

Socialist Worker

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During and after the Ontario election:



Fear of the Tories is matched by anger at the Ontario New Democratic Party (ONDP) for failing to provide an alternative. With each passing day, the party seems to lurch further to the right. From its “Makes sense” slogan – an echo of Mike Harris’ “Common sense revolution” – to its promise to cut \$600 million from the budget, the ONDP sounds more like a watered-down version of the Tories than a party of the working class.

The party’s shift rightwards has produced more than just anger. Among traditional NDP voters, it has generated confusion and demoralization – with some preparing to vote Liberal for the first time ever, and others announcing their plans to “sit out” this election. Among the left, it has sparked a debate about the future of the ONDP – should we try to take it over, or ditch the party and start a new one?

These are important questions. How we respond will affect our ability to challenge the austerity agenda, not just in the weeks ahead, but for years to come. As activists, we need to think through the election’s impact on the political terrain in Ontario, and develop a strategy that puts us on the best possible footing to resist neoliberalism – regardless of who wins on June 12.

Why elections matter

In the short term, the most immediate question is how to vote, or whether to vote at all. For some activists, voting is a complete waste of time because, in their view, it creates illusions in the ability of the system to be reformed and diverts our attention from building movements. But this view assumes, incorrectly, that elections have no impact on

movements.

Elections are important because they draw huge numbers of working people into discussions about how to improve their lives and the world around them. Not surprisingly, under capitalism, most people believe that elections are the only way to do this, and therefore pay more attention to politics during elections than they would otherwise. The left should use this opportunity to raise its own demands, shape the terms of debate, and convince this audience that meaningful change happens outside parliament.

Elections are also important because their outcome affects the balance of class forces. When the Tories do well, the corporations, the banks and the rest of the ruling class feel more confident to go on the offensive – making our work as activists more difficult. By contrast, when the NDP does well (even with a right-wing platform), party activists who make up a big part of the labour and social movements feel more confident about their struggles. This is why elections matter – not because getting the NDP elected will win our demands (it won’t), but because its electoral success – even on a small scale – can improve the conditions for building a viable movement against austerity.

Not everyone buys this logic. In response to the ONDP’s rightward shift, some activists insist that the party under Andrea Horwath’s leadership no longer represents working people, and that Kathleen Wynne’s Liberals have become a left-wing alternative; as a result, they plan to vote Liberal on Election Day. This argument is flawed for two reasons.

Why vote NDP?

First, the criteria for voting NDP is not the strength of its platform, which almost always pales in

comparison to its members’ aspirations for a better world. Instead, the criteria should be its connection to the working class. This is what makes the NDP qualitatively different from the Liberals, the Tories and even the Greens: it is organically and structurally linked to the trade union bureaucracy and, by extension, to the broader labour movement. Their interests remain opposed to those of the corporations and the banks.

A vote for the NDP is therefore a vote against the bosses’ parties: the Liberals and the Tories, who each represent competing tactical approaches of the ruling class. It is also in this sense that voting NDP demonstrates a basic sense of working-class consciousness, which the left should aim to develop.

But not everyone agrees with this characterization of the ONDP. An increasing number of activists dismiss it as “just like the other parties” or “another liberal party.” This is still a mistaken assessment. Regardless of the party’s platform, and even of Horwath’s frosty relationship with the trade union leadership, the ONDP remains deeply connected to (and reliant upon) Ontario’s labour movement: hundreds of union staffers work on elections, while thousands of members volunteer; union funds help pay for ONDP campaigns and operations; and union delegates play a role in the internal life and decision-making of the party.

Second, this is not the first time that the ONDP has shifted rightward, while retaining its link to labour. On many other occasions, the party has adopted right-wing positions that put it at odds with its base, and that led to similar calls to vote Liberal or abstain altogether. During Bob Rae’s tenure from 1990 to 1995, the party abandoned its commitment to public auto insurance, allowed a free vote on

a bill for same-sex benefits (which led to its defeat), and forced public sector workers to take 12 unpaid holidays a year – the so-called “Rae Days.”

Social democracy

In this light, the recent rightward shift of the ONDP is really no surprise – especially given the general trajectory of social democracy towards Third Way or Blairite policies. Rather than seeing such shifts as breaks from the “real” social democratic tradition, we should recognize them as familiar patterns: under capitalism, all social democratic parties – no matter how many seats they hold in parliament – are confronted by the unrelenting pressure of capital, which often forces them to abandon their principles. The absence in Ontario of a strong and mobilized labour movement to counter such pressures also likely contributes to the ONDP’s rightward shift.

This is not to suggest that we let the ONDP off the hook, simply because of social democracy’s history of succumbing to market forces. The point is to demonstrate that, despite this history, the ONDP remains a fundamentally different party from its Liberal, Tory and Green opponents, and that this difference – its links to labour and the working class – is the main reason to vote for it.

Nevertheless, even among activists who recognize this difference, many still plan to vote for the Liberals. Their reasons have less to do with seeing them as a left-wing alternative to the NDP than with seeing them as a “lesser evil” to the Tories. This is what is known as “strategic voting” – casting a ballot for whichever party is more likely to defeat a Conservative candidate.

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Liberals back down on OW/ODSP merge

by JANET RODRIGUES

In capitalism, it is better to make the poor feed each other than have the rich spend a little more. This is the philosophy of at the core of the Brighter Prospects report, released in October 2012.

The plan: take funds from the 440,000 disabled people on social assistance and use part of it to upgrade the inhumane rates of the other 450,000 people on social assistance who are unable to find sufficient employment, and sometimes have disabilities too.

Austerity

The authors of the report, recommended that “Ontario Works (OW) and the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) be replaced by one integrated program that provides individualized services and supports to all social assistance recipients.”

This means that all OW and ODSP recipients would start off with equal rates and then those who have disabilities will have to prove they deserve other funds may be assigned. These funds often cover extra costs of living with a disability, such as an accessible apartment, healthy food, and the likelihood that the person will be on ODSP for much longer than someone on OW.

Merging these two programs made no sense, it would strip disabled people from the already meager benefits they receive, only to have them prove that they deserve those funds, or potentially force them to go back to work regardless of their health conditions, as disabled people in the UK experienced.

Resistance

Many ODSP recipients, advocacy groups and grassroots organizations issued strong opposition statements and organized protests. The Toronto Disability Pride March issued their own statement and held an ODSP advocacy information session; none of the attendees favored the merge.

More recently OCAP wrote, as part of their Raise the Rates campaign: “Disabled people who have to rely on ODSP know what an inadequate and discriminatory system it is. You have to jump through bureaucratic hoops to get onto it and the level of income it provides comes nowhere close to meeting your basic needs. However, the Ontario Works (OW) system is even less adequate and even more insecure.”

When the Minister of Community and Social Services said in April that the OW and ODSP programs won't be merged, the sigh of relief could be heard across the province. Yet while activists and advocates prepare for the next step on the struggle, we are starting to hear rumors that maybe the government will take back their decision and go ahead with the merge.

We must not accept this. It's been a long fight from those who are chronically ill and live in extreme poverty. It's time to move forward.



Quebec: la lutte continue

by JESSICA SQUIRES AND BENOIT RENAUD

The results are in: Québec solidaire (QS) won a third seat in the National Assembly, and the party garnered 7.5 per cent (an additional 1.5 per cent) of the popular vote, and 323,000 votes (an additional 60,000 over last time).

Objectively, this does not seem like much. So why does it feel like a huge victory? There are several very good reasons for this.

QS gains

First a bit of context. QS is a very young party, only eight years old, and it has waged four general elections and a bunch of by-elections. In the meantime it has managed to adopt three-quarters of a programme (party policy, in the parlance of the old guard political parties), and several party platforms—commitments for a theoretical first mandate of a QS government.

QS is also a party whose membership of roughly 13,000, and its active base is largely made up of activists in social struggles—including the student movement and organized labour, anti-poverty groups, women's groups, human rights, and the climate justice movement.

So for a party with few resources and little experience, we've come a very long way.

More importantly, this election was not so much about the result but also the journey of this specific month-long election campaign. The mood on the ground in districts across the province was optimistic and positive. A significant number of new activists came from the student movement, who radicalized during the massive student strike of 2012.

PQ defeat

A third factor was that the PQ was defeated—no small thing, since it meant the defeat of the xenophobic Values Charter project, which would have banned the wearing of religious symbols and clothing for all public servants. The project was a thinly veiled attack on Muslim women and a cynical play for populist votes.

But the PQ, who counted on riding their upswing in popularity through the five weeks of the campaign, learned that their support was built on sand. Even before the election, those who supported the charter were far from united in their understanding of its meaning and importance for Quebec.

Liberal 'majority'

The results of the election were not all positive. The

Liberal Party received a majority government mandate, which in our first-past-the-post system meant that a 40-odd-per cent support from the popular vote means about four years of Liberal rule.

These are the same Liberals who were tossed out on their ears in 2012 by the student movement and climate justice movement, and because of their corruption, still under investigation by the Charbonneau commission two years later.

Effectively Quebecers have traded PQ neo-liberalism, including the Charter and austerity measures such as deep cuts to education, oil exploration in protected waters, etc., for Liberal neo-liberalism, including the Liberals' Plan nord—a plan to wreck the north for mining corporations' profits—and their own austerity measures, such as their planned tuition fee hikes which led to the strike in the first place.

La lutte continue

It would be understandable if progressive Quebecers felt as if we had just pressed rewind. But social movement activists know how to fight against a Liberal government and will do so on everything from shale gas to tuition fees.

In contrast, the movements were disoriented and divided

in the face of the PQ's attacks against religious minorities in the name of secularism, women's rights and gay rights. The devil you know, and love to hate, is better than the devil in a progressive disguise.

The nail-biting last few minutes of April 7, which saw Manon Massé, the third MNA for QS, elected on a 90 vote margin, was symbolic of the reason many people were left feeling so good about it. In a context of global and federal austerity, neoliberal control of the media, and in an era of defeats and defensive struggles for labour and social justice, QS is still managing to grow and increase its influence.

That is a victory on which we can build. The next step is to sink deeper roots in our communities and neighborhoods, supporting and promoting all the movements for social justice, so that the forces of neo-liberalism and climate destruction can be turned back.

If you like this article, register for Marxism 2014: Resisting a System in Crisis. Sessions include "After the Quebec election: what next for the left" and "Quebec solidaire and left regroupment."

In contrast, the movements were disoriented and divided

BC Liberals put profit before food

by ANNA ROIK

At the end of March the BC Liberals introduced the first reading of Bill 24, which will change how farmland is protected by the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) and the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR).

The ALR was created in 1972 to protect farmland from development pressure, and encompasses about five percent of all provincial land. Currently anyone wishing to remove land from the ALR for non-farming purposes must apply to the ALC for exemption. Although there has been talk about these changes since at least last summer, the bill was drafted with no official public consultation, not even with farmers or the ALC itself, and no governmental review showing that there is any need for the ALR to be changed.

Proponents of the bill dispute that lands will no longer be prioritized for farming, claiming that much of the land is mountainous, swampy, boggy or otherwise unsuitable for farming.

However, even where soil is of lower quality, it can be good for specific farming purposes such as forage crops or raising livestock.

One of the main reasons decision-making on farmland use was concentrated in the ALC was the belief that regional authorities could not be relied on to effectively protect farmland from non-farm development. That is, they would be influenced by lobbying for short-term economic gain instead of long-term planning about food security. The ALR was created to keep options open for future food production. With the increasing popularity of the eat local food movement,

and climate change leading to higher temperatures, having farmland available in the northern regions of the province will become more important in the future.

In fact, critics of Bill 24 say this is just what is happening since there is evidence that some protected farmland lies atop petroleum and mineral deposits. They believe the government wants to make it easier for oil and gas companies to gain access to these deposits without having to manipulate the process of how their work will protect or remediate soils for farm use. The fact that the introduction of Bill 24 comes just weeks after the BC Liberals opened up the province's parks to industrial development makes this even more believable.

One hundred of BC's most prominent scientists have condemned the plan on

the grounds that fragile ecosystems and wildlife at risk adjacent to the ALR benefit from the lack of industrial development. Hundreds of BC farmers took to Twitter and turned the trend of farmer selfies, known as felfies, into a political act under the hashtag "#farmers4ALR". They posted pictures of themselves taken on their farm, their concerns written on signs held in their hands.

It is important to continue to fight against these changes to the ALR that will have government legislation prioritize industrial development over food production.

Food security is a serious concern, and with BC already a net importer of food, every bit of land that can grow food needs protecting. Farmers must be given what they need to feed everyone in the province.

Equal access now!

by MAUREEN ASLIN

On April 17 there were nationwide solidarity rallies in support of the women of New Brunswick. The closure of the Morgentaler Clinic in Fredericton is an attack on choice, and the reproductive justice movement across the country is responding.

Each year 800-900 women have had abortions at the Fredericton clinic, despite the lack of government funding. Under anti-choice Regulation 84-20, the provincial government denies funding to the clinic because it does not provide abortions in a hospital and with prior approval of two doctors. The province's failure for the last 20 years to fund the clinic and the \$1 million in legal fees spent suing the province, are forcing it to close.

After July the only access to abortion in New Brunswick will be in a hospital and after the approval of two doctors who deem it "medically necessary." But any abstract criteria other than choice denies women's control over their own bodies, and revives the paternalistic "therapeutic abortion committees" that were defeated by the women's movement a generation ago.

The closure of the Morgentaler clinic will particularly impact women in PEI seeking abortions, where there is no access to abortion, and 50 per cent of whom travel to the Fredericton clinic. Travel costs, childcare, lost work time, and the cost of the procedure make it especially difficult for low-income women.

That the government of New Brunswick has been able to deny abortion funding for two decades, against the Canada Health Act, shows the complicity of the federal government in failing to enforce the law. At the Toronto rally NDP MP Peggy Nash spoke out against the Harper government: "We demand the federal government enforce the Canada Health Act to guarantee equal access."

The rally also included Med Students for Choice, labour activists from the Steelworkers and OPSEU, a speaker from the Immigrant Women's Health Centre, and an appeal to support the campaign for justice for missing and murdered aboriginal women.

If you like this article, register for Marxism 2014: Resisting a System in Crisis. Sessions include "How do we win reproductive justice: past and present struggles."

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BDS momentum grows

by SHAYMA BASHAWIEH

The non-violent movement known as Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) initiated by Palestinian civil society in 2005—which calls upon the rest of the world to boycott Israel and other institutions and companies that are complicit in Israel's oppression and human rights violations of Palestinians—has been gaining increasing support from around the world.

As Omar Barghouti, one of the founding members of BDS has expressed in a number of interviews, the movement has three central and intimately interconnected goals.

Firstly, BDS aims to end Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza—which also includes East Jerusalem. Additionally, BDS aims to procure the equal treatment of Israel's "non-Jewish" citizens, or the Palestinian citizens of Israel. Lastly, and perhaps most controversially, the movement aims to guarantee the right of return of the displaced Palestinian refugees, as stipulated under UN Resolution 194.

BDS momentum

What started off as a modestly sized peoples-based, grassroots movement—as an alternative to the hitherto state-sponsored and led initiatives towards the resolution of the Israel-Palestinian conflict—has been accumulating notable allies and supporters from around the globe.

Referring to it as a "qualitative leap" Barghouti, in an interview with the Real news, discusses the increasing support BDS has come to enjoy—especially in the years 2012 to 2014—from a wide variety of allies. These include South

Africa's African National Congress (ANC), student unions from across the US and Canada, labour unions, and pension funds such as the Netherlands' largest pension funds company PGGM—all of whom have passed BDS.

As Rafi Gozlan, chief economist for Israeli investment bank Leader Capital Markets, wrote in *Haaretz*, "a spate of announcements of boycott actions by European banks and pension funds, as well as the controversy around Scarlett Johansson's appearance in an Israeli company's ad campaign, had drawn attention to the boycott efforts and may have scared off some investors."

Canadian universities and student unions

In Canada alone, between the years 2012-14, almost a dozen student unions endorsed BDS. These include York University, University of Toronto, Carleton University and University of Windsor's student unions, to name but a few.

Following this momentum, Ryerson University passed BDS on April 2 during Ryerson Student Union's (RSU) annual general meeting. Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) largely attributes the successful endorsement of BDS by RSU to the six months of campaigning done across campus by the club's members, which resulted in SJP collecting over 1600 signatures in support of BDS.

But university administrations have refused to follow student's democratic decisions. Ryerson University's President Sheldon Levy wrote that the RSU's endorsement of BDS would not become university policy because "Ryerson

doesn't support it. It doesn't play any role at all because the RSU is a separate entity." The same message is echoed by SJP: "Our work is unfortunately not over and there is still much to be done. Now comes the actual work of figuring out what unethical investment Ryerson is making and pressuring them to divest."

Debunking false accusations

Despite the frequent accusations and of branding BDS supporters as anti-Semitic and predominately of the Muslim faith, the evidence over the years suggests the contrary.

BDS has come to enjoy support by organizations and individuals from all around the world and from a variety of backgrounds.

Indeed, after comparing the slandering of BDS supporters with McCarthyism, Barghouti in a *Democracy Now* interview states "the Israel lobby and its spokespeople are making it absolutely forbidden to speak about Palestinian rights and to attack Israeli policies."

Furthermore, Barghouti continues, "any attempt to say that calling for a boycott of Israel is anti-Semitic is an anti-Semitic statement, because it's making Israel and the entire Jewish existence one and the same. It's saying that all Jews are the same, all of them support Israel, and Israel speaks for them. And that ignores the massive diversity among Jewish opinions around the world."

As Hanan Ashrawi, an executive member of the PLO, explained in *The New York Times*, "BDS does not target Jews, individually or collectively, and rejects all forms of bigotry and discrimination, includ-

ing anti-Semitism."

In fact, BDS merely attempts to guarantee that Israel respects the same international laws other nations must abide by.

This point is brought home in Ashrawi's letter when she writes, "BDS is, in fact, a legal, moral and inclusive movement struggling against the discriminatory policies of a country that defines itself in religiously exclusive terms, and that seeks to deny Palestinians the most basic rights simply because we are not Jewish."

Solidarity

Yet BDS supporters are optimistic especially considering how much the campaign has spread globally in the past few years.

As Barghouti said in an interview with *Democracy Now* "BDS is indeed spreading tremendously. We have major support from large trade unions in Britain, Norway, Spain, France, Italy, Canada and many countries. And increasingly it's entering the United States.

There's a huge movement supporting BDS that includes several Jewish groups... There's a disproportionately high number of conscientious Jewish citizens of the Western countries that are not just acting, but leading some BDS movements around the Western world."

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our comrades were martyred, Ahmed and Rami, and a third was wounded.

We extend our condolences to the families and comrades of Ahmed and Rami and declare our solidarity with the Revolutionary Left Current and with all those struggling for a democratic and non-sectarian revolution in Syria.

Glory to our martyrs and to the martyrs of the popular revolution!
The revolution continues!

This is republished from the International Socialist Tendency

The anniversary of Rwanda's genocide

by JESSE MCLAREN

April to July marks the 20th anniversary of the Rwandan genocide, which is repeatedly invoked to justify Western intervention. But the genocide was the result of Western intervention, not its absence.

In a span of 100 days nearly a million people were killed through an orchestrated massacre: Tutsis were scapegoated, identified by ID cards and hacked to pieces by government militias armed with machetes and machine guns.

This is supposed to be evidence of ancient tribal divisions, requiring Western intervention to police. But it was Western intervention itself that paved the way for genocide.

Colonial divide and rule

Hutus described the agricultural majority group while Tutsis were the minority cattle-herders—but these groups were fluid and changeable, and shared language and religion.

It was Belgian colonialism at the start of the 20th century that imposed a rigid racial distinction between Tutsis and Hutus through identity cards, using minority Tutsi elites to rule. During the anti-colonial period Belgium switched sides and supported reprisals against Tutsis, driving large numbers out of the country.

Economic crisis and austerity

The IMF intervened, deepening poverty. Like other colonies, Rwanda's economy was geared towards mono-crop exports, specifically coffee. When coffee prices fell in the late 1980s, the IMF imposed a currency devaluation to boost coffee exports. This was a disaster for health, education, and employment.

Many unemployed youth joined the government militias (the Interahamwe), and had their frustrations challenged towards Tutsis.

Inter-imperial rivalry

Inter-imperial rivalry intervened to arm these artificial divisions. As Belgian imperialism waned the French increasingly intervened, providing military support for the Hutu dictator Juvénal Habyarimana. Meanwhile the US armed the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), a group of Tutsi rebels that invaded from Uganda in 1990.

This included "peacekeepers" who helped the Interahamwe track down and kill Tutsis—earning France's "socialist" President Francois Mitterand the nickname Mitterahamwe.

Prevent genocide: end imperialism

By re-writing history, Rwanda becomes a buzzword to support further Western intervention—in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya—erased of their own context.

The Rwandan genocide could have been averted—by not creating ethnic divisions, not arming rival factions, not imposing austerity, not training the militia, and not sending troops.

This requires challenging capitalism, racism and war.

Solidarity with Syrian socialists

The Syrian Revolution is in a tragic situation. It is attacked on all sides – by the forces of the Assad regime and its regional and international allies, by the open allies of Western imperialism, and by sectarian jihadi groups.

Despite their antagonisms, these different forces have a common interest in crushing the original democratic revolutionary movement, which united Syrians of all religious and ethnic backgrounds in the struggle to overthrow the regime.

Our comrades in the Revolutionary Left Current of Syria report an attack on 12 April on fighters politically linked to them that illustrates this situation:

A group of fighters of the 'People's Liberation Faction', while travelling from Hama to Aleppo to support comrades in arms and of the cause to confront the continued attacks of the regimes forces, were stopped at a check point controlled by an Islamist extremist faction, said to belong to Jabhat al Nusra. Two of our fighters came to reach an understanding with the fighters of the checkpoint,

who asked them their names and affiliation and sects. Our comrades told them that they are 'People's Liberation Faction' and that they were from various sects. Some of the fighters at the checkpoint then demanded to all the militants from religious and ethnic minorities to surrender their arms to them. The comrades refused this categorically. The fighters at the checkpoint started pointing their arms at the face of our fighters and then opened fire against them, which led to a clash between us and them. Three of their fighters fell during the clash, while two of

Workers of the world

May Day is celebrated around the world as workers' day. It was inspired by the attack on workers during the Haymarket affair, also referred to as the Haymarket massacre, which initially began in Chicago as a peaceful rally in support of workers striking for the eight-hour day on May 4, 1886.

It's ironic that today in much of North America, except perhaps for Quebec, Labour Day (celebrated in September) has replaced May 1 as an international day of solidarity for labour. It is celebrated in many other countries around the world, but here in the belly of the beast it's as if the working class needed to be separated from their brothers and sisters internationally.

Labour Day took on a much tamer character. There may have been a sense on the part of labour bureaucrats that workers in North America didn't need a fighting labour movement. Labour leaders could depend on the profits of a booming capitalism to appease their members and lead them to believe that gains could be made without substantial struggle.

Economic crisis and austerity

This may have been the case for the 25 year period after World War II. But since recession and crisis returned to the system in 1973 there has been a continuous chipping away at workers' living standards and conditions here in North America. With the economic meltdown of 2008 we have witnessed what was a slow slide and a series of recessions and recoveries become a global crisis from which economies around the world have yet to recover.

This crisis has ushered in the era of austerity, also on an international scale. Simply put, austerity is a series of measures intended to inflict deep cuts to ordinary people—and particularly to the salaries, working conditions and union protections of organized workers—in an attempt to restore profit rates.

This does not mean that unorganized workers and the poor do not also suffer from these measures. But critical to the bosses' drive to austerity is that section of workers who can pose the most serious threat—organized workers, whether they live in Brazil, China, South Africa, Greece, Britain, the US or Canada.

International solidarity

Here in Canada Jason Kenney, Federal Employment Minister, has recently come under attack for the Tory government's Temporary Foreign Workers Program. This program is on the one hand a gift to employers, the Tories' natural supporters, since under the provisions of this program business owners can hire so-called foreign workers at substantially lower wages and with no citizens' rights or ability to stay in Canada. At the same time as it targets "foreign" workers and makes them subject to different standards than other workers, it aims to lower workers' wages and conditions across the board.

According to the propaganda on the government's website this is the purpose of the program: "Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) and Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) work to ensure that the employment of foreign workers supports economic growth and helps create more opportunities for all Canadians."

In reality the program increases the exploitation of migrant workers, and encourages scapegoating and racism by creating a "special" category of workers who will then be blamed for "stealing" so-called Canadians' jobs. In addition to attacking migrant workers this also reinforces the colonial Canadian state and denies indigenous sovereignty.

It's important that workers unite. We must support the rights of workers—whether they were born in Canada or not, whether they are currently Canadian citizens or not—to decent wages and working conditions. If the bosses are allowed to lower the wages of "foreign" workers, attacks on the wages and conditions of so-called Canadian workers will not be far behind. As the United Food and Commercial Workers writes, "while much has been achieved through legal advocacy and lobbying government, it is through unionization and membership in UFCW Canada that we have been able to empower thousands of Temporary Foreign Workers... to effectively use collective bargaining as a means of ensuring a path to permanent residency."

As Karl Marx argued over 150 years ago in The Communist Manifesto it is essential for the international working class to unite if they are to win their liberation. Corporations cross borders whenever they like in the race for profits, often with military backing, but ordinary people are kept in or out of this or that country. Programs like the Temporary Foreign Workers Program are designed to increase the exploitation of one group of workers, and to divide workers in general so that we can be more easily picked off by the bosses.

We have never needed international solidarity more than we do today.

If you like this article, register for Marxism 2014: Resisting a System in Crisis. Sessions include "Racism, sexism and the war on women," "Global resistance to imperialism," "Taking on the anti-union threat in Ontario and Quebec" and "Socialism and indigenous sovereignty."

Fighting for reproductive justice in the Spanish State



Around the world governments are responding to the economic crisis with austerity. This includes attacking reproductive choice, to reinforce the nuclear family where women do unpaid labour. But there is also resistance. Marta Castillo Segura, an activist from Seville, reports on the growing movement against austerity and for reproductive justice in the Spanish state.

History of abortion laws

Illegal abortion used to be one of the main causes of death of women in the Spanish state. In 1937, during the revolution, abortion was decriminalized for the first time in Catalonia, where the most advanced abortion law in Europe was approved, allowing women to choose interrupting their pregnancy in the first 12 weeks. Federica Montseny, Minister of Public Health, managed to apply this law in the areas where the republicans had the government.

But the victory of the fascists in the civil war ended with all the social progress made by the Second Republic.

After all the darkness of the dictatorship—and thanks to the pressure of the movement at the beginning of the 80s to support "the eleven of Bilbao", who were in court for abortion and were finally absolved—in 1985 the Ley Orgánica 9/1985 was approved, legalizing abortion under three circumstances: risks for the pregnant woman, rape and fetus malformation.

In 2010 the current law was approved, allowing women to have an abortion freely during the first 14 weeks and until the 22 week in some particular cases. It also introduces the right to teenagers of 16 and 17 years old to decide without their parents' permission.

Austerity and oppression

Nevertheless, the reactionary Spanish Government that is imposing economic attacks with cuts, privatizations, labour reforms, bank bailouts etc. is also attacking reproductive choice. And of course, women suffer the consequences of the crisis doubly.

Together with the implementation of policies that are deepening women's oppression and reducing our possibility

of having equal opportunities (huge cuts in benefits for dependant people, childcare services, free school meals, etc) they attack something so basic as our right to decide over our own body.

All these ups and downs show us clearly something that we should never forget: under capitalism rights are never definitively conquered; the attacks of those who want to dominate the workers do never stop and therefore our struggle must not stop either.

In December 2013, the Government approved a draft bill of a law that, according to activists of the pro-choice movement, "it involves a regression of more than 30 years, back to the era of Franco". In contrast to the current law (a law "based in terms"), this is again a law "based in conditions", like the one approved in 1985, but in a more restrictive version. It accepts only rape and health risks for the woman as conditions to justify an abortion.

On the top of this, the process and bureaucracy involved to get all the permissions required become much more complicated. According to some professionals: "This law almost abolishes the right of abortion, because in practice we will be able to make only 1% of the interventions we carry out currently."

Resistance

The Government argues that their proposal is a response to the demands of a big part of the society. This is very far from reality though: in 2009 a survey revealed that 55 per cent of the youth in the Spanish State believes that abortion should be only a women's decision, 25 per cent think that the society should set up some regulations to it, and only 15 per cent of young people are against abortion under any circumstances.

And this is obvious on the streets. There are continuous mobilizations to stop this law (that the Government hasn't dared to approve definitively yet). The Purple Tide, one of the so called "mareas" (tides)—the movements emerged in the Spanish State to fight against all the attacks we are suffering during this crisis—has been created to defend women's rights and is concentrating most of its efforts in the struggle to defend the right of

abortion. They have called several demonstrations where many other groups (unions, political parties, 15M assemblies, etc.) have joined.

The last 8th of March (International Women's Day) became an outcry against the Government and their attack to women. All across the State thousands of people were shouting: "We give birth, we decide!", "Keep your rosaries out of our ovaries!", "Safe, free and free of charge abortion!", "Women decide, the State guarantees, the society respects and the Church does not intervene."

Not only womens groups are protesting, important coordination between movements is going on. The White Tide, formed by professionals and users of the Public Health to fight against its privatization has also mobilised against the reform of the law of abortion. Gallardón, Minister of Justice and the main defender of this new law has received the so called "escraches" at home—the visit of activists to protest in front of his door.

The resistance is growing: on March 22, more than 2 millions people gathered after marching from all across the State shouting for "dignity, bread and housing."

Reproductive justice

The attack on abortion is part of a broader political strategy—including opposition to the right of Catalunya to decide for their independence, opposition to using the Catalan language in schools in the Balearic Islands, and opposition to gay marriage.

Understanding all this, the biggest challenge of the pro-choice movement is to generalize our struggle even more, especially in the working places and through the unions. Abortion should be treated as a right to be guaranteed by the State and not as a crime. Attacks on abortion are not only an attack on women but also to all the working class. And the people united will never be defeated!

If you like this article, register for Marxism 2014: Resisting a System in Crisis. Sessions include "How do we win reproductive justice: past and present struggles."

Iraqis vote in Parliamentary elections

by YUSUR AL-BAHRANI

Millions of Iraqis bravely challenged the bomb attacks and voted in their first parliamentary elections since the withdrawal of US forces in 2011.

Around 22 million Iraqis were eligible to vote in the parliamentary elections on April 30, 2014. More than 60 per cent of the population voted, despite the unstable situation created by more than a decade of US occupation. Iraqis outside Iraq voted on April 27 and 28 in several countries in the world. Elections were also held in hospitals, prisons and for military and police, ensuring that

the majority of the population would have the chance to vote.

People's commitment to vote and their hope to have a change and a better future is reflected in the competition between the parties, coalitions and candidates. There were more than 9000 candidates contesting for seats in the parliament. This has never happened even in the most developed democracies in the world. Many of the candidates were new in the political arena and a large number of them were young individuals proposing programs with social reforms and plans. The variety of options gave people the chance to vote for change.

Speaking to voters supporting different political parties all referred to the elections as a "democratic wedding" in which everyone is celebrating. Unlike the past elections, this time sectarian tensions between the competing coalitions were not dominant. This is mainly because the elections were not under the US occupation.

Whoever the winner will be, millions of brave Iraqis who defied the threats and bomb attacks to vote will always stand against imperialist plans and anyone who represents imperialism and its agendas in the region.

Wet'suwet'en vow to keep all pipelines off their land

Anton Cu Unjieng discusses the protest camp and how it connects resistance to pipelines with reclaiming the ancestral connection to the land

In 2010, the Unist'ot'en clan of the Wet'suwet'en people established a "soft blockade" over their territory demanding free, prior, and informed consent for anyone seeking entry.

In the next few years, this move may prove decisive for both the struggle for indigenous sovereignty and to stop the ecocidal plans of the fossil fuel industry and their government backers.

What's at stake?

Eleven companies currently plan to run pipelines through Unist'ot'en territory. The most immediate threat is Apache and Chevron's Pacific Trails Pipeline (PTP) which, if built, would connect their fracking operations in the Laird and Horn River Basins to a proposed LNG processing plant in Kitimat, and transport a billion cubic feet of gas a day.

The Unist'ot'en have turned away several workers contracted to Apache and Chevron and have set up a camp near a choke point in the Morice River Valley in order to enforce their blockade.

The spokesperson for the Unist'ot'en, Freda Huson together with her husband and hereditary chief of the Likhts'amisyu clan, speaking at an event in Vancouver on April 4, described the camp as not only a structure that helps them in the fight against the proposed pipelines, but as a way of re-staking their ancestral connection to the land.

The significance of the camp

The Wet'suwet'en people are fighting to protect the land on which they depend. The river by the encampment is a source of fresh water all year long; the forests are an important hunting ground; the proposed PTP route crosses two main salmon spawning channels which provide the staple food for the community.

The Unist'ot'en people have declared that they will not allow any pipelines through their territory. They believe that the fight against the PTP pipeline is a vital stage in the struggle because the Enbridge pipeline is set to be built along side it. The PTP therefore sets the stage for future pipelines.

The camp itself has become an important site for hands-on activist training. Freda and Toghestiy joked that when they first opened up the camps to volunteers they were swamped by people in fatigues ready to take up arms. But this is not a realistic tactic.

The camp itself is on unceded territory and so far the RCMP has not made an assault on the blockade (as they did last year against the Mi'kmaq blockade in Elsipogtog). In earlier days, Apache and Chevron tried to sneak surveyors and engineers into the back end of the terri-



Freda Huson described the camp as not only a structure that helps them in the fight against the proposed pipelines, but as a way of re-staking their ancestral connection to the land.

tory either through helicopter or in the very early hours of the morning. These attempts failed repeatedly, and for now at least, the blockade is being respected.

What is needed now, according to Toghestiy, are people willing to learn to do the daily work of helping to build the pit house and bunk cabin, carry water, help with the permaculture garden, and to do all the other daily tasks involved in maintaining a small community of activists.

Bob Ages, a long time socialist and recent volunteer at the camp gave me an anecdote which helps illustrate the dynamics there. "This wasn't a commune," Bob said, "where we sit around and discuss and we have a debate." It is indigenous land, and activists had to take their cue from the leaders of the community, in particular Freda and Toghestiy.

Bob gives an example of a young man who, for some reason was persistently arguing with Toghestiy and who eventually had to be asked to leave. At the same time, volunteers are encouraged to show initiative in doing tasks as they arise: "use your own judgement. You make mistakes, let's talk about it, but take responsibility. That's what being a warrior means. We're still getting our head around that; on the one hand, we shouldn't be substituting for the First Nations or telling them how to do their struggle, on the other hand we can't be just 'what should I do now, what should I do now': be a warrior, even though you're part of the settler community. What that means in practice, is something we're still thinking about, and we'll learn."

Wide and growing support

Both Freda and her husband are people of status in their community, but as their stories make clear, the resistance to the pipelines has a wide and growing support. PTP has worked through the elected band chiefs and councils and is claiming "partnership" with 15 First Nations. But this does not reflect the position of anyone besides the elected chiefs. Late in 2012, the band council in Moricetown invited representatives from PTP for an "information session": the meeting was so thoroughly disrupted by the clan members and especially the hereditary chiefs that it had to be cut short.

Opposition to the pipeline extends far beyond the clan membership, and even seems to include employees of the oil and gas companies themselves! Once, the Unest'ot'en clan intercepted surveyors attempting to sneak into their territory at five in the morning because someone from the company called them to warn them of the plans the night before. In another incident, equipment was discovered that had been brought into the back end of the territory and the workers were given five days to remove it. When the equipment was removed, the workers actually cheered the blockade as they left.

There has also been considerable solidarity from the settler community with an influx of volunteers from all over Canada and beyond (for those interested, there is an application form on their website).

Apache and Chevron have already started to clear bush

at both ends of the proposed route, apparently planning to pincer the Unist'ot'en camp from two sides. They are mistaken if they think they will not face opposition at every stage of the construction process, but if they should reach the camp, the Unest'ot'en have pledged to lay down their lives in defense of their sovereignty. Given the strength and determination of the opposition, it is incredible that the companies appear to be operating under the assumption that they will be able to finish the pipeline. I asked Bob about this and, based on his conversations at the camp, and he gave an answer that is worth repeating: "They've been rolling over First Nations and First Nations rights ever since contact, and companies like Chevron, and Apache – its like there's a mental block that reveals the incredible arrogance of the 1%. Even though it's the law you can read it and there's all these people supporting it, they still think like a couple of 'radical Indians' and some activist kids can't stop major corporations."

History has already shown that they are wrong to underestimate what grass roots, indigenous led opposition can achieve. Let's show them that they are wrong once again. For more information visit unistotencamp.com

If you like this article, register for Marxism 2014, which includes sessions on "System change not climate change," "Environmental racism and climate justice," "Indigenous resistance: justice for murdered and missing Aboriginal women," and "Socialism and indigenous sovereignty"

The Ontario election and the fight against austerity

As we approach the June 12 provincial election in Ontario, there is growing fear of the Tories, and growing anger at the failure of the NDP to provide an alternative.

How should progressives respond, through the election and beyond, to challenge austerity?

Michelle Robidoux recalls lessons of the Harris era, and James Clark examines debates in electoral strategy.

From Harris to Hudak: back to the future?

by MICHELLE ROBIDOUX

Listening to Ontario Conservative leader Tim Hudak promise to decimate public sector jobs and services brings to mind an earlier Conservative regime under Mike Harris. Anyone who lived under that regime will hear the echo of Harris' punishing cuts and brutal attacks on working-class living standards in Hudak's platform.

But what is often not as well remembered are the similarities in arguments that raged before the 1995 election about the betrayals of the Ontario New Democratic Party (ONDP), strategic voting and the nature of the anger that fueled Harris' rise to power. With the confusion in this current election, retracing some of the arguments from 20 years ago may provide useful insights for us today.

Harris

On June 8, 1995, Harris' Conservatives won a majority at Queen's Park and immediately set out to implement their platform, the "Common Sense Revolution." Welfare was slashed by 21.6 per cent. Provincial income tax was cut by 30 per cent. Regulations were slashed and water testing was privatized, leading to the Walkerton disaster. Thousands of public sector jobs were cut, hospitals were closed, teachers came under attack, thousands of nurses were laid off, and services were downloaded to municipalities.

Indigenous activist Dudley George was murdered by the OPP after Harris instructed them to clear Ipperwash Provincial Park. Demonstrators and striking public sector workers were attacked by police on numerous demonstrations. A period of brutal austerity had begun.

But Bob Rae's NDP government had opened the door to this austerity logic. Ontario in the 1990s was in the grips of a harsh recession. Rae demanded \$2 billion in wage cuts within the civil service, eventually leading to a forced 12 days of unpaid leave for all civil service workers. This misnamed "Social Contract" also re-opened collective agreements of public sector unions, and froze the wages of all public sector workers.

Anger at the Social Contract contributed to driving the NDP from a majority government to third party status in 1995, to the benefit of Harris' Tories. The NDP's betrayal of support for same-sex spousal benefits also angered many who vowed never to support the party.

The NDP betrayal Harris' threat divided the labour movement. While some unions unconditionally and uncritically supported the NDP, others called for "strategic voting" (voting for the Liberals), or abstaining.

This allowed trade union officials to cover for the lack of their own leadership in fighting key workplace battles. The issue with an employer opening collective agreements and attacking conditions should be a no-brainer for any trade union. But the lack of an independent relationship to the NDP, especially in power, meant a punishing fratricidal battle that still affects Ontario's labour movement today.

Had the labour leadership responded in a united way to Rae's imposition of austerity with workplace struggle against these policies, the outcome of the 1995 election, and the terrain today, would be different.

Hudak

Conservative leader Tim Hudak vows to cut both corporate taxes (slashing government revenues) and the deficit. Declining revenues will "create a crisis" along the lines that Harris did in education. This will set the stage for a ferocious

attack on already threadbare social services.

As well, Hudak has put forward a series of proposals designed to weaken unions' ability to organize and defend workers. His model is the "right-to-work" policies of Michigan, but more importantly, the anti-union policies of Wisconsin.

Some economists predict that the combination of Hudak's cuts to jobs and corporate taxes will spin Ontario into a recession. But he is still getting a hearing for his fictional "million jobs plan," even though it couldn't be more fantastical. There is nothing supporting Hudak's claims that slashing 100,000 public sector jobs as well as corporate tax cuts will lead to private sector jobs growth. But that doesn't stop him from rolling out his "million jobs" banner at every photo-op.

If the evidence supporting his claims is so flimsy, why is he still getting any hearing at all? Déjà-vu all over again. The Liberals presided over a brutal period of job losses. From 2008 to 2009, 390,000 jobs were lost in Canada, 206,000 in Ontario alone. Many of these were good manufacturing jobs. The Liberals led the charge against Ontario's teachers, taking away their right to collective bargaining. They threw away billions of public funds for short-term political gain (gas plants), and stank up the joint with corruption and cronyism.

NDP

This should be a ready-made opportunity for the NDP to make gains if they had even the most minimal program of reforms to tackle the pressing issues facing working people and the poor in this province. Yet in this election, the Liberals appear to the left of the NDP, and the NDP has worked hard to campaign on the right.

In the months leading up to the election call, the NDP would not support the very popular campaign for the \$14 minimum wage. In fact, the party was completely silent on the issue, as thousands of workers mobilized across the province to demand change from Kathleen Wynne. Last year, when teachers were battling the Liberal government, Horwath sat out a mass rally against Wynne's attacks on teachers, seemingly fearing that the 'taint' of support for labour would damage her electoral chances.

Even Horwath's current slogan – "Makes sense" – harkens back to one of the worst eras for working people in Ontario, Mike Harris' "Common Sense Revolution." Horwath is bizarrely targeting small business and Conservative voters as "growth areas" for the NDP vote. This is a disaster for workers and will only encourage "strategic voting" strategies that call for a vote for the Liberals, the other bosses' party.

So this is a confusing picture, to say the least. How do we make sense of what is happening? Why is the NDP so right-wing? What can we do to stop Hudak and his Tea Party policies?

Understandably, many people who had hoped that the NDP would stand up for workers' rights in the current election have felt disgusted at the vacuous, dumbed-down policies put forward by Horwath. A \$100 rebate on Hydro cannot begin to address the real hurt that decades of neoliberalism have inflicted on workers. For the Liberals to be campaigning to the left of the NDP gives a new meaning to the slogan "Vote NDP without illusions!"

Social democracy

This is part of a pattern of social democracy embracing neoliberal policies. Around the world, parties similar to

the NDP have bought into these policies wholesale, agreeing that workers must pay for the crisis of the system. Disillusionment and anger are understandable in the face of this, and can play a key role in propelling action demanding a real alternative to the Tories' and Liberals' austerity policies. But in electoral terms, the notion of punishing the NDP at the polls is mistaken. Neither abstention nor "strategic voting" will deliver punishment for Horwath, nor will they protect us from Hudak.

The only option for progressives in this election is a vote for the NDP – not because it will provide the change we are looking for, but as a basic expression of workers' confidence to organize separately from the bosses. No matter how little progressive content appears in Horwath's election platform, the reality on the ground is that key progressive activists across the province will be pulling the vote and organizing to defeat Hudak and Wynne.

The unions that have already ceded to "strategic voting" have moved a step further away from any notion of workers organizing themselves to fight. There is nothing progressive about capitulating to the argument that the Liberals and NDP are now somehow the same. From the point of view of both the base of the party, and its connection to the trade union bureaucracy, the NDP is not at all like the Liberal party.

But just as importantly, the unions that are uncritically backing Horwath are out of touch with a swath of their members who face employers demanding huge concessions, and who are angry that the NDP is content to campaign on issues with no substantial impact on their lives.

In the electoral arena, the only option at the moment for workers is to vote NDP – not as uncritical support for Horwath's platform, but because the NDP is still the only party that embodies a connection with the organized working class. If the NDP is trounced in the June 12 election, it is Bay Street and the corporate elite who will feel emboldened. And that will have a negative effect on the confidence of activists and union members to fight.

Struggle

But whatever the results of the election, the key political question remains struggle. Struggle holds the key to pressuring the NDP to fight, to pushing back Hudak and his Tea Party agenda, and to building the confidence of ordinary people to do what is necessary to stop the decimation of jobs, services and the environment. The 1,400-strong demonstration against Line 9 on May 10 is a good example. The call for an environmental assessment of Line 9 must be part of the all-candidates' discussions across the province.

No matter what party forms the next government, building unity in struggle – between workers, Indigenous peoples, environmentalists and social justice activists – will determine what those at the top are able to get away with. There isn't a moment to spare in building that type of fight-back. The last time an Ontario government tried to implement such brutal measures, 11 one-day, one-city general strikes were the response. We have been through so much since those struggles – from anti-capitalist mobilizations to the anti-war movement to Occupy and Idle No More: these struggles hold the key to fighting back and to producing a fighting alternative to the NDP's enragingly low horizons.

Ontario can't afford Hudak's low-wage agenda

Stop the Hudak Attack

RightsAtWork.ca



'Strategic voting' (continued from pg 1)

The problem with strategic voting is that it's not strategic at all. Presumably, strategic voters are motivated to vote against the Tories because they perceive their agenda as significantly worse than the Liberals'. Again, if we focus only on party platforms, this may be more or less true. In practice, the reality is much different. In 1993, Jean Chrétien's Liberals won a majority, thanks in part to strategic voting against the Tories' record of free trade and budget cuts. Once in power, the Liberals expanded free trade and introduced the deepest cuts to social programs in Canadian history, the opposite of their promises. Likewise, despite its "left-wing" budget, the Ontario Liberals have already implemented 80 per cent of the Drummond Report's austerity measures, and have attacked public sector workers and their right to collective bargaining.

The other problem with strategic voting is that it assumes that the only way to fight the Liberals' and Tories' austerity agendas is through elections, as if the labour movement outside parliament has little or no role to play. Given labour's weak state, it's understandable why progressive voters feel compelled to vote strategically – especially in the face of Tim Hudak's promise to slash 100,000 public sector jobs and gut workers' rights. This also explains why sections of the trade union bureaucracy also endorse strategic voting: despite the potential strength of their base, labour leaders are more likely to rely on elections (or legal battles) to advance their interests than to mobilize their members in any serious manner.

In addition, strategic voting doesn't consider the impact of elections on the political terrain outside parliament, where activists organize in between campaigns. This point is crucial: the day-to-day struggles that exist before an election will still be there when it's over.

Austerity agenda

If "strategic voting" produces a majority Liberal government at the expense of the ONDP, it may stop Hudak from implementing his slash-and-burn policies. But it won't stop the austerity agenda – which, at their core, the Liberals fully embrace, but only with a different tactical approach than the Tories. Fewer NDP MPPs will mean far less pressure on the Liberals to court their support, or to offer the kinds of reforms they promised in their recent budget. Instead, an emboldened Liberal government confidently advance austerity, and on its own terms.

Or "strategic voting" could fail to prevent a Tory government but still shift support from the NDP to the Liberals. In

this situation, the political terrain outside parliament – where the real fight against austerity must take place – would be much more difficult, given the widespread demoralization of the NDP base and the labour movement, and the triumphalism of the Tories' ruling-class backers.

Tellingly, no matter how much the NDP attempts to obscure its links to labour, the mainstream media almost always interprets its electoral losses as a rejection of "labour's party" – and with it – the possibility of any alternative to the Liberals or the Conservatives.

Given this context, the left should base its strategy – including how to vote – on what will strengthen the labour and social movements beyond the election. On these terms, it makes the most sense to call for a critical vote for the ONDP, despite the limits of its platform.

Movement-building

But this is just a start. The left must confront the much bigger project of building a viable, long-term movement out of the fragmented and isolated struggles that dot the current landscape. And just as it recognizes the impact of elections on movements, it must also recognize the impact of movements on elections – and organize accordingly. This dialectical relationship between the ballot box and the street is the key to addressing emerging debates about the future of the ONDP.

Much of that debate represents the frustration among members and supporters who want the ONDP to offer a real, left-wing alternative. The overall weakness of the movements has raised the stakes even further: because of the difficulty of imagining the possibility of a large-scale, ongoing mobilization that could actually push back the austerity agenda, activists increasingly pin all their hopes on the electoral prospects of the NDP – a move that heightens their sense of betrayal and disappointment when the party fails to deliver.

This weakness also distorts the debate to the extent that activists become singularly focused on changing the ONDP – finding a new leader, taking it over or creating a left-wing version of it – without any sense of how the labour and social movements could play a role in this process. Their mistake is to treat the symptom (the ONDP's rightward shift) instead of the disease (the low level of struggle outside the party). As a consequence, the increasingly urgent task of "fixing" the party becomes a substitute for – instead of the outcome of – the difficult, time-consuming project of systematically rebuilding struggle from the ground up.

Next steps

That said, this debate is an important one, and represents more potential than the usual "regroupment" discussions that frequently pop up on the far left. Without a doubt, the election's outcome – no matter who wins – will only intensify the debate.

In the short term, there is a real urgency to address strategic voting, abstention, the idea that the Liberals are a "left-wing" alternative, and the working-class nature of the ONDP; our response will affect the extent to which we can have an impact on the election itself, and our ability to shape the political terrain once the election is over. For this reason, the left should call for a critical vote for the ONDP.

In the long term, our focus must be on the concrete issues immediately facing working people, and on building the kind of rank-and-file response that mobilizes them in large numbers: the fight to defend trade union rights and to stop so-called "right-to-work" laws; the fight to defend Canada Post as a public service; the fight for a \$14 minimum wage; the fight against Line 9 and for a clean environment; the fight for Indigenous sovereignty and for justice for missing and murdered Indigenous women; among many other struggles.

If we build these struggles broadly, and successfully attract wider forces beyond the self-identified left, the possibility of changing the ONDP's political direction – and of harnessing it (or something entirely new) as an electoral vehicle for the demands of the movements – becomes far less abstract than it is at the moment. In the process, this kind of regroupment may begin to generate among the wider public the kind of support for progressive, working-class demands that pressures the ONDP to take them up. And the more that pressure grows outside the party, the more influence the movements have inside it.

No matter who wins this election, this must remain our primary focus: rebuilding the capacity of the labour and social movements to confront and resist the austerity agenda in all its forms. It is here – among the struggles of ordinary working people, in their workplaces, on the campuses, and in their neighbourhoods – that the left will find the strength it needs for such a project, and the potential for the kind of regroupment that could transform the electoral landscape.

If you like this article, register for Marxism 2014: Resisting a System in Crisis. Sessions include "The NDP and the crisis of social democracy," "After the election: taking on the anti-union threat in Ontario and Quebec," and "Why do we need a revolutionary organization?"

No tears for Tories

RIP people killed by Flaherty's policies

Former federal finance minister Jim Flaherty died an early death at 64, causing the business community, the Tories and Liberals—but also NDP leader Tom Mulcair—to choke back tears. We mourn instead the thousands whose untimely deaths were brought about by the policies of Flaherty and the cabinets in which he served.

Flaherty was part of Mike Harris' government in Ontario, whose cuts to water inspection services led to an E.Coli outbreak that killed seven people in Walkerton, Ontario. The same government imposed massive cuts to welfare and social housing, killing Kimberly Rogers in the process, and years later people continue to die from homelessness.

Flaherty was also part of cuts to healthcare at both provincial and federal levels. As the Council of Canadians wrote last week in an article titled Broken Promises and Abdication: Flaherty's Healthcare Legacy, "March 31 marks the end of the 2004 Health Accord and the last day Canadian health care will have equalization payments to have-not provinces, national standards, and federal funding tied to achieving set benchmarks. March 31 is also a day to mourn the fact that we remain the only wealthy country with a universal health-care system and no national pharmacare plan." Healthcare cuts kill, including the Tories' inhumane cuts to refugee health—denying basic health care to people who had fled rape, torture and war.

Flaherty was also proudly part of the Harper government that turns its back on global health crises—boycotting the International AIDS conference in Toronto, imposing a maternal health plan denying abortion, cutting humanitarian aid to Gaza, and defunding Sisters in Spirit that investigates missing and murdered aboriginal women.

While destroying social services, Flaherty and the federal Tories have poured billions into the military, which has killed countless people in 13 years of occupying Afghanistan, the bombing campaign in Libya, and the UN occupation of Haiti. At the same time, Flaherty's budget policies included the New Veterans Charter—cutting benefits from veterans despite an epidemic of suicides and protests across the country.

Flaherty also pioneered the technique of using omnibus budgets to hide life-threatening cuts, from Bill C-45's attacks on environmental protection and indigenous sovereignty that sparked Idle No More, to the more recent Bill C-4 that attacks workers—including their health and safety.

We mourn these countless victims of Flaherty's policies of austerity, and organize to put an end to the capitalist system that cut their lives short.

Civil liberties

Outrage at decisions against Harkat and Diab

In liberal democracies people are supposed to be innocent until proven guilty, and have the right to a fair trial including access to the evidence against them. But thanks to Canadian courts, Mohamet Harkat could be deported to torture in Algeria, and Hassan Diab could be extradited to France, based on secret or substandard evidence.

"Security Certificates" allow the Canadian state to use secret trials to brand people as terrorists and detain them indefinitely, and those accused do not have access to the evidence presented against them or any opportunity to face their accusers.

After the Supreme Court found "security certificates" unconstitutional in 2007, the government added court-appointed lawyers as "special advocates" to oversee the secret trials. This does nothing to restore the most basic human rights violated by "security certificates," but instead of abolishing them the Supreme Court have now found them to be "reasonable."

After more than 11 years of prison and persecution Mohamed Harkat, an Ottawa man accused of being a terrorist but without access to the evidence or to a fair trial, now faces deportation to his native Algeria where he could face torture.

Meanwhile, another Canadian court upheld France's extradition against Hassan Diab for a crime he did not commit. As Diab wrote in response, "It is with great shock that I learned that the Court of Appeal upheld my extradition order on the sole basis of a discredited handwriting analysis report... Such a decision means that any Canadian citizen can be detained, uprooted and extradited based on deeply flawed evidence that a foreign state submits. Unfortunately, Canadians have very limited rights when they are sought by a foreign state."

According to Independent Jewish Voices spokesperson Sid Shniad, "Our government and judicial system are in the business of violating international law, demonizing Arabs and Muslims, and branding them terrorists while denying them the right to a fair trial. All those who believe in justice should be outraged. We should demand that Parliament intervene immediately to abolish Security Certificates and end unjust practices like the extradition proceedings against Dr. Diab."

For more information and news on upcoming actions to support Harkat and Diab, visit www.justiceforharkat.com and www.justiceforhassandiab.org

OPINION

The 99% needs a raise.

The 1% can afford it.

2/3 of low-wage workers are employed by large corporations



Source: National Employment Law Project

The truth about "small business" and the minimum wage

A widely-supported grassroots campaign was launched more than a year ago in Ontario calling on the provincial government to raise the minimum wage to \$14/hour.

Since then, there has been much ink spilled and politician's hot air expended over the issue of the minimum wage. Ontario Liberal Premier Kathleen Wynne announced in January that the rate will be raised to \$11/hour, with future increases indexed to the rate of inflation.

As the Workers' Action Centre pointed out however, a wage of \$11/hour will still keep minimum wage workers at approximately 16 per cent below the poverty line.

Premier Wynne was quoted in January saying "I know that there's a call for \$14 (but) we have to move very carefully, because this is about making sure that we retain and create jobs."

Ontario NDP leader Andrea Horvath was quoted in early February saying "Well, look, I respect the work of the grassroots movements that have been calling for the \$14 minimum wage, but I think our role right now is to consult with families that are affected, as well as small business particularly that's also affected."

The Ontario NDP announced in March that they will be proposing a \$12/hour minimum wage to be instituted by 2016, a rate which would then be indexed to inflation. As pointed out previously in *Socialist Worker* not only is there virtually no difference between the Liberal and NDP proposals, but the ONDP plan would still keep the minimum wage well below the poverty line, which for 2014 sits at \$13.18/hour. By 2016, when the ONDP propose

the minimum wage would be \$12/hour, the poverty line is projected to be up to \$13.66. Clearly the NDP proposal is not good enough.

"Small businesses" profiting from poverty wages

The notion that we can't have a non-poverty minimum wage because we have to protect small business is nonsense. According to Statistics Canada's Perspectives on Labour and Income, published in 2010, the sector of the economy that had "by far the highest incidence" of minimum wage jobs was accommodation and food services.

This is a sector dominated by large corporations like McDonald's, Tim Hortons, Marriott hotels and Revera nursing and retirement homes. The retail sector, another significant employer of minimum wage workers, is increasingly dominated by large multinationals like Wal-Mart, Target and Gap.

These are companies that can easily afford to pay their workers higher wages—Wal-Mart had total revenues worldwide of US\$466.1 billion in 2013; Tim Hortons, a small company by comparison, had revenues of C\$3.225 billion in the same year.

ONDP leader Horvath seems to want to raise the spectre of the Mom-and-Pop convenience store driven out of business because of having to pay their staff higher wages, but it's clear that the main beneficiary from this stance will be massive multinationals, not Mom-and-Pop sandwich shops.

Ironically for Horvath, both the Ontario Convenience Stores Association and the Ontario Chamber of Commerce told the Toronto Star

that they support indexing the minimum wage to inflation. As Beixi Liu of the Workers Action Centre recently told *Socialist Worker*, increasing the minimum wage to \$14/hour would not only be good for individual workers, the community and business" because it would generate approximately \$5 billion in economic stimulus that would be spent in local businesses, due to workers tending to spend their increased wages rather than hoard them.

So when the Ontario NDP says that we need to consult small business in order to proceed on raising the minimum wage, all they're achieving is providing cover to massive and profitable companies in their refusal to pay workers properly.

Pay equity

In addition, according to Statistics Canada, just over 60 per cent of minimum wage workers are women. The pay gap between men and women workers in Ontario is currently just over 30 per cent, meaning that on average women need to work thirty percent more hours than men to be paid the same amount.

Given that a substantial majority of minimum wage workers are women, raising the minimum wage to a non-poverty wage would be a major contribution to closing the pay equity gap.

It's long past time for corporations to be compelled to pay their workers better wages, and it's long past time for women to be paid equally with men. It's time for a real raise to the minimum wage.

REVIEWS



FILM

Secret Trial 5 heats up Hot Docs

Chantal Sundaram interviews Sophie Harkat about a must-see film.

Sophie, can you tell us in your own words why this is such an important film?

This film is crucial in bringing awareness against injustices that are taking place for 5 Muslim men and their families in Canada. A land of freedom, justice and democracy, but not if you get arrested under a Security Certificate and get labelled a threat to National Security.

The Security Certificate allows for indefinite detention, 30-plus years combined for the men without charge, and without access to the evidence. Many of those years spent in solitary confinement. The men and their counsels are kept in the dark.

The Supreme Court of Canada found the Certificates unconstitutional back in Feb. 2007, now they are under review again and we hope they will be abolished for good this time around! We hope this film will help spread the word and get people to react.

What was your own involvement with the film over the years it took to make it?

We started filming in Sept. 2009, one day after the surveillance cameras were taken out of our house and most of the bail conditions lifted. It was not my first experience with a documentary. I was not as enthusiastic about it at first because it is very time-consuming. After seeing their enthusiasm, their dedication, energy and professionalism, it was hard to say no and as the project was moving along, I was getting more and more excited about the end result.

So far I can say this is the best documentary I have participated in by far. The film focuses on all aspects of the Security Certificate process and involves all the families this time around.

PLAY

Sowing dissent

Seeds, a play by Annabel Soutar
Review by Chantal Sundaram

The last decade has seen the flourishing of “verbatim theatre,” a style of documentary theatre that uses court transcripts, interviews, and archives to reconstruct stories of actual events in the words of their participants. It is a genre that lends itself to political theatre.

Recent examples include The Laramie Project and The Laramie Project-Ten Years Later (about the murder of Matthew Shepard), My Name is Rachel Corrie, Black Watch (using interviews with Black Watch soldiers in Iraq) and The Exonerated,

Who was at the world premiere? What was the audience reaction?

The premiere was sold out and many of Amar and Noah’s friends and family were present. Some supporters came down from Kingston and Montreal to attend the premiere, but the best part was having all the families present. I was very touched and honored to share the stage with them for the Q & A afterwards.

The crowd cheered loudly after the film ended and the families got a standing ovation when we got on stage. I was told the film also got a standing ovation at the second screening. It was a great and memorable moment!

I am so proud of Amar and Noah for making it this far, they were dreaming of presenting at Hot Docs and the film is fantastic! Touching and disturbing at the same time. Their work is extremely professional and that is what impressed me most about the project. They put a lot of their own time and effort into this project because they really believed in it. I don’t consider them filmmakers, I consider them great friends who have gone through a lot with us!

Do you think the favourable reaction to this film shows a growing awareness of the situation of the Secret Trial Five and of Security Certificates in general?

Absolutely! But I have to say, I’m surprised to hear so many say they have never heard about Security Certificates before seeing the documentary. The majority of Canadians agree Security Certificates do not belong in a democratic society like Canada. People want the process to be abolished. I thank all the Canadians who have supported us through the years. We’ve gone that far because of them. I get my strength from the support and love, and knowing so many care is keeping me alive and fighting. Moe and I are very grateful for their support.

based on interviews with people exonerated from death row in the US.

Playwright Annabel Soutar has written and staged a number of plays in this genre with her Montreal-based company Porte Parole.

The latest, *Seeds*, about the historic pursuit by agriculture multinational Monsanto of Saskatchewan conola farmer Percy Schmeiser over a patented herbicide-resistant conola gene, is a marriage of theatrical form and the subject explored.

Annabel puts herself in the play to narrate how she documented this battle that made it all the way up to the Supreme Court, and likens her process to that of Monsanto: she collects raw material from the real world and modifies it until it becomes something she

Tell us a few words about your husband’s own current situation.

Moe has been detained under one form or another (jail or bail) for 11 years. It has been a very long and painful process, but the support has been amazing. He was detained for 7 and a half years under the toughest bail conditions in Canadian history until that point.

We also challenged the continued use of secret evidence/constitutional-ity in front of the Supreme Court for the second time this past October.

There is a ruling expected soon: can you tell us something about that?

The ruling could come down any day now. Justice will prevail one day and the truth will come out!

The main arguments were against the continued use of secret evidence, the unconstitutional process, the use of Special Advocates (who were not given all the evidence and access to informants and sources), the continued use of destroyed evidence by the government and the credibility of the informant. In our case, all original material was destroyed (interviews, intercepts, notes, etc.) and the main informant failed his lie detector test. CSIS failed to inform the judge. His credibility was never tested in secret proceedings by the Special Advocates that were put in place for that.

All this continues to make the process unconstitutional in our opinion and for all the groups that joined as interveners that day. Moe and the others never got a fair trial.

What are you hoping the impact of the film will be in the ongoing campaign against Security Certificates?

I hope people will react and act. Call your MP! Sign our petition www.harkatstatement.com and join thousands of other Canadians who want to see this unjust law abolished.

calls her own.

But whereas the jury is out on whether genetically-modified food is demonstrably dangerous or should be patentable, the verdict is in on Soutar’s *Seeds*: it is a sharp, funny and engaging take on the Monsanto-Schmeiser case that draws the audience in through the playwright’s attempt to reconstruct the many different voices involved.

In the end, what emerges is not a simple “David and Goliath” story of a farmer attempting to fight off a patent suit for genetically-modified seeds that blew onto his field.

Rather it raises complex questions about profit-driven science and the way it leaves both farmers and the public vulnerable to ignorance and manipulation.

LEFT JAB

John Bell

Capitalism’s bad sports

Well, we can sleep better tonight. The mega-profits of professional major league sports have been defended. Donald Sterling, billionaire owner of the NBA’s LA Clippers and sexist, racist jerk, has been shunned by the league’s other owners. Problem solved; move along everybody, nothing to see here.

Not so fast say observers like NBA Hall of Famer Kareem Abdul-Jabbar: “The whole country has gotten a severe case of carpal tunnel syndrome from the newest popular sport of Extreme Finger Wagging. Not to mention the neck strain from Olympic tryouts for Morally Superior Head Shaking. All over the latest in a long line of rich white celebrities to come out of the racist closet.

“What bothers me about this whole Donald Sterling affair isn’t just his racism. I’m bothered that everyone acts as if it’s a huge surprise.”

Racism

It would come as no surprise to racialized low-income tenants of Sterling’s California real estate holdings. Sterling has been repeatedly been convicted and fined for a history of discriminatory and racist practices as a landlord. With 20/20 hindsight, following the release of the tape featuring Sterling’s vile, racist rants, numerous observers have cited his damning legal history.

But where were these sports writers when the Clippers owner was refusing to rent to Latinos or publicly stating that Afro-American tenants “smell and attract vermin”? Sports writers seldom bite the hand that feeds them.

One of a tiny handful who buck that trend is left-wing sports writer Dave Zirin. In 2009 Zirin wrote a column in the Nation magazine outlining Sterling’s history of convictions and multi-million dollar fines for racist practices. He devotes a chapter to Sterling in his 2010 book *Bad Sports: How Owners Are Ruining the Games We Love*.

Not content to condemn Sterling, Zirin argues that the owners and officials who run the NBA are equally culpable. In a recent interview with radio’s Democracy Now he said: “The warning signs of Donald Sterling’s racism, egregious behavior, and misogyny go back more than a decade—and the league has coddled him. There is a racism culture in the ownership ranks of the NBA. ... In other words, not every owner is as outwardly racist as Donald Sterling, but for decades they have chosen to enable him and look the other way.”

NBA Commissioner Adam Silver had to act quickly to put an end to the story before a players revolt. The Golden State Warriors, in the midst of a playoff series against the Clippers, had planned to walk out before the game if nothing was done. The franchise owners who enabled Sterling for decades are now forcing him to sell the Clippers, banning him from attending any NBA event and fining him \$2.5 million.

Revolt

Their response was designed to paint Sterling as a lone gunman, an owner who had

gone rogue. It was forced by a growing revolt among NBA players, who were beginning to raise flags about a culture of racism throughout their sport. And it was done out of fear of a wider backlash against racism in other walks of life.

As Zirin writes: “If this ‘Donald Sterling moment’ is going to matter, it will be because we recognize that racism is not merely about someone saying vile things about Magic Johnson but the power this racist exercised over both his team and the thousands of residents in Los Angeles County who had to live in his residential complexes.”

#Notyourmascot

Let’s use this moment to remember that racism is not restricted to one owner, one franchise or one sport. There is a growing fight against racist team names and logos in major league baseball and football. Zirin reserves the title of the worst owner in pro sports for Dan Snyder, owner of the NFL’s Washington Redskins.

Snyder is too sly to be caught making overt racist and misogynist statements on tape, but his continued defence of that most offensive team name reveals the undercurrent of “polite” racism that pervades both sport and capitalist society at large.

Racist names and logos are not just relics of the past—just a year ago owners of a new Ottawa franchise in the Canadian Basketball League didn’t think there was a problem calling their team the TomaHawks. Remember, that was in midst of the Idle No More protests.

You don’t have to look far to find racism in sports—Spanish football louts tossing bananas at Black players for instance—but sport is only a reflection of the racism throughout society.

Capitalism

To be sure, ruling classes occasionally used racism to preserve their power long before capitalism emerged. But for Capitalism, from its inception in the African slave trade and genocide of North America’s first people, racism is essential, not an option. Just as you cannot have capitalism without imperialism, capitalism without racism is impossible.

But if capitalism depends on racism to keep us fighting among ourselves, it also forces us to overcome racism to defend our common interests.

Just today I am reading about the Cowboy Indian Alliance coming together in the US to oppose the Keystone XL Pipeline. In New Brunswick, First Nations people are joining with their settler neighbours to oppose fracking.

Donald Sterling may be stripped of ownership of his sport franchise, but he remains a charter member of the 1%, a billionaire slum landlord made rich off the backs of the racialized communities he despises. The system can afford to sacrifice one high profile, loose-lipped bigot to save itself.

It is time we stopped playing their game, and put an end to the system that lifts up bad sports like Donald Sterling in the first place.

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 kills the earth itself with pollution and unsustainable extraction of natural resources. Capitalism leads to imperialism and war. Saving ourselves and the planet depends on finding an alternative.

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.

Reform and revolution

Every day, there are battles between exploited and exploiter, 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 NDP and many trade union leaders say. It has to be overthrown. That will require the mass action of workers themselves.

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 developed under capitalism and are designed to 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.

Internationalism

The struggle for socialism is part of a worldwide struggle. We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries. We oppose everything which 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.

Canada, Quebec, Aboriginal 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 the Aboriginal peoples and the people of Quebec.

We support the struggles for self-determination of Quebec and Aboriginal peoples up to and including the right to independence. Socialists in Quebec, and in all oppressed nations, work towards giving the struggle against national oppression an internationalist and working class content.

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 transgendered people. We oppose discrimination on the basis of religion, ability and age.

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.



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SATURDAY JUNE 14

10-11:15am:

*"System change not climate change", featuring migrant justice activist Connie Sorio, green jobs activist Gerry Leblanc, climate justice activist Jesse McLaren, and others TBA

11:30-12:45pm:

*"Environmental racism and climate justice", featuring Indigenous youth activist Vanessa Gray, and climate justice activist Anton Cu Unjieng

*"WWI: slaughter and resistance", featuring columnist and activist John Bell

*"The birth of industrial unionism in Canada 1937-45", featuring labour activist Christine Beckermann

*"Why is capitalism in crisis?", featuring labour activist Pam Frache

1-2:30pm:

*"The NDP and the crisis of social democracy", featuring author and activist Nora Loreto, and labour activists David Bush and Ritch Whyman

2:45-4pm

*"Global resistance to imperialism", featuring African solidarity activist Ameth Lo, Tamil solidarity activist Krisna Saravanamuttu, and Arab solidarity activist Yusur Al-Bahrani

*"Racism, sexism and the war on women", featuring student activist Hanan Jibril and anti-war activist Faline Bobier

*"What is socialism?", featuring student activist James Clark

*"1917: from war to revolution", featuring activist Peter Hogarth, author of "Students, austerity and resistance"

4:15-5:30pm

*"Quebec: after the elections, what's next for the left?", featuring Quebec activists Jessica Squires, Nora Loreto, Mathieu Murphy-Perron, and QS candidate Benoit Renaud

*"Indigenous resistance: justice for murdered and missing Aboriginal women", featuring Indigenous activist Wanda Whitebird and solidarity activist Valerie Lannon

*"Marx's ecology", featuring climate justice activists Anna Roik and Bradley Hughes

*"South Africa after Mandela", featuring activist from South Africa Joseph Kelly

7-9pm:

*"Taking on the anti-union threat in Ontario and Quebec", featuring labour activist Michelle Robidoux, Andria Babbington, Benoit Renaud

SUNDAY JUNE 15

10-11:15am:

*"Disability, austerity and resistance", featuring disability activists Ellen Clifford and Melissa Graham

*"How do we win reproductive justice: struggles of the past and present", featuring pro-choice activist Carolyn Egan, and the launch of a new reproductive justice pamphlet

*"Rosa Luxemburg and the mass strike", featuring labour activist Octavian Cadabeschi

*"Why do we need a revolutionary organization?", featuring activist Kevin Brice

11:30-12:45pm

*"Labour and the fight for green jobs", featuring green jobs activists Nigel Barriffe and Carolyn Egan

*"Secularism and religious accommodation", featuring anti-racist activist Chantal Sundaram, author of "Islamophobia: what it is and how to fight it"

*"Ukraine and inter-imperial rivalry", featuring anti-war activist Sid Lacombe

*"Socialism and indigenous sovereignty", featuring indigenous solidarity activist Valerie Lannon

12:45-2pm:

*"Are you a revolutionary? Introduction to the International Socialists", featuring student activists Shayma Bashawieh and Evan Johnson

2-3:15pm

*"Rebuilding our unions: a rank and file strategy", featuring labour activists Rob Fairley, Pam Johnson, and Laura Kaminker

*"World Pride and LGBT liberation", featuring LGBT activists Tim McCaskell, Junique Wambya and Maureen Aslin

*"Quebec solidaire and left regroupment", featuring Quebec solidaire activist Jessica Squires and QS candidate Benoit Renaud

*"Egypt's ongoing revolution", featuring Wassim Wagdy, member of Egypt's Revolutionary Socialists

3:30 to 4pm:

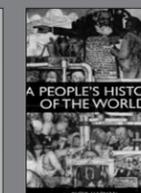
*"Resisting a System in Crisis" closing rally, speakers TBA

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STEELWORKERS PROTEST

by ALEX THOMSON

On Wednesday April 17, approximately 50 Toronto Steelworkers gathered on the sidewalk in front of the Four Seasons Hotel in Manhattan.

They were members of Steelworkers' Local 9175 and the Steelworkers Toronto Area Council who were there to protest the shareholders' meeting of Carnival Cruises and bring attention to the ongoing seven-month strike at Crown Holdings' Toronto plant.

The CEO of Carnival Cruises, Arnold Donald, is also on the Board of Directors of Crown Holdings. Steelworkers have launched a boycott of Carnival Cruises.

While the protest was carried out on the sidewalk, other Steelworkers holding proxy Carnival Cruises shareholder votes attended the meeting, where they took the opportunity to ask Donald some pointed questions from the floor. Once the meeting was over, they were able to bring their concerns to Arnold Donald personally. The Steelworkers were interviewed by a reporter from Business Week, which led to an article on the business magazine's website.

The approximately 150 members of USW Local 9175 hope that these actions will bring the employer back to the bargaining table for a fair settlement without the major concessions, such as a two-tiered wage system, that the very profitable Crown Holdings is demanding.

For more information on the Crown strike visit www.takebacksnomore.ca.

SAVE CANADA POST

by CHANTAL SUNDARAM

On April 9, the Hintonburg Community Centre in Ottawa welcomed residents of the municipal ward of Kitchissippi to a Town Hall about preserving the public service and good union jobs represented by Canada Post's home mail delivery.

We heard from Nick Aplin, an 81-year old community resident of the ward, about the impact on seniors; from Peter Denley from the Canadian Union of Postal Workers about the real story behind Canada Post's financial claims (and about the full social cost of the proposed move to Community Mail Boxes); and from Shellie Bird, of community coalition Solidarity Against Austerity, about the link between the move to undermine Canada Post and the bigger agenda of privatization and austerity.

The meeting heard statements both written and spoken from Ottawa candidates for City Council in the upcoming municipal election, who all claimed general support for maintaining home mail delivery. Window signs and lawn signs were handed out, and future town halls on home delivery were planned.

For more information visit cupw.ca

FIGHT FOR \$14/HR CONTINUES



by ALEX HUNSBERGER

On April 14, a crowd of about 175 people marched in downtown Toronto to demand a \$14-an-hour minimum wage and improved legal protections for precarious workers. The action was spearheaded by the Campaign to Raise the Minimum Wage, a coalition of community and labour organizations.

Participants gathered in front of Old City Hall at Queen Street West and Bay Street and marched to the headquarters of Randstad, one of Canada's largest temp agencies. At the rally, speakers and marchers were united in their message: Ontario workers deserve a \$14 minimum wage now!

Exploitation

The Ontario Liberal government's recent decision to increase the minimum wage to \$11 an hour on June 1 from the current rate of \$10.25 is an important victory for workers that came as a result of ongoing political mobilization. However, the crowd was unanimous in

condemning this move as wholly inadequate, as it will keep thousands below the poverty line.

Marchers also denounced the particularly harsh exploitation that workers employed by temp agencies face, demanding improved employment standards protections and aggressive enforcement of those provisions already on the books.

Oppression

Laura Thompson, a member of the OPSEU Women's Committee; and others addressed the crowd and offered solidarity.

Thompson noted that the Ontario government has declared April 16 Equal Pay Day – which represents the amount of additional time, on average, a woman would have to work into a new year to earn as much as a man earned during the preceding year. She explicitly highlighted the link between precarious work and gender inequality, pointing out that a majority of low-wage workers are women, and that women continue to earn less than men across the board.

Unity

Among the crowd were a variety of unionized and non-unionized workers from different sectors, including members of Access Alliance, UFCW, the Toronto Social Planning Council, UNITE HERE, the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty, CUPE – including about a dozen members of the CUPE 3903 Flying Squad – and more.

The April 14 action is part of an ongoing series of demonstrations occurring on the 14th of each month, to show the government that workers will continue to mobilize until the goal of a \$14-an-hour minimum wage is realized. The next mobilization will take place on Wednesday, May 14.

To get involved in the \$14 Minimum Wage Campaign, visit raisetheminimumwage.ca.

To sign a petition urging your Ontario MPP to support current legislation to protect workers and regulate temp agencies, please visit <http://togetherontario.org/decent/>.

AFTER CLC CONVENTION, FIGHT TO SAVE CANADA POST

by MICHELLE ROBIDOUX

The election of Hassan Yussuff as president of the Canadian Labour Congress has breathed a sense of excitement into the labour movement across the country. The key task for activists now is to push to translate this into a concrete fightback against austerity.

Many workers of colour see it as a significant breakthrough that an immigrant worker from Guyana has won the highest position in the labour movement in Canada.

Close to 5,000 delegates were registered for the convention, almost double the numbers for the 2011 convention

Many were first time delegates, many were young workers. An impressive contingent of labour council delegates – including young activists from Halifax, Fredericton and Cape Breton – played a key role in stopping a proposal that would potentially have bureaucratized and strangled labour councils.

Paradoxes

Interestingly, one of the most hotly contested elections in memory has produced a "renewal"

executive where 3 of the 4 officers have a combined 40-odd years at the head of the CLC.

This was not the only paradox at the convention: when Denis Coderre, the recently elected Mayor of Montreal (and former Liberal cabinet minister) welcomed delegates to Montreal, he wore a CUPW ball cap with "Save Canada Post", and led a chant of "So-so-so-solidaire" in support of the fight to maintain home delivery. But when federal NDP leader Tom Mulcair addressed the convention saying "Canadians can vote for change and actually get change" by voting NDP, he pointed to restoring Old Age Security to 65 years and beginning the process of increasing the Canada Pension Plan. With a federal election coming in 2015, his message to delegates was clearly: don't expect much.

Another paradox: the unions widely seen as more militant, such as Unifor, endorse strategic voting (vote Liberal or NDP), while unions that are viewed to be more moderate, such as USW, call for a vote for the NDP, seeing Liberals as a party of business.

We know only too well how union leaders often use these divisions and contradictions to justify inaction and infighting. As one Ontario labour council leader said, "Now the hard work begins."

Save Canada Post

The movement on the ground is key to ensuring that the new leadership of the CLC, and the broader labour movement, feel the pressure to deliver on the expectations that were so visible at the convention – starting with Canada Post.

In every union local, labour council and beyond we can push for concrete action around saving home delivery.

By activating union members in every neighbourhood, this can also build pressure on the NDP to do more than pledge to restore a couple of the things that Harper has cut.

Finally, activists who met and organized in Hassan Husseini's campaign to "Take Back the CLC" have pledged to try to maintain a network beyond this CLC convention, and plan to meet again at the People's Social Forum in Ottawa August 21-24: www.peoplesocialforum.org.

STICKING WITH THE UNION

Carolyn Egan

Rebuilding our unions

Rallies and meetings have been taking place across Ontario in the last few months—bringing labour activists together to confront anti-union attacks.

Local labour councils and the Ontario Federation of Labour have put out a call, and militants responded in large number in Durham, Peel, Toronto, Guelph, London, Windsor, Sudbury and other centres.

The anti-union attack

Unions have taken a beating in recent years with concession contracts, layoffs and plant closures. In the public sector there have been significant cutbacks with necessary services reduced and privatization being the name of the game. Right wing forces have been taken advantage of the economic insecurity and anxiety about the future that so many feel, and have blamed unions for the situation confronting the working class and the poor. They have promoted the politics of envy talking about the "gold plated" pensions and wages of public sector workers. They have tried to use divide and rule tactics to weaken the working class, pitting one against the other.

We have seen in the United States what has happened where this right wing ideology has gained traction. "Right to Work" legislation has taken root not only in the south where it has been in place for decades but also in northern states such as Wisconsin and Michigan which have long trade union traditions.

Labour bureaucracy

The situation has been confounded by the fact that many unions have not been fighting back and have lost the confidence of their members. Most union leaders have lost touch with the needs of their members.

The labour bureaucracy is a layer between the rank and file and the employer. By the nature of their position they tend to dampen down militancy and mediate between the membership and management.

As we weather the attacks on unions, activ-

ists have been taking on the task of connecting with their fellow workers, engaging in workplace discussions, talking about the need for unions to be accountable to their members.

Rank and file

Many of the meetings that have been taking place in Ontario have been confronting the need for a renewed union movement. Activists have recognized that we must rebuild our unions from the bottom up.

Now that we are into a provincial election the stakes are very high and we have to redouble our efforts to strengthen working class organization in our workplaces. Some unions have really begun to see a change in workplace culture with ordinary members going to meetings and taking on the role of engaging with their fellow workers. The number of workers identifying with their unions and seeing the importance of a membership controlled organization is growing but much more needs to be done.

The role of unions will be on everyone's lips during this election. This is the time to up the workplace discussions. Lunch room meetings, workplace leafletings, union walk throughs all have to be organized so that a buzz is created in every workplace. Listen to the concerns and the complaints. Start discussions about what the union could be, if more of us became active and demanded accountability and action.

The recent rallies have shown that many workers want to rebuild their unions. Let's build on that momentum, not let it fade away. Let's use this time to work with fellow activists and do the hard work necessary to take on the anti-union attacks and rebuild a fighting rank and file.

The right wing knows that an organized working class is its worst enemy and can push back their attacks. Let's make it happen by mobilizing at the base and show that a real alternative to the austerity agenda is possible.

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Socialist Worker

Yinka Dene Alliance tells Harper: no pipelines on our land

by BRADLEY HUGHES

The First Nations of the Yinka Dene Alliance summoned representatives of the Canadian government to Nak'azdli, British Columbia, to hear the formal reasons for the Alliance's refusal to allow the Enbridge Pipeline to cross their lands..

At a gathering on April 12, hereditary and elected leaders, elders, youth and other representatives from the First Nations of the Yinka Dene Alliance provided their reasons for banning the tar sands pipeline from their land to Harper's officials.

The Yinka Dene Alliance includes Nadleh Whut'en, Nak'azdli, Takla Lake, Saik'uz, Wet'suwet'en, and Tl'azt'en First Nations in northern BC who have banned the Enbridge Northern Gateway Pipelines from their territories.

Their original decision to ban the pipeline was published in 2010 as the Save The Fraser declaration, which has now been signed by over 130 First Nations (www.savethefraser.ca).

Save the Fraser

The declaration states, "A threat to the Fraser and its headwaters is a threat to all who depend on its health. We will not allow our fish, animals, plants, people and ways of life to be placed at risk."

The signatories explain that, "We have come together to defend these lands and waters from a grave threat: the Enbridge Northern Gateway Pipelines project."

They conclude, "therefore, in upholding our ancestral laws, Title, Rights and responsibilities, we declare: We



will not allow the proposed Enbridge Northern Gateway Pipelines, or similar Tar Sands projects, to cross our lands, territories and watersheds, or the ocean migration routes of Fraser River salmon."

In their presentation to the Canadian officials, Chief Fred Sam of the Nak'azdli First Nation explained, "Our decision to refuse consent for the Enbridge pipeline is a de-

cision according to our own laws. It is binding and clearly set out in the Save the Fraser Declaration." He continued, "This gathering is about our people giving the reasons for our rejection of the Enbridge pipeline, in our voices, on our lands, under our laws."

Chief Anita Williams of Takla Lake First Nation explained some of her reasons: "The risk of a devastating spill from the Enbridge pipe-

line is real. If a spill enters our waters, there is no effective way to clean it up. We will not allow our children to pay that cost for Enbridge."

The Canadian delegation included Brett Maracle, the federal official responsible for First Nations consultation on the Enbridge pipeline proposal. Clan members at the gathering each contributed to a gift that was presented to

the federal officials for carrying the peoples' message to Prime Minister Stephen Harper and his cabinet. "This gift is made according to our laws to recognize these federal officials, and ultimately Stephen Harper and Canada's cabinet, for hearing our formal notice that under no circumstances will heavy oil pipelines go through our territories" said Hereditary Chief Tsodih, Nak'azdli.

Sovereignty and solidarity

If there was any real justice in the territories claimed by the Canadian government, this would be the end of the pipeline project.

"It's important for the Canadian government, and the public in BC and Canada, to know that our people act according to principles and responsibilities in our own system of law and governance", stated Chief Tsodih. "This gathering of our clans, for our leaders and elders to give reasons for the rejection of the Enbridge pipeline in an assembly according to our laws, affirms that our ban on the Enbridge pipeline isn't a preference, it's a determination under law."

The Yinka Dene Alliance has launched a Solidarity Accord that is generating broad support. As Chief Martin Louie of the Nadleh Whut'en First Nation explained, "Never before have we been joined by such a vast range of supporters from across Canadian society. This gives the alliance greater strength for the fight ahead and shows the magnitude and power of public opposition to this pipeline that is proposed to cross over our territories."

"Unifor is proud to stand in solidarity with First Nations as they resist the Enbridge Northern Gateway project," said Gavin McGarrigle, Unifor Area Director for BC. "It's time for a new vision for Canada's energy industry—one that addresses the reality of aboriginal title and rights, respects our social and environmental commitments, and generates lasting wealth for all who live here."

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No more stolen sisters

by VALERIE LANNON

According to a report by the RCMP there have been nearly 1,200 missing and murdered Indigenous women since 1980. James Anaya, UN Special Rapporteur on Rights of Indigenous Peoples, has added his voice to Indigenous groups and their allies calling for a national inquiry.

If this crisis were happening at the same rate in the non-Indigenous population there would be more than 27,000 missing and murdered women.

As Michèle Audette, the President of the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) explained, "We can no longer deny the existence or seriousness of this issue and we hope that this ends the complacency and indifference previously shown by the RCMP and the

federal government towards our missing and murdered sisters."

Root causes

The extensive number of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls, and the low "solve rate" raises many issues, all of which revolve around the question of "why?"

This question is best answered by looking at the impact of colonization, poverty, racism, sexism, and the role of the state.

The Highway of Tears exemplifies many of these root causes. Women and girls hitchhike because of poverty, either they lack their own cars or they can't afford the infrequent Greyhound bus. Poverty for Indigenous women on both their traditional territories and in urban settings also causes some women to turn

to sex work, and street-level sex work in particular creates enormous vulnerability.

Another issue is lack of police follow up, which can only be attributed to racism and sexism. A study by Human Rights Watch documents "not only how indigenous women and girls are under-protected by the police but also how some have been the objects of out-right police abuse...Human Rights Watch heard disturbing allegations of rape and sexual assault by RCMP officers, including from a woman who described how in July 2012 police officers took her outside of town, raped her, and threatened to kill her if she told anyone."

After years of community demands, the BC government established an inquiry led by judge Wally Oppal. Aside from major problems of insufficient involvement

of indigenous community representatives, the impact of the inquiry was minimal.

The Harper government is using the rhetoric of action to dismiss an inquiry. But their only action has been to defund NWAC and support the further colonization of Indigenous communities like tar sands and pipelines

Action

For years there have been vigils across the country and calls for a national inquiry, led by Indigenous groups and with growing support from political, faith and labour groups like the Canadian Labour Congress and individual unions such as Unifor and the Steelworkers.

For updates and information visit www.nwac.ca.