

World protests oppose racism and fascism

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Money for pipelines, borders, cops and war



Liberal budget fuels racism

The killing of 50 Muslim worshippers in New Zealand resulted in an immediate spike in Islamophobic incidents worldwide.

In Toronto, the hate group Pegida organized a rally just one week later. But they were stopped from marching and humiliated by a much larger anti-racism protest.

As was the case in hundreds of cities and towns, the outpouring of solidarity against racism was massive.

Peace circles protected mosques from Birmingham to Burnaby with different faith leaders and activists surrounding the prayer sites, providing a physical and psychological barrier to the haters.

Once again, the divisions which have been so strenuously entrenched by media and politicians were countered by the solidarity of regular people standing with their neighbours.

But our politicians have no intention of

stopping their drive to divide us.

Conservative leader Andrew Scheer sent “thoughts and prayers” but refused to even mention that the victims in New Zealand were Muslims. He knows full well that an active section of the Conservative party base is violently Islamophobic.

Maxime Bernier, leader of the far-right People’s Party, didn’t even mention the attack.

And how did Trudeau respond? By putting millions of dollars in the federal budget into policing borders, pandering to the racists he hopes will vote for him in what is a very close race to form the next government.

There is no border crisis in Canada. There is no crisis of “Canadian values” being eroded or watered down by immigration. These are dog whistles to the racists, and it appears Trudeau wants to win their votes.

The Liberals also put \$1.4 billion into continuing the disastrous wars in Iraq and

Afghanistan which have fueled Islamophobia and contributed to forced migration for almost two decades.

There was \$25 million in the budget to address systemic racism in Canada. This is great, but unfortunately it is no match for the extra \$1.2 billion for border security and policing, which is always used disproportionately against people of colour and immigrants.

Contempt

In typical fashion, the Liberals have pledged a penny to progress and a dollar to push back that same progress. On balance, this budget will further fuel racism.

And Trudeau wasn’t done there. His contempt for anyone that challenges him has become a feature of the current Liberal party meltdown.

When members of Free Grassy Narrows advocacy group interrupted Trudeau’s fund-

ing pitch in Toronto, his callous response of “Thank you for your donation” showed a complete contempt for Indigenous people. They are protesting mercury contamination of their land that has not been cleaned up after decades of promises by different levels of government.

This is environmental racism plain and simple, as are all the pipeline projects which are being pushed through Indigenous land without approval.

After the Christchurch attack, we learned that the shooter had connections to the far-right Rebel Media, had donated to Faith Goldy in Toronto and was inspired by the Quebec City Mosque shooter Alexandre Bissonnette.

Indeed, these people are making Canada a leading exporter of hate and division. Certain party leaders have been helping them out. But we can stop them if our unity can overtake their hate.

A very Canadian scandal

by John Bell

Every time Justin Trudeau tries to change the channel and move on from the SNC Lavalin scandal, he is dealt another blow. Here's what we know thus far:

Global engineering and construction firm SNC Lavalin is charged with fraud and conspiracy from its activities in Libya; SNC happens to be a major donor to the Liberals and, to a lesser degree, the Tories. Buried deep in the previous Liberal budget bill was Deferred Prosecution Agreements (DPA) whereby criminal enterprises can avoid the embarrassment of public trial in exchange for a cash settlement and a few Mea Culpas.

Justice department prosecutors decided not to grant a DPA to SNC. SNC threatened to take its HQ out of Quebec and jobs out of Canada. Liberal honchos right up to the PMO were pissed. They started to badger Justice Minister and Attorney General Jody Wilson-Raybould to intervene and grant a DPA for SNC. She refused. Pressure was brought from Clerk of the Privy Council Michael Wernick, PMO insider Gerald Butts and Trudeau himself. She still refused.

In a cabinet shuffle JWR went to Veterans Affairs, a clear demotion. After a few weeks JWR resigned from cabinet. She explained why before the Parliamentary Justice Committee. Her televised appearance got huge ratings and the young Indigenous woman MP became a national celebrity.

Next Trudeau fart-catcher Gerry Butts resigned to save the reputation of his friend and boss. He began his testimony before the Justice Committee by saying he did not intend to speak ill of JWR; he then spent almost all of his time throwing her under the bus.

Central to Butts' defence was the claim that PMO reps, up to and including Trudeau himself, were just doing the right thing, defending 9000 jobs that might be lost if SNC Lavalin didn't get a free pass from conspiracy and fraud prosecution.

Trudeau's defenders repeated the figure of 9000 lost job until it was accepted as gospel. The problem:



Jody Wilson-Raybould and Jane Philpott: splits in Liberal ranks

Butts had pulled it out of his ass. He was unable to recall where the number came from. Neither could Wernick, when it was his turn to appear before the committee. Soon after he too resigned.

Nagging questions

Then Jane Philpott quit cabinet as head of the Treasury Board, ostensibly in solidarity with JWR. The grumbling and splits in the Liberal ranks grew. Should the dissenters be praised for nobly upholding the rule of law, or should they be tossed out of caucus for breaking party solidarity and arrogantly ignoring the threat to Canadian jobs, jobs, jobs.

Then Trudeau just shut down the Parliamentary Justice Committee, in hopes that a feel-good budget would grab the headlines. No such luck. Finance Minister, Bay Street Bill Morneau was literally drowned out by opposition catcalls and noisemaking. The Tories were actually starting to portray themselves as upright exemplars of honest government—

magically erasing a decade of Harper dirty tricks and corruption.

And just as the dust was settling, JWR delivered Trudeau another swift kick in the nuts. She delivered tape of a phone conversation with Wernick (made without his knowledge) wherein he tries to twist her arm into granting the PDA to SNC. Her side of the conversation seems almost scripted to make her shine, a sort of Jody of Arc defending the rule of law.

So there you have it, pick your version of the truth. A noble Indigenous public servant upholds the law and gets tossed to the wolves. An embattled Prime Minister and his supporters willing to bend the rules to defend Canadian workers. Tory opportunists and racists suddenly singing the praises of a Liberal cabinet minister they had publicly reviled only weeks earlier.

Pardon me for seeming cynical, but a long lifetime of observing Liberal MPs and cabinet ministers has trained me not to expect noble deeds of public

sacrifice. The decision to disband the Justice Committee and to release the secret gotcha phone recording does nothing to change my opinion of either Liberal faction.

Why did JWR balk at the use of a corporate "get-out-of-jail-free" card she, as Justice Minister, had helped hide deep within a budget omnibus bill in the first place? Could it be because her opposition was not to letting SNC Lavalin off the hook for past crimes, but another motive? If she is so aggrieved why is she planning to run again as a Liberal in the next election? Why did she record the phone call with Wernick that occurred before her cabinet demotion, so obviously scripted to make her look good? Did she have a game plan even then to kick the legs out from under Trudeau and his supporters?

So many questions. But in Canadian politics, when in doubt follow the petro-dollars.

Corporate grifters

Remember, SNC Lavalin doesn't just build prisons for dictators and privatized hospitals; they're also in the pipeline business. When Trudeau bought out the Trans Mountain pipeline project, did you ever stop to think what corporation would be getting the job? How would it look to award that contract to a company that was fighting a bribery and corruption scandal through the courts? No wonder the PMO and SNC were so desperate for the DPA to be granted quietly.

So the Liberals are split and Trudeau has a problem. Does he let JWR (and Philpott) remain in caucus, to organize a faction that seems devoted to replacing him? Is JWR going to pursue her not so secret campaign to become the first Indigenous PM? Or does he kick them out and risk losing the support of Liberal members and voters who have been snowed into seeing JWR as a noble truth teller.

And all this political theatre distracts us from the real story—that our "democracy" is rotten with corruption and collusion at the highest levels. So a party of corporate grifters is tearing itself apart. Working people have no stake in backing either side.

Tory tough love

by John Bell

The Ontario Tory budget features, among other things, cuts to education funding. That means teacher layoffs, even though Doug Ford repeatedly promised during the campaign there would be no jobs lost as a result of his government.

The Toronto District School Board estimates they will lose 1,000 teachers.

And teacher layoffs mean bigger class sizes. Average secondary school classes will go from 22 to 28 next year.



Former goat herder and Tory Education Minister Lisa Thompson had the nerve to go on radio to say that bigger class sizes were actually good for kids.

"When students are currently preparing to go off to post-secondary education, we're hearing from professors and employers alike that they're lacking coping skills and they're lacking resiliency. By increasing class sizes in high school, we're preparing them for the reality of post-secondary as well as the world of work."

Thompson even contended that "some" teachers had asked for bigger classes: "I'm speaking to some teachers as well, when it comes to the group work and the teamwork that they want to facilitate in their classrooms, that ideal number is between 26 and 28."

Doug Ford would rather invest \$10 million in the horse racing industry than in Ontario students. As for teachers who might be thinking of protesting: "If the head of the unions want to hurt the children of this province by doing walkouts and everything else, I'd think twice if I were them."

Bottom line: kids can expect capitalism to treat them like shit, so it is time to start toughening them up. These Tories are true believers that life is, and should be, a brutal contest of survival of the fittest. Naturally they want to transform education in their own image—mean, selfish, bullying and ugly. And if teachers dare to stand up for students, there could be some knees broken.

The good news is that students, teachers and parents are organizing to fight back. The movement to stop Ford is on the rise, and won't be deterred by corny B-movie threats.

Stop Ford's cuts to autism funding

by Ken Golden

On a bright but cold winter morning, families, therapists and support worker from across the province assembled outside the Legislature to oppose the Ford government's proposed changes to the Ontario Autism Program.

These changes would devastate families, many of which are already in a state of prolonged crisis.

The Progressive Conservative plan was announced as a way to cut the existing waitlist for support and therapies. However, the medicine is worse that the problem it is intended to solve. Families who are already receiving support will see devastating cuts; many will lose the critical ongoing therapy that they are reliant on for their children and loved ones. For those children who have been waiting on

the list, they will no longer have a level of support commensurate to the needs of their child. The funding formula will now be based on a low start-up level, it will be age dependent and it will be income tested. All these things are virtually constructed to starve children of the funding they actually need and cut it back if household income happens to be beyond the equivalent of two minimum wage earners. Not only that, but funding will then plummet further for children beyond the age of five!

Lisa MacLeod, Minister of Children, Community and Social Services, was caught out recently for bullying one of the therapist associations. Her department also secretly froze therapies back in the fall for families and forbid service agencies from letting parents on the waitlist know. She then tried

to deceive citizens and the media about what she had done (effectively inflating the waiting lists and creating a crisis she is pretending to solve).

Families have been mobilizing in their communities, outside of MPP offices and online to explain the problems with the government program. The changes are set for April 1st, but there will be no laughing on 'April Fool's Day' when those receiving therapies will have much of their funding severely cut back and families are being provided with almost no information to adapt to the changes; many therapists are also on the threshold of losing their jobs.

Fortunately, the government has been on the defensive. In the coming weeks and months we'll have to push every MPP on this issue and try and force the

government to re-examine their changes. There is a looming crisis for families who have children on the autism spectrum (with kids who have difficulties with social communications, self-regulation, sometimes dressing themselves, eating and living independently), for young people and adults who need support and for many trained therapists who have dedicated themselves to helping. The crisis will also impact a school system that isn't at all resourced or equipped to handle the support that will be required, as children come off programs their parents will not be able to afford and are forced to put them into the school system.

• For more info: Ontario Autism Coalition <https://ontarioautismcoalition.com/>

Five lessons from Sudan and Algeria

from *The Socialist*, Egypt

A new wave of mass mobilisations has been on the rise for many weeks in Algeria, and over the past three months in Sudan. It proves that the structural political and economic problems of the regimes will continue to spark mass resistance from below.

The popular uprisings in Sudan and Algeria carry vital lessons for the peoples of the region, of which the following are perhaps the most important:

The age of popular revolution is not over

For many years the dictatorships and counter-revolutionary forces across the region have striven to defeat the Arab Spring of 2011-2013. They have also sought to consolidate a bleak ideological picture of revolution as a political choice, presenting it as bringing only misery to the masses and leading inevitably towards defeat.

But the return of the masses to the political scene in Sudan and Algeria confirms that revolution will remain a political choice for the people. In fact, it is the only solution which can overcome the problem of regimes which cannot be reformed. In Algeria, Bouteflika is the public face of corrupt networks of generals and big businessmen, while in Sudan El Bashir heads a bloodstained regime pursuing tough austerity policies on the orders of the International Monetary Fund.

At the same time as the Sudanese and Algerians are rising, a strong protest movement is developing in Morocco, with participation of professionals and trade unionists. Meanwhile Tunisia is witnessing major workers' strikes. And in Lebanon there have been mass protests against deteriorating living conditions.

Even in Jordan, last June a mass movement forced the King to reverse the government's economic decisions, and before that we saw the Great Return marches in Palestine. Meanwhile growing popular anger in Egypt and other countries means the situation is increasingly volatile for those at the top.

Despite the defeats suffered, the memory of the region's revolutions remains inspiring, offering lessons and experiences. The spectre of revolution still haunts the region's tyrants. If the uprisings in Sudan and Algeria achieve significant victories in the near future, waves of hope and confidence will spread across the region.

From the political to the economic and back again

The uprisings in Sudan and Algeria erupted for more profound reasons than the slogans which the news coverage attributes to them.

In Sudan, the spark was the regime's decision to triple the price of bread. However, after the beginning of the uprising on 19 December, widespread public discontent quickly turned into calls for the downfall of the regime. The people declared there was no room for compromise or negotiation with El Bashir's bloody regime, which has impoverished them for three decades. "Just go now", they



Mass protest against Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika

Photo: Fethi Hamlati, CC-BY-SA

demanding.

In Algeria the slogans and demands rapidly broadened from rejection of Bouteflika's fifth presidential term to social demands including ending the unemployment crisis. On top of this are protests against high prices and the spread of poverty and corruption—a quarter of the population lives under the poverty line. The movement has continued to call for the "downfall of the regime".

The broadening of the mass movement in both countries allowed shifts from the economic to the political—from the price of bread to the fall of the regime in Sudan. It also allows shifts from the political to the economic—from rejecting the fifth term to social demands in Algeria.

The breadth of the movement has led to open war on the political front, as well as on the economic and social front. This is what is most terrifying for the dictatorships.

One of the principal tasks of the two uprisings is to fully integrate struggles on the political and economic fronts, to move towards the overthrow of the system as a whole.

Confront the manoeuvres of the regimes

The uprisings in Sudan and Algeria are escalating, despite a combination of direct repression, blackmail, distortion and deceptive concessions.

Since the eruption of the uprising El Bashir has accused "foreign parties" of stirring up protests. He has also warned demonstrators of colluding with the "conspiracy", pointing to the economic sanctions

imposed on Sudan in order to blackmail the revolutionaries.

El Bashir has also made deceptive concessions, such as calling on parliament to reverse measures to extend his time in office while simultaneously imposing a state of emergency. On the same night—22 February—thousands responded by marching in more than 80 rallies in different Sudanese cities.

Demonstrations and strikes are continuing on a daily basis across the country. The uprising has broken the myth of power which the Sudanese regime has been sowing

power or a challenge to its rule.

Throughout that decade, the Algerian state waged a cruel war against factions associated with the Islamic Salvation Front. This was after the army cancelled the results of the parliamentary elections in 1991 in response to a clear victory by the Front.

The two uprisings have reached a stage where falling for the manoeuvres of the respective ruling classes will unleash vicious revenge by the regimes against their opponents.

important of these have been the strikes involving tens of thousands of workers in health and education last year over wage policies.

Without these clouds gathering on the horizon over the past few years, the mass storms in Algeria and Sudan today would not be raging with such power and resilience.

Once again this confirms that popular uprisings require the accumulation of struggles in many battles over a long period, however limited these may seem at the time, and however elusive their victories. This is exactly what we need to see in Egypt today.

The role of the working class

At the heart of the heroism and resilience of protesters in Sudan stands the "Sudanese Professionals Association", consisting of eight trade union organisations. This leads demonstrations and strikes on a daily basis against El Bashir.

Meanwhile in Algeria some of the trade unions have begun to challenge the regime.

There is no doubt that massive popular marches in the two countries are playing a crucial role in the escalating challenge



Sudanese uprising: demonstrations and strikes continue across the country

for more than 30 years.

There remains an urgent need for a decisive blow, through coordinated action from the working class—acting in the workplaces—to bring the regimes to their knees.

The regime in Algeria is also manoeuvring in a manner similar to deposed dictator Mubarak's claims in 2011 that he "did not intend to run for election". Bouteflika pledged to stay in power for a year and then hold early elections, prepare a new constitution and broad reforms.

The Algerian uprising has also destroyed the myth of the "Black Decade" (1992-2002). The regime has menaced the people for long years with the threat of repeating the horrors of that period in case of opposition to its continuation in

Build for the long term

Great popular uprisings are never born in a vacuum, but rather represent the fruits of years of tireless, hard struggles against the regimes.

In Sudan, the people never surrendered to El Bashir and his regime. Tens of thousands rose up in June and July of 2012 against the regime's harsh economic policies. And in September 2013 protests spread in many Sudanese cities, which were met with brutal violence and the killing of around 200 protesters.

Demonstrations and strikes continued to pose a serious challenge for many years before the current uprising exploded.

In Algeria as well, there is a history of workers' strikes which have built up for years. The most

posed by the uprisings. Yet this kind of challenge is one which the regime can tolerate. There is a danger that it will continue to repress marches and demonstrations over long periods of time.

This is why the two uprisings need decisive intervention by major sections of the working class to stop the wheels of production through open-ended mass strikes. This would open up major fissures within the two regimes.

The steadfastness of the escalating mass rallies has forced the regimes to back down from more vicious responses. But there remains an urgent need for a decisive blow, through coordinated action from the working class—acting in the workplaces—to bring the regimes to their knees.

French protests challenge system

by **Faline Bobier**

The Yellow Vests (Gilets jaunes) movement in France has been raging for four months now, since November of last year. What initially started out as a protest against rising fuel prices has expanded into a movement calling into question the government of Macron and capitalism itself.

Students and youth have become an important presence and big supporters of the Yellow Vests. A school student in Bordeaux explained, “We see our parents work very hard but get almost nothing. We want more than that when we see the rich take more and more. We want free education for all at every level and a life that is human, not reduced to a machine for profit.”

There have been attempts by the far right in France to hijack the movement. The fascist Marine Le Pen has posed as its champion, but her message of division and racism has been largely rejected.

This is because of the broad-based nature of the opposition, which has become a revolt of French workers and students against the venality of all politicians.

A rail worker who came to Paris with his work mates to participate in the mobilisations said, “I came to see if this was a real working class movement of the sort I could support. It was brilliant, we all thought so. We were all involved in the rail strikes earlier this year. They were good but they didn’t go far enough. Now I feel we can bring Macron down.”

Polarization

What is happening in France – the polarization between left and right and the failure of the centre (mainstream, ‘reasonable’ politicians) to hold – is a global phenomenon. The difference is that in France the class anger and bitterness has erupted on the streets and increasingly in the workplaces to challenge the status quo of a politician like Macron who originally was elected on a platform of being the ‘saviour’ of French capitalism and somehow also the friend of ‘ordinary’ French citizens.

In countries like Britain and Canada there have been attempts by the far right to claim the mantle of the Yellow Vests for their own racist purposes. They have been able to do this partially because there is no comparable movement on the streets – but they have not gone unchallenged by anti-racists, Indigenous activists and others who see through their phony identification with a burgeoning anti-capitalist struggle in France.

In France, there is no central coordination of the Yellow Vest movement. In that sense it has similarities with Occupy, in terms of being a spontaneous eruption from below.

But the most popular demands of the movement are unifying ones: a big increase in taxation on the rich, more money for the services ordinary people need, the removal of Macron, and an end to privatization.

Of course, the mainstream media and the politicians take every opportunity to say that the movement is dying. They are being helped along by the repressive forces of the French state who have been arresting and physically attacking the demonstrations since the beginning.

However, a few weeks ago thousands were on the street in Toulouse, carrying placards such as “Fâché mais pas facho” (Angry but not fascist) and “capitalist dinosaurs, tremble, the world will change”.

The Yellow Vest movement has been inspiring fightbacks in other countries, such as Belgium and the Netherlands, where ordinary people face the same austerity and attacks.

Protesters in Iraq have been inspired to wear yellow vests on their own demonstrations. And in Egypt the regime of dictator Abdel Fattah el-Sisi restricted the sale of yellow vests ahead of the anniversary of the 2011 Egyptian Revolution.

Organized workers

There are two things that are critical for the movement in France to grow. One, the Yellow Vests must join up with organized workers, who have the power in their workplaces to make Macron and his capitalist cronies cower.

To a certain extent this has been happening over the last months. The government has tried to blame “ultra left and ultra right trouble-makers” for the revolt. But the vast majority of those involved are ordinary people.

Right wing paper *Le Figaro* admitted that most of those arrested on the Yellow Vest protests have been “workers, mechanics, cooks, carpenters, farmers and plumbers, aged between 20 and 30”.

Strikes have been growing in regional transport, the energy sector, and even the administrative and technical section of the police.

And links with Yellow Vests are developing. The Sud-Rail union – the third biggest in the industry – has called explicitly for support of Yellow Vest protests.

France’s main trade union federation, the CGT, has finally voiced support for the Yellow Vests. At first it was contemptuous of the movement, which began against rising fuel costs.

Now it says there is “legitimate anger in the population” and that “the CGT shares this anger”. But the CGT leaders have too often throttled real resistance so the movement must build its own rank and file leadership that can carry the struggle forward if the union leadership waver and back down.

Secondly, the Yellow Vests must take a clear anti-racist position to withstand the scapegoating and racism that is being fomented by the ruling class in France to try and break the movement. In a recent television address Macron ominously called for something to be done about French people’s identity, about immigration and about so-called threats to secularism.

But united and more militant struggle can defeat all of Macron’s scheming and push for fundamental change.

TAKING ON THE RACIST THREAT

Over the last few weeks, hundreds of thousands of people around the world mobilized against racism and Islamophobia. From Christchurch to Chemnitz, resistance to the right’s attempts to divide us is growing.



NEW YORK
IN NEW YORK the newly formed group United Against Racism and Fascism organized its first demonstration on March 16. Hundreds rallied in Times Square before marching through downtown Manhattan.

VIENNA

AROUND 12,000 people joined the demonstration in Vienna, Austria, on Saturday March 16. It was organised by the Platform for a More Humane Asylum Policy and backed by over 100 other organisations, including trade unions and political groups.



Shutting down hate across Canada & Quebec

AMSTERDAM
AFTER far-right parties took 24 per cent of the vote in elections in the Netherlands on March 20 they were met with a response in the streets.

On less than a week’s notice, over 10,000 marched in Amsterdam and many thousands more throughout the country in opposition to the racist parties. The movement needs to grow to hold back the threat of the far right and has called for a series of national demonstrations over the next months.

NEW ZEALAND
In cities throughout the country, people formed peace circles around dozens of Mosques on Friday March 22. Hundreds, including many high school students, gathered at the Madinah Masjid in the east end of Toronto. Reverend Sarah Miller told participants that, “All together today, we should commit to a world of peace” before organizing a moment of silence with participants from Jewish, Sikh and Christian groups. This followed a rally of 500 at City Hall marking the International Day against Racism.

At the Quebec City Grand Mosque, where far-right shooter Alexander Bissonnette killed 6 worshippers in 2017, people held a vigil in honour of the victims of all Islamophobic attacks.

In a somewhat less peaceful but no less important event, anti-racists in Toronto shut down a planned march by Pegida (Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the West) in downtown Toronto on March 23.



“Ring of Peace” at Madinah Masjid

Hundreds of people from many different groups, religious leaders, socialists and anti-fascists forced the 50 racists to scuttle to the subway before they could spread their hate. It was a show of force that

humiliated the bigots. In Vancouver, student organizers shut



BARCELONA
MORE THAN 3500 people marched in Barcelona against racism and the growth of fascism on March 23. Chants of “We must stop racism on the streets” and “We are united against the fascists” echoed through the city. The protest focused on the rise of the right-wing parties in the Spanish state and the resulting attacks on refugees seeking sanctuary in all of the European countries that border the Mediterranean.

down a proposed event featuring white supremacists Stefan Molyneux and Lauren Southern – not once, but twice. Students quickly set up Students Against Bigotry and began inundating the administration to stop the meeting at the UBC. The university cancelled the event and the organizers were forced to move off campus. But that didn’t help. They moved to the Hellenic community of Vancouver site, but were again shut down by an outpouring of opposition. No matter where the racists try to set up, they are being shut down by ever growing numbers.



International Day for the Elimination of Racism in Toronto



Raging Asian Women drumming up resistance

A call to battle

by **Carolyn Egan**

Almost 900 stewards and trade union activists gathered in downtown Toronto for the first multi-union stewards assembly in years.

The event began with a stirring drum performance by the Raging Asian Women who inspired the crowd with their passion and intensity. Drumming has been historically a call to battle in many cultures and this was what was happening that night. The assembly was a call to arms for the working class in this city, and the workers who came out after a long day on the job on building sites, in manufacturing plants, hospitals, schools, hotels and more, were there to build a movement of resistance against the attacks of the Ford government.

Pressure has been building on the Toronto and York Region Labour Council from delegates to take up the fight, and the leadership called the assembly. There was worry about how many would respond. The Ford government had won a majority election based on lies and false promises. Over thirty percent of union members had voted for the Tories but the tide was beginning to turn.

Over ten thousand marched for International Women’s Day. The parents of autistic children, the farmers in the green belt surrounding Toronto, university and college students have been pushing back hard and it was time for bold steps. Many labour leaders have been slow to respond but the numbers coming out over recent months have shown that people want to fight.

Aside from a couple of speeches by labour leaders, it was rank and file workers who took the stage. A young racialized apprentice from the electricians spoke of what was at stake for the building trades. In an attempt to break their unions the government is intending to allow non union companies to bid for contracts from cities and large institutions such as hospitals and universities. A transit worker spoke about the proposed takeover of the subways by the province and the effect that would have on its workers. Teachers and childcare workers spoke about the attacks they are facing. At the same time, hotel workers from Unite Here local 75

and members of IATSE 58, who had just finished a long work stoppage, spoke about their victories and the importance of solidarity.

Into every workplace

There was not enough time for discussion and a clear plan did not emerge, but the direction was clear from those who spoke. There are key actions coming up such as the health care rally at Queens Park, mobilizing at elementary schools in support of the teachers, and the ongoing fight against the subway upgrading. There are major battles to come and workers showed that the confidence is there to build a grassroots movement of resistance.

The stewards and activists in attendance pledged to bring back the message of the assembly to their workplaces and communities. Workplace meetings, connecting with other activists, lunch time discussions, forming committees, talking to the majority in every workplace who are not with the bosses are the tasks ahead. Drawing these fellow workers into the growing movement of resistance is what has to be done.

I was speaking to a young, Black steward in my local. He said that he learned so much about what was going on in other sectors that he can now take on the discussions and debates in the workplace and organize solidarity. This is what we have to build on.

Workers in this country have a long legacy of working class fight back. This year is the 100th anniversary of the Winnipeg general strike, when immigrant workers and Canadian born veterans of WWI shut down the city for six weeks. They were inspired by the Bolshevik revolution where workers took control of their own lives, their workplaces and their society. In Russia they legalized abortion and homosexuality and created possibilities that had never been dreamed of by ordinary working people. Sadly, that revolution was betrayed by the horrors of Stalinism and the incredible gains were reversed. But we have the legacy of those courageous women and men who have left us with lessons of what is possible when rank and file workers use the collective power that is ours.

What we think

Against imperialism

by Tom Leonard

The word 'imperialism' is thrown around a lot by progressives, but what does the word mean?

There's an old meaning, going back to ancient times. Imperialism meant a state with an emperor, a ruler using military force to conquer other people. In that sense it applied to ancient China, Persia, Rome and others. Typically, the old empires ruled through appointed governors - think of the New Testament's Pontius Pilate - whose job was to squeeze tribute out of conquered territories to be sent back to imperial headquarters. Conquered territories were also frequently used as places of settlement for populations moved from the empire's heartland. Imperialism meant robbery by force, and the building of settler communities in conquered lands.

The old Spanish and Portuguese empires in

network of military bases as a new form of empire. Thousands of people have been killed in U.S. drone strikes all over the world since 2008, many (if not most) of them innocent bystanders. Plenty of British and American soldiers returned from the Iraq War, including several of those who came to Canada as resistors to that war, openly arguing that "We're not there to help the Iraqis but to grab their oil."

However, imperialist control extends beyond the realm of military power and open conquest. Even after the U.S. ended the formal occupation of Iraq in December 2011, imperialist control continued. To understand this, we have to get behind the immediate military and colonial question. There is more to understanding imperialism.

At the turn of the twentieth century the big powers had largely finished dividing the world between them. Marxist thinkers of that time, such as Lenin, Bukharin and Luxemburg used

national-states. That competition took the most brutal form in the First and Second World Wars. Millions of corpses were piled up as the most powerful industrial states fought each other, using every dreadful means that modern science and industry could provide, to divide and re-divide the world.

Imperialism was not just powerful states dominating backward countries, but is the shape of modern capitalist competition. After the Second World War, the U.S. and Russia emerged as the two strongest powers. They divided the world between them, building two "blocs" that threatened each other with nuclear annihilation for most of the next half century - the Cold War. With the collapse of the Soviet Union and its satellite Stalinist states in Eastern Europe, U.S. capitalism set out to remake the world to fit the needs of its own big corporations.

Military spending, and the use of massive

inequality. Production of cheap drugs to treat AIDS, malaria and other diseases is banned, for corporate patents would be threatened. The WTO, IMF, World Bank and other agencies of corporate domination force their rules on the rest of the world. In the 19th century, Britain and America used navy ships to force China and Japan to trade on terms set by Britain and America. Today, they bribe and coerce governments to achieve the same ends.

For most of the world's population the result is disastrous. As the tiny number of billionaires grows, so too do poverty, sickness and death. Even in the most advanced capitalist countries workers work longer hours and are less secure. Nationally and internationally, the inequality gap widens and the world becomes more dangerous.

Must billions be wasted on the real weapons of mass destruction - the aircraft, submarines, rockets and nukes of America and its closest allies? Must food, water, housing, education and every other kind of production be placed under the sway of the multinationals? Must the very air we breathe and our weather patterns be wrecked by the demands of profit? The short term answer, alas, is yes. Capitalist imperialism - the close interdependence of big corporations and big governments - will enforce these disasters.

Our job is to develop real movements that perceive these linkages, and that aim to break them for good.



U.S. Iraq War veterans joined massive protests against the war in Boston

Latin America, as well as the British Empire, had significant aspects of this. But this dynamic did not simply disappear with decolonization and the wars and movements of national liberation that followed the Second World War. According to anthropologist David Vine, the United States has approximately 800 military bases located in roughly 80 countries around the world. Former CIA consultant Chalmers Johnson commented in 2004 that "the United States dominates the world through its military power. Due to government secrecy, our citizens are often ignorant of the fact that our garrisons encircle the planet" and referred to this global

term "imperialism" to make sense of the new forms that capitalism was taking in the 20th century. Out of the competitive struggle that always characterizes capitalism, new forms of capitalist organization were becoming dominant. Small companies were gobbled up by giant corporations. In some countries huge banks were taking control of industry. What was variously called "monopoly capital" and "finance capital" was now central to modern capitalism.

Yet despite this massive centralization of capital, competition did not end. Rather it took new forms, increasingly involving the major

deadly force, is one part of its armoury, but not the only part. Institutions like the World Trade Organization (WTO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, all of which are dominated by the U.S., are another.

The WTO has a very simple policy. Nothing must hinder corporations from making profits, wherever and however they can. Therefore, everything must be privatized so that the rich can make profits from it - water, health services, railways, schools.

The true content of globalization is the removal of all limits to exploitation and

READ MORE

• Rosa Luxemburg, **The Crisis of German Social Democracy** (The Junius Pamphlet) <https://bit.ly/2Ush9qg>

• Vladimir Lenin, **Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism** <https://bit.ly/2elvCKS>

• Alex Callinicos, **Imperialism and Global Political Economy** <https://bit.ly/2UaaJgf>

Territorial Acknowledgement

As settlers, we acknowledge our occupation of lands that are the Indigenous territories of Turtle Island. Furthermore, we support all struggles for Indigenous sovereignty in whatever forms they take by the hundreds of First Nations and Inuit communities that have resided here for many thousands of years, and by Métis communities that have developed in the last hundreds of years.

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WHERE WE STAND socialist.ca/ourstand

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. Capitalism cannot regulate the catastrophic effects of climate change. We stand for climate justice, including the

concept of "just transition" for affected workers.

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

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Quebec Solidaire votes to fight racist CAQ ban

by **Chantal Sundaram**

With chants of “So-so-so solidarité”, Quebec solidaire delegates celebrated a decisive vote in favour of opposing any and all ban on religious symbols at a meeting in Quebec City on March 30.

While the vote came two days after the CAQ introduced its racist bill to ban the wearing of religious symbols by many public sector employees including teachers, it was the product of a long debate within QS to clarify and harden its own position against any ban on religious symbols for any profession in the false name of secularism.

Following the vote, Sibel Ataoğul, spokesperson for the “Solidaires pour un Québec laïque et inclusif” collective, stated “We believe that we have chosen to be consistent with our program and with the Quebec Charter of Rights and Freedoms which already guarantees non-discrimination.”

The debate within QS not only clarified the party’s position but also its resolve to take on the divide and conquer politics of the CAQ. As speaker after speaker said, the consequences of this are real: racism divides our movement, and Islamophobia kills. The CAQ bill will immediately stoke violence against the Muslim community, and now that QS has affirmed its clear opposition as a party, it must



put that commitment into action with coalitions on the ground to oppose the bill.

In the same week, QS announced another ultimatum to the CAQ government: take real action on climate change by 2020 or we will disrupt Parliament and prevent business as usual. QS is now well positioned to take on the CAQ on the two key issues of our times, the climate and racism. It is well positioned to be the real opposition, in Parliament and in the street.

REVIEW

A very scary look at Us

by **Faline Bobier**

Jordan Peele, director of 2017’s brilliant film *Get Out*, skewering racism in America, has done it again with his new movie *Us*, out in theatres now.

Peele has always been a fan of horror, although he was previously best known for his work as a comedian on shows such as *Mad TV* and *Key and Peele*.

The best horror movies often have a comic aspect, however twisted or macabre it may be, and *Us* is no exception.

In some ways the question of race is not at the centre of this movie in the way it was in *Get Out*, although placing a Black family at the centre of the action can’t help but reverberate with audiences, in terms of the actually existing racism of the larger society.

Peele has described one of the main themes of the movie as the divisions we create between ourselves and the other, in order to distance ourselves from that which makes us afraid or that which we would prefer to ignore.

In an interview about the movie Peele revealed his influences from other directors of scary movies:

“My favorite horror images are the beautiful ones that are subverted. This is why I was drawn to *The Stepford Wives*, and movies like *Jaws* and *The Shining* appeal to me, is that when you have something idyllic and beautiful and sort of perfect, that’s where true horror lies. In this movie, it’s even — to present the shiny, happy, “Hands Across America” version of our culture with the promise of the darkness underneath.”

The movie begins with a flashback to 1986 where a young Black girl (the eerily effective Madison Curry) is visiting a Santa Cruz, California amusement park with her parents. She wanders away from her parents and enters a kind of funhouse with a big neon sign which reads ‘Find yourself’.

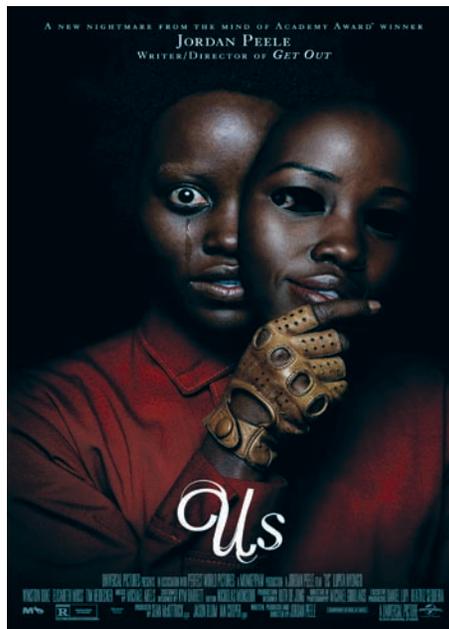
What she finds is her doppelganger, her double, which will have horrifying repercussions later on in the film.

Adelaide or Addy, the little girl all grown up, returns to the same area some 30 years later for a couple of weeks at the family cottage with her somewhat goofy husband Gabe (Winston Duke) and her two children, teenage daughter

Zora (Shahadi Wright Joseph) and younger son Jason (Evan Alex) who hides most of the time behind a monster mask.

This is definitely an ensemble piece but actress Lupita Nyong’o (of *Twelve Years a Slave* and *Black Panther*) stands out as the troubled matriarch of this clan. There is humour in the film and moments when the audience erupts in laughter. From from its very beginning, though, when the Wilsons drive up to the cottage and there is an overhead shot featuring the beauty of nature, which is definitely an homage to Stanley Kubrick’s panning views in *The Shining*, we know all will not be well in their universe.

On their first night at the cottage the daughter



Zora notices that there is a family standing in their driveway, whom we can’t make out at first. It turns out that the family is a mirror image of their own, but as if seen through the distortion of a funhouse mirror.

They look like the Wilsons but they are different, with their fixed stares and animal-like, guttural speech. They are dressed in matching red overalls and wielding oversized scissors, the better to attack their counterparts.

When Addy asks who they are and her coun-

terpart, Red, replies ‘We’re Americans’ in deep, sepulchral tones we begin to see that the movie has more on its mind than empty scares.

Raging inequality

At the beginning of *Us*, as a kind of prologue, we read the following text across the screen:

“There are thousands of miles of tunnels beneath the continental US. Many have no known purpose at all.”

As the film goes on we realize that the Wilsons are not the only ones targeted by these creatures from the netherworld. In a plot twist reminiscent of *The Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, it turns out there are doppelgangers for their white neighbours (ably and creepily played by Elizabeth Moss and Tim Heidecker) and perhaps for everyone else on the planet.

The question that keeps getting posed throughout the movie, “Why are they doing this? What do they want?” is answered in part by Red when she explains the impoverished life she led, while Addy lived in comparative luxury above ground.

There are echoes of this critique of materialism in the comparison between Addy’s family and that of their white friends. The Wilsons seem to be comfortably middle class but their lifestyle can’t compare or is definitely a lesser version of their white friends Kitty and Josh.

This is underlined in a scene at the white couple’s ‘cottage’, which is not really a cottage at all, but an opulent residence, complete with all the requisite technology, including ‘Ophelia’ (a Siri-like virtual assistant), who hilariously misunderstands the couples’ plea to call the police when they are attacked by their own doppelgangers and starts playing N.W.A’s ‘Fuck the police’.

At least part of what *Us* is about (note the acronym for U.S. in the title) is the raging inequality in American society, which in a sense gives rise to these doppelgangers who rise up to partake in the wealth that has been denied them.

Peele puts a lot in his film and there will no doubt be a lot of discussions about the meaning of various sequences, but there’s also no doubt that he’s created a film that will remain in your head long after you’ve seen the it.

Highlights include

FRIDAY MAY 3

Workers power against the bosses

Speakers:

Megan Whitfield, president CUPW Toronto local
Connie Ndlovu, CUPE 7797
Cory Weir, Unifor 222
Carolyn Egan, USW 8300

SATURDAY MAY 4

Students in revolt

Speakers:

Mohammed Ali, student organizer, Mohawk College
Quentin Rowe-Codner, SFU Tuition Freeze Now!
Nour Alideeb, Canadian Federation of Students – Ontario

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Ford can be beaten

Since their election last June, Doug Ford's Tories have been on a mission – to roll back, slash or eliminate services and legislation affecting working class Ontarians.

Unlike their Liberal predecessors, who preferred a 'death by a thousand cuts' approach, Ford's Tories, under the slogan "For the People", have moved quickly to satisfy the people he really represents: Ontario's true special interest group, the 1%.

The Ford government has attacked health care, French language services, Indigenous education, replaced the sex-ed curriculum, rolled back labour rights for the lowest paid, attacked autistic children, rolled back grants to university students, licensed new construction on the green belt, attacked health & safety for construction workers, to mention a few low-lights.

Workers' power is the key

There has been pushback! Thousands of students, precarious workers, parents of autistic children and anti-poverty activists have been on the streets since Ford's election. But there is an elephant in the room: the labour movement's failure thus far to bring its weight to bear in opposing these attacks.

There are signs this is changing. A mass teachers' protest against education cuts on April 6 and a province-wide protest to defend health-care April 30 are an excellent beginning.

Our class, the workers, has the power, when organized, to pull together all the fightbacks, and strike a blow against the Tories and their rich backers in the Chambers of Commerce. We can shut down their factories, offices, construction sites, schools etc. – in other words, where it will hurt them most – in their pocketbooks.

We saw a recent glimpse of the possibility of



Post-secondary students protest Ford's cuts to education

labour/community solidarity when postal workers were ordered off their strike by Trudeau. Trade unionists and community members immediately shutdown postal facilities and picketed Liberal MP offices across Canada and Quebec in protest. This speaks to a mood of resistance and solidarity that can be the spark for mass actions that can push Ford back.

We've done this before – during the Days of Action against the Harris government starting in 1995. Labour began shutting down city by city, "London Calling", "Hamilton Answering", to Kitchener-Waterloo and eventually to Toronto.

Nothing moved during the strike in Hamilton, and downtown Toronto was virtually shut down – demonstrating the awesome power we have as workers, if we use it.

Yet Mike Harris was re-elected with a majority in 1998 – were those mass strikes a failure?

In a word, no. The failure was to be found at the top of the labour movement. After the shutdown of Toronto at the end of October 1996, calls were made throughout our movement for an Ontario-wide General Strike. But it was never called. Our leaders at the time wound down the Days of Action, de-mobilizing our movement in

the run-up to the election.

Mass strike action can and does work – we are this year celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Winnipeg General Strike. But we must carry it through to the end, and aim to bring down the Ford government, not wait passively for the next election while our province is destroyed.

Next steps: actions against Ford

Labour needs to build on recent mass anti-Ford meetings with a plan, including hiring action coordinators for every city/region, so that we can coordinate not only among ourselves as different unions, but give maximum solidarity to others in struggle such as students, parents of autistic children, social assistance recipients etc. We need to do this *now* – an attack on union rights à la Hudak may be in the cards, and we must be ready.

We need a plan for mass action against the Ford government to bring us all together – to begin to demonstrate our power when we fight together, and to show those who are angry and demoralized, who may have voted for Ford, that there is an alternative, and that we, 'The People', in collective struggle, are the ones who can make it happen.

The plan must include a Solidarity Pledge. When educational workers and others go up against Ford in bargaining this year, we need to pledge our support up to and including picket line support and strike action in solidarity.

Every Local should be ready to form a flying squad. This will say to bargaining teams that they don't have to cave at the bargaining table, that there is an alternative, to be found on the picket line if need be.

Finally, we must look at building on the wonderful legacy of the days of action, a PLAN for mass action to force back Ford's Tories.

Students push for fee freeze at SFU

by **Quentin Rowe-Codner**

A few weeks ago marked a critical point in the Tuition Freeze Now (TFN) campaign at Simon Fraser University, with both a rally on Monday March 18th, and a climactic Board of Governors (BOG) meeting on Thursday the 21st.

It was at the BOG meeting where top administrators voted on a proposed budget for the 2019/2020 school year, which within it included a substantial tuition hike, particularly for incoming international students, who are poised to see an increase of up to 20% depending on which department they are in.

The rally proved very successful in garnering support for the campaign, and in inspiring those who attended towards further action. In the morning, Tuition Freeze Now unfurled a giant banner over the campus' main entrance sign, which every student and staff member has to pass by on their way to the university.

The rally itself started at the SFU pond, with speeches from such community members as Svend Robinson with the BC NDP, Sara Sagai from the Vancouver Tenants Union, indigenous activist Raven Deer, and a handful of student speakers. Jean Swanson from the COPE campaign and currently on Vancouver City Council also sent a kind message to the cause.

Additionally, the organizers were able to utilize the numbers that we had rather efficiently, marching through the hallways, chanting, and handing out packets of ramen accessorized with information on the tuition increase. The rally concluded in the main administrative building,



Tuition Freeze Now campaigners bring their message to the SFU Board of Governors

where we handed an admin representative a petition with over 2000 signatures. TFN was told that all of this would be considered, and we finished off the rally with another round of chants.

A few days later came the consequential day that the TFN campaign had been building up to for months, the Board of Governors meeting. Tuition Freeze Now organizers and allies and prepared to present in front of the BOG. At 8AM, a total of over 80 students filled the room.

We discussed our *Tuition Talk* series, where students have come forward about the burdens facing them with regard to tuition, and how the

increases will negatively affect them. Amongst these tuition talks are stories of students who have been forced to drop out, move, take on extra work, all in the name of higher tuition. We then reiterated our economic positions, highlighting the absurd increases being faced by incoming international students, who in some programs will suffer a 20% increase. The presentation closed by assuring the Board of Governors that their hands were not tied on this matter, and that it was more than feasible to accept a tuition freeze for two years, while working with the student body to lobby for better public funding.

This was not a radical demand, nor hardly even a modest one, as months of research and investigation have proved.

Following Tuition Freeze's presentation, the VP of Finance and the President of the university each took time with their own speeches, callously and insultingly ignoring every word that we had said. They stuck to the same lines as they had for months, despite our having painstakingly addressed their concerns time and again.

Unfortunately the BOG voted almost unanimously in favour of the proposed budget, voting yes to a tuition increase. The passion and energy in the room at that moment erupted.

Despite the vote against students and against a tuition freeze, the campaign is making sure to stay as active as ever, and plans on continuing to fight for affordable education at SFU and across the province.

A day after the Board of Governors meeting, an organizer with Tuition Freeze Now, Giovanni HoSang, was elected as President of the Simon Fraser Student Society, which represents all undergrad students at the university. Numerous others from his team were elected to positions within the student society's governance as well.

Not only will this be important for the campaign going forward, but also comes as a sign that students care about these issues, and want to see a solution. No student a cash cow, tuition freeze now!

• Follow the campaign on social media as SFU Tuition Freeze Now, and visit our website at <http://www.tuitionfreenow.com/>