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Photo: Michael YC Tseng

BUILD THE RESISTANCE

Stop Ford's attack on workers

The Doug Ford Tories are looking out for the CEOs – not the little guy. Their plan to scrap the hard-fought workers' gains in Bill 148 will only help the rich at the expense of the rest of us. Ford has announced Bill 47 which would cut sick days, scrap the expected \$15 minimum wage increase and roll back a host of workers' rights.

All the while, his advisors and friends are being given plush new jobs. He recently hired his lawyer

and family friend Gavin Tighe who is getting paid a \$667,000 yearly salary by the people of Ontario.

The response has been swift. Rallies, marches and pickets were organized all over the province the day after the announcement.

Workers from all backgrounds will be affected by Ford's actions.

The loss of sick days will mean more people going to work when ill which will cost all of us in increased healthcare costs.

The freeze on the minimum wage at \$14 will result in a cut in real wages. The doom and gloom arguments about the loss of jobs after the wage increase have not borne out. In fact, giving more workers a raise means that they spend that money locally, providing a boost to the economy.

Christine, a speaker at the Toronto rally on March 15 said, "All my jobs are minimum wage. Last year I earned in the vicinity of \$22,000.

You can't live in Toronto on that. You just can't."

She will be one of 1.6 million people who will continue to suffer as the minimum wage cannot pay for the skyrocketing cost of living.

Ford has said that there has been an exodus of companies moving out of Ontario because of Bill 148. During the announcement of the repeal, reporters asked Jim Wilson, Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade if he could name any

company that left Ontario. He could not, nor could any of the half dozen cabinet ministers who joined him at the press conference.

The next weeks will be a crucial time for the people of Ontario. People will need to be on the streets in numbers to stop Ford. Shamefully, the big battalions of the labour movement have yet to activate and they will be needed to stop the Tory attacks.

For full coverage
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Bill 148 and people with disabilities

by Melissa Graham

On October 3rd 2018, Premier Ford spoke to Provincial Parliament in defense of his decision to repeal Bill 148, the *Fair Workplaces and Better Jobs Act*:

"Speaker, I'll never forget when I went to Renfrew—Minister of Transportation, John Yakabuski. I saw 20 people with disabilities come up to me and say, 'Doug, I lost my job because of Bill 148.' These are young people and young adults with autism. Thousands across the province lost their jobs because of Bill 148. Students lost their jobs because of Bill 148. We're going to create jobs. We're going to make sure we hire students, hire people with special needs."

He was referring to the closure of sheltered workshops across Ontario. These workshops have been in gradual closure since 2015 as part of a process to modernize and individualize employment supports for disabled people.

Sheltered workshops in Ontario are typically run by not-for-profit organizations funded by the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS). They provide work for people who struggle to find jobs, often adults who have developmental disabilities. Originally, they were created to be temporary places where people would learn job skills. In reality, many people have worked at



them for decades, some for most of their lives.

Where Bill 148 comes in

Sheltered workshop workers were paid a stipend, sometimes only a few dollars an hour. Up until the passage of Bill 148, sheltered workshops were exempted from the *Employment Standards Act*. They did not have to pay the minimum wage, overtime, or provide hours of work protection.

Bill 148 did not directly close sheltered workshops, but it did remove their exemption from the ESA. There was no transition funding provided to sheltered workshops to allow them to meet the requirements of the ESA during the transition period. This forced a lot of them to close prematurely.

When the Liberals decided to slowly transition Ontario out of sheltered workshops, they hadn't put new programs in place yet to replace them. This was really difficult for some people who worked there. For many, this was their social connection, and opportunity to feel like

part of the workforce. This is also why some well-intentioned families want the return of sheltered workshops.

By removing that exemption, the Liberals sparked a conversation about how workers with disabilities are perceived in Ontario, and why some people and politicians think they deserve less than other workers.

In the 2018 provincial election, there were a number of Conservative candidates who campaigned on bringing these sheltered workshops back. They capitalized on the gap in services, and directed the anger, inaccurately and conveniently, at Bill 148, much like Ford did a few weeks ago.

The Liberals did the right thing by closing sheltered workshops. To reopen them now would be a huge step backwards. There are ways to provide employment supports in community for equal pay, but that requires political will and adequate funding.

The coming attack on social assistance

Sheltered workshops are only part of the problem. For workers who are also on the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP), the current earnings exemption, recently increased by the Liberals, allows social assistance recipients to keep \$200 of their gross wages per month. Every dollar over \$200 reduces their income support by 50% of those wages. ODSP

Ford cuts healthcare funding, prepares ground for privatization

by John Bell

"No attempt at ethical or social seduction can eradicate from my heart a deep burning hatred for the Tory Party. So far as I am concerned they are lower than vermin." —Aneurin Bevan

Most will be unfamiliar with Welsh firebrand Bevan, one of the outstanding MPs in British Labour Party history. Think the Jeremy Corbyn of his day. Bevan was Health Minister in Clement Attlee's postwar Labour government, who oversaw the creation of the National Health Service. He spent a lifetime fighting Tories who didn't just turn a callous,

Health Act outright. According to Ontario Health Coalition (OHC) research, 88 clinics across the country charge user fees.

In Ontario the Tories under Harris, and then the Liberals under McGuinty and Wynne, created a "crisis" in healthcare where patients face overcrowded facilities, longer waits for non-emergency treatment, and staff shortages. Now the Tories under Doug Ford promise to solve "hallway healthcare."

Tory medicine

Expecting Ford to solve the very problem he and those like him created is ridiculous. Everything

money"; this is a one-time infusion aimed at dealing with the upturn in patient visits during flu season. The amount is actually less than that spent by the Wynne Liberals at the same time last year, and will do nothing to address the systemic problems behind "hallway healthcare."

It must be noted that Ford's announcement came not at an open press conference, but at a closed-door photo op. Critics like OHC's Natalie Mehra and representatives from the Ontario Nurses' Association were excluded, forced to stand in an outside hallway instead.

Finally, all of Ford's coming



blind eye to the deadly health issues facing Welsh coal miners; many of those Tories were mine owners profiting from shortened life spans and brutal exploitation.

Bevan considered universal health care a human right: "The collective principle asserts that ... no society can legitimately call itself civilised if a sick person is denied medical aid because of lack of means."

Creating a crisis

Since the early 1960s most Canadians have come to agree with Bevan, and identify healthcare as an essential part of our national identity. But "free market" Tories disagree; they see only an opportunity to make profit snatched from their grasp. Doug Ford's Tories, like the Conservatives Bevan battled, believe that no one is entitled to anything unless they can afford to buy it.

The very popularity of our healthcare poses a problem for Liberals and Tories. Given their way they would abolish public health services outright, but that would be political suicide. Instead they chip away and weaken our system. They've delisted services that were once covered; they've cut funds and laid off nursing staff; and they've weakened regulations prohibiting private clinics.

As of 2017 there were 34 private clinics operating in Ontario, and 136 across the country. Some, like private cataract surgery clinics, operate under provincial rules but offer "premium" services for extra fees – two-tiered healthcare. Others, like "boutique" doctors' clinics, violate the Canada

his Ontario government has done promises to make things worse.

One of Ford's first acts was to appoint Dr. Rueben Devlin as his special advisor on healthcare. Devlin is indeed special: former president of the Ontario Conservative Party during the Mike Harris years; advocate of privatized medicine; and former CEO of a "public private partnership" hospital that spent a fortune replacing staff with digital resources. Ford is paying Devlin \$350,000 (plus expenses) for advice.

Next Ford appointed former BC Liberal premier Gordon Campbell to oversee an examination of the Wynne government's policies. Natalie Mehra of the OHC sums up Campbell's record on healthcare: "I was trying to think of who could actually be worse than him to be appointed into that position... He has a terrible record on health care and privatizing and cutting public services." After 10 years in office Campbell was forced to resign amid scandals and unpopularity, leaving Christy Clark to carry the Liberal banner for another six years.

After the Liberal years, BC led the nation in doctors extra billing for services. When the new NDP government started issuing fines for violations of the Canada Health Act, BC doctors brought a lawsuit to the Provincial Supreme Court seeking an injunction to stop the clamp down. An affidavit in support of the doctors' right to charge extra fees was delivered by none other than Gordon Campbell.

Then came Ford's announcement of \$90 million of "new

cuts will make life harder for people in Ontario: harder to pay bills, harder to find an apartment, harder to stay home rather than have to spread illness at work.

Full disclosure: part of this was written during a recent stint in hospital. There were indeed patients on gurneys in the halls of the ER where I was admitted. When asked, nurses laughed openly about the prospect of Doug Ford solving the problem. One told me they expect the trend of nurse layoffs to continue: "We're already serving more patients per nurse than is safe. It should be 4 to each nurse. I'm looking after 6, and that's on a good day."

Smaller health facilities will be amalgamated for "efficiency", beds will be closed and staff made redundant as a result. This is already happening at hospitals in Lindsay and Peterborough. And the crisis in healthcare will be made worse, giving the Tories the excuse to do what they wanted to do all along – introduce a two-tiered system that will allow the rich to buy better care while workers suffer with crowding and long waits.

Our health system is under a long-planned and carefully executed attack. To defend it will require serious grass-roots organizing. It comes down to whether or not you believe that every human being deserves decent healthcare; whether medicine is first and foremost about need or about making profit. When we talk about those in Doug Ford's Tory government we know where their priorities lie, for now as in Bevan's day they are "lower than vermin."

Toronto election: more of the same

by John Bell

In an election marred by the manipulations of the Ford provincial government, cutting the number of wards almost in half, voters turned out in small numbers. The results – incumbent John Tory was easily returned as mayor.

His leading opponent, Jennifer Keesmaat tried to position herself as the left standard-bearer, but never galvanized support. Her positions, like fighting a housing crisis with policies like rent-to-own housing, made no sense to voters. Her definition of “affordable” housing as 80% of market rent, where market rent for a 1 bedroom tops \$2,000 monthly, was too anemic. And tearing down the crumbling Gardner expressway might be a good idea, but it hardly tapped into voters’ major concerns.

Disturbingly, neo-Nazi Faith Goldy came third, with more than 25,000 votes, about 3.4%. Her campaign was given a boost by the openly racist *Toronto Sun*, and tacit support from Toronto Police, some of whom posed with her for pictures. Some of those votes might just be protest votes, but her campaign was explicitly anti-immigrant, and especially Islamophobic. The result will give more confidence to far-right organizing, and make life more dangerous for Muslims, Jews and people of colour.

One bright spot was the strong campaign of human rights lawyer Saron Gebresellassi, who impressed in debates with strong positions for affordable transit and housing. She also challenged the ideas that addressing crime means more money for policing – in fact she proposed financing public services by taking money away from the massive police budget. Knowing she had no chance to win, she declared she was in the race to give voice to young women of colour. Despite the fact that most “left” votes went to Keesmaat, Gebresellassi garnered almost 15,000 votes (2.01%).

Council

Despite the chaos created by Ford’s meddling, the election resulted in status quo on council. The expanded downtown wards brought back left-of-centre incumbents Joe Cressy, Mike Layton, Gord Perks, Kristyn Wong-Tam and Paula Fletcher. And the suburban wards brought back right-wingers Michael Thompson, Mike Ford and Mark Grimes. If Ford’s cut of wards was meant to destroy the left, it failed. The makeup of council is much the same as the outgoing one, on a smaller scale.

Some defeats were welcome. Racist scumbag Georgio Mammoliti ran as “Doug Ford’s Choice,” and was turfed after a campaign that has to be described as thinly-veiled fascism.

Long time left councillor Joe Mihevc lost to centrist Josh Matlow. Why Mihevc prominently featured an endorsement from John Tory is the question; Matlow’s vocal sparring with Tory over subway overspending was probably the secret to his success.

GTA Votes

In Brampton, the improbable return of Patrick Brown saw the recently-disgraced Tory leader defeat incumbent mayor Linda Jeffry. Jeffry had been a strong defender of the Muslim community when it came under attack from bigots, but no doubt lost because she had been in a losing fight with the provincial Tories over transit funding.

These elections were marred by open campaigning by Nazis. In Mississauga, white-supremacist Islamophobe Kevin Johnston came second, with 13.6% of the vote. But in Hamilton, despite numerous articles in *The Spectator* giving him a platform, long-time Nazi Paul Fromm got only 552 votes.

This warning on the right underlines the need for a bold left alternative to the failed policies of Tory. It was largely not on offer in this election. But Vancouver’s COPE platform, which elected councillor Jean Swanson on a bold campaign for housing, shows that such an alternative can inspire, mobilize and deliver electoral success.

Resistance needed after far right victory in Brazil

by Alistair Farrow

Far right candidate Jair Bolsonaro was elected president of Brazil on October 28.

He took around 55 percent of the vote, and his victory in a country of 210 million people will have a huge impact. It is also another sign of the rise of the global far right that has to be resisted everywhere.

His election marks a brutal turn in Brazilian politics. Bolsonaro is a front man for the sort of forces involved in the murderous military dictatorship from 1964 to 1985.

On Saturday Charlone Lessa Albuquerque was shot dead, allegedly by a Bolsonaro supporter, while attending a rally in support of the Workers’ Party (PT) candidate Fernando Haddad.

Throughout his election campaign Bolsonaro has used vile language to refer to minority and oppressed groups. He has backed the use of violence by the murderous Brazilian cops. Between January and July this year, in just one state—Rio de Janeiro—cops killed 895 people.

He has described himself as “homophobic—and very proud of it.” LGBT+ groups described his victory as “opening the gates of hell.”

“Bolsonaro means everything that is bad,” PT member Cleusa told Socialist Worker. She was attending a protest outside the Brazilian embassy in central London on Saturday night.

“He has said that the citizens he deems to be ‘good’ will be allowed to carry guns. The ‘bad’ ones are the people who live in favelas [poor areas] and are black.”

“He has said women shouldn’t earn the same as men.”

Fascists

Cristina argued, “After Sunday, Brazil will not be the same. The fascists there will wake up.”

Earlier in the election campaign a woman had a swastika carved into her body by a Nazi.

Bolsonaro’s lead narrowed after a particularly vicious speech he gave last week in which he threatened to arrest left wingers if they did not leave the country after the election.

This led prominent figures in Brazilian society to publicly back Haddad. In the end this

A large part of the blame for Bolsonaro’s election win lies with the PT. Its credibility was destroyed by its record of 13 years in office. Huge corruption by PT officials involving the allocation of contracts for state-owned oil company Petrobras undermined the party’s support.

This meant Bolsonaro was able to pose as an anti-corruption crusader - while allying with corrupt elements in Brazilian society.

The corruption scandal of the PT, including jailed former president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva (Lula) soured the party’s image for millions. On top of the corruption, Lula’s successor Dilma Rousseff heaped the price of the economic crisis on the backs of ordinary Brazilians.

“In Lula’s day the whole favela was PT,” said Haroldo Carrilho. “They abandoned us.”

Bolsonaro’s main support base lies in the richer southern states of Brazil such as Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. A new middle class, who have seen their standard of living attacked, particularly after the commodities crisis of 2015 onwards, see him as a fighter for their interests.

The new government will be a government for the rich. Bolsonaro has surrounded himself with economic advisers such as Paulo Guedes, who wants to privatise 147 state-owned businesses as well as introduce a flat-rate 20 percent income tax.

“I lived through the dictatorship and we don’t want to go back to that. It’s dangerous,” said Lima. “I know what dictatorship means. It means torture, do you know what I’m saying?”

There will be resistance to Bolsonaro. The military dictatorship was eventually beaten by mass workers’ resistance and strikes.

There are powerful women’s and LGBT+groups and social movements.

The resistance to Bolsonaro and the far right he has emboldened must start today.



had little effect.

Bolsonaro capitalised on an attack on him during the election campaign, during which he was stabbed. This allowed him to present as a law and order martyr.

To attribute his victory just to this would be a mistake—there are more deep-rooted reasons.

Big business has warmed to his success. Since he moved ahead in the first round of the election three weeks ago one Brazilian stock market index has soared 18 percent while global indexes have fallen.

Confronting the rise of the far-right

by Michelle Robidoux

The far-right is building internationally – we need to fight back globally. This sums up the urgent task set by the international conference organized by Stand Up to Racism in the UK on October 20th. Titled Confronting Racism and Fascism, the conference, attended by 1400 people including representatives from across Europe, Latin America and Canada – discussed the growth of racism and the far-right, and strategies to oppose them.

“There are a lot more people fighting racism in Germany than were being racist in Chemnitz – we have to be more organized,” said Claude Moraes, MEP, referring to the recent racist rampage in the east German city.

Hungarian Roma activist Sandor Szoke spoke of the fast-changing situation in Hungary, where far-right president Victor Orban has implemented a series of brutal attacks, criminalizing the homeless, banning gender studies, and forbidding protests. Nara Jararaca, an activist with the Brazilian Worker’s Party (PT), spoke of the growth in attacks on Afrodescendant communities and the left, as far-right presidential candidate Jair Bolsonaro boosted the confidence of Nazi thugs and police.

Notorious far-right ghoul Steve Bannon is

trying to unify the strategy of European far-right parties and has established a headquarters in Brussels in advance of next May’s European elections. Each victory of the far-right, from Trump to Bolsonaro, energizes and radicalizes these parties.

Resistance

Cornelia Kerth, from the Federation of Anti-Fascists in Germany, spoke of the organizing that produced the brilliant 240,000-strong protest in Berlin against racism and xenophobia. “The [far-right] AfD party are stronger where we aren’t present. But in Hamburg, wherever they speak, we mobilize. It is impossible for them to book a room.”

Ismahane Chouder, a teacher and activist, spoke of the role of Islamophobia in the growth of the far-right in France. “Unfortunately, right-wing ideas have penetrated the left. There is an identitarian left convergence with the right on Muslim questions. This makes it difficult to mobilize left groups on initiatives upholding the rights of all.”

The far-right, she said, has understood this. “I understand that it is easier for governments to fight against Muslims than against unemployment,” Chouder said.

Petros Constantinou, of the Greek organi-

zation KEERFA, said: “Every time we make a concession, we open the door to the far right.” But while the threat is growing, so is the force that can stop it. “The media say, the far-right is unstoppable. It’s not true. Millions have protested Trump. Salvini and Merkel are on the defensive because of movement on the streets. Don’t panic if they enter Parliament, but don’t underestimate them. Golden Dawn tried to build from Parliament to the streets but there was a mass movement there to meet them.”

He reminded us that there is power in the workplace: when Golden Dawn tried to use its allotted hour to speak in Parliament, government workers struck for an hour. They have organized in the teachers’ unions, among doctors, and among youth. Refugee communities have played a central role in fighting back.

Paul Holborow, a key organiser of the Anti-Nazi League that successfully defeated the British National Front in 1979, said “We need to join ranks and build an international wall of resistance against this filth trying to infect our politics.”

Next steps: mass action November 17 in the UK and coordinated protests world-wide for UN anti-racism day on March 16, 2019.

• For more info: standupracism.org.uk

HOW WORLD WAR I WAS STOPPED

The First World War ended – not because the generals and the politicians wanted it to, but because workers and soldiers refused to fight. On the 100th anniversary of the end of the war, Sid Lacombe explores the revolutions in Germany and Russia that ended it.

World war and world revolution

This November 11 will mark 100 years since the end of the first world war and in Canada we will be inundated with stories of heroism and national pride. The Canadian government will, no doubt, laud the killing fields as the crucible within which Canada became a nation. The battle of Vimy Ridge – a fight that killed 3,598 and wounded 7,004 Canadian soldiers for a largely useless ridge line – will be given specific treatment as a key moment in Canadian history.

The realities of the war – more than 100 years past – are now obscured by official histories and Canadian history vignettes.

As Ian McKay and Jamie Swift state in their book, *The Vimy Trap: Or, How We Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Great War*, the commemorations of the battle only began in earnest well after the soldiers who participated in it had died. It was during the Cold War militarist build up that the battle became a centerpiece in Canadian history textbooks.

Governments from all of the belligerent nations have tried to build a new narrative about the war as a noble quest for peace and democracy. But nothing could be further from the truth.

One needs only look at the writing, poetry and art from the soldiers themselves to see the brutality of the war from the perspective of the troops. And although they rarely get any air time in the current official histories, they offer a glimpse of what really happened both during the war and what really ended the conflict.

Siegfried Sassoon, a British soldier wrote a letter which was read in the House of Commons which spoke for the millions of soldiers in the trenches, "I have seen and endured the sufferings of the troops and I can no longer be a party to prolong these

sufferings for ends which I believe to be evil and unjust."

Imperialist war

This was a war started by the main capitalist powers in Europe to try and gain control of the resources and lands of their rivals. As many as 10 million working people died in an industrialized slaughterhouse that served no purpose at all.

As socialist historian Chris Harman

Economic competition had turned into competition for territories, and the outcome depended on armed might.

states, "The rival imperialisms which had emerged as each capitalism tried to solve its own problems by expanding across state boundaries now collided right across the world. Economic competition had turned into competition for territories, and the outcome depended on armed might."

This competition between states is a central feature of capitalism which needs to accumulate wealth at all costs.

Revolution

While the war was greeted with some enthusiasm by the general populations at the start, the prolonged struggle resulted in a growing anti-war and revolutionary sentiment. Soldiers from both sides of the conflict began to identify more with the other poor infantrymen in the opposite trenches rather than with their own rulers and officers who sat in chateaus sipping cognac as they sent tens of thousands to a grisly death.

The Christmas truce in 1914 scared the officers and rulers on both sides of the conflict. German and British

troops decided to end the hostilities themselves and came out of the trenches to share drinks and play a game of soccer. Although this is now seen as a bold and tender moment on history, it was viewed very differently at the time. The British declared that they would kill any soldiers, German or British if they came out of the trenches to engage in this kind of civility again.

The first major mutinies started in

that the October revolution was largely bloodless. There were few army units left to send to try and defeat the revolutionary forces in Russian cities. Most had been won over to the revolution.

Unfortunately, the other imperial powers were unwilling to talk peace. They were terrified that any concession would result in a weakening of their position in the global imperial pecking order.

As a result, they killed more than one million more people between the Russian call for peace and the official end of the war in 1918.

Legacy

The stark brutality of WWI was to call into question the very nature of the capitalist system for workers throughout the world. Simultaneously, the Russian revolution provided the inspiration for millions who opposed the barbarity of the system.

The next few years were filled with revolutionary uprisings from Hungary to Austria to Italy to Germany. Unfortunately, they were not successful, which left the Russians isolated and under attack.

The ruling classes in the belligerent countries even put aside their own animosity towards each other – despite years of describing their opponents as inhuman killers – and joined forces to attack Russia.

Their fear of a worker led government that refused to engage in imperial slaughter was greater than their hatred of a rival ruling class.

The commemorations of the war this year will be full of flowery language and calls to patriotism. It is crucial to remember that a key factor in the war's end was the revolt of the troops who saw that the real enemy wasn't the workers in the opposition trench, but the capitalists and generals that prolonged the slaughter for their own personal gain.

Russia

And in Russia ending the war, which had cost some 1.8 million lives, became a central demand of the revolutionary movement. The Bolshevik party was one of the few socialist groups that was opposed to the war from the beginning. The Bolsheviks called "upon all the belligerent nations and their governments to start immediate negotiations for peace." They then

The German Revolution 1918-1919

by Chantal Sundaram

November marks the 100th anniversary of a little-known revolution in the heart of Western Europe. Like the Russian Revolution of 1917, it posed a fundamental question: what kind of social change did the world need to escape the barbarism of world war and social inequality?

The German revolution replaced a constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary republic, later known as the Weimar Republic. It also unleashed a period of instability that lasted until late 1919. As in Russia, the enormous toll of WWI on poor and working class people created a crisis that put the legitimacy of the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie into question.

Soldiers' mutinies erupted in German naval ports at the end of October, provoking civil unrest until the monarchy fell and the republic was proclaimed on November 9.

The immediate question in Germany, as in Russia after the fall of the Tsar, was: who will now govern?

A tale of two revolutions

The socialist movement in Germany was quite different from the one in Russia, where a credible alternative to parliament existed, even prior to October 1917: a large network of grassroots workers' councils rooted in workplaces (called "soviets" in Russian), controlled by direct workers' democracy, and excluding the ruling and middle classes.

And unlike the Bolsheviks, who looked to those workers' councils as the key to winning genuine power for working people, in Germany the dominant left party, the Social Democratic Party (SPD) looked instead to a national assembly that would integrate the German upper classes into a social democratic parliamentary government. This extended to an alliance with the German Supreme Command of the military.

The other major difference between Germany and Russia at the time - in addition to the hold of parliamentary politics and the absence of workers' councils as an alternative - was the absence of revolutionary organization capable of uniting the majority of working people in coordinated mass activity on the ground.

Parliament or worker's power?

By 1918 a new party to the left of the SPD, the USPD, had formed. But it too had illusions in a parliamentary solution to the crisis. Immediately the two began negotiations on the formation of a government.

The USPD, in return for an offer of equal representation, withdrew its most radical conditions. A Council of People's Commissars was established with three members of each party, and they called for the election of a national assembly.

As the Russian revolutionary leader Leon Trotsky famously said, if the forces of reaction had been successful in dividing the revolutionary movement in that country, fascism would have been a Russian word.

Socialism or Barbarism

German revolutionary leader Rosa Luxemburg, who herself was a victim of the Freikorps on January 15 1919, wrote in 1916: "Bourgeois society stands at the crossroads, either transition to Socialism or regression into Barbarism."

German fascism found a base in

the contradictions of the Weimar Republic. Although state power was not inevitable, the Nazis' emergence was linked to the failure of the German revolution to lead to a conception of socialism that was not wedded to the old forms of wealth and power.

The other form of barbarism that resulted from the failure of the German revolution to lead in a socialist direction was Stalinism. For the revolution to hold on in Russia and not regress to control by a new ruling class, it needed to spread internationally – and immediately to wealthier countries. In the end the Stalinist push for "socialism in one country," which was actually a turn to state-run capitalism and counter-revolution, won the day.

Rosa Luxemburg

Rosa Luxemburg, a leader of Spartacus and a founder of the German Communist party, was undoubtedly one of the most important theorists of revolution from below in the Marxist movement. She theorized the importance of workers' self-activity through mass strikes, and the ability of spontaneous struggle to change the consciousness of masses of ordinary people.

But her tragedy was in underestimating the need for separate political organization outside the SPD in the years before 1918-19. The SPD was the largest and most successful socialist party in Europe, and gave rise to the social democratic movement throughout the West, including parties like the NDP. But Luxemburg's hesitation was not due to illusions in the ability of the SPD, or USPD, to lead a revolution. On the contrary she fought relentlessly as the SPD took one mistaken position after another, from trying to reinterpret Marxist economics as a way to reform capitalism, to the disastrous capitulation of supporting the German war effort in 1914, to the compromise with German capital in forming Weimar.

On October 2nd, in the east end of Toronto, the Radisson Hotel which houses over 570 refugee claimants was the target of an arsonist. A security guard found a gas container with a burning wick in a third floor hallway. The floor rug was burning when he kicked it into a concrete stairwell. Fire services and police were called and the hotel was evacuated. This could have been a horrible disaster if it had not been discovered in time.

The refugees crossed into Canada from the United States because of Donald Trump's anti-immigrant policies. The government has been separating children from their parents at the Mexican border, continuing systemic anti-Black racism, and has been whipping up hatred against Muslims. It is also trying to remove immigrants who have been in the country for years. Many at the hotel are originally from Haiti and Sudan and are now very fearful for their safety.

An immigrant aid organization which provides services to them has spoken out about the rise of right wing nationalism in this country and the need to fight against it. It clearly saw this as a hate crime.

The hotel is organized by the United Steelworkers, and when the local area council of the union heard about what had happened, the delegates representing every USW workplace in Toronto unanimously passed a motion to support the refugees and the workers at the



Arson attack on refugees at Toronto hotel

By Carolyn Egan

A synagogue was recently attacked in Pittsburgh by a white, anti-Semitic male who left dead and wounded behind him. A few years ago, a mosque in Quebec City faced a similar assault by a young Quebecois influenced by right wing, Islamophobic ideas. We are seeing a move to the right in this country, with an increase of 20 to 25% in racist, anti-immigrant organizations in the last three years, according to the Toronto Star. Faith Goldy, who has taken part in neo-Nazi demonstrations, ran for mayor of the city of Toronto and won 25,000 votes.

Doug Ford, premier of Ontario, posed for a picture with her and didn't distance himself from it for days while public pressure mounted.

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An immigrant aid organization which provides services to them has spoken out about the rise of right wing nationalism in this country and the need to fight against it. It clearly saw this as a hate crime.

The hotel is organized by the United Steelworkers, and when the local area council of the union heard about what had happened, the delegates representing every USW workplace in Toronto unanimously passed a motion to support the refugees and the workers at the

hotel. Along with other unions and community organizations such as the Urban Alliance on Race Relations, the Steelworkers have been mobilizing members in protests against right wing extremism.

I recently attended a conference in the UK, "How Do We Defeat the Rise of Fascism and Racism". Over 1200 attended the event and there were representatives from across Europe including Hungary, where the extreme right has come to power. A leader of an anti-fascist group in London was attacked by a dozen neo-Nazis who laid in wait for him as he approached the conference. They were run off, but it speaks to the level of violence that people are facing in many countries and the reality of the far right gaining confidence.

People from France, Germany, Poland, the Netherlands, Catalonia, Denmark, Greece and other countries spoke about the organizing that they are doing. There have been inspiring demonstrations, such as the 250,000 who recently marched against fascism and racism in Germany, strongly supported by trade unions. In Greece there have been broad mobilizations against the Golden Dawn, a fascist organization, which a few years ago had seventy-six offices across the country and was openly attacking immigrants and refugees. Today, the number has been cut to ten because of united front activities locally and nationally that have strongly reduced their capacity to draw people to their ideas. It has been a combination of community organizations, immigrant groups, trade unionists and socialists that has strengthened the anti-racist, anti-fascist organizing.

Though we are not facing the same level of far-right activity in Canada, we must be very clear that unless we organize today it could certainly happen. With the election of Donald Trump and Doug Ford, we have seen how people can be drawn to right-wing ideas unless there is a real alternative. They, in turn, give confidence to the extreme right. We have to do all we can to directly take on the growth of racist and fascist ideas and build an anti-racist working class alternative that will fight against exploitation and oppression in all its forms.

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.

The People's Party is the people's mess

by Kevin Taghabon

A few months ago, it would have sounded silly. Maxime Bernier and Andrew Scheer seemed like two peas in a pod. But then the peas got in a spat. Maxime was pushed from cabinet, and eventually left the party three days before their disturbing convention in Halifax.

Conservative Party delegates voted to end birthright citizenship, a cruel position that could create untold stateless people. This proposal is a dramatic escalation in the wrong direction in our century, which will almost certainly be marred with unprecedented climate-induced migration.

The Conservatives are setting themselves up to capture popular anger and marry it with the idea of internal enemies. Andrew Scheer is less Donald Trump than Donald Duck, but Scheer's campaign manager is former Rebel Media exec and Alberta Wildrose operative, Hamish Marshall. An expert in far-right propaganda sits comfortably at the top of the Conservative campaign machine.

The post-Harper rightward drift of the Conservative Party has accelerated partly due to their distance from official power. They watch as reactionary forces translate resentment against austerity into anti-immigrant violence and electoral opportunities the world over.

Bernier: not enough

Bernier, evidently, did not think the Conservatives were moving to the far right fast enough. He has now appointed himself as the saviour of "Canadian values" by launching his People's Party. The seven central planks that Bernier wants to focus on if he gains power include well-trod reactionary ideas such as gutting public finances with tax cuts and opening the door to bankruptcy-causing private healthcare.

But Bernier is also moving comfortably with the tides of the far-right by proposing that CSIS, the RCMP, and IRCC, "do background checks on all classes of immigrants, including more face-to-face interviews if deemed necessary." Yes, Bernier believes that an effective way of dealing with refugee crises is to have refugees



Bernier: Courting fascists and xenophobes

interrogated by security services after their struggle to arrive.

Like Scheer, Bernier is not Trump. He is still calculating how he can establish himself on the right of the Conservative Party without humiliating himself in the 2019 election. Hence, the rhetorical fence-straddling with far-right sprinkles.

It would be unwise to predict his downfall. The far-right AfD has surged in Germany to second place in the polls under the reigning Conservative, Angela Merkel. France came within a hair's breadth of electing their own neo-fascist government in 2017. Beyond motions in Parliament denouncing Islamophobia, the Liberal government has done little to quell the spike in extreme-right violence in Canada, while security services themselves are implicated in discrimination. After the white supremacist terrorist attack against the Muslim community in Quebec in January 2017, this is astounding. Inaction has allowed the cancerous forces of bigotry to organize openly in public spaces, which only increases the confidence and electability of far-right parties.

Moving the goal posts

There are those who deeply disagree with Bernier and conservative politics in general who have been celebrating the break between Scheer and Bernier. "Vote splitting" between two right-wing parties will save no one. It will not help build a popular base for progressive policies. Worse, it may feed into the continual "lesser of two evils" narrative that encourages so many progressives to vote for a Liberal party that destroys the

climate while continuing to arm Saudi Arabia.

Many Canadians have forgotten that Stephen Harper was wandering in the wilderness while Jean Chretien was Prime Minister. His pre-PM days were equally ideological, serving as head of the National Citizens Coalition from 1998-2002. Harper tempered his own social conservatism and went from an outsider to Prime Minister in four years.

The inability of the Liberals to meaningfully combat bigotry, coupled with the Conservative Party's need to keep in line with its base, means there is no guarantee whatsoever about the effect of the People's Party.

What is clear is that professional conservatives are well aware of where popular energy lies. Right-wing Ontario Proud directly imitates the UK Labour Party's "For the Many, Not the Few" messaging. Doug Ford's campaign repeated "for the people" more times than any platform point. The ability of conservative politicians to convince voters that their politics are not skewed towards the rich is a significant, if hollow victory.

It is also failure of the left and in Parliament, the NDP. An equivalent, harnessed popular energy pushing bold candidates on the left to the national stage is missing. Social movements, the likes of which have propelled figures like Jean Swanson and Bhutila Karpoche in their cities, are key to building a left alternative. As it exists, official power has been unable to stem the tide of reaction. Mass movements are the only deterrent to the birthing of a far harsher Canada, because ballot boxes only come every few years.



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Labour of Love: Hip Hop for the revolution

by Kevin Taghabon

At the October 25th launch event in Toronto, I asked The Socialist Vocalist AKA Mohammad Ali what local underground talent he is impressed by. His face went wide eyed, as if the list of talented working musicians was a mountain in his head. This brief pause is a good snapshot of Ali – a working artist who tirelessly channels the popular rage and love in the political struggles of our time. (Ali named THEO3, Toronto's FreedomWriters supergroup, Solidarity Squad, and Ian Kamau).

Ali's solidarity extends far beyond the musical realm. Activists in Ontario will recognize him from performances at key actions, including the June 16th Rally for Decent Work and last year's OFL Young Worker's Assembly. After being completed for two years, Ali has finally collected the art, resources, and infrastructure to put *Labour of Love* out properly. The project is not limited to the album, with other artistic pieces, merchandise, and an excellent lyric and art book supplement.

The music is relentlessly political. This does not mean emotionless or dry. On the contrary, Ali understands that songs are not seminars. "Music has to be emotionally honest," Ali explains. "You can't just put a press release out over music and have it connect with people. You need to tell stories that really connect with people, that really pull on heartstrings, and make it real. Make it tangible."

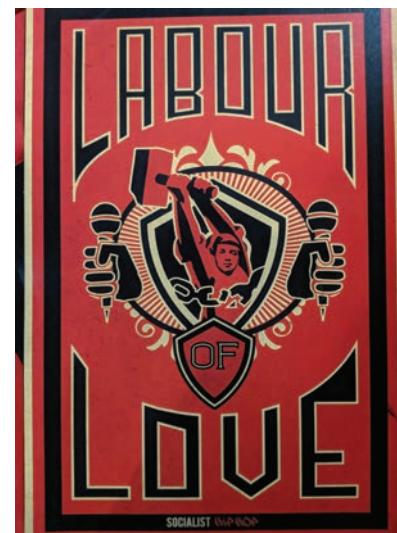
Ali lives the life he raps about in his songs, present on the title track. "Report in for my shift/ a couple more months/ I can afford another trip/ Disneyworld, me and my little girl/ Disneyland, me and the little man/ Next year,

maybe we won't need the rental van." These scenes quickly resonate with listeners in a way that other media cannot. "Labour of Love" along with "Solidarity Forever" featuring Ayesha Adhami are the most soulful on the record, and demonstrate Ali's versatility – not all political rap has to be aggressive.

Still, Ali is a socialist entrenched in the books as well as the streets. On a wide-spanning interview with Talking Radical Radio with Scott Neigh, Ali said that his exposure to Che Guevara's *Motorcycle Diaries* gripped him. Ali weaves experiences with political literature, as in, "Never had a dad/ so I adopted Frederick Douglass."

The radical politics junkie will have to listen several times before appreciating every historical reference. Ali says he draws immense thematic inspiration from Fred Hampton and the Black Panthers. As a young man facing racism in small-town Ontario in the '90s, Ali gravitated towards rap as a way to understand his experiences. He also credits Malcolm X's autobiography as a big part of his political development in youth, and refers several times to Vijay Prashad's *The Karma of Brown Folk*.

Some of the songs on the album center around characters that are vehicles for the larger struggles. The "Dreams" tracks (part I, II, and III) spread out on the album introduce the listener to three different characters and their clash with structural forces in society. Part III introduces a soon-to-retire Steelworker who has his retirement threatened by the Harper government. The Steelworker decided to get very involved in his union at the end of his working life, and was part of a campaign that successfully beat back Harper's attacks. The story is



based on a real person whom Ali met years ago through political work.

The relationship with the trade union movement that Ali regularly alludes to is not a one way street. Ali reminded people at the show that it was here where he has been able to find a home and spread his music. Mayworks Festival and the Worker's Arts and Heritage Centre in Hamilton are among the organizations he has previously pointed out for doing it right. This means incorporating the artists' experience into their programs and campaigns, not simply having them perform and leave.

"Some specific unions are really trailblazing in terms of how they work with the arts community," he says. "CUPE, their cultural program works super seriously at their conventions, at their rallies. Same with OPSEU.

Music, visual arts, and collaborative work with artists in general...especially Region 5, OPSEU in Toronto."

The closing song, "The Karma of Brown Folk", is quite interesting. Ali has turned the melody from 50 Cent's "Many Men", a song about gang violence in New York in the '90s, and turned it on its head. The chorus begins, "Many men, is stressed about me/ Love in my eyes, got what they can't see/ I'm trying to breathe, they won't let me be me/ 'Cause people tryin' to take my rights away." Ali opens the track with a spoken-word quote from Prashad's *The Darker Nations*. He then moves to explore the pains that racialized people experience in the West. "We're in their households/ But our names, they can't pronounce though/ Samir, not Sammy/ Abdullah, not Abby/ This ain't some rap name/ Born and raised Mohammad Ali". Ali also calls the listener to ally oneself with today's movements, rapping, "Rock Trayvon's hoodie/ Rock Malala's hijab".

The song features vocals from Rob GF, who was recently signed to Universal Music Canada. Ali said on Talking Radical Radio that while the vast majority of artists he has met are progressive, they can't all make political music. He asserts that labels have one contract for every 10,000 musicians, and many are not looking for political work. In this sense, Ali's music occupies two spaces – that of precarious labour, as well as steadfast solidarity, despite potential barriers it might present. Ali has no intention of slowing down, and is already hard at work on new albums: Protest Music volumes I, II, and III.

• Follow Ali's work at socialisthiphop.com

Indigenous sovereignty and socialism

by John Bell

Hats off to authors Valerie Lannon and Jesse McLaren for tackling the difficult task of producing a succinct overview of the struggle against colonialism, aimed at educating settlers who wish to become allies. The result is an excellent introduction to a big topic, a brief book that points readers to a wealth of literature by Indigenous writers.

Both are activists who bring expertise around climate justice to a view of Indigenous history and analysis of current struggles. This is a crucial link since connection to the land, and its stewardship, is central to understanding those struggles.

Kanehsatake activist and artist Ellen Gabriel was talking specifically about the 1990 "Oka Crisis", but her words could refer to Indigenous resistance from first contact to today: "We are a sovereign nation and our identity is linked to the land. That is why the government has tried so hard to break us, so that they can fully exploit our land."

Three strands intertwine through the book: the history of colonialism both before and after the creation of the Canadian state, with its concerted attempts to destroy Indigenous cultures through both violence and subtle attempts at assimilation; indomitable Indigenous resistance and struggle that continues to this day; and the relevance of socialist ideas in understanding these histories and informing the struggles to come.

Marxism and Indigenous Culture

Lannon and McLaren make it clear that the relationship between Marxism and Indigenous culture is not a one-way street. Indeed, infor-

mation about the organization of Haudenosaunee Confederation of Six Nations democracy and classless society was a huge inspiration to Marx and Engels. It proved the lie about "human nature" central to capitalism—that competition, greed and individualism were essential to human beings.

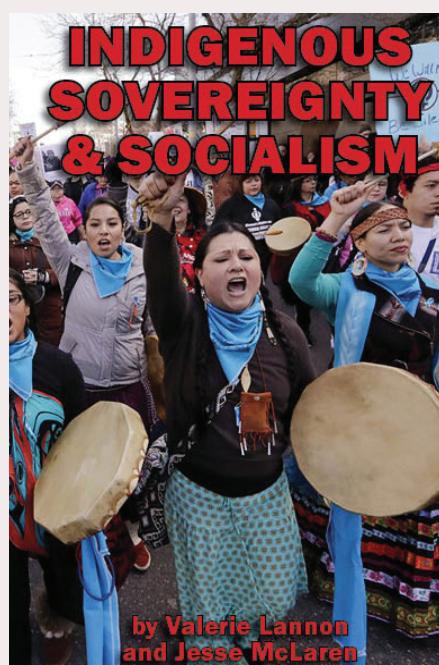
Instead, here were cultures where democracy, equality and sustainable relations with nature were the rule. This inspiration was central to one of the foundational Marxist texts, Engels' *The Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State*: "All are equal and free—the women included. This is what mankind and human society were like before class divisions arose."

Marx also wrote extensively about how capitalist relations broke the connection between human and nature, so that nature becomes an object to be exploited. According to Marx a healthy approach, one found among Indigenous cultures, said that nature was "man's body, with which he must remain in continuous interchange if he is not to die. That his physical and spiritual life is linked to nature means simply that nature is linked to itself, for man is part of nature."

Capitalism breaks this healthy metabolic connection—Marxist writers rediscovering the essential place of socialist ideas in facing environmental crises call this the "metabolic rift". And Marx notes well how this rift is connected to the rise of capital, colonialism and the brutal exploitation of Indigenous peoples. In *Capital Vol. 1* he wrote: "The discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation and enslavement and entombment in mines of the aboriginal population, the beginning of the conquest and looting of the East Indies,

the turning of Africa into a Warren for the commercial hunting of black skins, signalled the rosy dawn of capitalist production..."

These are crucial insights. They make the



ideas of socialism a natural resource for Indigenous struggle—not just Eurocentric ideology. And it should make socialists resolute and respectful allies in the fight to expose and end colonialism.

So it is useful that Indigenous authors and historians who are influenced by Marxism—Howard Adams, Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, Glen

Coulthard, Ron Bourgeault and others—are generously cited.

Struggle: Nation to Nation

The authors skilfully expose the way brutal practices like Residential Schools give way to today's high rate of First Nations children being taken from their families by children's aid workers. There is nothing new about Justin Trudeau's practice of acknowledging Indigenous rights in the abstract, and opposing them when Indigenous nations exert those right on the ground.

There can be no resolution of colonial oppression until there is recognition of Indigenous national sovereignty—not the phony, less than municipal government concept on offer from Trudeau's colonial state. And the good news is that there is now, more than ever, solidarity with Indigenous struggles from sections of settler society.

From the Red River Rebellions, to the rise of Red Power, to Idle No More the evolution and constancy of struggle is described and rightly celebrated. The mission of the book is summed up perfectly: "As socialists we want to learn from and support Indigenous sovereignty. As the two Row Wampum made clear 400 years ago, it is not up to settlers to steer the course of Indigenous national liberation movements but to provide unconditional support. This requires revolutionizing settler society, by building unity and solidarity within the working class, which includes Indigenous workers."

Indigenous Sovereignty and Socialism makes a worthy contribution toward that goal.

• To order, visit socialist.ca



RADICAL ELECTORALISM COPE victory in Vancouver

by Bradley Hughes

There is lots of good news from the Vancouver city election on October 20. First and foremost is that one of the three COPE candidates for council, Jean Swanson, won a seat, with the fourth most votes.

COPE ran an incredibly inspiring campaign that stressed unapologetically working-class demands. They emphasized that the life of renters and the rest of the working class can only improve if we take power and money away from the 1%.

The campaign focused on fighting for a rent freeze, ending homelessness in one year and imposing a mansion tax on homes worth more than \$5 million. This campaign won a partial victory weeks before the vote.

The provincial NDP government had announced that the allowable annual rent increase would be 4.5%. In a city where the average rent for a one bedroom apartment is now above \$2000, this would have meant increases of over \$1000/year for many renters. After COPE and the Vancouver Tenants Union organized rallies and email campaigns to MLAs, the province reduced the increase to 2.5%. As the candidates said repeatedly, "Two down and 2.5% to go!"

Housing

The COPE campaign concentrated on those most effected by the housing crisis and canvassed hundreds of apartment buildings in the lead up to the vote. Mainstream parties usually put little effort into renters since they tend to vote much less than people in condos or houses.

The makeup of the new council is also good news. For a decade the mayor and the majority



COPE will carry on fight for a rent freeze, a mansion tax, an end to homelessness.

on council have been members of Vision Vancouver. This is Vancouver's version of the federal Liberals: get all your funding from business, look out for their needs first and then try to convince the rest of us that we matter. As a result, property developers and speculators have done very well for themselves, rental vacancy rates have plunged to zero, the numbers of homeless people have remained constant, and rents have shot through the roof.

The other traditional pro-business party is the NPA; between them the two business parties had the mayor and nine of the ten council positions before the election.

The new council, along with Jean, includes Kennedy Stewart, a former NDP MP as mayor, three greens, Christine Boyle from One City and five NPA councillors. In more great news, Vision Vancouver was unable to get a single seat on council, and their best placed candidate, Tanya Paz, was nine people back of the last councillor to get in. Paz won 29,000 votes compared to Swanson's 49,000.

On election night Derrick O'Keefe, who almost made it onto council, explained the importance of this. "For years they told us you have to vote for the centre, that voting for the left spoils elections. Well, tonight we saw the opposite;

"COPE is back and Vision is gone." The COPE campaign and its electoral success show that the radical left can get a hearing and win elections.

It also shows that elections can be won without mainstream parties' fixation with data mining and elaborate social media campaigns. Working class people with working class politics can talk with and convince other workers of the need to vote in their own interests.

Defeat for the bosses parties

The good news from this election continues; none of the three new pro-business parties, Coalition Vancouver, Vancouver 1st and YES Vancouver got a single candidate elected to council, school board or parks board.

Two of the three Green councillors did significantly better than the rest of the winners. Adrienne Carr and Peter Fry won nearly 70,000 and 62,000 votes respectively, while the rest of the elected councillors won between 43,000 and 53,000 each.

If everyone who cast a vote voted for at least one councillor, Carr received 39.5 per cent of the vote. Since none of the major parties fielded a complete slate, it's very likely that this reflects not just their own support but also voters from the right and the left choosing the Greens as a second choice.

Now that the election is over, COPE is gearing up to win the fight for a rent freeze and a mansion tax to end homelessness. As Jean Swanson said at the election night victory party, before the results were announced, "our accomplishment and our focus is movement building." Watch out for actions on the day the council members are sworn in and on the first day that council meets.

Stephen Harper's message: 'give me a fascist any day'

by John Bell

Former Prime Minister and current corporate reptile Stephen Harper recently told Global News: "I look at Donald Trump. Obviously, there's things that I'm uncomfortable with but the Bernie Sanders of the world or the Jeremy Corbys in Britain are the ones that really, really frighten me."

We presume Harper is "uncomfortable" with Trump's flirtations with fascism, employing racists like Steve Bannon and Stephen Miller in the White House, and refusing to condemn Nazis marching in the streets. Perhaps there is a minor disagreement over the fact that Trump will address the Family Research Council's Values Voter Summit – a group that is virulently anti-LGBTQ+ and has been designated a "hate group" by the Southern Poverty Law Centre. Trump will share the podium with Steve Bannon and Sebastian Gorka, a leading anti-Muslim racist.

Harper didn't stop there. He also gave a



Stephen Trumper

nod to Nigel Farage, former leader of UKIP, an anti-immigration party well to the right of the British Tories. Farage has made a career of flirting with fascist groups, and manipulating Islamophobia to grow his party. He has been adept at connecting Brexit nationalism to anti-Muslim racism. Farage has

more than done his part to drive reported hate crimes in the UK up about 40 %, from 5,949 in 2016-17 to 8,336 in 2017-18, according to the Home Office data.

"The Donald Trumps of the world, the Nigel Farages of the world — one can disagree with them, especially a conservative like myself," Harper told his interviewer. "But they are at least trying to fix what they see as democratic, capitalist, market-oriented societies and my fear is if they don't have success or if conservatives do not adapt to the political pressures that are driving these movements, my concern is we will have the left-wing version of that, which will be anti-market, which will be socialist or Marxist economics, which I believe would turn us in an irreversible, downturn direction."

Just to be clear, Harper would have polite disagreements with neo-fascists, bigots and white-supremacists, but gladly ally with them to save the free market. But people who are actively fighting against racism and for better lives for working people – what-

ever criticisms one might make of Bernie Sanders or Jeremy Corbyn, that broadly describes both their long political careers – "really, really frightened" him.

Harper has a book to sell and he's in say-something-sensational mode, but what he describes is a world trend, not just his personal creepiness (although there is that, this is Stephen Harper after all). Check the vicious, racist austerity regime of the faltering British Tories; of the US Republicans refusing to bar out-and-out white supremacists from running for office under their banner; of Australian conservatives who parade their xenophobic policies to maintain power; or our own Tory Ontario Premier (and long-time Harper ally) Doug Ford who refuses to denounce an outright neo-Nazi who ran for mayor of the country's biggest city. Everywhere an economic system based on inequality and oppression is ready to turn to fascism to solve its pesky democracy problem.

Unlike Harper, that's what really, really frightens me.