differently,” with a grassroots campaign based on a radical program. This is a great strength. But without the history and roots of parties like the UK Labour Party it can be difficult to compete with mainstream party machines for actual votes.

There is another weak link: the lack of clear, mass resistance to Islamophobia and anti-immigrant sentiment. This is not unique to Quebec: in Europe this has allowed racist and openly fascist forces to make electoral gains and mobilize masses in the streets. For the left to make breakthroughs it must specifically tackle the hold of racism.

Building an alternative to the CAQ also means the broad left building resistance to the rising tide of racism, during and beyond the election.

The Brexit debate two years on

by David Bush

It has been just over two years since Great Britain voted to leave the European Union (EU). With the final leave date set for March 29, 2019 Brexit negotiations between the UK and the EU have revealed deep divisions within the Tory party and the broader ruling class.

In the run-up to and shortly after the Brexit vote in the summer of 2016 many on the left sounded the alarm about the dangerous potential of Brexit for the UK, Europe, and even global politics.

Brexit was going to usher in a revanchist carnival of reaction. For the last two years people have linked Brexit and the rise of Trump, using them as a sort of shorthand to describe the dangerous rise of rightwing populism across Europe and North America. Is this linkage warranted? Two years on what has been has been the actual effect of Brexit?

Brexit predictions

Many predicted Brexit would see the far-right's electoral fortune improve. UKIP's Nigel Farage was one of the most prominent Brexiters and it was assumed UKIP's stunning growth in the lead up to 2016 referendum would balloon as result of the vote. The result has been quite the opposite, UKIP's support has withered away. Farage has stepped down as leader and UKIP's vote went from 12 percent in 2015 election to 1.8 percent in the 2017 election.

It was also feared that Boris Johnson or Michael Gove, the hard rightwing of the Tory party, would be elevated to leadership in the wake of the vote. Theresa May, a Remain supporter in fact won the leadership. Johnson became foreign secretary and recently resigned this post, while Gove was initially sacked from cabinet after May won and brought back later as environment secretary.

It was also assumed that the Brexit vote would make it impossible for Labour and Jeremy Corbyn to win. The Liberal-Democrats, who vigorously supported Remain, were set to eat into Labour's vote. Some Remain supporters, especially those on the right-wing of the Labour Party, saw Corbyn's Brexit campaign for Remain as ineffectual, with 37 percent of Labour Party members voting for Leave. Some feared that Corbyn's subsequent acceptance of the Brexit result would cut him off from Remain voters and hurt Labour's election chances.

The 2017 general election we were told was going to be all about Brexit. While the media, the Blairite



wing of the Labour Party and the Tories all acted upon this premise, Corbyn effectively made the election about public services and inequality. Brexit, it turned out, was not the ballot question.

The result of the election was a stunning near victory for Labour. Corbyn's Labour Party won 40 percent of the vote, drastically increased their seat count and took away the Tory majority. The Lib Dems, Greens and the SNP, which all backed Remain, lost votes. This was not because the election was about Brexit, rather because Corbyn had made the election about healthcare, education, housing and public services.

The contradictions of Brexit

The Brexit vote was far from straightforward. Large segments of the official Leave campaign were motivated by reactionary politics, intent on stoking anti-immigrant and racist fears. But for Leave voters it was more complicated than a simple referendum on immigration. Leave voters were motivated by many different issues: economic inequality, sovereignty, healthcare and public services and yes immigration. What was clear was that working class voters, especially those outside of London, were much more likely to vote for Leave. Leave voters, were far more likely to see the economy as not working for them and heading in the wrong direction.

The Remain side was backed by the vast majority of the ruling class. Financial institutions in the City and large corporations were overwhelmingly pro-remain as was the then Prime Minister David Cameron and most of the Tory cabinet. In fact a majority Tory MPs joined nearly all other politicians in supporting Remain. The establishment was

clearly for Remain, with only a minority section of the rightwing supporting Brexit. For many voters, living in forgotten communities, where jobs and hope have long disappeared Brexit was seen as a way to reject the establishment. Diane Abbott, a Labour Shadow Cabinet and Remain voter, summed up the referendum results like this:

"For decades now, there has been disquiet among most Britons that our economic system is designed for the benefit of the few over the many. And in the referendum on Britain's membership with the European Union, the many – and some of the few – voted in favour of Brexit to try to change that."

The bosses club

The EU has always been a project of the ruling class. It was rooted in the post World War Two European Coal and Steel Community, which aimed to regulate industrial production and markets in the interests of European capitalists. The EU was from the very beginning a bosses club. It served only the interests of the ruling class in Europe and was never a bulwark against reaction. Today the EU is synonymous with Fortress Europe, its militarized border has sent thousands of migrants from North Africa to their death in the Mediterranean. The economic policies of the EU have served to hamstring left alternative inside the Eurozone, instituting brutal austerity in countries like Greece, and imposing budgetary constraints and curbing the rules around nationalization. EU countries have been a breeding ground for the far-right: in Germany, Poland, Austria, Italy, Greece, France and Hungary the far-right has either entered in government or has seen its influence grow significantly.

There was an attempt by some forces on the far-left to advocate for

a left exit or 'Lexit' position. While this position was marginal in the lead up to the Brexit vote, it drew on a long tradition on the Left, from the Bennite wing of the Labour Party to revolutionary socialists, of opposing the EU. The Lexit position was clear, there were no prospects for the working class inside the EU. It was argued that a Brexit vote would cause a crisis in the ruling class in the UK and in Europe and create better conditions in which to battle both the bosses and the far-right.

After the Brexit vote

The fear that Brexit would automatically lead to a major rise in racism and xenophobia was not unfounded. There was a rise in xenophobia and racism in the years leading up to and immediately after the Brexit vote. Just this past month there was a large pro Tommy Robinson march in London organized by a number of different elements on the far-right. However, it is important to note these trends in the UK existed long before the Brexit vote and were the product of years of austerity and pro-EU policies. Recent polling in the UK on the issue of immigration has seen attitudes since the Brexit vote swing sharply to the left. As reported in the Financial Times July 9th:

"The British Social Attitudes survey, seen as the country's most rigorous polling exercise, found that just 17 per cent of Britons thought that immigrants had a negative impact on the economy. Just 23 per cent thought immigrants undermined Britain's cultural life. Both counts are markedly lower than when the questions were last asked in 2015, before the Brexit referendum campaign. In 2011, when the questions were first asked, about 40 per cent of people thought immigrants were bad for the economy or British cultural life. "There is little

sign here that the EU referendum campaign served to make Britain less tolerant towards migrants; rather they have apparently come to be valued to a degree that was not in evidence before the referendum campaign," the survey said."

It is not that the Brexit vote was destined to automatically lead to a decrease in anti-immigrant sentiment, rather that the Brexit vote opened up a political space in which those ideas could be shifted via political struggle.

Two years on it is clear that if Remain won there would more barriers than openings for the Left. David Cameron would still be the Prime Minister in a Majority government, the Tories would not be racked by political crisis, UKIP would be much more popular and able to harness frustration with the establishment more easily, British and EU capitalists would not be staring down a political crisis, Corbyn would not have had an election that would have put his internal critics on their back foot and shifted the political debate in the country.

Politics means political struggle

But none of that happened. Instead the ruling class is facing a major crisis. The Tories top Brexit negotiator, David Davis resigned and was followed by other leading Tories like Boris Johnson. The Tories are divided over how to carry out Brexit – either a 'soft Brexit' formally leaving the EU but remain closely aligned as to effectively be subjected to EU rules and regulations or 'hard Brexit' which would mean a divisive exit. The Tories not aligned with a hard Brexit and the rightwing of the Labour Party want a second referendum, to forestall this crisis and weaken Jeremy Corbyn. When faced with business fears about Brexit, Tory MP Boris Johnson stated "fuck business." Clearly all is not well in the ruling class.

Brexit from the outset was full of contradictions. Political struggle is and will always determine which side of the contradiction emerges from a political event. Too many on the Left forgot this basic outlook and retreated to moralism and fear. The Left should not dread shake-ups in ruling class institutions. It is messy, but that is the nature of political struggle – a shifting political terrain creates openings, but it is also fraught with new dangers. The role of the Left is not to shirk from this struggle, to pine for institutional and political stability of capitalism, but to work to understand the potential, and actively shape the outcomes, of a political crisis. Two years on that is the lesson Brexit.

DEFEATING FORD: LESSONS FROM THE FIGHT AGAINST HUDAK

by Michelle Robidoux
and Carolyn Egan

The election of Doug Ford as Premier of Ontario has generated much discussion about the Harris government in the 1990s – in particular, the response by trade unions and community organizations to vicious attacks by a neo-liberal government on social services, health care, education and workers’ rights. This is very instructive as people grapple with the best way forward today. Inspiring stories of the city by city general strikes that shut down workplaces across the province and involved millions of people, have given many a sense of confidence that we can take on the assaults that we know are coming. We may not organize in exactly the same way as we did in the 1990s, but the lessons learned can be very helpful as we campaign on issues such as the Fight for \$15 and Fairness with community partners.

A more recent example of a coordinated union mobilization is the response to Conservative Tim Hudak’s threat to bring in “right to work” legislation in the 2014 provincial election. At that time, these measures – which had previously only been enacted in the southern states of the US – were implemented in

long-time labour strongholds such as Michigan. The threat of right to work eventually pushed union leaders to set about developing campaigns within workplaces across Ontario.

Rank-and-file mobilization

Significant resources were allocated, and rank and file members were booked off to work on the campaign. Labour councils, which unite union delegates across all sectors, took on a major responsibility for training activists and mobilizing members to fight this existential threat to all of our unions. It was a campaign that won the hearts and minds of many workers, and the Tories who were initially expected to win the election, went down to defeat.

It was very important that union after union stepped up to the plate and put their funds into this huge effort. But it was the rank and file activists who responded to the attacks that made the difference. There was a mass mobilization of stewards and ordinary members to take on this assault on unions.

Hudak had hoped to tap into anger and insecurity caused by the loss of thousands of manufacturing jobs and the lack of decent jobs, to convince workers they would be better off if they weren’t required to pay union dues. The prospect of not paying union dues under ‘right to work’ was sadly attractive to many members,



Windsor stewards assembly says no to Hudak

who didn’t think unions were actively protecting their interests.

A plan was put together that gave a road map on how to arm union members with information about the threat posed by Hudak’s policies. Training sessions and stewards’ assemblies were organized.

In our own union, the Steelworkers, a “war room” was set up in the Toronto Area Council hall, with every work site posted on a board. Step by step, contacts were developed in each one. In every workplace, there are the activists – but on the other side, there are those who are with the bosses. There is a large majority in the middle. The goal was to solidify

the activists, and then speak to each of those in the middle, convincing them of what was at stake for every working class person in the province if Hudak and his Tories were to win.

We developed a data base of sympathetic members and held lunch time meetings at workplaces where we were able. Members organized to talk to their fellow workers on the shop floor, at plant-gate leafletings, listening to their issues and what they needed from their union, and of course talking about the importance of this campaign. Questions and answers were developed to prepare activists and anticipate the issues that would come forward.

Rank and file committees were set up and as the weeks went by, the results were becoming clear. The working class in all its diversity will fight in its own interest. Socialists and other activists knew what was at stake and went all out to ensure that ordinary workers had a voice in determining their future. The role of these rank and file organizers was critical to the success of the campaign.

There is a long history of rank and file networks and stewards’ councils in many countries. One example is the Clydeside stewards in Scotland, whose motto was “We will support the officials just as long as they rightly represent the workers, but we will act independently immediately they misrepresent them.”

The recent US Supreme Court Janus decision is a body blow to public sector unions. We know that Doug Ford has promised to stop the implementation of the \$15 minimum wage on January 1, 2019 and other aspects of Bill 148, such as equal pay, paid emergency leave, and union successor rights will undoubtedly be under attack. As the fight against ‘right to work’ showed, our ability to resist depends on retooling our unions for the fights ahead. We have to take up the same strategy which we used to defeat Hudak and defend these hard-won gains for all workers in this province by organizing the strength of the rank and file.

LEFT JAB

by John Bell

Dog-whistle Doug Ford

On a sunny July day Mississauga resident Muhammed Abu Marzouk, his wife and two children went for a picnic. Afterward, trying to leave the community centre parking lot, he was attacked by two men who beat and kicked him so badly part of his skull had to be removed; he remains in serious condition in hospital. His assailants also kicked his wife who tried to shield him. As they beat him they called him a “fucking Arab”, a “terrorist” and told him to “go back where he came from”. Initial media reports referred to the crime as “road rage” rather than what it was, a racist hate crime.

On the same day, a London Ontario man tried to prevent another – a person of colour with a beard – from leaving a grocery store. Video shows the large white man assaulting the younger man, accusing him of being an illegal immigrant, and demanding to see his Canadian documentation. London police are investigating as a “possible” hate crime.

Where do these people get the idea they are empowered to assault other citizens, especially Muslims, whether verbally or with brutal force?

These are the attack dogs. They are being encouraged by dog-whistle racism and Islamophobia coming from every level of government. But since these attacks took place in Ontario, forgive me if I focus on the new Tory regime, and its already impressive record of racism.

Doug Ford’s true colour

The incoming Ontario government of Doug Ford wasted no time showing its true colours. Make that colour singular: thoroughly white. Choosing his 20 cabinet members, only one (former Toronto City Councillor and Ford Nation loyalist Raymond Cho) is non-white.

Gone is any respect for First Nations or acknowledging a history of colonial racism. Alongside the cancellation of the updated sex and health education curriculum, Tory Education Minister Lisa Thompson has removed lessons on First Nations history and reconciliation. The former ministry of Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation is shut down. Responsibility for First Nations has been subsumed by the Ministry of Energy, Northern Development and Mines. During his campaign Ford promised to open the resource rich “Ring of Fire” region, even if he had to drive a bulldozer himself. But he uttered not a word about consent from the First Nations’ on whose territories the minerals reside.

On the campaign trail Ford blew the whistle during a debate in Northern Ontario. When the issue of immigration and refugees was raised he declared that we should “take care of our own” before taking in newcomers. After, he pretended to be shocked that anyone would accuse him of racism, and bragged about his support in immigrant communities. Sadly, there’s more than a grain of truth in his claim.

‘We know what you’re sayin’ Dougie’

But racists hear the tune. One neo-Nazi blogger posted: “I think when people reach a certain level, they’ll dog whistle to us. Like, recently Doug Ford said ‘we gotta take care of our own before we take care of anybody else’, and just that sentence alone, you know, every nationalist out there are like ‘we know what you’re sayin’ Dougie.’ And he can’t say certain things and have a chance of winning in a Liberal f–king playground like Ontario.”

As Premier, Ford wasted no time blowing that whistle again. He blamed Toronto’s unaffordable housing on a flood of “illegal” refugees. According to a statement from his office: “This has resulted in a housing crisis and threats to the services that Ontario families depend on. This mess was 100 per cent the result of the federal government, and

the federal government should foot 100 per cent of the bills.” Of course, neither the profit driven housing bubble nor privatization of services were mentioned.

The real violence: poverty, discrimination and austerity

Not content to marginalize First Nations and scapegoat refugees, Ford’s government moved to demonize Toronto’s Black communities over gun violence and crime. Asked in the legislature about Ford’s unabashed support for carding (aka racial profiling), the new Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services (there’s a nice pairing) Michael Tibollo bragged about his recent ride-along with police: “I went out to Jane and Finch, put on a bulletproof vest and spent 7 o’clock to 1 o’clock in the morning visiting sites that had previously had bullet-ridden [sic] [and also sick] people killed in the middle of the night.”

He also spoke of how he and Ford had visited a crack house and “walked over broken crack pipes.” He said this without a hint of irony. Tibollo is the Minister responsible for the anti-racism portfolio.

Jane Finch Action Against Poverty responded with a brilliant statement: “Thousands of residents of Jane-Finch, from over one hundred cultural backgrounds, proudly live in the neighbourhood, without (a) bulletproof vest or fear of each other, knowing that the most brutal violence imposed on them has been caused by poverty and racial discrimination reproduced by all levels of government, and years of austerity and rich-loving/poor-bashing policies. Instead of scapegoating and stereotyping our community, stop cutting community programs and services, stop providing more tax breaks to the rich and corporations so they can become even richer, stop destroying our public

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The incoming Ontario government of Doug Ford wasted no time showing its true colours. Make that colour singular: thoroughly white.

schools and creating more precarious employment and stop justifying more policing in our neighbourhoods; start bringing real long-term decent jobs and sustainable investments in the community as opposed to short term PR announcements.”

Ford and his government have moved beyond dog-whistles that only their racist Dobermans can hear. To ignore or deny a consistent thread of racism in word and deed from these Tories would be difficult – yet Ford remains stubbornly popular among the communities he regularly insults because of his reputation as champion of the underdog. This reputation is a lie, of course, but one carefully constructed through years of repetition.

And so more Muslims will be attacked and insulted. More young Black men will be humiliated by police harassment. More First Nations people will be vilified for standing their ground. It will continue until we smash the lie, and stuff that dog-whistle down Doug Ford’s throat.



Scrap Ford, not sex ed

by Carolyn Egan

When Rehtaeh Parsons’ father Glen Canning spoke out after reading the revised sex ed curriculum in Ontario, he said: “I really wish there was something like that in Nova Scotia 10 years ago. Because if there was – and if consent and empathy and respect were being taught in schools in Nova Scotia – I honestly believe that I would still have my daughter with me today.” Rehtaeh was 17 years old when she committed suicide after being sexually assaulted by four teenage boys at a party. Pictures were then spread on the online, which led to continued harassment and bullying.

Pandering to bigots

Doug Ford’s Progressive Conservative government is pandering to the most regressive elements in our society that are intent on rolling back all the gains that we have made through decades of struggle. It was homophobic, misogynist, anti-choice forces that helped win him the leadership of the party, and they are demanding their payback.

Campaign Life, and other groups that have fought consistently to turn back the clock on those seeking to make their own determination on whether to continue a pregnancy, were elated when Ford became the Premier with a majority government. They have a strategy of step-by-step overturning sexual and reproductive rights, as has been done by their counterparts in the United States. Ford said that he will take away the right to be free from abuse entering an abortion facility, impose parental consent for teens and no longer require physicians to refer those seeking an abortion.

So many have fought against the systemic violence against women, trans and LGBTQ people, very often of colour, and although a sex education curriculum is not going to be a panacea for all that we face, it was a progressive step forward. Teaching consent, respect and an end to bigotry and harassment speaks to a gaping wound in our society that everyone who has ever been subjected to this type of violence and harassment knows only too well. The

numbers who have been scarred by this are way larger than many would imagine, and that is why the outcry has been so strong.

Our society is riddled with systemic violence and disrespect. You need only look at the anti-Black racism and Islamophobia which communities are fighting. Keeping young people sexually safe with the ability and confidence to control their own lives must be a priority of the educational system. The fact that scrapping the new sex ed was one of the first steps taken by the new government makes very clear its ideological stance against the women’s, LGBTQ and other progressive movements which have been fighting for meaningful reforms.

Teachers fight back

The Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario, which has a majority of women members, has spoken out strongly against the Tory government’s move to bring back the previous curriculum. It is 20 years old and is sadly lacking in many of the elements that students need most to deal with their lives. The fact that teachers are taking a stand in support of their students and most parents is very important. They are the ones required to teach the curriculum and are in day to day contact with students who in many cases turn to them with problems that they are confronting.

The teachers’ unions have often been in the vanguard of fightbacks against regressive forces, as we have seen in Chicago and most recently in West Virginia and Arkansas, where they took strike action to demand more resources for their students. The teachers played a very important role in the struggle against funding cuts under the previous Progressive Conservative government of Mike Harris.

Community groups are also gathering to plan a strong campaign against this regressive move. People from many backgrounds have spoken out against it, and there’s been some indication that the government is feeling the heat. Let’s keep up the pressure and fight alongside those in other movements like the Fight for \$15 and Fairness, to make the Tories back off all their attacks. In unity there is strength.

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.

Challenging mayor Tory: Saron Gebresellassi

by **Gustavo Monteiro**

Saron Gebresellassi is a community organizer, activist, and human rights lawyer. She has been practising law as a tool for social justice since 2014. Among her clients are precarious injured workers and Black Lives Matter Toronto. Socialist Worker caught up with the Mayoral hopeful during her campaign launch on Weston Road.

SW: How did you end up here, running for the mayor in the city of Toronto?

SG: I am a lawyer, and I am known for running for a lot of cases such as police brutality and a variety of human right issues. I have a long history in Weston road and across the city in terms of fighting for social justice, and against poverty and systemic racism. I am on a mission to fight for working class, and for immigrants, asylum seekers, and racialized communities, who now comprise of the majority of the population in Toronto at 51%. We are having a moment in Toronto.

SW: It also seems that the situation is just heating up in the province. How do we deal with various challenges coming our way such as carding, TAVIS, regression of Sex-ed curriculum, cutting funds for renewable energy and environmental issues, in terms of working with racialized communities?

SG: This is a prime example of why we need to mobilize in the city of Toronto and elect progressive leadership at the municipal level. My mission this year is to really emphasize the voice of the people, which is to say that we need more jobs for young people and less police, and that if we have more opportunities for young people to work and succeed, we wouldn't need to resort to criminalizing young people and incarcerating them. This is an opportunity to mobilize the masses in Toronto, and advance working class agenda.

SW: Recently, there was a letter sent to mayor Tory and chief Saunders urging that more police isn't the solution for the whole crime situation in the city, and that education and health care are necessary. Are you aware of this letter?

SG: Absolutely, and I wrote a letter as well. I am really appalled at some of the language coming out of John



Saron Gebresellassi (second from left) meets supporters on Weston Rd.

Tory around "rounding up the thugs," "gangsters," "sewer rats" - using very pejorative language to describe young people. One tenth of city's budget goes to policing - that's approximately 1 billion dollars - 90% of that item goes to salaries. What we are calling for is the redistribution of resources into priority neighbourhoods.

SW: We also need to talk about affordable housing and homelessness in the city of Toronto.

SG: Housing is a major crisis in the city of Toronto, and it's not being treated like a crisis. Housing is out of hand, and it really is a struggle for so many families, young people, and senior citizens. Under our platform, we consider housing as a fundamental right that is enshrined under international law, and the city of Toronto has an obligation to adhere to those standards. This has to be priority number one. Under the HOT (Housing Opportunities Toronto) Plan, there was a target of a hundred thousand units that were supposed to be built - that never happened. Under our website, you will be able to see all the details around what our plan is in addressing [this crisis].

SW: How will you as the mayor of Toronto help support the momentum of movements such as 15&Fairness?

SG: I stand 100% behind the 15&Fairness campaign. Really, the push-back from those corporate giants like Tim Hortons is an indication of how big of

a class struggle we actually have in the city of Toronto and in the province. In light of the growing level of poverty we are seeing in the city, it is interesting to see that we haven't seen push-backs from small businesses. The push-back has been from the Loblaws and the Tim Hortons - corporate giants, and yet [the dominant narrative] has been under the banner of for the sake of small businesses. The vast majority of the small businesses in [the Weston] area, and across the city, would say that they stand behind 15&Fairness. I am one hundred percent in solidarity with this campaign.

SW: How can we support your campaign?

SG: I will let everyone know that this isn't just a campaign. It's not just about the electoral process; we are building a movement: one person at a time and one family at a time, one day at a time. This is really a lifelong movement that we are building right out of here at Weston road, and it's quickly growing. We want to educate the masses about the politics of rebates: when you donate, you can get up to 75% of your donation back. This is a city that belongs to immigrants, working class and all of us, the way to support is really vote on October 22. I also encourage people to look at what happened in the U.S. with Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, and get some inspiration to continue the movement here at the city of Toronto.



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The system is the problem

Continued from page 8

Lisa: What do you say to people who argue that you should beware of 'splitting the left vote' in the city?

Derrick: Well, this year COPE is only running three candidates for 10 council seats, so voters who also like other candidates or parties will have plenty of spots left on their ballots.

But on the larger question I will answer in two parts.

First, we think voters have been deprived of a true left-wing alternative to the status quo for so long that they will be really energized by the ideas we're putting forward this year and therefore motivated to vote. In Jean Swanson's by-election campaign we really focused on speaking to the interests and also the emotions of people who are used to being ignored and excluded by electoral politics: renters, working-class people, poor people, homeless people, people on social assistance, people living with addictions, people who live in non-profit housing. You're not supposed to spend time on 'those people'; you're supposed to focus on homeowners and those who supposedly are the ones who show up to vote. So we're trying something different, which is to expand the electorate and inspire all those who have been turned off by electoral politics.

Secondly, all that having been said, there are legitimate concerns about splitting the majority of the current Vancouver electorate that tends to vote for left and/or centrist/centre-left parties. It's important to understand that Vision Vancouver, for all of my criticisms of their housing policies and their decision to accept so much corporate money over the years, has in the past depended on the support of many progressive voters, on the support of many unions and their members, and on the support of people who are concerned about the environment and climate change.

"You can vote with your head and your heart, as they say; there's no need to hold your nose and vote for some 'lesser evil' this time."

We are appealing to those people who have voted Vision in the past, but are now fed up or are now looking for a stronger alternative to block the overtly right-wing parties like the NPA from returning to power. We're also appealing to the supporters of other parties like OneCity. I know a lot of good people in OneCity, and although there are obviously some real political differences, there is also significant political common ground and so I think it's a good thing that supporters of our two parties can vote for both because we've kept our slates relatively small.

Of course I think we've got the strongest candidates. In terms of standing up to the right-wing, both of my fellow COPE city council candidates Jean Swanson and Anne Roberts have a lifetime of experience doing just that. We also have incredible and experienced women running for school board like Barb Parrott and Diana Day -- who is aiming to become the first Indigenous woman to ever serve on the VSB.

So if you're worried about stopping the Right, the strategic vote is for COPE. You can vote with your head and your heart, as they say; there's no need to hold your nose and vote for some "lesser evil" this time. On Oct. 20, a vote for COPE is a vote for strong left-wing politics at Vancouver's City Hall. And it's also a vote for the political revolution that is gaining steam around the world. Socialist politics needs to become the common sense of the 21st Century, and our fight here in Vancouver is part of a wider movement for a better world.

This interview has been edited for space. Read the entire interview on socialist.ca

REVIEW

Call centre capitalism

by **Faline Bobier**

Boots Riley is an American rapper (The Coup), producer, screenwriter and film director. He's also an avowed Communist who has stayed true to his working class Oakland roots.

This is how he described his new movie in a recent interview: "It's an absurdist dark comedy with magical realism and science fiction, inspired by the world of telemarketing, called Sorry to Bother You."

Racism and capitalism

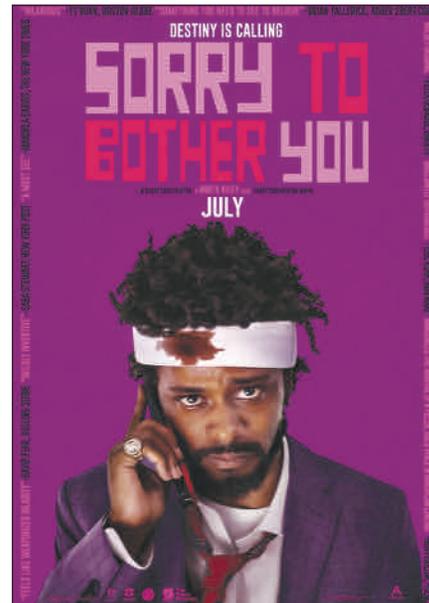
Anyone who's ever spent time in the cubicle world of telemarketing will relate to Cassius Green (or Cash) the young Black protagonist, desperate to land a job at RegalView. It's a sketchy telemarketing firm where workers slave on commission, scamming people just like themselves, living hardscrabble lives.

The main rule is "Stick to the script" or "stuss," as Cash's manager insists. The whole mantra pushed by management is that if you work hard enough you can make it out of the sweatshop, and ascend to the upper reaches of the "Power Callers."

And of course, if you're one of the chosen few, you get to take the elevator to the Promised Land. If you're one of the drones the stairs are good enough for you.

Cassius (Lakeith Stanfield) is counselled by his cubicle neighbour Langston (the inimitable Danny Glover) to use his "white voice" if he wants to make sales—the voice that implies "all my bills are paid, I don't have a care in the world, I am soooo smooth." When Cassius and Langston use their "white" voices they are actually dubbed by white actors.

The movie is partly about the situation of millennials who are also people of colour — Cash and his best friend Salvador (Jermaine Fowler), who helps Cash get the job in the first place; his girlfriend (Tessa Thompson), a struggling artist with a day



job wearing ridiculous costumes and holding up signs in front of various businesses; and a young Asian telemarketer Squeeze (Steven Yeun) who will eventually spearhead a union drive at RegalView.

But Riley doesn't fall into the trap of portraying low-paying, super exploitative employment as for the young only. Capitalism is an equal opportunity exploiter and there are people of all ages and ethnic backgrounds in this workplace.

Worry Free

To his own surprise Cassius proves to be a brilliant seller. He gets the bigger picture when he makes it to the upper echelons of the "Power Callers." He leaves his co-workers just at the point a fightback is beginning. At first, he is dazzled by the money and the material goods this new job can afford him — but he also sees the pitfalls.

Whereas his telemarketer co-workers were multi-ethnic, including white work-

ers, when he moves upstairs there are fewer brown and black faces. There he meets Steve Lift (Armie Hammer channeling Elon Musk), king of all the wealth afforded him by the labour of others.

Lift is the psychopathic, racist, pseudo-hip founder of WorryFree, the "new" workplace that will save American capitalism, which is nothing but bond slavery. WorryFree provides desperate people guaranteed food and shelter in exchange for their "free" labour. They are housed in barracks and at all times must wear garish yellow uniforms.

There is a futuristic tone to the movie, but a world based on WorryFree and RegalView is all too plausible.

There is a nightmarish scene in the film where Cassius is invited to a party at Lift's home. Here in his domain Lift can openly express his racism and misogyny, covered as it is by a thin veneer of hipness. At one point, Cassius is more or less forced by his host to perform rap in front of a mostly white audience. He turns the tables on them somewhat unwittingly with what he thinks they really want to hear. It's a brilliant send-up of fake "wokeness," which is really just racism in disguise.

But it's when the big reveal happens, when Cassius mistakenly happens on a room he wasn't meant to go into, that Lift explains what the end game actually is. It involves Lift using Cassius as a kind of token Trojan horse to betray his own, the people who have as little power as he does. This is when Riley's film veers into what could be called science fiction, but a science fiction that seems very close to possibility in a sick system where human beings are only worth something if they can increase the bosses' profit margins.

Go and see Riley's film. It's a biting and funny satire, an indictment of racism and capitalism, and a call to solidarity and for all of us to decide finally which side we're on.

"I'm not your model citizen": Dead Sara

by **Kevin Taghabon** and **Mary Code**

A filthy hot summer is the perfect time for some old school hard rock. The sauna of Los Angeles still seems to churn out more semi-unknown mega-talented rock bands than anywhere else on the planet. To this end, Dead Sara have emerged with their second EP (fourth release overall) in ten years. The six track EP has some of their best work, and the band has not lost any of their fire after a decade of struggling along and jumping between labels. Dead Sara continues to channel the style and sound of the best 90s grunge while sounding fresh and relevant. Lead singer Emily Armstrong has more than a few shades of Kurt Cobain within.

"I guess I'm unamerican"
The first song, "Times to Remember" is celebratory, and the second track, "Anybody" is largely about personal loneliness. The feeling of not belonging bleeds well into the next song. "Unamerican" is easily the best song on the EP. The track was the first played live from this new batch, originally titled "Alien", a likely reference to the odious phrase, "illegal alien". Armstrong does sing, "I want to be an alien" several times at the end of the song. It was clever to switch the name and get ahead of accusations that the band is "unpatriotic". The entire track is a bludgeon on the head of anti-women politics. "I'm a good Samaritan/ Yeah, a psychopath/ I had to

sweat off/ chemicals in a bubble bath/ The all-American girl, lesbo-gay maniac".

Armstrong repeatedly laments in jest that she falls short of every expectation



levelled at her. This is a point of rage and pride. "I'm not your model citizen/ No, I'm not your daughter/ And I'm not your bitch/ I guess I'm unamerican" is the hook. There is no mistaking the intention of the song when the instruments abruptly cut out before a chorus and Armstrong screams, "Well, fuck this playing around/ Don't give a fuck if it allowed/ Well, fuck you Donald Trump!/ Fuck this, fuck everyone".

The closing track "Heaven's Got a Back Door" takes a similar line, rejecting the puritanism that infects American society. "I'm through feeling sorry/ For the things

that I can't choose/ If I made it this far being who I am/ Maybe heaven's got a back door too/ When will I stop running/ From the things I know are true/...I've never been on the same sidewalk as a steeple/ May we take notice in regard to the unknown". Armstrong refuses to exist in a way that will please those who told her they knew better for her. She is proud of rejecting these values, but at the same time is insecure about her station in life. "Yeah maybe I should just call in dead and quit my job/ And lose my 9 to 5 and throw my television out" she sings on "Times to Remember".

This is no newly-polished-for-Top-40 trash. This point should be stressed, as this is a female-fronted act. Hard rock is a genre that is still overwhelmingly dominated by straight white men, as Torontonian music journalist Laina Dawes chronicled excellently in *What Are You Doing Here: A Black Woman's Life and Liberation in Heavy Metal*. Armstrong and lead guitarist Siouxie Medley have been the frontwomen of the band since they became friends as teenagers 15 years ago. Dave Grohl of Nirvana and Foo Fighters proclaimed in 2013, "Dead Sara should be the next biggest rock band in the world," after their self-titled debut (2011) got them a fair share of attention.

The full review can be found at socialist.ca

“The system is the problem”

Lisa Descary from the Vancouver International Socialists interviewed writer and activist, Derrick O’Keefe. Derrick is a founding member of the Vancouver Tenants Union, and a candidate for Vancouver City Council with the Coalition of Progressive Electors (COPE).

Lisa: How is your campaign different from other ‘progressive’ campaigns? And why is the City We Need platform important?

Derrick: We’re not claiming to have reinvented the wheel, but we do think this COPE campaign, like last year’s by-election campaign for Swanson, is part of a process where the left in Canada and internationally is rediscovering its radical roots and responding to the global crisis of inequality. That’s why we talk about the need for a “political revolution”; we’re consciously alluding to the kind of new politics taking place in other countries like with Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez in the United States. Timid, centrist politics is not just wrong but it’s also now increasingly ineffective at holding back the rising right-wing tide.

COPE’s message this election is that the system is the problem, and that for us to find a real solution to the housing and affordability crisis it’s not enough to tinker around the



Socialist Derrick O’Keefe is running for city council in Vancouver

edges. We need a total shift in priorities, away from market solutions and towards public and non-market housing. If housing is a human right, which we believe it is, then it needs to be decommodified. Even beginning to do that for housing, for example by aiming for a significant percentage of new housing to be non-market, is an enormous political project. Especially after the federal government under the Liberals in the 1990s almost entirely cut-off funding for non-market housing.

Our critics in other parties and in the main-

stream media will frame this critique of global capitalism as somehow “too radical,” but I would say it’s essential to understanding why a city like Vancouver has become so incredibly expensive and to thinking about bold solutions that will actually solve the problem. The policies we’re pushing like stronger rent control and a Mansion Tax (a progressive property surtax on houses valued at over \$5 million) are actually quite modest reforms that we aim to win. But we know that even these relatively small practical steps require building a move-

ment because they will be fiercely opposed by those who currently have all the power.

Lisa: What do you think needs to happen after October 20 to ensure we win the reforms we need? And what role do you see the Vancouver Tenants Union and other movements/groups playing in this?

Derrick: We understand that as hard as it is to get elected on an unabashedly left-wing program, the really hard work starts the day after you win. Having three elected city councillors from COPE will give us a megaphone and the ability to move and second motions, but we won’t win the changes we need without a movement pushing from outside City Hall every step of the way.

Our concept is that too often social democratic parties appeal to social movements for support at election time and then lose any real connection to that base once they get in office. People who have experienced this a few times can get understandably cynical about politics. We want to foster a different kind of politician, and a different relationship between politicians and activists. We want to use elected office not just to raise the issues that matter, but to build the social movements themselves.

In my mind a politician should see themselves almost like a delegate on behalf of the causes they work on and care about.

(continued on page 7)

Stop the cuts – stop Ford!

Those with long memories of the Mike Harris days knew what to expect: the Doug Ford Tories were going to hit hard and hit fast. Sure enough, Dime Bag Doug and his lily-white cabinet wasted no time attacking the poor and vilifying immigrants, refugees and people of colour.

The outgoing Liberals had slated a 3% increase to welfare rates – long overdue and insufficient. But too rich for the Tories, who are looking to cut \$6 billion and will do it on the backs of the poorest and most vulnerable. They have sliced the welfare raise in half, presenting a cut like a generous increase.

At the same time they axed the Guaranteed Annual Income pilot project with no notice. This left low-income Ontarians in the lurch, wondering how they would pay the rent. During the campaign, Ford promised to leave that program intact. Social Services Minister Lisa MacLeod first shrugged off the lie by saying they couldn’t afford to keep their word. A day later she changed her tune, saying that verbatim pre-election quotes from Ford were “fake news”.

But Ford reiterated his promise to provide \$1 beer for consolation.

It also became clear how the Tories were



Didn’t vote for that: Doug Ford has no mandate to cut Toronto city council

planning to deal with tough questions and inconvenient facts. At a Queen’s Park press conference regarding the anti-democratic gutting of Toronto City Council, Tory staffers tried to stifle difficult follow-up questions. When reporters persisted in asking for answers, those

same staffers—people whose salaries come from taxpayers—drowned out the questions with rhythmic clapping.

In place of a free press or investigative journalism, Ford has revived his personal fake news “channel” from the campaign. “Ontario

News Now” is completely written, reported and controlled by Doug Ford’s office. It will present only happy news and Tory sanctioned lies, dressed up as objective news reports.

There will be more attacks—like the anti-union legislation used against workers at York University—but the template has been set. Attack the poor, cut services for working people, blame immigrants and refugees, and lie like hell and hide behind fake news whenever challenged.

It will be up to us to come together to fight these tactics. We have to defend reforms, like the increased minimum wage and workplace improvements, that are sure to be the targets in days to come.

And the fight has already begun. There have been rallies and actions against the crapping of the sex-ed curriculum, the roll back of the minimum wage and the gutting of city council.

We have to reject all attempts to wedge us apart, using racist lies and scare tactics about “floods” of outsiders swamping our public services, when it is privatization and cuts that are the real threat.

For more on the fight against Ford, see centre pages.