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JUSTICE NOW



No more missing and murdered Indigenous women

Wanda Whitebird, of the Bear Clan, is a member of the Mi'kmag Nation from Afton, Nova Scotia. She currently resides in Toronto, and has been active with No More Silence for ten years. She spoke with Socialist Worker about the campaign for justice for missing and murdered Indigenous women, the real history of Canada, and the role of allies.

Can you tell us about No More Silence?

No More Silence pre-dates Sisters in Spirit, a national campaign about murdered and missing Indigenous women. We are partners with SIS. Both native and non-native women founded NMS in Toronto, from a mutual concern about violence against women.

People in Toronto are probably familiar with the February 14th memorial that we organize each year, as a ceremony of remembrance. We chose February 14th to coincide with the date used by the group in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. And we chose the Toronto Police station (headquarters on College St.) to make a statement, so that we are combining ceremony with a demand for justice.

Why did you get involved with No More Silence?

I care about these women and I have met families of the survivors. This is something where I could help because of my knowledge of ceremonies, which I've been doing all my life. The use of ceremony is very inviting and comfortable for people.

What did you think of the recent RCMP report on missing and murdered Aboriginal women?

I have to wonder, why trust them? Why did they release the report now?

What are your thoughts on the call for a national inquiry into the many cases of missing and murdered Indigenous women?

As to whether there should be an inquiry should be up to the families of the survivors. These families want help and they want an understanding of what went wrong. When police say there has been "no foul play" it doesn't explain what actually happened. It seems police don't care enough to do a proper investigation.

What are the main messages you and No More Silence want to get out to people?

Harper's government made an apology about residential schools,

but Harper won't acknowledge the role of the state in the past genocide of Indigenous people. So I encourage people to recognize and spread the word about the real history of this country, not an altered version. The truth is not taught in the schools, for example, how reservations originated and how there was no choice for our peoples. The media does not say enough about our survival and resistance.

Can you tell us about the role of allies in this campaign?

Allies are very important so that the families of survivors know that they are not alone. Support from individuals and organizations is key and we want to hear from everybody.

Allies take direction from Indigenous women, as we decide what's best for us. But we are given good information from our allies too. It's important that allies don't have their own agendas and that we recognize our shared interests, because there's nothing new about violence against women. We have February 14th as a memorial day and you have December 6th.

How do you think justice will be achieved for families of missing and murdered Indigenous women?

We can't bring the murdered women back but we need to reveal the truth about what happened with them. All different kinds of media need to report on this. How many more women have to die before people will care? When will the government tell the real history, instead of telling new immigrants that Indigenous people are basically dead?

Everyone needs to acknowledge that Canada was indigenous land originally and that Canada killed Indigenous peoples in order to acquire the land. We learn all about European history but not about Indigenous peoples.

Any final thoughts?

People need to search their hearts to understand and find the real truth about the tragedies that have happened. Admitting the real history of Canada will free you and your family from the secret, and will not threaten you.

Rather than only fighting discrimination towards Indigenous peoples, embrace their beauty and understand their worldview, living with nature. We destroy the land in the name of "being better", but we have to think of tomorrow.

For more information visit nomoresilence-nomoresilence.blogspot.ca/

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Support refugee health

by JESSE MCLAREN

Two years ago the Harper government made severe cuts to refugee health, and a recent study has revealed the consequences.

According to the study “The Cost and Impact of the Interim Federal Health Program Cuts on Child Refugees in Canada,” the hospital admission rates for refugee children doubled.

The study compared the admission rate in the six months before the cuts, to the admission rate in the six months after the cuts—at Ottawa’s Hospital for Sick Children, one of the largest pediatric hospitals in the country.

In this time period immediately surrounding the cuts, admission rates for refugee children doubled, from 6.4 per cent to 12 per cent.

These results show the cuts to refugee health are callous and costly, and that the governments claims of stopping abuse and saving money are bogus.

Callous and costly

Cutting healthcare to people who have fled war, torture and rape is inhumane. The study destroys the government’s claim that refugees are “abusing” the healthcare system. The cuts have not prevented inappropriate healthcare visits, they have delayed appropriate visits.

As co-author Dr. Alexander Caudarella explained, “If they don’t have health insurance, they present themselves later to the doctors. By then, the kids are sicker.”

These results also show the illusion of “cost savings.” The percentage of ER bills paid by the Interim Federal Health Program dropped from 46 per cent to seven per cent as a result of the cuts. But these costs were simply transferred to hospitals. As co-author Dr. Andrea Evans explained, “What jumps out at us is, as a result of the cuts more than 90 per cent of the bills were not paid back. It means that if they’re going to other institutions, like urgent walk-in clinics, 90 per cent of them would have to pay the bills or get no care.”

The Harper government has used cuts to refugee health in order to cut healthcare, download costs to the provinces and scapegoat refugees. The result has been an increasing suffering for refugee children.

Chris Alexander has taken over from Jason Kenney as Immigration Minister, and has continued his repeated use of the term “bogus” to describe refugees. As Alex Neve from Amnesty International pointed out, “Calling them bogus is clearly meant to undermine any public sympathy for their plight such that decisions to cut them off from health care or discriminatorily deny them access to vital appeal processes will be welcomed and applauded rather than condemned and rejected.” It is the cuts, and their rationale, that are bogus. Opposition to the cuts, and solidarity with refugees, continues.

On June 13 join the third annual day of action against cuts to refugee health: visit cdrdayofaction.com



Secret trial supreme injustice

by CHANTAL SUNDARAM

In a travesty of justice emanating from the so-called “war on terror,” on May 14 the Supreme Court of Canada upheld the national security certificate against Mohamed Harkat, who now faces the prospect of deportation to Algeria.

The decision was a result of Harkat’s challenge to the constitutionality of security certificates, which were struck down by the Supreme Court in 2007 because they deny the right of the accused and their lawyer to know the evidence brought against them and thus meet the case allegedly against them. They allow for detention without public trial, a fundamental challenge to accepted notions of justice.

The government response to the 2007 decision was cosmetic: the appointment of independent lawyers with high-level security clearance to represent the interests of the security certificate holder, known as “special advocates.” But their ability to act on behalf of detainees is extremely limited and is not a solution to the problem of secret evidence.

For example, Harkat’s legal team challenged the use of summaries of informants’ recorded conversations as evidence rather than the actual tapes of intercepted phone calls that were destroyed under the pretext of “security.” Incredibly, the court found the use of summaries acceptable.

The decision not only means that Harkat can be unjustly deported to torture or death in Algeria, but also that the general ruling on fair and reasonable process in his case has legitimized the secret trial process as a whole. The court said security certificates “do not violate the named person’s right to know and meet the case against him, or the right to have a decision made on the facts and the law.”

In future, this decision puts an onus on the trial judge who hears a specific case to play a “gatekeeper role” for anyone issued with a security certificate. This is a strange reversal of the original Supreme Court decision in 2007, which found undue onus on judges to be a factor in the problem of fairness, given that judges cannot cross-examine. This

was a problem the “special advocates” were supposed to alleviate.

Not only was the constitutionality of the certificates upheld, there was not even a ruling for a new hearing against the use of secret or destroyed evidence. The only instance where the eight Supreme Court justices were not unanimous was in ruling that CSIS informants are not privileged: that is, they may, at times, be cross-examined in a closed court by special advocates assigned to the security-certificate holder. But the court allowed for the identities and testimony of the informants to be kept secret from the security certificate holder.

Chief Justice Beverley McLachlin, who wrote the decision, said that Harkat “potentially faces deportation to a country where he may be at risk for torture or death, although the constitutionality of his deportation in such circumstances is not before us in the present appeal.”

Five men were charged under these certificates, but the ones for Adil Charkaoui and Hassan Almrrei were

quashed in 2009. Two others remain under house arrest, Mohammad Mahjoub and Mahmoud Jaballah.

The deportation process against Mohamed Harkat can now begin, starting with a Pre-Removal Risk Assessment. Although it should reveal the very real possibility of torture and even death that Harkat could face in Algeria, Canada’s system of risk assessment is fundamentally flawed, a feature of a system stacked against immigrants and refugees. Said Harper’s Public Safety Minister Steven Blaney: “Our government is pleased with the decision made by the Supreme Court in regard of Mr. Harkat.”

Keeping up the public pressure remains important, both for the fate of those facing deportation and to build on the wide public sentiment that already exists for the final abolition of unjust secret trials.

You can sign the *Statement Against Security Certificates online at harkatstatement.com.*

First Nations resist Tory ‘education’ bill

by JOHN BELL

The colonialist arrogance of the Harper Tory government was exposed in Bill C-33, the “First Nations Control over First Nations Education” act.

In true Orwellian fashion that language hid the fact that the education plan was written without real consultation or input from First Nation communities.

In a move that sent shock waves through Ottawa, a majority of chiefs in the Assembly of First Nations voted to reject the bill. AFN Grand Chief Shawn Atleo, who had acted as cheerleader for the bill since it was tabled in April, was forced to resign.

Following that, a meeting of some 50 chiefs in the Confederacy of Nations

drafted a statement that included: “We will strategically and calculatedly begin the economic shut-down of Canada’s economy from coast-to-coast. First Nations will determine whether or not there is intentional economic for the economic development on Turtle Island.” The working document was leaked to the press.

The group asked for a meeting with Minister of Aboriginal Affairs Bernard Valcourt. He escalated the situation by saying: “We should have members condemn, in the strongest terms, the threats of those rogue chiefs who are threatening the security of Canadians, their families, and taxpayers.”

Atleo had no doubt been swayed by the promised \$1.9 billion in education spending in C-33. But Ottawa’s generosity was more show than substance. The money was to be doled out over many years, and in many cases would not be released for two years.

Given the history of Residential Schools and the cultural genocide they attempted, it is no wonder education is a crucial matter for First Nations. And the money in C-33 hardly makes up for the chronic underfunding of First Nations education in recent decades.

Since 1996 the federal government has capped spending increases for First Nations education at

2 per cent per year. This ignores inflation and a rapidly growing number of elementary and secondary school students. An AFN report estimates that First Nations schooling has been underfunded to the tune of \$3 billion since 1996.

Finally, the Tories have withdrawn—for now—Bill C-33. They are unwilling to seriously consult First Nations about developing a First Nations education plan that addresses their needs.

The reality of colonialism means that education has always been a means to assimilate and destroy First Nations cultures. Until First Nations control over their education—in reality, not just in Tory double-speak—that colonialism continues.

Support BC teachers

(continued from back page)

Also at issue is wages. The class size provisions that were bargained provincially in the 1998 contract were paid for by teachers. We took two years of zero increases in 1998 and 1999 to cover the costs of smaller classes, which were then unilaterally stripped from our contract. Zero wage contracts were also imposed by legislation in 2004 and 2005, and in 2011 and 2012. Including this year, 2013, with no contract and no wage increase, this means teachers have had zero wage contracts in seven of the last 15 years.

While the level of anger amongst teachers is high, it remains to be seen how events will unfold.

Teachers took a heroic stand in 2005 when we stayed on the picket lines for two weeks after legislation was imposed and the courts found us in contempt. This was the type of action necessary to move an intransigent and ideologically motivated government off their position of concessions. The eventual agreement included contract improvements and some renewed class size provisions in the School Act

Our last strike, however, had a very different ending. After three days on the line, the government imposed Bill 22, which not only ordered teachers back to work, but threatened fines for teachers and the union for continued strike action. In response, teachers returned to work

Repeated use of back-to-work legislation, imposed contracts, and threats of fines mean that teachers must be willing to take risks if we are going to achieve our bargaining goals. While some teachers were willing to face the threats of fines in 2012, it was not a majority of those who argued and debated at our AGM what action to take. And sadly, there was never a member-wide vote on taking continued strike action, despite the fact that a vote was called for in the action plan. Instead, teachers withdrew extra-curricular activities – a strategy that proved to be divisive in some areas.

Hopefully the experiences of 2005 and 2012 will provide lessons and guidance for the type of action necessary to be successful this round. The frustrations of the day-to-day life in the classroom need to translate into teachers insisting that their union continue to take action even in the face of legislation which may yet come.

Tara Ehrcke is the bargaining chair and past president of the Greater Victoria Teachers’ Association. This is republished from rankandfile.ca

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What's the world doing for Syrian refugees?

by SHAYMA BASHAWIEH

It has been over three years now since the popular revolution in Syria was sparked by the Arab Spring. What began as a popular demonstration demanding the overthrow of the authoritarian regime of Bashar Al-Assad turned into an all-out civil war—as the regime clamped down on the opposition while anti-government factions fought with each other. The real and bitter price of the Syrian civil war has been paid by the civilian population.

It is now widely reported that the current refugee crisis borne out of the Syrian civil war is one of the most catastrophic witnessed in human history: 2.7 million refugees, nine million internally displaced persons, and over 150,000 dead from a population of 23 million. United Nations has made its biggest appeal to date—\$5 billion dollars—to assist with humanitarian relief, and some fear \$5 billion will not be enough.

While Syrians are poised to surpass Afghans as the largest refugee population what is the international community doing to respond to the crisis and to meet the basic needs of the millions of refugees?

Like these other crises, imperialism is to blame. Syria has become the latest battlefield for regional rivalries—between Tehran and Riyadh—and global imperial aspirations, as a proxy war between the US and Russia.

While the “international community” was readily available to pour huge resources into military intervention—whether implicit or explicit—it is all but absent when it comes to the responsibility of assisting refugees and providing immediate relief for the humanitarian crisis.

Neighbouring states

Out of the 2.7 million refugees, over 2 million are located in the neighbouring states—Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Egypt and Turkey—as Syrians leave behind everything they know and own to free for their lives. Around 133,000 Syrian refugees are in Egypt, 220,000 are in Iraq, 600,000 are in Jordan, and over 670,000 in Turkey. The highest concentration are in Lebanon, a country of 4.5 million people which now has 1 million Syrian refugees.

Despite the large number of Syrian refugees in Lebanon, the state has refused to set up camps. Refugees have had to settle in slums and construct makeshift shelters under bridges and in old construction sites—forcing them to live under abysmal conditions without basic utilities such as clean water. Recently Human Rights Watch has condemned Lebanon for arbitrarily denying refuge to Palestinian-Syrian refugees and forcing them to return to war-torn Syria.

Over half of the refugees are children aged 17 or under. Recently, UNICEF reported that at least 10,000 refugee children in Lebanon are malnourished while approximately 2,000 are at risk of dying due to acute malnutrition. The main causes are, says UNICEF, are “poor hygiene, unsafe drinking water, diseases, lack of immunization and improper feeding practices of young children.”

Yet, the plight of Syrian refugees does not end there. Other challenges include lack of education opportunities, shortage of housing, lack of employment opportunities, and lack of medical care for acute and chronic medical conditions.

The lack of resources for refugees is forcing some to resort to child labour, women entering unwanted marriage and exchanging sexual favours for financial gain.

Jordan in the face of a budget deficit and growing unemployment must find a way to assist the 450,000 Iraqi refugees already there and absorb the newly registered Syrian refugees as well.

But refugees are not to blame for this. It was the US Iraq War that created the violence that has driven Iraqi refugees into Jordan; US and its ally Saudi Arabia who have intervened to undermine the Syrian revolution and create a civil war driving people across the border.

And neighbouring states like Jordan, Egypt and Turkey get billions of dollars in military aid from the US each year.

The West

Although still falling far short of the \$5 billion appealed for by the UN, the international community seems much more generous when it comes to contributing funds towards the UN relief programs than assisting refugees with resettlement.

Imperialist powers are providing contributions to affected regions in the hopes of containing the crisis the West created, while restricting the entry of refugees based on anti-migrant racism.

This has benefited far right parties in the recent elections, while forcing refugees to resort to illegal avenues to reach the shores of these states—one must only remember the dead bodies of Syrian refugees that reached Lampedusa beach while attempting to cross through illegal means.

This has led a Syrian refugee to remark to The Guardian, “we

suffer twice, first in Syria and now as refugees. I feel like I’m fighting the world to be with my family”. Twenty years after the Rwandan genocide and it seems the world still has not learned its lesson.

The US, while contributing \$1.3 billion in aid, only accepted 31 refugees for resettlement out of a total of 135,000 applications—rejecting a large number of the applications under “anti-terrorist” legislations. The acceptance rate amounts to a ratio of 1 in 4000

Similarly, the UK contributed £500 million but has until recently been refusing to welcome refugees, and has only agreed to resettle 500. Europe has now agreed to provide humanitarian relief to 60,000 Syrian refugees, with a disproportionately large number of applicants accepted in Germany and Sweden. But this is still a small number, compared with Turkey that has accepted 10 times more refugees as some European Union member states.

Canada has a long history of anti-migrant racism. While the Harper government announced it would settle 1,300 Syrian refugees, it only welcomed 10 in 2013. As Janet Dench from the Canadian Council for Refugees explained, “It was clear at the time of the announcement that there was no clear intention to make them arrive by the end of 2014. We know that if you want people to arrive in the resettlement program you have to make provisions to make that possible.”

Instead, the Harper government has been busy gutting healthcare for refugees, and criminalizing migrants to provide a scapegoat for austerity.

one of the West’s strongest allies in the region as a counter-revolutionary force.

Hundreds have been arrested since 2011 when pro-democracy protestors in Saudi Arabia, inspired by the Arab Spring, took to the streets demanding an end to discrimination, oppression and poverty. Unlike other pro-democracy movements, there has been an international code of silence towards the ongoing violations of the Saudi monarchy due to imperialist support.

Thailand: coup and resistance

by GILES JI UNGPAKORN

General Prayuth Chan-ocha officially took power in Thailand and mass protests simultaneously erupted.

They hit many areas of Bangkok but also Chiang Mai and other towns. These protests are spontaneous but it would be a mistake to think that they are “unorganised”. Pro-democracy activists have been creating grassroots networks for years. They include ordinary working class people, although not as organised trade unionists.

The hope is that this movement will grow and will reach out to the organised working class. But this will take time. It may well be a case of “two steps forward, one step back”. Many arrests have taken place and the military is trying to crush the movement.

The protests shattered a number of myths. Firstly the uprising in Bangkok proves that Red Shirt and pro-democracy ideas are influential there. Commentators previously claimed support for the Red Shirts was concentrated in rural areas.

General Prayuth claimed he “had no choice” but to stage the coup to stop further conflict between two warring factions. Yet, quite predictably, the military has concentrated on arresting and questioning Red Shirts and other pro-democracy activists.

Since the military staged a coup in 2006, it has sided with the anti-democratic conservatives among Thailand’s elites. This reactionary coalition includes the “Democrat” Party and street mobs, top officials and judges, the middle classes, and various conservative academics and NGO leaders.

It takes immense courage to defy a military junta and stand in front of armed soldiers. In 2010 General Prayuth ordered the killing of nearly 90 Red Shirt demonstrators who were demanding democratic elections.

Those who wish to ignore the role of ordinary people claim that the crisis is merely an elite dispute. They say it has been made more urgent by the issue of who will succeed the aged king as head of state. Yet the Red Shirt movement, which grew after the 2006 coup, is the largest social movement in Thai history. And the king has always been weak and cowardly. When staging the present coup, General Prayuth made no pretence at taking orders from the king or securing his approval.

This long-running Thai crisis is really a result of a clash between the conservative patron-client way of conducting politics and a more modern one. Thaksin Shinawatra, a billionaire politician, made serious efforts to modernise Thai society to increase competitiveness after the 1996 Asian economic crisis. His party became hugely popular after introducing the first universal healthcare scheme and job creation programmes in rural areas. Millions of ordinary people have a real stake in protecting democracy. Yet Thaksin and his sister Yingluck don’t want to lead the all-out assault on the old order that is necessary to defend and develop democracy.

This is shared from Socialist Worker (UK)

Saudi Arabia activists sentences activists to death

by YUSUR AL BAHRANI

A Saudi court sentenced two young activists, Reda AlRubh and Ali AlNemer, to death. The prosecutor demanded sentencing tens of other activists to death. They are waiting for the decision of the court.

While the pro-Western Saudi government attempts to silence opposition by sentencing activists to death, protestors continue demonstrating in several parts of Saudi Arabia—especially Qatif, the hometown of

AlRubh, 26, and AlNemer, 20. The sentences on the two young protestors were announced on May 27 and 28. However, protests have been ongoing since then and according to activists, more upcoming demonstrations will take place until all political detainees are released.

AlNemer was arrested on February 14, 2012 when he was 17 years old. Like most other political prisoners in Saudi Arabia, AlNemer and AlRubh were both subjected to ill treatment

and solitary confinement. According to the European Saudi Society for Human Rights, confessions that led to death sentences were extracted under torture.

The death sentence, in whatever way, is brutal. AlRubh is facing what is described as a regular death sentence by the sword. AlNemer is being sentenced to death in the form of crucifixion. Although the Saudi government uses medieval practices in responding to dissent, it remains

Marx's method

"In the social production of their existence, [human beings] inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of [human beings] that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness."

This quote is taken from the 1859 Preface to Marx's *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* and is probably the clearest statement he made about the method that would come to be known as historical materialism.

Historical materialism

Marx starts his examination of human society with the material reality in which we find ourselves. It is this that determines our lived reality, not the ideas in our heads, although there is a complex interaction between material reality and the ideologies that spring up to explain, or more often, obfuscate, that reality.

This is a big advance over the way that history is often viewed i.e. the Great Man (and less often, Great Woman) theory of history that is peddled in mainstream educational institutions. According to this view of history society moves forward because of individual genius, separated from social relations and the rest of society.

This is why the study of history so often seems to be reduced to memorizing the dates of kings and queens, emperors, presidents, prime ministers and so on. They are the "actors" that make history and the only role for the rest of us is to look on in awe, or more often, in terror, as they run roughshod over our lives.

However, Marx turned this idea on its head and brought ordinary people onto the scene of history. According to Marx's concept history moves forward, not through the action of powerful individuals, but through class struggle. He saw capitalism as another stage in the development of human society, one which could usher in socialism, an egalitarian society where all could benefit from the immense amount of wealth created by the economic system of capitalism.

However, this was not a foregone conclusion. It has sometimes been argued that Marx has an 'instrumentalist' view of history – that Marx believed that history would inevitably lead to socialism.

Struggle

Nothing could be further from the truth. On the contrary, to paraphrase Marx, human beings make history, but not in conditions of their own choosing. History moves forward through class struggle, but the outcome of those struggles is not pre-determined. As the great 19th century African American abolitionist Frederick Douglass, who was born a slave, once wrote "If there is no struggle, there is no progress."

In that sense, Marxism is both a hopeful and a realistic philosophy. If we look around the world today there is ample evidence that the system needs to be changed – from the devastation of the natural environment and the threat of catastrophic climate change to the continued oppression and racism suffered by millions around the globe, the attacks on ordinary workers and their families, the increasing gap between an extremely tiny and wealthy minority and the rest of the planet.

But struggle is happening all around us – when Indigenous activists organize to stop the environmental destruction of pipelines and tar sands, when fast-food workers strike and demonstrate against poor wages and working conditions, when international LGBTQ activists stand up against homophobia and horrendous discriminatory legislation in countries such as Uganda and India.

Organization

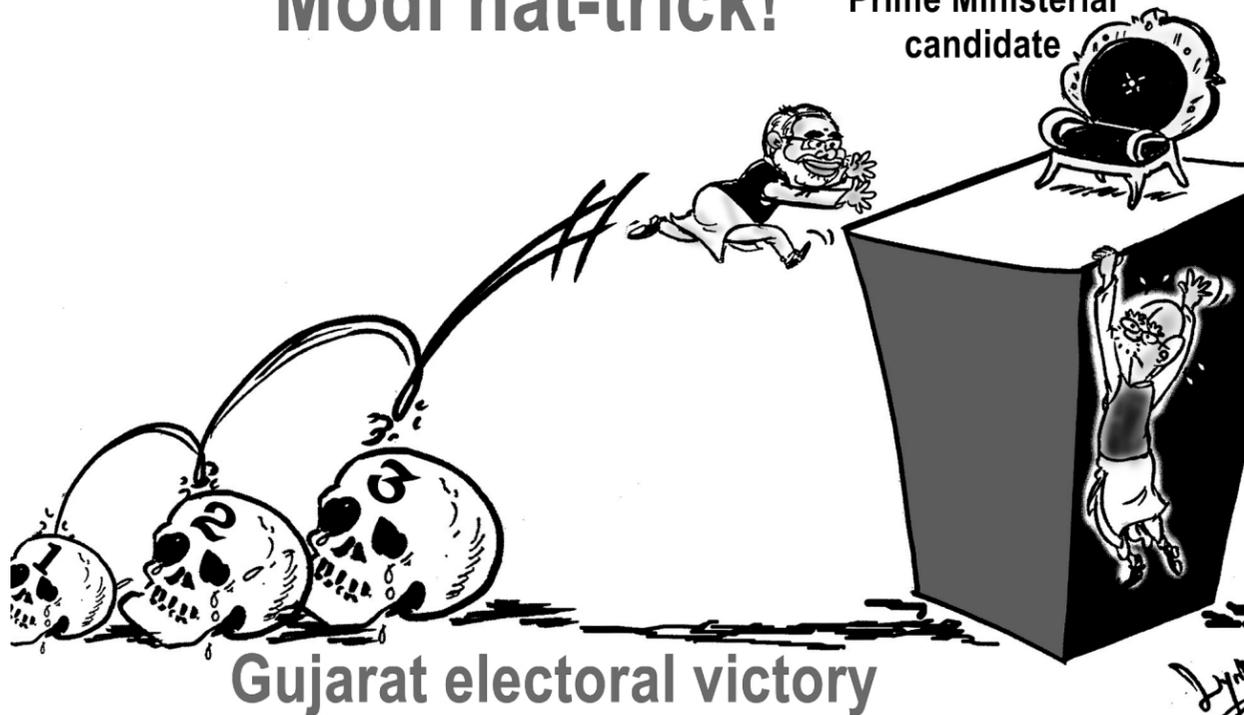
What we need is revolutionary organization that can link these struggles together and win. Leon Trotsky, a Russian revolutionary who devoted his life to taking conscious action to transform society, along with millions of others during the Russian Revolution, and with much smaller numbers after he was exiled by Stalin, never lost his belief in the possibility of human beings to make history:

"For forty-three years of my conscious life I have remained a revolutionist; for forty-two of them I have fought under the banner of Marxism. If I had to begin all over again I would of course try to avoid this or that mistake, but the main course of my life would remain unchanged. I shall die a proletarian revolutionist, a Marxist, a dialectical materialist, and, consequently, an irreconcilable atheist. My faith in the communist future of mankind is not less ardent, indeed it is firmer today, than it was in the days of my youth [...]"

Natasha has just come up to the window from the courtyard and opened it wider so that the air may enter more freely into my room. I can see the bright green strip of grass beneath the wall, and the clear blue sky above the wall, and sunlight everywhere. Life is beautiful. Let the future generations cleanse it of all evil, oppression and violence, and enjoy it to the full."

Modi hat-trick!

Prime Ministerial candidate



Gujarat electoral victory

Far-right party wins elections in India, how will Harper respond to Modi?

by CHANTAL SUNDARAM

India's new Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, has reason to cause a stir internationally.

Not only did his hard-right party, the BJP, achieve a historically resounding victory in the month-long national election that ended in May, but he is part of the fascist core of that party, a group called the RSS, or "National Patriotic Organisation."

The RSS was banned three times in post-independence India, the first in 1948 after one of its members assassinated Gandhi over his support for Pakistan independence and Muslim rights.

But the real stir for Canadians should be that, for the last 12 years, Modi has been denied a visa to Canada, and has been shunned by several other Western countries, including the United States, for events much more recent than 1948.

Pogroms

His visa denial to Canada was based on a provision of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act that bars suspected human rights abusers. In 2002, he was chief minister of the Indian state of Gujarat when thousands of Muslims were killed in organized pogroms by the Hindu religious right.

The gangs were sometimes thousands-strong and armed with swords, explosives and gas cylinders. According to Human Rights Watch, they obtained addresses of Muslims from the local administration, and the

attacks were organised "with extensive participation of the police and state government officials".

Although Modi was officially exonerated by the Supreme Court of India, he will not be the first head of state to get away with organized murder.

But there are two major questions for those watching this victory for the hard right from Canada.

Right-wing reaction to austerity

The first question is: how and why did this happen in India, where some of the largest national general strikes and deep resistance to austerity have occurred in recent years?

On the one hand, India is not unique in seeing a turn to the right, including to the far-right, in response to the economic crisis and the failure of the electoral left to represent a real alternative to it – and this sometimes despite the level of real struggle.

India's rulers promised that under the incumbent liberal Congress Party the country's economic boom would be fairly distributed. But this promise proved to be a mirage during the boom. Now, with inflation soaring while the poor get poorer, few ordinary people think Congress will defend them.

Millions once followed the Communist parties into strike waves, land seizures and polling booths. But since 2007 they have championed "economic development" at the expense of workers and poor people.

The result is that they have lost even their heartland states of Kerala and West Bengal.

At their height, the Communists' class struggle politics provided a basis for Hindu-Muslim unity among workers. This could temporarily keep the RSS in check. But today disparate national and local forces are taking advantage of the Communists' weaknesses.

Resolving "how did this happen," and how can it change, lies with the working people of India.

Canada

The second question for those watching from Canada is: will Ottawa now welcome Modi with open arms? Not only for "diplomatic" reasons, but because Canada has a significant stake in economic relations with India? Harper's welcoming of Australia's Tory Prime Minister—who is openly racist, sexist, homophobic and denies climate change—gives a hint of how Harper will respond to Modi, as does Harper's own policies towards First Nations and Muslims.

But the answer lies with us as much as it does with Harper. How long will we tolerate the selective condemnation of human rights abuse? How long will we tolerate the selective treatment, of both countries and individuals, guilty of that abuse, based on their power and economic interest to Canada's rich?

Protests erupt in response to French fascists

by SYLVESTRE JAFFARD, PARIS

Around 10,000 people, mainly youth, have marched against the Front National (FN) in France.

The demonstrations were called at short notice by a wide spectrum of youth organisations attached to parties of the left, from the MJS (the youth wing of the ruling Socialist Party) to the Front de Gauche and the NPA, as well as student unions and anti-fascist groups. In Paris there were over 4,000 people marching, 1,500 in Toulouse, 1,000 in Lyon, 500 in Nantes, Bordeaux and Marseille. The protests were vibrant, with slogans against Marine Le Pen and against racism. Old favourites such as, "First, second or third generation – We are all the children of migrants"

and "Le Pen, you are done for, the youth is in the street" rang out.

This shows the disgust felt by many at Sunday's election result, which saw the FN take 25 percent of the vote and top the poll.

Many were reminded of April 2002, when the Nazi Jean-Marie Le Pen (Marine's father) got enough votes to go through to the second round of the presidential elections. Then mass demonstrations erupted throughout France, culminating with over a million people marching in Paris on May day. The spirit of today's demos also reminds people of the student protests against the government's expulsion of foreign students last autumn.

Even though the FN managed to attract record votes last Sunday, most people in France reject it and all it stands for.

Today shows the potential for building a broad and powerful movement against fascism. Another demonstration is planned for Saturday 7 June. It will commemorate the death of anti-fascist activist Clément Méric who was killed last year by a Nazi thug. A conference to coordinate local campaigns against the far right will take place in the capital at the end of June.

This is shared from Socialist Worker (UK)

Racism and resistance: the history of the Komagata Maru

On the centenary of the migrant ship's arrival, Gurkirat Batth and Gurnishan Singh describe the racist response, the resistance and solidarity, and the role of socialists

From May 23 to June 23, 1914, the migrant ship Komagata Maru was on the shores of Vancouver, sparking a challenge to racism in Canada—a struggle that continues today.

During the earlier part of the 20th century, most immigrants to Canada were from Europe, predominantly from Great Britain. Canada had very racist laws that selected against Asians when it came to immigration.

On January 8, 1908, the Canadian government passed a law called the "Continuous Journey Regulation," which was the government's attempt to restrict people from Asia from entering into Canada. This regulation prevented any ship from coming to Canada if it made a stop between the initial country and Canada.

Combined with the \$200 head tax on every Asian individual aspiring to enter Canada, this was a major deterrent for potential immigrants from Asia.

Anti-colonial movements

Many revolutionary movements had started all across India as people started to unite and fight for independence from the British Empire. This led to rise of the Ghadar Party, an organization founded by Punjabi Indian rebellions in India, Canada and United States, whose aim was to free India from British rule.

One of the prominent members of the Ghadar Party was Gurdit Singh Sandhu, also known as Baba Gurdit Singh. Sandhu, born in Punjab, India, was a successful businessman in Singapore before he joined the Ghadar Party. He became heavily involved in this party and built numerous connections with Indians in other countries, especially Canada and the United States.

Most of the Indians in North America opposed the British rule of India at the time and did all they could to support the Ghadar Party and other nationalist movements at the times. They provided funds and even weapons in some cases to Ghadar Party members in order to fight the mighty British rule in India.

Sandhu, after witnessing the support that he was receiving from Indians overseas, decided that he would travel to North America in order to further harness those links and create a bigger network of Indians that could support the nationalist movement in India.

Also, he had heard about the racist immigration laws of Canada, also a British Colony, which tried to deter Indians from migrating to Canada even while India was part of the British Empire. Sandhu took it upon himself to challenge these laws and embarked on an historic journey to Canada.



The Komagata Maru and the racist response

Gurdit Singh Sandhu chartered a Japanese streamliner ship called Komagata Maru. It carried 376 passengers, mostly of Indian descent; some were members of the Ghadar party, and others were seeking to immigrate to Canada. The ship set sail from Shanghai, Hong Kong on April 8, 1914 and arrived on May 23 in Vancouver.

The immigration officer did not allow the ship to disembark because it was carrying Indian passengers and did not start the voyage from India. Richard McBride, the Conservative Premier of British Columbia, gave strict orders to not allow the ship to disembark. H. H. Stevens, a Conservative Member of Parliament from British Columbia, urged the government to force the ship to leave Canada as soon as possible.

Stevens with the help of Vancouver Mayor Truman Baxter relentlessly organized "Anti-Asian" town hall meetings and rallies against the ship's passengers disembarking. They were not allowed to disembark and were not supplied with food or water, leaving them to starve.

Stevens famously said, "I have no ill feelings against people coming from Asia personally...but I reaffirm that the national life of Canada will not permit any large degree of immigrants from Asia...I intend to stand up absolutely on all occasions on this one great principal of a white country and a white British Columbia." All this state-sponsored hatred stirred many local mobs to attack the ship in hopes of expelling them.

Resistance and solidarity

But the mob was unsuccessful as the passengers of the ship defended themselves by throwing bricks and coal at the mob.

Despite the attempts to isolate and starve the passengers, there were "shore committees" that were formed in order to help support the passengers of the ship. The shore committee held its first meeting on May 30, including South Asian immigrants and white allies. Hassan Rahim, a member of the Socialist Party of Canada, and Sohan Lal Pathak were the main organizers of the committees. They held protests all over Canada and the United States against Canada's treatment of the passengers.

The committees provided food, water and the other necessary supplies that the passengers needed. They protested to let the Komagata Maru disembark and allow its passengers to enter Canada. Khalsa Diwan Society of Vancouver called a meeting in support of Komagata Maru and worked with the shore committee to raise \$22,000 for the ship.

The committees, in solidarity with the other societies and groups launched a legal battle in a court in British Columbia in the name of Munshi Singh, one of the passengers on the ship. Edward Bird, a socialist, was the only Canadian lawyer willing to fight for the people on the boat working with Indians already in Canada.

But the BC court of appeal came to a unanimous judgment that "under new orders-in-council, it had no authority to interfere with the decisions of the Department of Immigration and Colonization."

Retreat

On July 19 the passengers resisted an attack by police and immigration officers. But on July 21, 1914 the newly formed Royal Canadian Navy was attacked the Komagata Maru, forcing it to return to India on June 23.

On September 26, 1914, the ship arrived close to Calcutta, India where a British gunboat stopped it. All the passengers on board were held prisoner and ordered to board a train and to Punjab. Also, the passengers had taken the Sikh scripture, the Guru Granth Sahib with them on their voyage and wanted to place the scripture in a Gurdwara (Sikh place of worship) in Calcutta. The British also denied this request. Outraged, the passengers rebelled and started marching towards Calcutta. The British officers opened fire, killing 20 passengers.

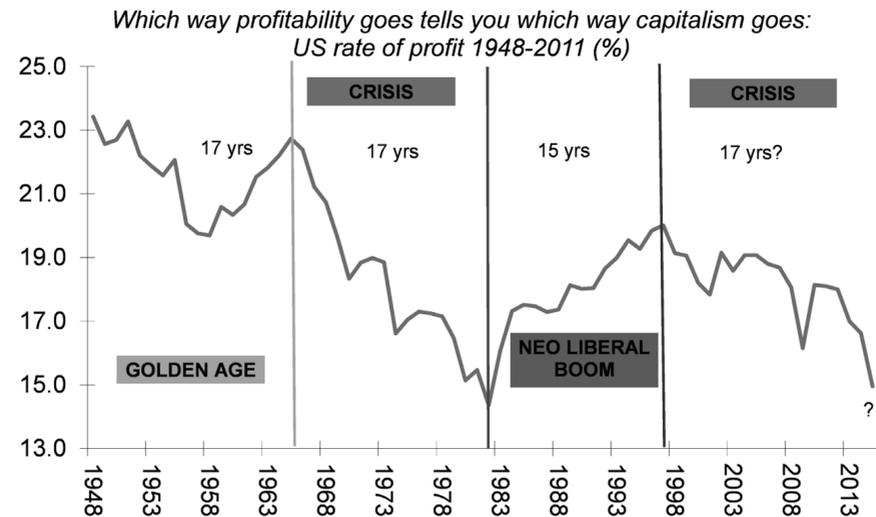
Harper's "apology"

To this day no official apology has been made in Parliament. In 2008 after much political pressure on the federal government, Harper made an appearance at a festival in Surrey BC, where he gave an apology, which was more of a stunt to gain votes. There was an immediate protest and rejection of the apology.

Harper's "apology" is rhetoric used to distract from continued anti-migrant policies—exploiting temporary workers, cutting healthcare for refugees, and denying entry to 492 Tamil refugees aboard the MC Sun Sea.

The Komagata Maru shows the threat of racism but also the potential for resistance and solidarity, a struggle that continues.

ONE SOLUTION: REVOLUTION!



Exploitation and economic crisis

Economic inequality and capitalist crisis are not just bad policies, they are built into the system.

Capitalism is based on exploiting working people for profit. Capitalists own machines/technology (products of previous labour by workers), but only workers create new value. Capitalists pay workers less than the value they produce, extracting surplus value as profit. Competition between capitalists drives them to exploit workers and reinvest profit in a relentless expansion.

As the German revolutionary Karl Marx wrote in *Capital*, "Fanatically bent on making value expand itself, he ruthlessly forces the human race to produce for production's sake... The development of capitalist production makes it constantly necessary to keep increasing the amount of the capital laid out in a given industrial undertaking, and competition makes the immanent laws of capitalist production to be felt by each individual capitalist, as external coercive laws. It compels him to keep constantly extending his capital, in order to preserve it, but extend it he cannot, except by means of progressive accumulation."

The competition between capitalists that drives accumulation prevents coordination—resulting in periodic booms producing more than can be consumed through the market. These crises of overproduction are "solved" through destruction and further expansion.

As Marx wrote in *The Communist Manifesto*: "Modern bourgeois society...is like the sorcerer who is no longer

able to control the powers of the nether world whom he has called up by his spells... In these crises, there breaks out an epidemic that, in all earlier epochs, would have seemed an absurdity — the epidemic of over-production. Society suddenly finds itself put back into a state of momentary barbarism; it appears as if a famine, a universal war of devastation, had cut off the supply of every means of subsistence; industry and commerce seem to be destroyed; and why? Because there is too much civilisation, too much means of subsistence, too much industry, too much commerce... And how does the bourgeoisie get over these crises? On the one hand by enforced destruction of a mass of productive forces; on the other, by the conquest of new markets, and by the more thorough exploitation of the old ones. That is to say, by paving the way for more extensive and more destructive crises, and by diminishing the means whereby crises are prevented."

Some economists praise the "creative destruction" of capitalism, arguing it restores equilibrium. Not only is this barbaric—like the massive destruction of WWII and the permanent arms economy that drove the subsequent long boom of capitalism—but it also makes things worse over time.

Competition for profits leads to greater investment in technology/machines, which can temporarily benefit an individual capitalist but also compels other capitalists to make similar investments. This pressure forces investment in technology to rise faster than investment in living labour (the

source of profit) so the ratio of profit to investment—the rate of profit—has a tendency to fall.

Capitalists can try to offset this by increasing exploitation (making workers work longer, harder, or for less wages) or by investing in financial markets and getting rich off of speculation bubbles. This is what neoliberalism did in an attempt to restore the rate of profit. But it failed to prevent the 2008 financial crisis.

The destruction inherent in economic crises can pave the way for more growth. But over time the concentration (through growth) and centralization (through mergers) of capital leads to huge corporations that dominate industries and can make subsequent crises even more damaging. Many banks and corporations are both "too big to fail", but also "too big to save." Massive bailouts saved unprofitable corporations, but prevented "creative destruction" and prolonged the crisis, creating massive public debt.

The ruling class is caught in a catch 22 over how to respond: austerity measures can increase the rate of exploitation, but layoffs and wage cuts undermines production and consumption. On the other hand, calls to increase consumption through higher wages eats into corporate profits, while bailouts prolong the crisis.

Capitalism has no solution, and will continue expanding through periodic crises until it is replaced by a democratic system of workers' control based on human and environmental needs not corporate profits.

Capitalism and oppression

Oppression is not natural. For most of human history people lived in egalitarian hunter-gather societies where there was no rigid and unequal gender binary.

But when the agricultural revolution provided a surplus, a small ruling class emerged to control it—through repressive states and male-dominated families. As the German revolutionary Friedrich Engels wrote in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, the rise of class society marked "the world historical defeat of the female sex. The man took command in the home also; the woman was degraded and reduced to servitude, she became the slave of his lust and a mere instrument for the production of children."

Capitalism, the current form of class society, has both maintained and changed women's oppression, as the Russian revolutionary Alexandra Kollontai wrote in *Communism and the Family*: "Capitalism has placed a crushing burden on woman's shoulders: it has made her a wage-worker without having reduced her cares as housekeeper or mother. Woman staggers beneath the weight of this triple load."

As Kollontai wrote in *The Social Basis of the Woman Question*, "For women, the solution of the family question is no less important than the achievement of political equality and economic independence...The civil code places women in a greater or lesser dependence on her husband, and awards the husband not only the right to dispose of her property but also the right of moral and physical dominance over her. Where the official and legal servitude of women ends, the force we call 'public opinion' begins. This public opinion

is created and supported by the bourgeoisie with the aim of preserving 'the sacred institution of property.' The hypocrisy of 'double morality' is another weapon. Bourgeois society crushes woman with its savage economic vice, paying for her labour at a very low rate... she is given only the gracious alternative of the bondage of marriage or the embraces of prostitution—a trade despised and persecuted in public but encouraged and supported in secret."

Capitalism uses the nuclear family to pay women lower wages and nothing for domestic work—all to the benefit of capitalists. To maintain the nuclear family capitalism is obsessed with controlling reproduction, sexuality and gender: restricting abortion and contraception, moralizing against women's sexuality and blaming women for rape, and reinforcing a heteronormative gender binary through homophobia and transphobia.

Racism emerged to justify colonization and slavery, and to divide workers. As Marx wrote: "This antagonism is artificially kept alive and intensified by the press, the pulpit, the comic papers, in short, by all the means at the disposal of the ruling classes. This antagonism is the secret of the impotence of the English working class, despite its organisation. It is the secret by which the capitalist class maintains its power. And the latter is quite aware of this."

Since 9/11 there has been an increase in Islamophobia, attacking Muslims (especially Muslim women) to justify wars and occupations abroad and to scapegoat for austerity at home. This racism hides behind "secularism" and some on

the left have supported Islamophobia by misquoting Marx that religion is "the opium of the people." But Marxism has always defended freedom of religion and focused on building unity against an oppressive system that requires religion. As Marx wrote, "The criticism of religion is, therefore, in embryo, the criticism of that vale of tears of which religion is the halo... Thus, the criticism of Heaven turns into the criticism of Earth, the criticism of religion into the criticism of law, and the criticism of theology into the criticism of politics." As Lenin explained in *Socialism and Religion*: "Unity in this really revolutionary struggle of the oppressed class for the creation of a paradise on earth is more important to us than unity of proletarian opinion on paradise in heaven."

Because capitalism is based on exploiting working people for profit, it pathologizes people who do not conform to rigid standards of labour productivity. People with disabilities are often excluded from the labour market or concentrated in the lowest wage jobs, and blamed for their different abilities to distract from capitalism's inability to accommodate diversity. Capitalism pathologizes people with mental health issues—including institutionalization, forced treatment, and high rates of police violence—for not conforming to rigid standards of thought and behaviour.

The fight against capitalism has to be connected to the fight against every form of oppression, towards a world of liberation and equality where we can live "from each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs."



Colonialism, imperialism and ecological crisis

A century after the "war to end all war," economic crisis continues to drive colonialism and imperialism

Despite the myth of "free market" capitalism, it only emerged through violence—as Marx wrote in *Capital* in 1876, the year the colonial Canadian state was founded: "The discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement and entombment in mines of the aboriginal population, the beginning of the conquest and looting of the East Indies, the turning of Africa into a warren for the commercial hunting of black-skinned, signalled the rosy dawn of the era of capitalist production."

This process of capital expansion undermines indigenous communities. As the German revolutionary Rosa Luxemburg wrote in *The Accumulation of Capital*: "Since the associations of the natives are the strongest protection for their social organisations and for their material bases of existence, capital must begin by planning for the systematic destruction and annihilation of all the non-capitalist social units which obstruct its development... Each new colonial expansion is accompanied, as a matter of course, by a relentless battle of capital against the social and economic ties of the natives, who are also forcibly robbed of their means of production and labour power."

Capitalists are not unified but are a "band of warring brothers." Economic competition between corporations has become intertwined with geopolitical competition between states. The inter-imperial drive that produced the scramble for colonies in the late 19th century gave rise to a world war in 1914.

As the Russian revolutionary Vladimir Lenin wrote in *Imperialism: the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, in the midst of WWI, "the capitalists divide the world, not out of any particular malice, but because the degree of concentration which has been reached forces them to adopt this method in order to obtain profits. The epoch of the latest stage of capitalism shows us that certain relations between capitalist associations grow up, based on the economic division of the world; while parallel to and in connection with it, certain relations grow up between political alliances, between states, on the basis of the territorial division of the world, of the struggle for colonies, of the 'struggle for spheres of influence.'"

As a result, we need to support national liberation movements against our own capitalist states. Canada is founded on the colonization of First Nations and the oppression of Quebec. For socialists in Canada this means supporting indigenous sovereignty and Quebec's right to self-determination, opposing Canada's imperialist wars abroad, and opposing the Canadian state's attacks on refugees and migrants.

The accumulated impact of a system based on relentless growth on a finite planet, and imperialist wars for oil, is a planet in the midst of climate catastrophe. There is nothing "natural" about these disasters.

Our capacity to collectively work with nature is what makes us human, and what has developed both human society and the natural world around us. But as John Bellamy Foster summarizes in Marx's *Ecology*, capitalism from its very inception has divided humanity from nature. As Marx

wrote: "capitalist production collects the population together in great centres... disturbing the metabolic interaction between humans and the earth... Capitalist production, therefore, only develops by simultaneously undermining the original source of all wealth—the soil and the worker."

Under capitalism, "nature becomes purely an object for humankind, purely a matter of utility; ceases to be recognized as a power for itself; and the theoretical discovery of its autonomous laws merely as a ruse so as to subject it under human needs, whether as an object of consumption or as a means of production."

With the planet at a tipping point, we need a revolutionary transformation in society and in our relationship with nature.

As Friedrich Engels wrote in *Dialectics of Nature*, "we by no means rule over nature like a conqueror over a foreign people, like someone standing outside nature—but that we, with flesh, blood and brain, belong to nature, and exist in its midst, and that all our mastery of it consists in the fact that we have the advantage over all other creatures of being able to learn its laws and apply them correctly... The more this progresses the more will men not only feel but also know their oneness with nature, and the more impossible will become the senseless and unnatural idea of a contrast between mind and matter, man and nature, soul and body. This regulation, however, requires something more than mere knowledge. It requires a complete revolution in our hitherto existing mode of production, and simultaneously a revolution in our whole contemporary social order."

Reform, revolution and organization

Socialists support reforms because they improve the lives of people in the here and now, and because through the experience of fighting for reforms (not waiting for them to be handed down) people can gain experience and confidence to demand much more—highlighting the limits of the system and the need for revolution.

As the German/Polish revolutionary Rosa Luxemburg wrote in *Reform or Revolution*, "Can we counterpose the social revolution, the transformation of the existing order, our final goal, to social reforms? Certainly not. The daily struggle for reforms, for the amelioration of the condition of the workers within the framework of the existing social order, and for democratic institutions, offers an indissoluble tie. The struggle for reforms is its means; the social revolution, its aim."

Elections are an important opportunity to give voice to the struggle for social change. Socialists engage in elections to give voice to social movements, and push for elected officials to act as a megaphone for the movements. But electing different leaders to capitalist institutions will not on its own create an alternative.

This is not a flaw in leadership or party platform but a reflection that social democracy, capitalism's main political institution, can never get rid of capitalism. Parliament offers no control over capitalism's repressive apparatus (the police, military and courts), no control over the economic power of corporations, and—by leaving the majority as passive onlookers—minimizes the opportunities for people to make change.

The state appears neutral, but it is actually an institution of class rule. The police claim to "protect the peace" but the state uses them as attack dogs against blockades, protests

and strikes. The courts claim to "administer justice" but they serve the 1%, maintaining a society of exploitation and oppression. The military claim to provide "defense" but it attacks and occupied other countries for the benefit of Canadian corporations.

As Engels wrote in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*: "In order that these antagonisms and classes with conflicting economic interests might not consume themselves and society in fruitless struggle, it became necessary to have a power seemingly standing above society that would alleviate the conflict, and keep it within the bounds of 'order'; and this power, arisen out of society but placing itself above it, and alienating itself more and more from it, is the state."

But these antagonisms that the state seeks to mediate periodically explode in revolutions, where ordinary people reinvent society, and in the process themselves. As Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky wrote in *The History of the Russian Revolution*, "the most indubitable feature of a revolution is the direct interference of the masses in historical events. In ordinary times the state, be it monarchical or democratic, elevates itself above the nation, and history is made by specialists in that line of business—kings, ministers, bureaucrats, parliamentarians, journalists. But at those crucial moments when the old order becomes no longer endurable to the masses, they break over the barriers excluding them from the political arena, sweep aside their traditional representatives, and create by their own interference the initial groundwork for a new regime... The history of a revolution is for us first of all a history of the forcible entrance of the masses into the realm of rulership over their own destiny."

The 20th century saw revolutions or rebellions in Russia

1905/1917, Germany/Austria 1918-19, Spain 1936, East Germany 1953, Hungary 1956, Cuba 1959, France 1968, Chile 1973, Portugal 1974, Iran 1979, Poland 1980, East Europe 1989, South Africa 1994, Indonesia 1998, and Serbia 2000. The start of the 21st century has seen rebellions in Latin America, revolutions across the Arab world, general strikes from India to South Africa, a worldwide Occupy movement, and an indigenous movement Idle No More. These rebellions and revolutions have raised the possibility of a world based on human need not corporate greed; a world free from war, climate chaos, exploitation and oppression in all its forms.

We already have the material capacity to feed, clothe, house and provide healthcare for everyone, and the technology to fuel society sustainably. But we need a revolution of the 99% and for the 99% to achieve it.

This is not utopian or futuristic, and is a task that we must begin now. As Lenin wrote: "It is far more difficult—and of far greater value—to be a revolutionary when the conditions for direct, open, really mass and really revolutionary struggle do not yet exist, to be able to champion the interests of the revolution (by propaganda, agitation and organization) in non-revolutionary bodies and often enough in downright reactionary bodies, in a non-revolutionary situation, among masses who are incapable of immediately appreciating the need for revolutionary methods of action. To be able to find, to probe for, to correctly determine the specific path or the particular turn of events that will lead the masses to the real, last, decisive and great revolutionary struggle—such is the main task of Communism in Western Europe and America today."

Leaked letter reveals anger with NDP's right-wing platform

A leaked letter to Ontario NDP leader Andrea Horwath by 34 prominent NDP members—including Michele Landsberg, Judy Rebick, Winnie Ng, and Grace-Edward Galabuzzi—has reflected the anger of thousands of people disillusioned with the NDP's rightward drift.

As the letter explained, the NDP is “running to the right of the Liberals in an attempt to win Conservative votes. It is not clear whether you have given up on progressive voters or you are taking them for granted... You seem to be giving credence to his (Hudak's) policies by adopting a more moderate right-wing program focusing on balanced budgets, austerity or at least public service cuts and ‘common sense.’”

This captures the shock and sense of betrayal amongst NDP members at the leadership's refusal to support the \$14 minimum wage, promise of an “accountability” minister to deliver budget cuts, use of an election slogan reminiscent of Mike Harris, and refusal to rule out a coalition with Tim Hudak.

The vicious and ageist attacks on the signatories from within the party—calling them “embittered pensioners” and an “aging commentariat”, or “whiners” who should “shut the hell up”—further confirms the rightward drift of the party.

Be strategic: don't vote for Bay Street

But frustration with the NDP's rightward shift led many people to shift their own vote to the right by voting Liberal—inappropriately named “strategic voting.” This was based on fear of Tim Hudak, who has promised to slash 100,000 public sector jobs and threatened to impose “right to work” legislation to smash unions.

But fear of the Tories led to amnesia about the Liberals. In his article “Anyone but Tim Hudak for Ontario premier”, Unifor president Jerry Dias warned that “If Tim Hudak becomes premier, Ontario will see unprecedented job cuts, health-care cuts, education cuts and the decimation of workers' rights.” But this is exactly what the Liberals have done: revoked Toronto transit workers right to strike, imposed Bill 115 on teachers, closed hospitals, increased tuition, held down welfare rates and the minimum wage, and refused to conduct an environmental assessment of Line 9.

The leaked letter claimed the NDP defeated “the most progressive budget in recent Ontario history,” but this ignores the Liberal record and other cuts contained in the budget—including \$1.25 billion to public services and a continuation of the Drummond report cuts (80 per cent of which the Liberals have already imposed).

The Liberals are not the “lesser evil”, they are the twin party of corporate Canada. The Liberals share the Tories' austerity agenda but only differ in their tactics on how to impose it—using concessions and progressive rhetoric as a tactic to bury their own record and demobilize campaigns so they can more effectively rule after election day.

NDP and the crisis of social democracy

Part of the sense of betrayal of NDP members is the idea that the NDP are a real alternative to capitalism: the letter states that “the NDP has always stood for more democracy and social justice.” But the NDP in power have legislated teachers back to work and attacked indigenous resistance in BC, legislated paramedics back to work and increased tuition in Nova Scotia, and attacked workers and refused to support same-sex partnership benefits in Ontario.

This follows the behaviour of social democratic governments around the world—from the British Labour Party that invaded Iraq, to the Greek PASOK government that imposed austerity, to the South African ANC who shot miners—sharpened by the economic crisis.

Faced with an NDP that is selling out, the two most obvious solutions are abstention or voting for other parties. But both of these, expressions of frustration with social democracy, reinforce its vision of change—which is said to come from above through Parliament or the Legislature, as an expression of party platform that people vote for once every few years.

Change comes from outside the official institutions of capitalism, in the hundreds of days between election day—driven by movements in the streets, campuses, communities and workplaces. But the composition within the Legislature affects the struggle outside the Legislature. The best “strategic vote” in this context is a critical vote for the NDP—the only party associated with the working class—while building extra-parliamentary struggles that really make change.

Alternatives

Calling for a vote for the NDP, while criticizing and explaining their sellouts and building the movements, is part of a process that can give rise to left alternatives—like Québec solidaire or Syriza. But these parties emerged from mass struggles between elections—like the huge anti-globalization and anti-war protests in Quebec, and the series of general strikes in Greece.

A left alternative to the NDP won't materialize in the midst of the election campaign when the pull of electoralism is the strongest; rather, it will have to emerge from the current movements growing much stronger after the election, rooting themselves in the working class, and winning people to building a party of the ballot box and the street.

The legitimate anger at the NDP could lead to disillusionment and a strengthening of the Tories/Liberals, or an internal fight to “reclaim” the NDP despite their record and the reality of reformism. Or it could lead some to reject social democracy and fight for a socialist alternative, with a tactical approach to elections; if this includes you, join the International Socialists!

INTERVIEW



From the UK to Ontario, disabled people fight back

Recently, Ontario activists had the pleasure of meeting Ellen Clifford from Disabled People Against Cuts (DPAC). Her tour across Ontario included Toronto, Kitchener, Sudbury, Kingston and Ottawa.

She has been campaigning with the disabled people's movement for 15 years and, since 2011, has sat on the National Steering Committee of DPAC. She is also a member of Unite the Union and works to build solidarity between workers in unions and those forced to live on social benefits. She kindly answered a few questions for us.

What is DPAC and why was it created?

DPAC was set up in order to oppose the vicious and brutal assaults on disabled people being waged by the Tory government. It grew out of a protest called in Birmingham for the Tory party conference in October 2010. It was evident early on after the Tories took power that they were deliberately targeting disabled people and accelerating policy directions brought in by New Labour to privatise the welfare state. It was also clear that disabled people needed a co-ordinated national voice in order to fight back. If the Tories thought disabled people were easy targets we proved them wrong.

What seems to be the greatest threat to disabled people right now?

We are facing an unprecedented level and scale of attack affecting every aspect of our lives from benefit cuts to the slashing of frontline support services, to attacks on education and employment opportunities. Underlying the assaults on disabled people's ability to participate in day to day life and receive the support we need to survive is an ideological attack on disabled people's place in society. The message is that disabled people cost too much and consequently it is unreasonable for us to expect the same chances in life as other people.

What are some of the unique things about how DPAC organised compared to other movements?

DPAC was set up specifically to work within the broad left and with the trade union movement. During the last wave of activism in the 1980s and early 1990s, the UK disabled people's rights movement was grounded in identity politics and campaigned in isolation. There was mistrust of the trade unions that had a poor understanding of the social model of disability. The social model as a tool for social reform argues it is society that needs to change in order to include disabled people, there is nothing “wrong” with disabled people ourselves. DPAC's analysis of the current attacks on disabled people is that they are part of a much wider ideological agenda that seeks to dismantle the welfare state as a basis from which to then attack workers.

DPAC understands that the Tories are waging class war. Disabled people can and have struck victories against them but we can't win the war on our own. For that we need the power of an organised working class and that's why links with the unions have been so important to DPAC.

Has DPAC connected with other movements? What has that looked like?

As one of my DPAC comrades says, solidarity is spelt D P A C. Solidarity is absolutely essential for realising the power that we have when we collectivise our struggle. We have close links with activist groups such as UKUncut, LondonOccupy, and Boycott Workfare among many others. Their solidarity has enabled us to build our public profile and thereby reach more people, overcoming the barriers to recognition that disabled people usually encounter within mainstream society. We have also been able to relearn practical skills for organising direct actions and grow our confidence for mobilising along more militant lines than the UK disabled people's rights movement had grown used to under the New Labour years.

Unlike many of our activist allies we also have strong links with the trade unions on different levels. Disabled people are also workers and union members of course. Unions represent workers who are also affected by government attacks and they therefore have an interest in supporting our campaigns. Research by PCS Union found that 43% of JobCentre Plus staff who would be responsible for implementing benefit changes would also be affected by them as increasingly workers are forced to turn to benefits to top up low wages to feed their families.

DPAC also has strong links with rank and file workers. Just as they come on and support our protests so we go down to their picket lines and give solidarity when they take industrial action. The trade union bureaucracy is generally, depending on the union, uncomfortable with DPAC's level of militancy but we have created a situation where our credibility and wide support base means they simply can't ignore us and we will push the trade union leaders for action whether they officially give us a platform or not.

Without these links with the wider anti cuts movement DPAC would not have been in the position we have to intervene in and push for a co-ordinated fightback instead of giving in to a tendency to either wait for a Labour government or collapse into voluntarism.

What were some critical moments in DPAC's fight against austerity?

For me the Remploi dispute was one because it brought class consciousness centre stage within the disabled people's rights movement. In 2011 the government announced

the closure of the Remploi factories, effectively sheltered workshops employing a couple of thousand Deaf and disabled people across the UK. Disabled people's organisations had long campaigned for the closures on the basis of promoting inclusion. DPAC instead took a stance that supported the Remploi workers who were opposing the closures. We maintained our position against segregated employment but highlighted on the one hand the movement's betrayal of the disabled workers and on the other the government's hypocrisy taking away disabled people's employment at a time of recession yet cutting benefits in order to “support” disabled people into jobs. We effectively split the movement, identifying who was with us and who wasn't while building closer links with the unions.

Why is it important for socialists and workers to connect with the disabled people's movement?

As socialists we are tribunes of the oppressed. It is harder for governments to co-opt significant layers of disabled people due to the deep-seated links between disability and poverty so, in the UK at least, the disabled people's rights movement has always had a militant edge and an understanding that disability equality can never be fully realised under capitalism, that what we need to work towards is a society “from each according to ability, to each according to need.” The social model of disability which has underpinned the movement since the 1980s was developed by Marxists. Among socialists and workers who would never tolerate homophobic, racist or sexist language you still commonly hear disabledist terms and assumptions used freely. 1 in 3 people are affected by disability so it's not a marginal issue.

How were you received by the different cities you visited?

I was surprised that so many people were interested in coming and hearing about DPAC. We have all heard about the student strikes and protests in Montreal so the idea activists in Montreal wanted to hear from us was quite overwhelming. For me the best bit was meeting disabled activists in Canada to compare experiences of mobilising and uniting beyond the disabled people's movement.

What suggestions would you have for the Canadian disability movement?

When disabled people collectivise, when we unite and fight we are formidable. In contrast to the traditional images society has of us as pitiful, tragic and vulnerable we can also be strong political leaders not only within the disability movement but at the forefront of the wider campaign against austerity. You can see that when you look at Rapliq and Toronto Disability Pride. The next step would be a national co-ordinated militant voice of and for disabled people with links to the trade unions.

From Demonized to Organized / Building the New Union Movement



BOOK

A youth guide to unions

From Demonized to Organized: Building the New Union Movement
Written by Nora Loreto
Review by Chantal Sundaram

All they taught you at school...
Was how to be a good worker
The system has failed you, don't fail yourself
- Billy Bragg

Former student leader Nora Loreto has written an important intervention into the lives of her peers about trade unions and workplace justice.

The book is a brilliant practical guide to trade unions, and to the law and politics surrounding them. She negotiates well between what you need to know about how unions operate in society, in all their strengths and weaknesses: how they will protect you against the system, and also how they are a compromise with it, depending on circumstances. It is a passionate argument for the necessity of trade unions, while also guid-

ing you through what is within their control, what is not, and why.

And along the way, she gives multiple examples of actual struggles that show what unions can achieve through the activity of their members, from a union drive at the Hot and Crusty Café in NYC, to a strike by faculty at St FX in Nova Scotia to support contract staff.

Although the book will serve as a practical and accessible resource for the mechanics of trade unionism, what's most interesting is how it unites that practical guide to action with an understanding of what holds young people back from unions.

Nora ascribes the generational loss to the absence of an alternative. And she locates that absence not only in what has happened to the union movement but what has happened to society as a whole: "In Canada, there exists a clear lack of social solidarity that should accompany living in any society and this has isolated young people like never before."

She counterposes the notion of

"community" in rural societies where survival nurtured cultures of interdependence. Now, that sense of community is simply foreign, and any notion of interdependence is viewed at worst as a weakness, at best as abstract, in ever-more fragmented workplaces.

Nora makes the patient case that, in the end, there is no individual way out, only a collective way, even if much of the immediate communal dividends have been lost in the neoliberal shuffle. Those who have been dealt out should push their way back into the game, and at least have the benefit of all the union rules that are now under attack.

Nora admits that she provides only an incomplete answer to the most important question posed by her book: what is to be done? Do we keep playing, or do we rewrite the rules of the game?

I think she would agree: we have no choice but to do both at the same time.

LEFT JAB

John Bell

Stephen Harper's acts of charity

I suspect that, for most of you, the last word that springs to mind when you think of Stephen Harper is "charitable". Yet he must be, to extend charitable status to Canadian men's rights organization called Canadian Association for Equality.

The fellows at CAFE are delighted, not only because their supporters can get tax breaks in return for donations: "Perhaps most significant is that this development, following a detailed review of our programs by the Canada Revenue Agency, serves as a major legitimization of our men's issues agenda and a great step for our movement."

Legitimizing misogyny

Great—legitimization for a movement that believes most women who are raped are really asking for it.

All is not a bed of roses for mostly white men in our society, and that is pretty much the fault of women. CAFE's "mandate" may blather on about the "health and well-being of boys and men", but its real mission is to attack feminism.

CAFE's benign language masks a reactionary backlash against the gains—the insufficient gains, I might add—that women have made over several generations. Check out the comments on any on-line article about Men's Rights Activists (MRAs) and you'll discover barely disguised misogyny and threats of violence, particularly sexual violence, against women critics. For them feminism is the enemy, alternately a joke or an insult.

Let's just say they prove "Lewis's Law" which states: the comments on any article about feminism justify the existence of feminism.

So when CAFE organized a music festival to celebrate "Equality Day" in Toronto, social media bombarded the concert venue and the bands with facts about the men's rights movement. The venue scrapped the event and the bands pulled out, apologizing for not doing their homework on the event or its sponsor.

There are plenty of good resources exposing outfits like CAFE, and I'll leave MRAs for another column. What angers me most in all of this is that the Harper government—through granting charitable status by the Canadian Revenue Agency—has given its seal of approval to this group and this dog's breakfast of creepy ideas.

'Charity' as weapon

What is not new is the way Harper has used "charity" as a weapon to attack ideas and causes he dislikes and to promote those he favours.

In his 2012 Omnibus budget bill, Harper devoted \$8 million for the CRA to investigate registered charities engaged in "political activities."

To receive charitable status organizations have to contribute toward the social good, through actions, education or research. To retain the status, they cannot spend more than 10 per cent of their resources on political activity, advocacy or lobbying.

It was an open secret that the move was meant to intimidate environmental

organizations critical of the fossil fuel industry. The Suzuki Foundation and Forest Ethics were two groups that bore the brunt of expensive audits and investigation.

David Suzuki resigned his seat on the Suzuki Foundation board in order to speak out against the government: "I am keenly aware that some governments, industries and special interest groups are working hard to silence us. They use threats to the Foundation's charitable status in attempts to mute its powerful voice on issues that matter deeply to you and many other Canadians. This bullying demonstrates how important it is to speak out."

In particular, charities with international connections—especially those opposed to tar sands development and pipeline building—were targeted. As then Environment Minister Peter Kent told parliament: "The opposition members can whinge all they want but the fact of the matter is some charitable organizations have allegedly used funds from outside this country inappropriately in regard to their charitable status."

Kent was full of shit. Two years and \$8 million later, only one group out of about 900 has had its charitable status revoked.

Physicians for Global Survival (PGS) has been around for over 30 years, warning about nuclear war and promoting disarmament. PGS is affiliated to International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW). This group won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1985. But because the Tory audit decided that about 20 per cent of PGS resources went to political advocacy, its status was yanked.

Anecdotally, I can tell you the attack on charities has had an effect. Organizations are looking over their shoulders, reluctant to engage in advocacy or speak loudly on issues like civil liberties, environmental degradation and increasing militarism.

Promoting propaganda

On the other side of the charity ledger are those that Harper likes.

I doubt the Fraser Institute faced a serious audit. The "think tank" cranks out a steady stream of climate change denial and privatization propaganda for the media, and acts a pro-corporate lobby group. Yet this passes as "education" and "independent research".

I doubt that the Manning (as in Preston) Foundation for Democratic Education faced much scrutiny. This is the "charitable" wing of The Manning Centre, devoted to building the conservative movement. You are also supporting, through your taxes, The Canadian Constitution Foundation, a lobby group against universal public healthcare and union rights.

Every aspect of the state is a tool in Harper's hands, to attack the ideas and causes he hates: anti-militarism, environmentalism and real human rights organizations—while granting charitable status to a group of sexist creeps like CAFE. It's up to us to ensure that opposition continues despite the Tory approval.

BOOK

Idle No More's first year

The Winter We Danced: Voices from the Past, the Future and the Idle No More Movement
Produced by the Kino-nda-niimi Collective
Review by Valerie Lannon

Manitoba's Kino-nda-niimi Collective has created an invaluable resource with the recently-published book, *The Winter We Danced* (ARP books, Winnipeg). This is a treasure trove of photos, poems, stories and essays, in all about 120 entries that capture the emotions and ideas of indigenous pride and resistance that fuel the Idle No More movement.

The title is derived from the round dances organized in numerous cities and towns across Canada in late 2012 and early 2013, in both outdoor and indoor locations like shopping malls. The intent was to provide an oppor-

tunity for both indigenous and settler peoples to celebrate indigenous rights. They were hugely successful and were quickly supplemented with all kinds of educational discussions on campus and in community centres, which continued to draw both indigenous and non-indigenous participants.

Some indigenous authors' names are familiar due to their exposure in mainstream media over well-fought campaigns, e.g. Ellen Gabriel, Winano LaDuke, INM founders (Jessica Gordon), Taiiaki Alfred, Wab Kinew, Hayden King, and BC's Representative for Children and Youth, Mary Ellen Turpel Lafond.

Others are long-time indigenous activists (several of whom have blogs) like Russell Diabo, Clayton Thomas-Muller, and Chelsea Vowel.

While most contributors are indigenous, space was also made for statements from allies including the

letter of support to Chief Theresa Spence from the Canadian Union of Postal Workers, and authors such as Ethan Cox, Naomi Klein, and Judy Rebick.

The chapter "Friendships" demonstrates the remarkable outreach undertaken by INM, not only to settlers in general but to other oppressed communities, for example the article entitled "Idle No More Organizers Reach Out to Queer Community."

The final chapter, "New Directions" contains thoughtful assessments of both the success and the limitations of INM's first year of existence, as well as suggested strategies for the future. Suggestions are made about the continuing leadership role of indigenous women, and the need to defend traditional territories.

This highly accessible volume is suggested reading for everyone.

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.



“My pen is my sword”: interview with Bahraini journalist

Ahmed Ismael, 22-years old, was a citizen journalist from Salmabad village in Bahrain. His task as a revolutionary was to document the Western-backed Bahraini authorities' attacks on peaceful protesters in his neighbourhood and across Bahrain. While he was holding his camera, trying to have his hands steady in order to avoid the usual shaky videos of protesters' footage, a gunman shot him. He lost his grip on his video camera and fell. The camera, stained with Ismael's blood, was a witness to his death and the violations that journalists and photographers face in Bahrain.

Journalism in Bahrain

Although Ismael was killed in 2012 and many have been arrested and tortured since 2011, targeting journalists and photographers along with other pro-democracy and human rights activists was common even prior to the Arab Spring. For instance, Ahmed Radhi, a prominent pro-democracy Bahraini journalist, was targeted several times before the Arab Spring. Radhi was arrested during the uprising in 1995 and since then have been facing ongoing challenges.

“Journalism in Bahrain is in its worst days since February 14, 2011,” said Radhi. That's mainly due to the escalating crackdown on pro-democracy journalists who support peaceful protesters or are critical of the Western backed Al-Khalifa regime that has been in power for centuries. In the best case, a journalist would be dismissed from his or her work. However, attacks on journalists could include arbitrary arrest, unfair trials, solitary confinements and torture.

Radhi was subjected to torture in detention in 1995. He lost hearing in one of his ears due to torture and was released as his health deteriorated. His painful experience as a political prisoner has not deterred him from supporting and being part in pro-democracy movements in Bahrain.

Anti-imperialism

Bahrain is home to US Fifth Fleet. Imperialism and Western hypocrisy play a role as an obstacle to people's demands in Bahrain. For many activists in Bahrain, the demands are not only local, confined to their rights to equality and democracy.

Any resistance to Western direct or indirect intervention in the island state means resistance to intervention in the neighbouring countries. During the invasion of Iraq, countries in the Persian Gulf such as Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and Qatar were home to US bases. Protesting in Bahrain against the invasion on Iraq made activists and journalists a target of the pro-Western Al-Khalifa regime.

Radhi was very critical of the presence of US army base in Bahrain prior and during the intervention in Iraq. Authorities, mainly the Ministry of Information, were uneasy with his remarks about the US's presence in Bahrain. The ministry filed a lawsuit against Radhi to force him to quit his job as a journalist and to not work in the media field. “Due to pressures, I was forced to quit journalism during the beginning of US invasion of Iraq,” said Radhi.

Western hypocrisy, including Canada, has played a major role in ignoring human rights violations in Bahrain. Whether through investments or arms sales, Western governments such as the American, Canadian and British are complicit in the ongoing violations happening in Bahrain. Currently, Bahrain is one of Canada's priority markets in the Middle East.

During the Arab Spring

Despite the challenges and the global code of silence towards the situation of Bahrain, protestors, activists and journalists like Radhi continue in their struggle for democracy and social justice. Being a victim of torture in the 1990s has not stopped Radhi from protesting and blogging during the Arab Spring protests in Bahrain.

“The prison was a painful experience for me that has left its traces on my body and deep in my heart. I use my pen as a weapon to resist oppression and tyranny,” said Radhi. He has a blog site, “My Pen is My Weapon,” in which he writes about revolutionary and pro-democracy movements and human rights violations committed by the regime in Bahrain.

In September 2012 the Bahraini government forces raided Radhi's place and arbitrarily arrested him at dawn. Again, the authorities targeted him for his writings and for speaking with foreign media outlets about the Arab Spring protests in

Bahrain. According to Radhi, the arrest followed his participation in radio programs and other platforms in which he courageously supported the demonstrations in which the majority of the population in Bahrain participated. He was later released after four months of torture, ill treatment and detention. Despite that, he continues to write, protest and defend other political prisoners in Bahrain and the region.

Solidarity with other activists

I was first introduced to Radhi at the time of the arrest of human rights activist Hussain Jawad. Although being a target of the regime, Radhi was campaigning for Hussain Jawad and other activists by asking activists from around the world to pose for photos holding posters of prisoners of conscience. Jawad was released, but his father Mohammad Jawad, 63-year-old, remains in prison. Mohamed Jawad, well-known opposition leader in Bahrain, was detained in the 1960s, 1980s and 1990s.

“The human rights defenders are not classic human rights defenders like before. They aren't now behind keyboards. They are now attending most of the protests and events,” said Hussain Jawad. However, this has subjected human rights defenders, journalists and bloggers to more brutal attacks.

Western imperialism

The Bahraini government has been reluctant to make reforms and change. Any change in Bahrain means a change to Bahrain neighbours such as Saudi Arabia. The Western backed Saudi monarchy has acted as a counter-revolutionary force in several Arab countries -Bahrain, Syria, Egypt and Yemen-but in different ways.

“Bahrain is the gate to the region. That made Saudi Arabia and United States stand as an obstacle to political change,” said Radhi. While activists and protestors in Bahrain resist oppression, it is essential for those around the world to show solidarity by unveiling the West's hypocrisy towards human rights issues in places like Bahrain and Saudi Arabia.

“The will of Bahraini people will determine the destiny of Bahrain and the future of the revolution,” said Radhi.

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RESISTANCE PRESS BOOK ROOM

INTERNATIONAL SOCIALIST EVENTS

SOCIALISTS, SOCIAL DEMOCRACY AND ELECTIONS

Why does social democracy disappoint?

Tuesday June 24, 7pm
OISE: 252 Bloor St West
Toronto

After the election: what next for the NDP?

Tuesday July 8, 7pm
OISE: 252 Bloor St West
Toronto

Should the left still vote for the NDP

Tuesday July 15, 7pm
OISE: 252 Bloor St West
Toronto

How do left alternatives emerge: lessons from Quebec, Greece, Ireland

Tuesday July 29, 7pm
OISE: 252 Bloor St West
Toronto

Why do we need revolutionary organization

Tuesday August 12, 7pm
OISE: 252 Bloor St West
Toronto

OTHER SOCIAL JUSTICE EVENTS

Healing Walk

June 27-28
Fort McMurray, Alberta
www.healingwalk.org



Peoples Social Forum

August 21-24
Ottawa, Ontario
peoplesocialforum.ca



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MINIMUM WAGE ACTION

by VALERIE LANNON

May 31 saw dozens of activists with the provincial Minimum Wage Campaign engaging Toronto residents at the busy intersection of Bloor and Dufferin streets. The objective was to make the demand for a \$14 minimum wage an election issue, and it got media attention.

June 1 marked the day that the Liberals raised the hourly minimum wage from \$10.25 to \$11.00, in no small part because of the tenacity of the provincial campaign.

Socialist worker interviewed a number of campaigners, many of whom work for minimum wages themselves. A common reason for their participation in the campaign is the stress caused by having to live on such a low hourly wage.

Shi Ahilan said “\$11 an hour is still below the poverty line, leaving people with empty pockets at the end of the month. People we talk to support \$14 an hour and are signing our petition. To win this, we need party leaders to also support us, which is why we are making this an election issue. The minimum wage affects all workers and is not just for part-time young workers, but also for adults raising families.”

The sentiment was echoed by Ian: “All the big corporations, whether Monsanto, Line 9, or mining companies... don’t care about our well-being.” Elli Bedard noted “Everyone should have a living wage, above the poverty line.”

Labour was on hand to support the day’s action. Toronto and York Region Labour Council president John Cartwright stated, “Labour always supports raising the standard of living. So unions are joining with others to say we need \$14 an hour now.”

For more information: raisetheminimumwage.ca/

PROTECT OUR WATERS

by BRADLEY HUGHES

Thousands joined the Convergence 2014 march and rally to Protect our Sacred Waters from Tarsands Oil.

The event was organized by the Union of BC Indian Chiefs and included a march across the Burrard bridge in Vancouver.

After Harper’s expected approval of the Enbridge Northern Gateway pipeline continued solidarity with the First Nations will be crucial to stop the project.

MATERNAL HEALTH INCLUDES ABORTION



by MICHELLE ROBIDOUX

The Conservative government’s Maternal Health summit was met by a picket organized by the Ontario Coalition for Abortion Clinics, denouncing the exclusion of abortion from Harper’s maternal health policy.

Harper and the Minister for Status of Women Kellie Leitch attended the summit, which included delegates from Canadian NGOs

critical of the Tory policy. The counterprotest, as well as an evening panel discussion and media coverage, brought attention to the fact that 47,000 women die each year from unsafe abortion, leaving 220,000 children orphaned. Harper is applying his anti-choice policies abroad because he has been unsuccessful in directly tackling the right to abortion at home.

Protesters also demanded

that the federal government enforce the Canada Health Act in New Brunswick, where women must get written permission of two doctors to obtain an abortion in a hospital, and where clinic abortions are not funded by the province.

Maternal health includes abortion, in New Brunswick, in all of Canada and internationally.

BOYCOTT IKEA

by DOUG NESBITT

Locked out for thirteen months, over three hundred IKEA workers in Richmond, BC are still holding out. While setting record profits in 2013, IKEA is trying to impose a two-tier wage system and seriously weaken benefits.

Of the twelve IKEA stores in Canada and Quebec, it is the only one unionized outside of Montreal where workers are represented by CSN. Teamsters Local 213 represents the workers in Richmond.

One of the shop stewards at IKEA Richmond, Dorothy “Dot” Tompkins explains: “We’re the flagship store in North America. They’ve kept the union out of other stores by giving them what we get. Whatever we lose, they’ll lose.”

The fight is a difficult one. Of the 350 unionized workers, 36 crossed the picket line at the outset. Two more have since crossed the line. IKEA Richmond workers are also conducting daily information pickets outside the IKEA Coquitlam, although the pickets cannot legally disrupt the business.

Working at IKEA Richmond

Depending on job descriptions, IKEA Richmond workers will start at the minimum wage of \$10.25/h and top out at between \$19/h and \$21/h. The wage rates for supervisory work is between \$20/h and \$24/h. IKEA workers also have decent benefits.

However, the lack of hours for part-timers is a serious problem. Of the 350 workers, only 110 are guaranteed hours. The rest have no guaranteed hours. Most part-time workers are students and youth, mothers, and workers who have more than one job.

Management’s culture of bullying

IKEA Richmond workers have also faced a culture of bullying from management since 2006. In 2006, the workers struck for a month to repeal a two-tier wage system. The two-tier system was a concession made by workers in 2003 when IKEA said the store was going to be closed.

After the 2006 strike, the workplace culture at IKEA Richmond became far worse. They want to rollback family benefits by changing eligibility. Management has also pushed for contracting out, cutting life insurance in half, and not paying out vacation pay in a lump sum as the workers would prefer.

IKEA’s war against shop-floor representation union-management relations also deteriorated dramatically. Despite a union security clause in the contract, union reps were having a hard time scheduling times to get into the store to talk to workers. And they were no longer free to walk the floor without management supervision.

However, management increased the number of one-on-one “talks” and larger meetings with workers. Union stewards, such as Tompkins, were not asked into these meetings. IKEA used this approach in an attempt to intimidate workers from the Filipino community.

According to Tompkins, “IKEA was really banking that the Filipino workers would be so scared they would vote against striking and vote for whatever offer was there. They had two Filipino managers basically barraging them one-on-one and in captive audience meetings. Management didn’t realize that the workers are a lot smarter.”

Time for a real boycott

The locked out workers at IKEA Richmond are already calling for a boycott. With only twelve stores across Canada, IKEA is extremely vulnerable to a sustained labour campaign with regular boots-on-the-ground actions and a clear media strategy. Each store is in a big city where decent numbers can be mobilized.

Canadian Labour Congress President Hassan Yussuff, who visited the picket lines on June 2, has a real opportunity to put his promising words at last May’s CLC convention into action. Here is the “ground war” Yussuff says he wants to unleash. The CLC can easily start to organize a national pressure campaign against IKEA. It could provide local labour councils with the materials and direction to start coordinated info pickets at every single IKEA store, which could culminate in a call for a national boycott. Yussuff and the CLC can also work with the Teamsters and CSN to activate their memberships around their workplaces, including the unionized IKEA Montreal.

Last but not least, Hassan Husseini’s “Take the Back CLC” campaign can also inform and activate its network of supporters to democratically engage their labour councils with action plans and pressure Yussuff and the CLC into action.

The fight against IKEA is winnable, and holds out the opportunity to re-energize and rebuild networks of labour activists. This will only help the fight against Canada Post and future struggles. Time for a real boycott. Time for the ground war.

This is shared from rankandfile.ca

STICKING WITH THE UNION

Carolyn Egan

Building pride in labour

World Pride is being celebrated in Toronto during last week of June. Many events are taking place and the trade union movement has been engaged with it’s allies in co-sponsoring and initiating forums and activities which will highlight the gains that have been made in Canada through the work of the labour movement.

As socialists we understand that the working class has a critical role in the fight for reforms and in the eventual overturning of capitalism. Capitalism is the economic system that maintains the exploitation of working people and the oppressions that we struggle against—racism, sexism, homophobia, discrimination on the basis of ability and more.

Many in the social movements don’t necessarily share this outlook. But for those of us who fight for socialism from below, for the self-emancipation of the working class in all of its diversity, it is central to our understanding of how change takes place. We believe that workers, if they use the collective power that is theirs, have the potential to replace the rule of the 1% with that of the 99%.

If you look at the history of LGBTQ struggles in this country, it becomes clear that many of the victories that have been won come from the support of the working class movements. Activists demanded that their unions take up their struggles and fight for the end of bigotry and discrimination in our workplaces and our communities.

In 1985 the Ontario Federation of Labour demanded the inclusion of sexual orientation in the Human Rights Code adding its weight to the fight for inclusion. Language against harassment on the basis of sexuality was bargained in collective agreements before this ever became law. Same sex benefits were negotiated by unions in both public and private sector contracts leading the way. At the 1994 Canadian Labour Congress Convention a major policy paper was debated and

passed on sexual orientation. Shortly after unions called along with other organizations a march to the Ontario Legislature demanding the majority NDP government not allow a “free vote” on same sex benefits.

LGBTQ members of the United Steelworkers initiated the demonstration. Speakers from the Toronto and York Region Labour Council, the Steelworkers, the Canadian Autoworkers spoke along with activists from Aids Action Now!, Desh Pardesh, BlackCap and other organizations. Union banners led the 2,000 strong march through the streets from Church and Wellesley to Queens Park. CBC radio that next morning announced that thousands of trade unionist marched for same sex benefits! Most of the participants were from the LGBTQ community and rallied for their rights in the spirit of Stonewall, but the unions called the event and were very prominent. Once again they lent their strength to the struggle.

Unfortunately the NDP let the community down. The party allowed for a free vote and numbers of its own MPP’s voted it down siding with the bigots. The bill was defeated but the die was cast and a few years later that struggle was won.

In 2002 the Ontario Supreme Court ruled that Marc Hall had the right to take his boyfriend to his high school prom. When he was initially denied, it was the Canadian Autoworkers who came to his support and helped the case proceed through the courts.

Major changes took place in many unions with more and more members having the confidence to come out. Socialist must always be “the tribune of the oppressed” and use the organizations of the working class to fight oppression wherever it is found. Unions have a proud record in this country of doing that when LGBTQ members demanded it. This wasn’t automatic and homophobia had to be confronted, but when the unions moved it made the a huge difference not only for their members but for society as a whole.

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Socialist Worker

The future is ours: all out for the People's Social Forum

Socialist Worker spoke with Darius Mirshahi of the People's Social Forum organizing committee.

Who and what organisations/groups are involved in building the Peoples Social Forum?

Most unions, student organizations, Indigenous peoples and nations, lefty activists of all stripes, environmentalists, women's organizations, migrant justice organizers, artists, NGO's, and others who are just fed up with the direction of society.

The Forum is clearly inspired by Occupy, INM and the Quebec Student movement. Is it the hope that the forum can pull those inspired and active in those movements together?

The Forum is indeed inspired by the many mass movements that have rocked "Canada" these past few years. But it is also very much inspired by the Social Forum movement which pre-dates these recent happenings. The hope is that the Peoples Social Forum can pull together all our social movements to build together, identify points of unity that strengthen our diverse struggles and perspectives, build trust, build solidarity, and come out of the forum with plans for action and stronger bonds between all participating peoples.

It isn't often that activists from First Nations, Quebec and English Canada get together. How important to you is it that there is representation from all three?

From my understanding this is the first time something like this is happening. This is truly historic in that sense. "Getting representa-



tion" can be very tokenistic and problematic. What is inspiring about the PSF is that the whole process from the beginning has been led by activists from all three. There is real and meaningful engagement from all of our communities towards this forum. And we are anticipating major participation from all three as well as from migrant communities who don't necessarily identify with these three boxes.

What sort of response are you getting for the Forum?

Hype around the forum has only been getting bigger as the dates approach. Registrations and workshop proposals are coming in on a

daily basis. New people are joining committees and caucuses. The regional expansion committees are forming. There is a lot of buzz and interest across the country and even to the south.

What is the response like outside of the usual places (bigger cities, established activist circles etc.). What kind of response from smaller town, rural areas, marginalised communities?

There are families from small towns that are registering. There are community groups at Jane and Finch planning their participation and mobilizing the hood. There are many Indigenous nations and reserves plan-

ning buses. Hype is building everywhere.

How does the forum fit into the ongoing fight against austerity, and cuts to programs?

Fighting austerity is one of the main focuses of the Peoples Social Forum. We know that many workshops will touch on the subject, and anticipate there will be several actions planned during the forum to challenge austerity economics. There will also be assemblies at which we will all come together to plan our fight-back against austerity.

Given the concern by many activists at the rightward

drift of the NDP do you see the social forum as a place to discuss the building of a new political expression for the movements? Like Quebec Solidaire perhaps?

People are free to discuss these ideas at the forum. But it must be made clear that the Peoples Social Forum is strictly non-partisan and will not allow itself to become a platform for any politician or political party. It is about empowering grassroots movements and amplifying people's voices who are building the alternatives and fighting the economic and political status quo.

What role are the unions playing in the social forum.

Unions are helping in major ways. They've supported the forum financially and are mobilizing their members to attend. They are also helping support everyone's participation by co-ordinating buses from nearly every major city in the country (especially in Ontario and Quebec).

What are people hoping will emerge from the social forum

I'm hoping that the forum unleashes a wave of social activism in Canadian society that effectively undermines the austerity agenda, neo-liberal capitalism, and ongoing colonialism. I'm hoping to see organized labour regain its fighting spirit. I'm hoping to see all kinds of strategic alliances and solidarity between traditionally disconnected movements. I want to see decolonization and grassroots direct democracy in my lifetime and I hope this forum will be a significant contribution towards these ends, but that's just me. There's thousands of people and so many movements coming, and all of us have our own reasons, our own aspirations, and our own goals for the forum.

What can people do to help build for the social forum?

Register! Propose a workshop! Organize an assembly! Plan an action! Join your local expansion committee! Join a committee or caucus! Spread the word on social media. Talk to your friends, family, co-workers and neighbours and convince them to come. This event is only going to be as good as we make it. Let's build together. The future is ours.

Visit peoplesocialforum.org for more information.

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Support the BC teachers' strike

by TARA EHRCKE

Teachers in British Columbia are on strike after 16 months of failed contract talks. The strike is province-wide and rotating – teachers will strike one day per week in each school district.

The government has also "locked out" teachers for only certain activities, and deducted 10 per cent of their pay deducted for this "lock out."

Teachers are understandably furious at the government threat to reduce pay for not working on our breaks and lunch. Teachers are also upset at the impact this will have on student access to teachers and extra-curricular activities, which were purposely continued under the teacher job action on non-strike days.

The provocative move by government has caused

a firestorm of reaction on Twitter. Teachers and parents are questioning Education Minister Fassbender on the government threat

Background

The strike comes after twelve years of government attacks on teachers, our union, and public education. It was only six months into the BC Liberal mandate in 2002 that Bill 28 unilaterally removed all contract provisions relating to class size, class composition and specialist teacher ratios. That legislation was ruled unconstitutional by the BC Supreme Court in 2011 and the government was given twelve months to correct it.

The government response in 2012 was Bill 22. It was imposed during the last negotiating round, and has also been found to be unconstitutional by the BC Supreme

Court. The government is appealing this court ruling to the BC Court of Appeal and refused to reinstate the stripped contract language.

The purpose of removing these contract provisions was two-fold: first, to reduce the public education budget by about \$300 million per year. And second, to create mass layoffs and turn what was a teacher shortage into a teacher glut. Since the class size provisions were removed, over 2500 teacher jobs have been eliminated and it is now common for teachers to spend years in "on call" positions before a full time job is available. Just this spring, several school boards have announced drastic layoffs, such as Coquitlam, where 90 full-time positions have been eliminated.

The impact has been drastic for teachers and students. In my school district, Greater

Victoria, over a five year period, one in ten teachers will take a medical leave due to stressful working conditions. It is not uncommon to have a class of 30 students, with five to ten of those students having significant learning needs and/or disabilities such as autism, severe anxiety or oppositional defiant disorder. This is compounded by high levels of child poverty and many behavioural issues.

Classrooms, particularly in low income areas where poverty rates are high, are simply not suitable for teaching and learning. Some teachers are in a daily state of triage trying to keep a semblance of sanity for everyone there. Levels of violence are on the rise, with some teachers declaring unsafe work because students with violent behaviours are not adequately supervised.

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