

The Agitator

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OUR CAMPUSES ARE NOT FOR SALE!

Alongside the rapid deterioration of public funding for post-secondary education, campuses across the country are witnessing new forms of privatization, as administrators salivate over the chance to make a quick buck.

Without hesitation, they market students as avid consumers to a wide variety of businesses, eager to profit from the student demographic in new and innovative ways. The ensuing transformation of campus (bathroom stalls and classroom walls become permanent sites of advertizing) is not just an aesthetic one.

Without adequate public funding for post-secondary education, our academic institutions seek bigger and better contracts from private companies in order to fund research. This has undoubtedly re-shaped the nature of research today, which is far less likely to serve the public good than corporate interests.

Drop fees not bombs

In Ottawa, we have experienced a booming defence-and-security industry form around our six university and college communities.

Currently 200 defence and security companies reside in Ottawa, enjoying access to the region's best research facilities, found in the heart of our campuses.

In a political climate where funding for education is being slashed, and funding for the military is rapidly expanding (departmental spending for the Department of National Defence now exceeds \$18 billion annually), our campuses become increasingly militarized, and students themselves lose autonomy in their research.

Corporate influence in universities is perhaps most striking when we observe the



composition of university governing bodies. Prominent business leaders, including many from the defence-and-security industry, occupy seats on these boards via appointment.

Free Palestine, Free speech

At York University, a number of directors of the York University Foundation, the fundraising body of the institution, have been criticized for their deep connections to Canada's pro-Israel lobbyists. This has occurred alongside the repression of anti-apartheid activism at York.

At Carleton University, workers and students, led by Students Against Israeli Apartheid, have demanded that Carleton divest, through its pension plan, from companies that violate international law in Gaza and the West Bank. Carleton's business-friendly Board of Governors has thus far ignored the campus-wide plea to demonstrate respect for human rights.

No Corporate U

At Carleton, there are also numerous sites where private interests have penetrated the public university. Here, negotiations with the Australian-based company NAVITAS are underway. NAVITAS is a for-profit corporation that offers "pathway" programs to international students, so that they may seemingly increase their chances of attending the host university. The company uses the crest of the host institution, as well as their campus resources.

But these partnerships are exploitative. Following the program, many students are not accepted into their program of choice.

At Simon Fraser University and the University of Manitoba, where NAVITAS has contracts, non-unionized labour is used. Effectively, a two-tiered education system is produced, creating disparities among students, in class sizes, for example.

Programs such as NAVITAS have ignited intellectual property battles between university administrations and campus faculty, as seen both at the University of Manitoba and Carleton. These battles are crucial to the development of NAVITAS' course material.

The language classes that NAVITAS offers are a great source of contention for language professors, who are witnessing a non-unionized labour segment emerge to perform the same duties as they do, potentially threatening the job security of these workers.

Their working conditions are our learning conditions

The commercialization of universities and colleges affects both workers and students. Campus-wide student-worker coalitions, such as Campus United at Carleton University, can help us keep public institutions public. This means demanding more funding for education, so that we can stop skyrocketing tuition fees and protect quality jobs.

This means supporting campus workers on strike. At McGill 1700 non-academic staff represented have gone on strike asking for pay equal to other campuses. Represented by MUNACA they include clerical staff, library technicians, secretaries and nurses, and are the lowest paid university workers in Montreal.

Meanwhile across Ontario, 8,000 OPSEU college support staff—including counsellors, librarians, IT staff and cleaners—have gone on strike against administration attempts to increase temporary and part-time positions and impose wages that don't even keep pace with inflation. Defending their working conditions supports our learning conditions and future jobs.

Sam Ponting, Ottawa

Students and resistance

Students are once again at the fore of the social movements, following massive student-led mobilizations all over the world in recent years.

Students at all levels—high school, college and university—in Greece, Quebec, Britain, Chile and elsewhere have demonstrated against austerity and, in many cases, have been a catalyst to greater resistance from wider sections of the public, especially among workers.

Students as a social force

For the past 60 years, the status and social composition of students have changed dramatically.

After World War II, poor and working-class students finally won access to post-secondary education. The increased access came in response to capitalism's growing need for a skilled and specialized labour force.

Today students are very much part of the working class. Because some form of post-secondary education has become a minimum requirement for most jobs, the majority of students will come from working-class families.

Most will need student loans, grants (where they still exist) and other forms of credit to pay for school. Student loan debt in Canada is a whopping \$18 billion and growing. Students are more likely than ever to be working "McJobs" to pay their way through college, often slowing the progress of their studies.

Job prospects for graduates tend to be temporary jobs without benefits or security. The consequences of neoliberalism have made these facts a reality for students around the world.

May '68: the student spark

When students have organized and mobilized, they have won concessions from governments, universities and other institutions. Their struggles have also been the catalyst for more generalized working-class resistance—the way a spark can ignite a wildfire.

The most famous example is May 1968, when students in Paris held a series of escalating protests—including teach-ins, occupations and clashes with riot police—demanding the right to visit members of the opposite sex in student residence, a ban on police and fascists on campus, and an end to the Vietnam War.

On May 10, 50,000 confronted the riot police. Barricades were built out of parked cars, grills, railings and trees. Student activists took to the factories, leafleting and asking for solidarity between workers and students.

Two days after the night of the barricades, ten million French workers went on strike against repression. This one-day strike escalated into an indefinite general strike, bringing the economy of France to a virtual standstill.

Greece

In 2008, high school and university students exploded in anger at the police murder of a 15-year-old. Student walk-outs and demonstrations became a focus for all the discontent in Greek society.

In response, workers struck in solidarity, while also making their own demands. Solidarity between students and workers was obvious as teachers walked off the job with their students, electrical workers, and a general strike erupted against the government's austerity budget.



Quebec

Quebec Liberal Premier Jean Charest campaigned in 2003 with a promise to freeze tuition fees. Once in power, Charest went back on his word, transforming \$103 million of grants into loans, nearly doubling the debt of Quebec's poorest students.

In response, students from most CEGEPs and universities took to the streets in a campaign that saw a year of demonstrations, negotiations and protests.

At the height of the strike, 230,000 students in Quebec (more than half of the student population) had walked out of classes.

The movement ended with the restoration of funding for student grants. That Quebec has the lowest tuition fees in Canada can be credited to the united response of its students and allies in the face of these attacks.

With the economic crisis there is a renewed attack on public services. On November 10 of this year Quebec students will again take to the streets to defend accessible public education.

Britain, Chile, Togo

Trade unions in Britain are currently organizing for a massive general strike against austerity, a movement that was no doubt inspired by the militant student demonstrations last winter, which included the occupation of Tory headquarters.

In Chile, students across the country are leading massive protests against their government's plans to pay for the economic crisis by privatizing public education.

And in Togo, after more than eight weeks of suspended classes, sit-ins and clashes with security forces, students at the University of Lomé forced the government to the negotiation table. Students were protesting against a new semester system, a minimum pass mark and inadequate facilities.

Workers' power

All these examples demonstrate the vast potential of student resistance. But on their own, students don't have the same collective strength as workers—who can shut down whole sections of the economy when they go on strike, and whose labour is required for the production of profit.

This is why, for student struggles to go beyond the campus and to begin challenging the system in its entirety, students need to enlist the support of the broader working class.

In the lead-up to the September 26 mobilization against Ford's cuts in Toronto, there will be ample opportunity to build student-worker unity, and to infuse labour's fight against austerity with the spark of student resistance.

Peter Hogarth, Toronto

Stop war, austerity and climate change

Ten years since 9/11

During the memorials of those killed in 9/11 our rulers will once again try to use the tragedy to stir up jingoistic sentiment. No officials will consider the brutality of ten years of the wars they are responsible for.

In "response" to the 9/11 attacks, the US led a number of wars ostensibly to "root out" enemies of the west with disastrous consequences.

It began with Afghanistan, a war that drags on into its tenth year with escalating poverty and violence.

In Iraq, a war based to some extent on fictitious ties to the 9/11 attacks, more than one million have been killed and the US props up a brutal dictatorship that continues to rule the country with an iron fist.

In other nations such as Somalia, the specter of terrorist attacks was used to destroy the first indigenous leadership, and the first political stability the country had seen in decades, contributing to the current famine.

Domestically, the use of Islamophobia to justify unpopular wars has now become an even more prominent feature of the ruling ideas. While Islamophobia didn't start ten years ago, there is no question that it has become increasingly virulent in recent years to justify wars, distract people from the blatant inequality at home and to gloss over domestic political crisis.

But it is crucial for us to put this all into a longer time line. Just as Islamophobia didn't start on 9/11, nor did US and allied attacks on the Arab and Muslim world begin as a response to the attacks in New York and Washington.

Imperialism results in constant competition for resources and economic and political control of the world.

The war drive was not artificially imposed on the US but is rooted in the structural contradictions of US imperialism: with military dominance but an economy that has been in relative decline for many years, the US has become addicted to war to maintain supremacy.

The centrality of the Muslim world and its huge oil resources made it a target years before 9/11. US actions to gain more control over the area raised a deep hatred, which proved a fertile recruiting ground for al-Qaeda.

But ordinary people can stop these wars. In 2002-2003 a global anti-war movement emerged against the looming Iraq War. Despite the pro-war Liberals having a majority, the NDP helped amplify the anti-war movement—reaching a pinnacle of a quarter of a million people in Montreal—which stopped Canadian participation in the illegal Iraq War.

This kind of movement—inside and outside Parliament—needs to be built again to stop Canada's participation in the wars in Afghanistan and Libya.

Paul Stevenson, Toronto

Support staff strike

Over 8 000 support workers from all of Ontario's 24 community colleges officially went on strike on September 1.

The strike action, which is affecting approximately 500 000 students, was caused mostly by a reluctance from management to engage in meaningful negotiations with the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU), the union representing the support workers.

While management is portraying the striking workers as greedy, they are trying to impose wages that don't even keep up with inflation.

Workers are not only defending their wages from concessions but also fighting a larger fight against eroding benefits and rights for all Canadians.

Similar to the recent Canada Post/CUPW collective bargaining negotiations, management wants to increase the number of non-unionized workers at colleges and double the probationary time period for new workers from six months to a full year—a time period where no benefits are provided.

As one striking support worker in the Early Childhood Education department at George Brown College put it "We're striking for the next generation which is for you guys, we're paving the way for you guys to get a job."

Unfortunately the College Student Alliance (CSA)—which represents the majority of students affected by this labour dispute and has a tradition of applauding government decisions to increase tuition—has refused to engage in any meaningful student-worker solidarity.

But the Student Association of George Brown College (SA)—one of only two College student associations in Ontario to hold membership in Canada's largest and most progressive student organization, the Canadian Federation of Students—is providing logistical support for striking workers as well as engaging in membership outreach to educate students about why it is important to support the workers on the picket line.

Cindy Brownlee, the SA's Director of Education and Equity, recognizes that "workers are striking for better jobs tomorrow."

With solidarity among workers, students and communities, we can successfully resist the austerity agenda.

Mohammad Ali Aumeer, Toronto

Shut down the tar sands!

Opposition to the tar sands and its pipelines has escalated to mass civil disobedience in Washington and Ottawa.

From August 20 to September 3, more than 1,200 Americans were arrested at the White House, protesting the proposed Keystone XL pipeline—designed to carry heavy crude oil from the Alberta tar sands to the U.S. Gulf Coast—affecting vulnerable water sources, farmland, and Indigenous territory.

It's being justified as creating jobs in the oil and gas industry, but unions have started joining the opposition. The Amalgamated Transit Union and the Transport Workers Union, representing more than 300,000 workers, called on the State Department to deny the permit. In a joint press release they said: "We need jobs, but not ones based on increasing our reliance on Tar Sands oil".

Organizers are pledging to escalate the demonstration, and will return to the White House in October for Phase Two.

Meanwhile momentum is building for a similar protest at Parliament Hill on September 26, organized by the Council of Canadians, Greenpeace Canada and the Indigenous Environmental Network. As they state: "Tar sands mining and other extreme forms of energy extraction like Arctic drilling, shale fracking, and nuclear power generation send us in the exact opposite direction that we, as a civilization, must go to ensure global survival... On September 26th we are asking you to come to Ottawa to participate in one of the largest acts of civil disobedience on the climate issue that Canada has ever seen."

For more information visit www.ottawaction.ca

Melissa Graham, Toronto

Activist calendar

International Socialists

Campaigns/movements

LANGARA COLLEGE vancouver.socialists@ gmail.com

I.S. ORGANIZING MEETING
Wednesday September 14
12:30-1:30pm, room A218

2011: YEAR OF REVOLTS
Wednesday September 21
12:30-1:30pm, room B144



**2011:
YEAR OF
REVOLTS**

YORK UNIVERSITY yorksocialists@ gmail.com

MEET THE YORK I.S.
at the YorkFest Welcome
Week Village
Wednesday September 21
10am-6pm, York Campus Walk

UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA gosocialists@yahoo.ca

MEET THE UofO I.S.
at clubs day
Thursday September 8
10am-4pm, University Centre

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO international.socialists@ utoronto.ca

MEET THE UofT I.S.
Wednesday September 7
10am-2pm, clubs day
Hart House circle

2011: YEAR OF REVOLTS
Wednesday September 14,
1pm Sid Smith room 2119

FORD, HUDAK/MCGUINTY,
HARPER: HOW DO WE STOP
THE AUSTERITY
STEAMROLLER?
Tuesday September 27
7pm Bahen Centre

FORD, HUDAK/MCGUINTY, HARPER:
HOW DO WE STOP THE



PUBLIC FORUM: TUESDAY SEPT 27
7PM BAHEN CENTRE: 40 St. George

CAN THERE BE A
REVOLUTION IN CANADA?
Wednesday September 28,
1pm Sid Smith room 2119

VANCOUVER

NATO HANDS OFF LIBYA
Thursday September 15
7-9pm, 111 West Hastings
Join Stopwar.ca,
Vancouver's broad anti-war
coalition, for a forum to
discuss the past, present, and
future of Libya, the continuing
struggle of the Libyan people
for self-determination, and
opposition to the continued
NATO presence in Libya.
For more information visit
www.stopwar.ca

OTTAWA

SAY NO TO THE TAR SANDS
Monday September 26
Parliament Hill
With people power and the
time-tested tactics of civil
disobedience - join
thousands of people from
across the country in a sit-in.
Together we'll amplify our
voices and escalate the
movement and stop the tar
sands and build the just,
healthy future we all want to
see! For more information
visit www.ottawaaction.ca



TORONTO

RALLY TO SAFEGUARD
PUBLIC HEALTH CARE FOR
PEOPLE, NOT FOR PROFIT
Tuesday September 13
12 noon, Queen's Park
In the lead up to the October
provincial election, send a
message to all parties that it is
time for improved and
equitable access to
comprehensive health care
across our communities.
For more information visit
ontariohealthcoalition.ca

RALLY FOR TORONTO
TO SAVE CITY SERVICES
AND DEFEND GOOD JOBS
Monday September 26
5:30pm, City Hall
People from every walk of
life will be coming to City Hall
to demand respect for every
Torontonian.
Our Communities, Public
Services, Good Jobs.
For more information visit
www.labourcouncil.ca



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