

Socialist Worker

www.socialist.ca

\$2 | no. 547 | December 2012



MAKE THE REVOLUTION PERMANENT

OBAMA WAS right to be worried about Egypt, but now he probably wishes he was wrong. Just as Israel's bombing of Gaza threatened to spark wider protests across the region, the US stepped in and imposed a ceasefire—without any of Israel's usual conditions. It was meant to quiet the anger that was growing in Egypt and other Arab states in response to Israel's most recent attack on the Palestinians.

But in the days that followed the ceasefire, for which US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton heaped praise on Egyptian president Mohamed Morsi, it all began to unravel. Feeling wind in his sails, Morsi miscalculated the mood on the street and made a power grab to consolidate his control of the Egyptian state. On November 22, the day after the ceasefire, Morsi issued a presidential decree, making himself immune from judicial oversight.

Protests have continued since then, fuelled by Morsi's attempt

to drive through the draft constitution in a hastily organized referendum on December 15. Most of the mainstream media in the West have characterized the protests as a struggle between secularism and Islamism, but the division is much more about politics than religion. There is widespread anger at the Muslim Brotherhood for the role it has played during and since the revolution in 2011, elbowing its way to power at the expense of all other opposition groups. Because the Brotherhood had been the de facto opposition to Mubarak for years, it was the most prepared force to take advantage of elections and steamroll its opponents. But despite these advantages, it hasn't achieved the total success it had hoped.

Power grab

Morsi's power grab should be seen in this context: an attempt to entrench the Brotherhood in the post-Mubarak state. The proposed constitution retains and expands the unchecked power of the Egyptian

military, exempting the army from any parliamentary oversight and guaranteeing all its budget demands. It also cements neoliberal economic policy, despite the rapidly growing demands that formerly privatized state industries and enterprises be renationalized and their wealth redistributed.

Almost two years after the fall of Mubarak, ordinary Egyptians still support the revolution but have grown restless at the slow pace of change and want real political, economic and social reform, not just a changing of the guard at the top.

Strikes

The mass protests that have swept the country, including the reoccupation of Tahrir Square in central Cairo, mark the beginning of a new stage of the revolution, and one that could have dramatic consequences for both Egypt and the entire region. So far, the missing ingredient has been workplace-based strikes by Egyptian workers on a mass scale, and as a tool to respond to Morsi's repression. There are promising

signs that Egyptian workers may soon play a bigger role—sporadic strikes across the country, and the presence of workers and independent unions on the street protests—but it depends on whether workers' action can be coordinated.

Already the protests have had an effect. On December 8, Morsi rescinded his decree, in a major concession to the movement, but insisted the referendum would proceed. The reversal was meant to divide the opposition and demobilize its forces but it seems to have had the opposite effect. A major demonstration has been called for December 11, with more surely to follow, even if the referendum proceeds.

The key question for the Egyptian Revolution is whether it can become permanent—a continuing mobilization that attracts more and more forces, particularly the Egyptian working class, and that expands the scope of the struggle from basic political demands to the project of building a new and just society.

A history of AIDS activism in Canada

Page 8

Tim McCaskell on the triumphs and challenges of AIDS activists

Bahraini students

Page 10

Yusur Al Bahrani looks at the resistance and state suppression in Bahrain



CPMA No. 58554253-99
ISSN No. 0836-7094

Toronto Mayor Rob Ford finds his job on the line

by JESSE MCLAREN

A JUDGE has ordered Toronto Mayor Rob Ford removed from office on conflict of interest charges, in the context of pressure from below and splits from above.

Ford was elected just two years ago in a landslide victory. When the economic crisis began, “left-wing” mayor David Miller’s attack blamed city workers and provoked a strike in the summer of 2009, which opened the gate to Rob Ford’s backlash. Ford filled the electoral void with a right-wing populist campaign that abstractly spoke to people’s anxieties about the economic crisis and promised not to cut any public services.

Ford was massively popular when he was first elected and would never have been removed from office without grassroots activism and the splits it provoked. There were small protests from his first day in office, including during International Women’s Day, and in April 2011 labour and community groups mobilized 10,000 against cuts to jobs and services. That summer Ford’s boycott of Pride Toronto backfired and isolated him, while a petition by library workers became a lightning rod of opposition, followed by marathon deputations against cuts—causing some right-wing councillors to speak out against cuts.

With his support falling, Ford announced the delay of some cuts but in September of last year a second mass labour/community rally brought thousands more into the streets—following upon Occupy movement protests in October and November. In January a third mass protest pushed council to adopt an alternate budget—a slap in the face to Ford that was followed by further rebukes (often from centre or right-wing councillors) on everything from transit to housing.

Ford then went after city workers, and while some unions failed to lead their membership against the cuts, the library workers—who had built strong community support from the previous year—led a successful strike against the worst of the cuts they faced.

The splits at the top that isolated Ford to the point of being vulnerable to a legal challenge have not ended the austerity drive against jobs and services that the rest of the right-wing on council shares. But Ford’s imminent departure from office does show that the austerity agenda is vulnerable to pressure from below, and should give confidence to rank-and-file movements to keep organizing and fighting back.



Students in Windsor walk out of classes to protest Bill 115. (photo by Adam D’Andrea)

Still fighting for equal access to abortion

by DARREN EDGAR

IN PRINCE Edward Island, a campaign was recently launched to demand equal access to abortion.

Currently, PEI is the only province where women seeking abortion are forced to leave the Island to access the procedure because it is not offered in-province—not in any hospital, not in a freestanding clinic, not anywhere.

This lack of access to abortion services is in direct contravention of the Canada Health Act,

which requires that all citizens be granted equal access to healthcare. PEI is also the only province requiring doctors’ referrals for the procedure. These barriers are detrimental to women’s health, especially for women of low-income who cannot afford to leave the province for access to abortion services.

As part of a “Pan-Canadian Day of Action for Reproductive Justice” in October, various events were held in PEI to raise the level of awareness around the lack of access to abor-

tion services for women on the Island.

On October 19, representatives from the PEI Reproductive Rights Organization (PRRO), PEI’s Abortion Rights Network (ARN) and the Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada (ARCC-CDAC) took part in an event “to announce the Day of Action, enumerate its demands, and discuss the reasons why PEI decision-makers must pay attention to its message.” On October 20, the Day of Action saw activists take to the streets of Charlottetown in a

march, demanding equal access for women on the Island.

As partners in the ARCC-CDAC, many reproductive justice and abortion rights organizations in other provinces are helping to build solidarity for the women of PEI through petition and letter-writing campaigns. Those wishing to show their support for free and equal access to abortion for all should get involved by contacting their local organizations.

For more information, please visit: www.arcc-cdac.ca/

Quebec budget: very-very-slightly-lesser-evil-ism

by JESSICA SQUIRES

PAULINE MAROIS’ PQ government, only a few months old, has already exposed its allegiance to neoliberalism in its budget, released in mid-November.

The budget is essentially a carbon copy of the Liberal economic plan. The only differences are to establish a graded scale for the new “health tax,” supposedly

rendering it progressive; and to index hydro price increases to inflation, thus slowing down the rate at which the rates will increase.

Everything else – including balancing the budget and eliminating the deficit by 2014 – is still on the table. Following news that Marois’ government will encourage Plan Nord to continue, foster oil exploration in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and

explore the reversal of an oil pipeline to import oil from the tar sands, it’s hard to see how anyone can still be under the illusion that the vote for Marois to get rid of the Liberals was in any way “strategic.”

That said, some PQ defenders are arguing that the budget is actually a result of the fact they only got a minority – blaming it on the left, and Québec solidaire.

This is nonsense. The

opposition Liberals, who hold the balance of power, publicly stated they would not oppose a Marois budget. They are in disarray and searching for a new leader.

The PQ has brought in a budget that suits their values: neoliberal. Faced with the evil of three lessers (PQ, Liberals, CAQ), the real way to be strategic is to build the movements and their best electoral expression – Québec solidaire.

Corporate parties can’t get it right in BC

by BRADLEY HUGHES

AROUND THE world people are moving to the left. In BC this has led to the governing Liberals sinking in the polls and facing a right-wing split in the form of the BC Conservative party.

In a poll released on November 2 by Angus-Reid, the BC NDP has the support of 49 per cent of decided voters in BC. The Liberals and Conservatives between them only have the support of 42 per cent of people. The Green party trails at 7 per cent.

The Conservative party only recently became more than a fringe party. The organizers used the opposition to the Liberal Harmonized Sales Tax to bring their party back into public attention. In 2011 the party elected former Tory MP John Cummins as leader. The party rose in the polls and briefly had

an MLA when John van Dongen left the Liberals in the March to join the Conservatives. He has since changed his mind and sits as an independent. At the same time the Conservatives seem to be in a never ending internal fight about whether their elected leader, Cummins, really has the support of the party or not.

The governing Liberals are also in disarray. According to polling company Angus Reid, their support has been dropping since Ms. Clark was elected leader in March of 2011. With a small increase over the last few months due to a drop in support for the Conservatives. As a consequence, the Liberals were too afraid to open this legislature this Fall. Facing a fairly certain defeat in the May 2013 provincial election, a number of Liberal Cabinet ministers announced they would not

stand for reelection. These include the current and a former Finance Minister, the Transportation Minister, the Minister for Energy and Mines, the Education Minister, and the Child and Family Development Minister. So far 14 out of 46 sitting MLA’s have announced they won’t run. Having loyally served the 1% and the corporations of BC they can easily get high paying private sector jobs after the election instead of risking a humiliating defeat at the polls.

The Liberals’ problems started before 2011 when Clark became leader and Adrian Dix was elected leader of the BC NDP. The Liberals have been trailing the NDP in the polls since a few months after the last election in 2009.

Clark has continued the Liberals program of tax cuts for the rich and their corporations, and service and wage cuts for the rest

of us. The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives calculated that as a result of a decade of regressive tax cuts, the bottom 20 per cent of households pay 14 – 15 per cent of income in taxes, the middle income households pay taxes at 13 per cent and it drops to 11 per cent for the richest 20 per cent.

While the corporate parties remain loyal to the 1% the world is moving to the left. We’ve seen this in the Arab spring, the Orange wave in the last federal election, the Occupy movement, and now in a series of strikes across the public sector in BC. The politics of the business parties has less and less appeal to the majority in BC. Now is the time to build a movement that can force our parliaments and legislatures to undo the tax cuts, to properly fund public services, create climate jobs and to raise wages.

Voter fraud investigation deepens

by ALLAN WOOD

ELECTIONS CANADA has widened its voter fraud investigation and is currently tracking complaints of misleading or harassing phone calls in 56 ridings during the 2011 federal election campaign. Elections Canada has received complaints from voters in 247 of Canada’s 308 ridings.

According to Federal court documents, Responsive Marketing Group, a company working for the Conservatives, phoned voters about polling station changes in ridings that had no station changes. (Only Elections Canada is authorized to make such calls.) RMG made calls in five of the six ridings that are the subject of a court case brought by the Council of Canadians; only one of the ridings had actually changed the location of its polling station.

The Council of Canadians allege that the Conservatives instituted a broad campaign of voter suppression prior to the election, and are asking the federal court to void the election results.

Elections Canada began hearing complaints from voters three days before the May 2, 2011, election that gave Stephen Harper a majority government. The phone calls instructed voters that their polling stations had changed, and directed them to other stations as much as 90 minutes away. Elections Canada received specific complaints from voters in 234 ridings.

“Leading up to the election, Elections Canada was raising alarm bells of a voter suppression scheme all across the country,” says New Democrat MP Charlie Angus (Timmins-James Bay). NDP MP Craig Scott (Toronto-Danforth) said, “Conservatives can no longer pretend that this is just a few rogues in Guelph.” Liberal MP Carolyn Bennett (Toronto-St. Paul’s) wondered if Conservatives will speak about this investigation honestly “or are they waiting for the RCMP to once again raid their headquarters?”

Far from cooperating with Elections Canada, the Conservatives are dragging their heels whenever and wherever possible. Elections Canada investigator John Dickson has waited months (and continues to wait) for the Conservatives to arrange interviews with various staff members.

Socialist Worker

e-mail: reports@socialist.ca
web: www.socialist.ca
phone: 416.972.6391

All correspondence to:
Socialist Worker
P.O. Box 339, Station E
Toronto, ON M6H 4E3

Published every four weeks in Toronto by the International Socialists. Printed in Hamilton at a union shop; member of the Canadian Magazine Publishers Association / Canadian Publications Mail Agreement No. 58554253-99, Post Office Department, Ottawa / ISSN 0836-7094 / Return postage guaranteed



Protests in Jordan

by YUSUR AL BAHRANI

THOUSANDS GATHERED in Amman on November 13 protesting against the rise in fuel prices. The protest that started peacefully ended with civil disobedience the next day. Many trade unionists, workers and students announced a general strike.

While the majority of the protesters in Jordan demand reforms and an end to austerity measures, some of them have chanted the same slogan heard across the Arab Spring revolutions: "People demand the fall of the regime." Economic inequality and poverty, and the inspiring resistance to it across the region, have ignited the first sparks of what might be anticipated as a possible revolution in Jordan.

Most Jordanians use fuel in their domestic heating systems. Electrical heating systems are unaffordable for most Jordanians who only earn enough money to fulfill their basic needs. The decision to raise the fuel prices by 20 per cent means that winter will be very harsh for them. In addition, most families use fuel for cooking. The government's decision to alter the prices will only affect the working class with low wages, and those who already suffer from poverty and unemployment. Just like any capitalist regime, austerity measures target only ordinary people, while the ruling class and government loyalists are not affected.

Protesters occupied what's known as Interior Roundabout or what's officially called Jamal Abdunaser Roundabout. They refuse to return to their homes if their demands are not met. Protesters are also seen in several cities in Jordan with similar demands. The state's forces surrounded them and launched a tear gas attack. Forces are also using rubber bullets and live ammunition in the crackdown. There are reports that the electricity was cut off. Hundreds were arrested but exact numbers are not confirmed yet. The protests that initially started against austerity also exposed the government's corruption. Some of the protesters demanded the government stop sending Jordanian forces to the Gulf countries such as Bahrain. Knowing the deteriorating economic situation in Jordan, the government of Bahrain was successful in recruiting young unemployed Jordanians to their military. People in Jordan are disappointed to see their young ones attacking others in Gulf countries.

Several mass protests have been organized in the past two years, but so far the recent protests are the most prominent. Early parliamentary elections are scheduled for January 23, 2013. Opposition parties, trade unionists and leftists are planning to boycott the elections because the electoral system remains in favor of the king's traditional Bedouin loyalists. Despite the support of the tribes' elder leaders to the monarchy, many young Bedouins are joining the united front.

Any change towards democracy in Jordan will threaten the monarchies in the Gulf, which the West relies on for imperial control of the region. The Jordanian government has been very loyal to the West. In October, the United States sent military troops to Jordan to bolster its military capabilities and be prepared for any "humanitarian intervention" in Syria. Jordanians now are in the midst of a battle against austerity, monarchy and imperialism.

New imperialism in Middle East after Gaza ceasefire

by PAUL STEVENSON

THE GAZA ceasefire agreement negotiated by Egyptian president Mohamed Morsi is only the most recent sign of the new politics in the Middle East since the rise of the Arab Spring two years ago.

That an agreement was brokered is not all that unusual; there have been many ceasefires that are usually violated by Israel at some point. What was unprecedented is that Israel agreed to the ceasefire without having its basic conditions met, and was forced to call off a ground assault—even after amassing 75,000 troops at the Gaza border.

Protests erupted around the world in response to Israel's bombing of Gaza.

The usual terms of these agreements include calls by the Israelis to end rocket attacks from Gaza in return for a halting of the bombing of the coastal strip. In this case, however, the bombardments continued on both sides as the agreement was signed.

So, why did Israel agree to end the bombing? The answer is evident in the new contours of US imperialism that have emerged in the region since the Egyptian Revolution. The US was fearful of a more prolonged Israeli attack that would cause further destabilization in the area, and that could not be controlled by Washington. For the US, the larger geo-political implications had to

come first. A brief look at the changing terrain gives a clearer picture.

In Syria, the instability caused by the revolutionary movements is continuing to pose a problem for the US. The revolutionaries are stubbornly refusing to be brought under the umbrella of the NATO-backed Syrian National Council, which has little influence on the ground and even less credibility.

In neighbouring Jordan (the only other regional power with a formal peace treaty with Israel), hundreds of thousands of people have recently marched in solidarity with the Palestinians and against the monarchy. The possibility of a new revolutionary movement in Jordan was seen as a potential threat.

Turkey, an important ally of the US and a NATO member state, has recently been in conflict with Israel since its on the Gaza-bound Mavi Marmara in 2010. NATO needs Turkey to play a role in containing the revolutionary movements in Syria.

Add to the mix an unfinished revolution in Yemen, a stubborn and heroic democracy movement in Bahrain, workers' uprisings in Saudi Arabia, and ongoing problems for the US on the eastern end of their arc of control in Afghanistan, and we get a sense of just how precarious US imperial plans have become.

Crucially, Egypt, the most populous

of the Arab states, remains extremely volatile. The vast majority of Egyptians are on side with the Palestinians. The new Muslim Brotherhood-led government was widely expected to demonstrate its support for the people of Gaza and to mark a definitive break with the former regime of Hosni Mubarak, which was known for turning a blind eye to the plight of the Palestinians.

The recent mobilization of 500 Egyptians to the Gaza border illustrates the difference between the current situation in Egypt compared to three years ago during the Israeli war on Gaza. Three years ago, activists in a caravan to the Rafah border crossing were stopped by the Egyptian military. This time around, they were not stopped on the Egyptian side, and actually managed to get into Gaza to show their solidarity.

Morsi needed to move fast to stop these mobilizations from becoming a flood. For the US, this was a good test for the new Egyptian government, and there were a series of high-level meetings between the Egyptians and the US in order to guarantee a US-friendly outcome. It is also no accident that the IMF decided, during the Gaza war, to secure a \$4.2-billion loan for the Egyptian state. This was all part of the process of trying to rein in the new Morsi government.

There are some who argue that this represents a fundamental split between

Israel and the US. They point to the fact that Benjamin Netanyahu, who virtually campaigned for Republican Mitt Romney during the US election, was being slapped down in the wake of Obama's victory. This is reading too much into one incident. The US took great pains to show that it remains on side with Israel, reiterating again and again that Israel has a right to defend itself. What we saw was larger US interests trumping Israel's short-term interests. Gaza is not as strategically significant to the US as Egypt, Turkey or Jordan. This is not a split—it is a disagreement between the US and Israel on how to maintain the current imperial architecture.

Solidarity with the heroic Palestinian resistance contributed to the Egyptian revolution. During the International Cairo Conferences (a series of conferences organized by Egyptian activists in Cairo from 2002 to 2008 that drew anti-imperialist activists from across the region), participants raised the same slogan over and over again: "The road to Jerusalem runs through Cairo." Essentially, it means that in order to help free Palestine, the Arab people must throw off the shackles of US-backed dictatorial regimes. The ongoing Egyptian Revolution and the uprisings it has inspired throughout the Arab world are proving that point in practice.

Syrian opposition makes gains

by BRADLEY HUGHES

THE OPPOSITION to the dictatorship in Syria is continuing to make military gains against the regime's army, and has united into a political body. The challenge will be continuing to raise social and economic demands, mobilizing the working class not only against Assad but the broader system of repression and austerity.

In late November the Free Syrian Army (FSA) was able to take territory moving them closer to major cities such as Aleppo, Idlib, Latakia and the capital city Damascus. The rebels have also succeeded in seizing three major military bases from the regime within one week. These bases will be a source of much needed weapons. Due to the arms embargo on Syria, the opposition forces have been at a severe disadvantage in weaponry against the regime. Their biggest disadvantage comes from the regime's continued use of fighter jets against the FSA and civilians. Another success came earlier in November when the rebels captured Hamdan airbase, a military airport. This leaves the regime with only one

airport from which to launch their fighter planes.

President al-Assad has responded to the successes of the opposition with even more bloodshed and terror. Nearly 40,000 people have been killed in the fighting so far, the vast majority at the hands of the regime. In the latest in a long list of atrocities, the regime bombed a building next to a hospital in Aleppo. The hospital was previously damaged by attacks so the upper floors were no longer usable. Despite the damage it continues to try to provide emergency services to civilian victims of the regime's snipers and opposition fighters. The latest attack killed 14 people including a doctor and children who were in the street.

On the other hand, there have been reports from Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch that some rebels are also responsible for war crimes such as executions, torture, and arming children to fight with FSA. These are isolated incidents, unlike the Syrian government whose actions indicate a clear policy of torture and attacks on civilians. However, these sorts of actions will make it harder for the opposi-

tion to win people's support and also could discourage government soldiers from surrendering as a means of joining the opposition.

In early November, the Syrian opposition groups signed a deal to create a united opposition, the Syrian National Coalition for Opposition and Revolutionary Forces. The deal was agreed to in Qatar, and representatives of that government and of Turkey urged other nations to consider the new body as the legitimate representative of Syria. France, a former colonial power in the region, also recognized the new body. Reluctantly, the Syrian National Council, a body made up of exiles also joined the agreement. Britain and the US condescendingly put up conditions for their recognition of the legitimacy of the Syrian opposition. Their conditions include providing a transition plan.

Britain's General, Sir David Richards, was quoted on his government's plans to invade Syria: "The humanitarian situation this winter I think will deteriorate and that may well provoke calls to intervene in a limited way. But no, there's no ultimately military

reason why one shouldn't, and I know that all these options are, quite rightly, being examined. It's not impossible and obviously we develop contingency plans to look at all these things."

This was NATO's strategy in Libya: impose an arms embargo that weakens the opposition, and then use the resulting casualties as an excuse to invade—using military intervention to shape the political future of the country by purging the socio-economic demands of the revolution. An invasion by Britain or other NATO countries would be a disaster for the people of Syria.

As the Egyptian revolution shows, another threat to the Arab Spring is from within, from opposition forces that want to contain the revolution to a change at the top. As the opposition has united against Assad into a body acceptable to France and right-wing exiles, it will be important for the left in Syria to keep organizing independently so social and economic demands of the revolution do not get buried, and to continue combining working class strikes with military resistance to Assad.

Saudi Arabia: ongoing protests against Western-backed oppression

by JOSH LALOR

IN AN effort to avoid the revolutionary zeal that has spread across North Africa and the Middle East, Saudi Arabia has banned public protests and invested roughly \$130 billion in benefits for its citizens over the last two years. Despite these attempts to subdue the population, public protests have been occurring regularly in Saudi Arabia since February 2011.

Most of the protests have occurred in the city of Qatif, which is located in Saudi Arabia's oil-rich Eastern Province, and is largely in response to the political, economic and religious persecutions of Saudi Arabia's Shi'a minority. The protesters have been branded as Iranian puppets intent on destabilizing the national economy as Saudi Arabia and Iran vie for Middle Eastern supremacy. However, these protests constitute an important expression of the

broader struggle for human and civil rights within Saudi Arabia. Saudi human rights activists are fighting for the creation of a constitutional monarchy, parliamentary elections, the release of political prisoners being held without trial or representation, the end of royal corruption, the reform of the judicial system and the curtailment of the religious establishment's political power.

According to Ebtisam Al-Labad, the sister of slain protestor, Khalid

Al-Labad, "We only come out to demand legitimate rights, and they call us terrorists. They are afraid of the truth. They don't want people to speak. They want people to be like sheep." It is the political, military and financial protection afforded to Saudi Arabia by Western countries that sustains the basis of their political power. This is why the fight for human and civil rights in Saudi Arabia must receive more attention from the international community.

First wave feminism: indigenous inspirations

SOCIALIST FEMINISM owes a deep debt to indigenous societies. This is where the idea originates that women could be, and sometimes are, the equals of men—an idea adopted in Frederick Engels' *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*. But it was not only Marx and Engels who picked up the revolutionary concept of women's liberation. The first wave of feminists who would advance women's rights in the US were also students of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) nations.

Needless to say, this history has been buried. Many liberal and colonialist interpretations would claim that Western democracy is the birthplace of feminism. But recent efforts among indigenous feminist scholars and their allies are helping to restore the early contributions of the Gantowisas, the "indispensable women" of the Haudenosaunee of Turtle Island and elsewhere internationally.

Feminists

Sally Roesch Wagner has documented these linkages in her 2001 study, *Sisters in Spirit: Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) Influence on Early American Feminists*. The name most commonly associated with the early American movement for women's right to vote (suffrage) is Susan B. Anthony. Though women of nineteenth-century America had many privileges denied to enslaved African and indigenous women and men, white women were refused equal rights in the colonial settler project of the American state system.

Anthony, however, was not the only leading feminist of the time. And the battle for women's suffrage was not the only issue. The famous 1848 Seneca Falls Convention that marked the first meeting for women's rights would see the emergence of a triumvirate of women in the lead: Susan B. Anthony worked closely with Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Matilda Joslyn Gage. As Wagner summarizes:

"[T]he 'safe' version of the women's rights story is the victory of the 19th Amendment and the constitutional protection of women's voting rights. This is the story of Susan B. Anthony and her life's work...Equal in importance and reputation to Anthony during her lifetime, Stanton was nearly lost to history until the work of the Elizabeth Cady Stanton Foundation and the Women's Rights National Historical Park in Seneca Falls restored her memory...[Now] the Matilda Joslyn Gage Foundation carries the mission of returning Gage to her rightful place in history as well."

Gage and Stanton, working in collaboration with Anthony, insisted that the vote was only one measure demanded of the women's rights movement. The Christian Church and religion, the state, and capital were also subject to relentless challenge.

Inspiration

These were not socialist advocates, but radical democrats. They actively studied with and beside the societies of the Six Nations as inspiration to challenge the misogynist practices of daily life in mid-1800s US colonial life.

Anthony, Stanton and Gage collectively wrote the first three volumes of the *History of Woman Suffrage*, written between 1881 and 1886.

Gage in particular wrote extensively about the Haudenosaunee, which she maintained showed "in form of government, and in social life, reminiscences of the Matriarchate." She detailed the lessons in newspaper articles for the *New York Evening Post*, and was working on a book on the subject that was still unfinished at the time of her death in 1898.

Gage detailed the contrasting realities of the lives of women and children among the settlers, and those among the indigenous population. On the social level, Euro-American life saw children as the sole property of the fathers, and husbands bearing the legal right, and religious responsibility, to "discipline" wives. Among the Haudenosaunee, children were members of the mother's clan, and violence against women was not a normalized part of the culture. Rape or violence against women was treated as a serious crime. On a political level, while Euro-American settler society denied women the right to vote, among the Haudenosaunee women were responsible for selecting the chief, held key political positions, and enforced consensus decision-making practices where women were equal participants.

Realities

These realities challenged the basic notions of the era, which treated the Euro-American colonists as "civilized," and the indigenous peoples as "savages." Wagner summarizes the extreme sexism of early American society in this period:

"The forefathers looked with disdain on anything British as they formed their new government—until it came to forcing women into their place. Then the men looked to England for their model. The European tradition of church and law placed women in the role of property."

Though there were efforts to ameliorate this pattern by those such as Thomas Paine, the first major revolutionary figure to call for women's equal rights in the new United States, this view was not generalized. The oppression of women was particularly enshrined once women became married. Upon marriage, women relinquished even minimal legal rights, and they and their children became the legal property of men.

The legacy of these early feminists is mixed, as their main project was compromised by their class position. Instead of seeking a new world of full equality, they ended up fighting for equality with men in an oppressive, racist society.

But for socialists today, there is a different way to read this history. The resistance and voice of indigenous feminism continues to serve as an inspiration. Understanding the rightful place of indigenous society in the liberal democratic feminist movement is important in carrying forward a movement in the present, toward a new and better world free of racism, sexism and colonial oppression.



Walmart actions reflect anger of US working class

by JOHN BELL

WALMART IS the second biggest employer in the US, and the number one employer of African-Americans. Walmart's slogan is "Save money, live better."

By 2010, the financial worth of the Walton family equaled the combined wealth of 48.8 million US families. Let's put that another way: this one family is "worth" as much as the bottom 41.5 per cent of American families.

Founder Sam Walton once explained the secret to his success: "I pay low wages. I can take advantage of that. We're going to be successful, but the basis is a very low-wage, low-benefit model of employment." The average pay for US Walmart "associates" is under \$9 per hour. Even full-time workers qualify for welfare programs and food stamps. A 2004 University of California, Berkeley study proved that California taxpayers were effectively subsidizing Walmart to the tune of \$86 million per year.

Workers have no control over sched-

uling and hours, and complaints about management bullying, unfairness and favouritism are routine. Workers who complain and stand up for themselves and coworkers face reduced hours and firing. Walmart is adamantly anti-union. In 2000, a successful organizing drive among in-house meat cutters prompted the corporation to eliminate all such jobs across its chain. In 2004, workers in Jonquiére, Quebec made history by unionizing the first Walmart store. Six months later, the corporation shut down the store as an example.

More and more US workers have had enough. They are organizing to fight back. Maybe they figure they have nothing to lose. Maybe they are motivated by the obscene gap between corporate profits and their wages. Organizing under the banner of OUR Walmart (for-respect.org) they have their own slogan: "Stand up, live better."

On "Black Friday" Walmart workers and supporters staged over 1,000 walkouts or protests in more than 100 cities. Most of the events involved small numbers of Walmart workers—without

a union, worker activists are fearful of reprisals, cut hours and firings. But they know they have the support of most of their co-workers. But several of the protests drew crowds of more than 1,000. Many Walmart workers had the nerve to walk out and join the protests. One worker told a Milwaukee rally: "We need to stand up and tell these individuals we will not let poverty control us anymore."

Mary Pat Tiftt, a 24-year Walmart veteran, spoke to a crowd in Kenosha, Wisconsin: "Walmart has spent the last 50 years pushing its way on workers and communities. In just one year, leaders of OUR Walmart and Warehouse Workers United have begun to prove that change is coming to the world's largest employer."

This is bad news for service sector employers who get away with paying poverty wages in so-called McJobs. And it is great news for workers in the US and beyond. They have numbers and justice (if not the law) on their side and the Walmart protests prove they are getting organized to fight for more.

South African miners spark challenge to post-apartheid capitalism

by BRIAN CHAMP

THE BLOODY Marikana strike has sparked a broader challenge to the government, the local and international corporations they serve, and some of the trade unions' leadership that have held back the struggle.

On August 9, platinum miners at South Africa's Marikana mine (owned by Lonmin, a London-based multinational) went on strike demanding a substantial increase in wages. They were striking against not only the company but also their union, the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), that had completely blocked wage gains for the drillers and other mine workers who got their hands dirty.

The NUM was a militant part of the trade union struggle that challenged the apartheid state in the 1980s. However, since the election of the African National Congress (ANC) government the leadership of the NUM has become closer with government officials and less concerned with the workers in the mines. In truth, it could be seen to be an arm of the South African state, cementing its control over a key industry.

The NUM told Lonmin to ignore the demands of the striking miners, since NUM was the only official union body. Shots were fired at striking miners when they marched to the local NUM office on August 14 to demand that they be recognized. Two of the striking miners were killed. On August 16, while they were picketing the mine, 34 strikers were killed by police. Another 78 were wounded in the worst massacre to occur in South Africa in over 50 years.

This time the violence had been under the direction of the ANC government. President Jacob Zuma said he "regretted

the killings," but made no reference to the handling of the situation by the police. Furthermore, the government arrested 270 striking workers for the killings but released them after widespread protests erupted. After the massacre, NUM spokesperson, Lesib Seshoka said that, while the union condemned the violence, it was pleased the police had dealt with "criminal elements provoking violent behaviour at the mine."

South African workers are increasingly turning to unions like the National Union of Metalworkers of SA (NUMSA), who have retained a more militant stance. The NUMSA central committee issued a strong statement denouncing the massacre and raising questions about the role of the police: "What happened in Marikana should be correctly understood...as the first post-apartheid South African State massacre of the organised working class, in defence of the local and international mining bosses and their profits."

Miners' win inspires

Thanks in part to international outrage, miners won between 10 to 22 per cent increases and a pre-tax 2,000-Rand bonus. The victory sparked a wildfire of strike action throughout the South African mining industry, as mine workers who'd felt patronized, ignored and betrayed by the NUM went on strike to demand the increases they need to keep up with the soaring cost of living. This is part of a year of revolt across sub-Saharan Africa.

Throughout the platinum and gold sectors up to 100,000 miners were on wildcat strike at one point, representing 20 per cent of all mineworkers in South Africa. In addition, strikes have occurred in diamond mines, iron mines and coal mines. One of the leaders of the wildcat strikers, Evans Ramokga, expressed the

mood of defiance clearly: "Right now we have been planning to build a new organization; we have lost trust in the existing trade unions."

And the mood swept into other industries like the transport workers, whose actions brought the country to a standstill in late September. These workers won raises of 27 per cent over three years. Toyota workers walked out and in a few days won a 5.4 per cent pay hike. Municipal workers and farm workers struck and won. Strikes began to raise political demands, targeting government corruption and privatization.

Neoliberalism and resistance

Successive ANC governments have been enthusiastic practitioners of neoliberalism, privatization and austerity. Fights against soaring costs of water and power have marked simmering and growing resentment among workers. There is growing realization that getting rid of the worst of apartheid was not enough, since multinational capitalism simply switched gears and carried on.

The only way forward for workers is to complete the revolution that they started. They should heed the words of Nelson Mandela, speaking in September 1993:

"How many times has the liberation movement worked together with workers and then at the moment of victory betrayed the workers? There are many examples of that in the world. It is only if the workers strengthen their organization before and after liberation that you can win. If you relax your vigilance, you will find that your sacrifices have been in vain. You just support the African National Congress only so far as it delivers the goods. If the ANC government does not deliver the goods, you must do to it what you have done to the apartheid regime."

Why ‘men’s rights’ groups are wrong

‘Men’s issues awareness’ groups are developing an increasing presence in our communities—especially on our college and university campuses—but is there any basis to their claim of being champions of equality? **Jesse McLaren** looks past the veneer to expose their false rhetoric, and argues for a united struggle of people of all genders for real equality.

There is a growing movement of “men’s centres” and “men’s issues awareness” groups. Manipulating men’s anxieties, “men’s issues” groups ignore the poverty, racism, ableism, homophobia and transphobia that men and women face, and instead scapegoat the women’s movement specifically and progressive movements in general.

The Canadian Association for Equality claim they “believe the goal of true equality and human rights is best served by conducting inclusive conversations based on facts and evidence, not by promoting ideology or special interest agendas.” They want “men’s centres” on every university campus, and “men’s issues awareness” clubs are already appearing.

There is certainly a kernel of truth to what these groups claim. The problem is how they generalize these experiences, what they ignore and whom they blame. They imply that men are oppressed as men, and in relation to or because of women—a claim that is “justified” using simplistic sound-bites and “evidence” that is cherry-picked, ideologically-driven, and easily debunked.

Sound-bites

Here are some of their claims:

“Boys have high rates of being bullied.”

Yes, they do, but this is an abstract statement that ignores the main perpetrators and reasons. Boys are not bullied by girls for being boys, they are mainly bullied by other boys—who also bully girls. The main causes of bullying are sexism, racism, ableism, homophobia and transphobia—issues that “men’s issues awareness” groups ignore.

“More men kill themselves than women.”

Another abstract statement. While it is technically true, men do not kill themselves because of men’s oppression, they kill themselves due to poverty and other real forms of oppression along lines of sexuality, ability and race. And many more girls attempt suicide than men, often related to a history of sexual abuse—an endemic problem that “men’s issues” clubs ignore.

“Men are victims of violence.”

In terms of interpersonal violence, the vast majority of domestic abuse and rape victims are women. When men are victims of interpersonal violence it is usually from other men, and often related to police brutality, racism and Islamophobia, ableism, homophobia and transphobia. It’s true that more men die on the job and in the trenches, but this is not because of women but because of the (often male) boss or general—and the solution is to strengthen the trade union and anti-war movements, which are ignored by “men’s issues” clubs.

“Women do better on some educational indicators, like test scores or enrollment.”

The main threat to education for men and women is corporatization, which increasingly imposes a rigid reliance on test scores while undermining accessibility through tuition hikes. These threats to education harm both men and women, and a united fightback is necessary. Despite advances in some educational indicators, women still have not achieved equality in



Capitalism remains dependent on women’s unpaid labour in the home and reduced wages at work.

the labour market.

In the home, women still do the majority of unpaid labour. In Canada, 60 per cent of women are part of the paid workforce, but comprise 70 per cent of part-time workers and two-thirds of minimum wage earners, perform two-thirds of unpaid caregiving work, and earn 70 cents per dollar of what men are paid.

There’s a pattern to these sound-bites: framing these issues as “men’s issues” erases the dynamics of race, class, ability and sexuality that are at the heart of so many experiences of men (and women).

“Men’s issues” groups fail to provide any solutions for men, and instead they scapegoat women—appealing to two different audiences: the confused and the misogynist.

‘Misandry’ = Misogyny

Paul Nathanson has written extensively on so-called misandry. He views human society as rigidly divided between men and women. Man’s identity was biologically determined by “the male body’s distinctive characteristics: its size, strength and speed.” In his mistaken view of early human societies, men hunted for all the food and women provided the babies. As Nathanson writes: “Masculine identity has become increasingly problematic due to technological and cultural changes over the past 10,000 years. ... Egalitarian feminists have unwittingly exacerbated the problem, leaving men unable to make even one contribution to society, as men.” His targets include any deviation from the patriarchal family—including single mothers, same-sex marriage and abortion rights.

Warren Farrell has built a career promoting and profiting from the backlash against women. He has dismissed statistics on women’s oppression as “victim data” used to “catalyze Victim Power.” In his book *Why Men Are the Way They Are*, he defends sexism and claims men are incapable of non-sexist emotions: “We beg men to

express feelings, but then when men do express feelings, we call it sexism, male chauvinism, or backlash.” He has also defended rape, claiming, “If a man ignoring a woman’s verbal ‘no’ is committing date rape, then a woman who says ‘no’ with her verbal language but ‘yes’ with her body language is committing date fraud, and a woman who continues to be sexual even after she says ‘no’ is committing date lying... We have forgotten that before we began calling this date rape and date fraud, we called it exciting.”

If this is the hardcore misogyny at the heart of “men’s issues” groups, why are they building an audience based on appeals to “equality”? Understanding the roots of women’s oppression, and changes over the last couple generations, explains how these groups attack women directly and scapegoat them for men’s anxieties.

Women’s oppression

The real history of early human societies shows that for most of human history people lived in equality. Childrearing was a collective task and women also gathered food (which regularly provided more food than the hunt) and had equal say over community decisions. Without the nuclear family there was a free range of sexualities, and without a capitalist labour market there was neither racism nor disability oppression.

When the inception of agriculture provided a surplus, a small class emerged to control it and the nuclear family emerged to pass on private property. This produced a rigid and unequal division between the sexes: women were separated from production, confined to reproduction, and made subordinate to men who controlled production and the state.

As Engels described in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, the emergence of class society marked “the world historic defeat of the female sex. The man took command in the home; 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 remains dependent on women’s oppression for unpaid labour at home and reduced wages at work, and attacks any alternative expression, including abortion rights, queer rights, or single parents. Capitalism has also bred racism and disability oppression to lower wages and divide resistance.

Neoliberal backlash

There has been both a specific backlash against progressive movements and a general neoliberal and austerity offensive against the working class. As Susan Faludi, feminist author of *Backlash*, documented in her book *Stiffed*, “The post-war restricting of the economy” has led to a “crisis in masculinity.”

Men are socialized to be dominant and in control. But with capitalist restructuring, working-class men are in precarious work and unable provide for their family as they were socialized to do.

“Men’s rights” groups blame this experience on the few gains of women’s and queer liberation movements, while ignoring racism and disability oppression. This homogenizes men, and tries to dupe them into thinking they have more in common with the 1% of men who exploit most men and women, than the rest of the 99%.

Resistance

It’s by uniting the 99%—by challenging the systemic oppression that divides it—that we all win. This means challenging “men’s rights” groups who attack women, manipulate men, and don’t care about poverty, racism, ableism, homophobia or transphobia. Challenging these groups includes patiently explaining to people who are legitimately concerned about equality but have been misled by false rhetoric, and firmly exposing and challenging the misogynists at the core—while building real movements for equality.

The Harper government's attacks on civil liberties

It's been nearly seven years of Harper governments and their attacks on civil liberties keep piling up.

Socialist Worker looks at the history of these attacks, the grassroots campaigns to defend our civil liberties, and what it will take to win.



Mohamed Harkat and his lawyer take questions from the media in January 2011. (photo by Shannon Mannion)

Ten years later: the struggle continues for Mohamed Harkat

by JESSICA SQUIRES

A LOT can happen in ten years.

In ten years, you can finish a degree; move across the country and get established in a new career; get married, have children and see them enter grade three or four; write a book. Any number of things is possible. But not if you are a non-citizen and have been detained in Canada on a Security Certificate. None of these things have been possible for Mohamed Harkat.

What have you done in ten years? Think back to December 10, 2002—ten years ago, International Human Rights Day. That's the day Mohamed Harkat—Moe to his supporters and family and friends—was arrested and detained. To this day, he has not been charged, fighting to clear his name in a system stacked against him.

December 10, 2012 will bear the ignominious honour of being the tenth anniversary of Moe's detention under a Security Certificate.

Under the so-called Immigrant and Refugee Protection Act, detainees are slapped with Security Certificates based on hearsay, innuendo and secrecy. Information on which the allegation is based is kept secret from the detainee and his lawyers.

The three Muslim men still detained, and the two whose certificates have been quashed, were jailed in isolation or, at best, released under strict house arrest conditions—the strictest in Canadian history.

In February 2007, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled the Security Certificate process unconstitutional. One year later, the Harper government rushed through cosmetic changes to the regime, introducing so-called "Special Advocates" who, while they are privy to the secret proceedings, are not allowed to talk to the detained after proceedings begin.

Moe's supporters, including his wife Sophie, were quite optimistic that the second certificate, issued after the new legislation was passed in 2008, would be quashed. The public case was clearly not strong enough to support the gov-

ernment's claims. But the certificate was upheld, and to this day, Moe has no idea why, because the secret information has remained secret. The basic human right of due process—the right to know the case against you—is blatantly disregarded.

Recent releases of information exposing the continued use of information gleaned from torture have further exposed the abusive nature of the Security Certificates, since these cases were specifically mentioned as being ones in which certain types of information should still be allowed. And the original information the Crown is depending on has, in many cases, been destroyed. No defence is possible in these conditions.

Earlier this year, the Federal Court of Appeal agreed and sent the certificate back to the lower court in Moe's case, excluding the destroyed evidence. But if that were to happen, the case would be heard before the same judge as before. The federal judges also declined to rule the regime unconstitutional.

So Moe and his lawyers asked for leave to appeal to the Supreme Court. In later November, they agreed. They will also hear the Crown's appeal; government lawyers will argue the destruction of original information on which the case is based is of no matter, and that informants should not be cross-examined, even in secret hearings before lawyers with full national security clearance.

The Supreme Court must throw the entire Security Certificate process out. Its worst aspects, including secret hearings and arbitrary detention, are slowly becoming more widespread in cases against immigrants and refugees, even those with citizenship status.

As we said last year, on the occasion of Moe's ninth "anniversary," it is time for the Security Certificate regime to end. Mohamed Harkat wants his life back.

Rally in Ottawa on December 10 or sign the Statement Against Security Certificates (www.harkatstatement.com). Make a donation: Justice for Mohamed Harkat Committee (www.justiceforharkat.com).

Justice for Hassan Diab

by CHANTAL SUNDARAM

IN YET another travesty of justice for communities of Muslim and Arabic origin in Canada, Dr. Hassan Diab, an Ottawa professor, is fighting extradition to France for a crime he did not commit.

In June 2011, a Canadian judge committed Diab to extradition in connection with the bombing of a Paris synagogue in 1980. The entire case was based on handwriting analysis that the judge himself and several renowned graphologists have described as suspect. And this despite the fact that Dr. Diab's fingerprints, palm prints, and other physical characteristics do not match those of the perpetrator, whose fingerprints were found on both the writing samples and a car containing explosives.

In April 2012, an order was signed surrendering Dr. Diab to France, despite new information from French officials stating that Dr. Diab is only wanted for questioning, and Canada's Extradition Act does not allow the Justice Minister to surrender Canadian citizens to other countries for mere questioning without trial.

If extradited, Diab will face severe limitations on the ability of his defence to challenge the handwriting analysis and the use of unsecured secret intelligence that may be the product of torture.

France's willingness to use information derived from torture to prosecute terrorism-related cases has been documented by



Hassan Diab

Human Rights Watch in a July 2008 report: *Preempting Justice: Counterterrorism Laws and Procedures in France.*

But just as importantly, the Diab case has exposed the fundamental injustices of Canadian extradition law: Canada can hand people over to other countries based on low standards of evidence that would never be accepted in a Canadian court.

Dr. Diab is appealing the extradition order, but in the meantime, he must wear a GPS monitor for

which he himself must pay \$2,000 per month.

To beat this added injustice, the "Hundred for Hassan" campaign was launched for one hundred people of conscience to contribute \$20 a month to cover the cost of Diab's GPS monitor.

To join the campaign, send an email to diabsupport@gmail.com indicating how much you wish to pledge monthly, for how many months, and whether you would like to add your name to a statement of support. For more information about the case and the support campaign, visit: www.justiceforhassandiab.org



The human cost of Kenney's cuts

by IAN BEECHING

FLEEING THE genocidal war in Sri Lanka, 492 Tamils arrived in Canada aboard the MV Sun Sea in August 2010.

The response of public safety minister Vic Toews was not to deplore the perpetrators of the massacre, but rather to imprison the traumatized victims to "ensure our refugee system is not hijacked by criminals or terrorists." Canada's \$476.3-million trade relations with Sri Lanka were never questioned, despite an estimated 40,000 dead in 2009.

The Harper government used the Tamils to shift Canada's refugee policies decidedly to the right. Canada's Bill C-31 requires mandatory detention for all "irregular" arrivals over the age of 16. Australian Senator, Sarah Hanson-Young, has said "[m]andatory detention has led to significant mental-health problems of refugees, people who are already

suffering torture, trauma, the post-traumatic stress of the brutality that they fled, war, persecution."

Bill C-31 will require detentions be reviewed after the first 14 days then every six months. Previously, detention would be reviewed every 30 days. The cost of detaining a single refugee is \$239 a day. Prior to the recent changes, asylum seekers were only ever imprisoned during health, security and identity checks. Those arriving by boat now have a five-year ban on family reunification, permanent resident status and travel. In Australia, this policy has resulted in an increase in children arriving by boat.

Under the new law, only 15 days are given to find a lawyer and prepare a written statement. According to the Council for Canadian Refugees, this will not be enough time for newcomers to prepare their cases properly, given the barriers they face with

the legal system, language and cultural practices. The demand for faster processing time has not been met with an increase in funding for legal aid. In fact, there has been a decrease by \$2.7 million.

On July 1, Kenney cut health care coverage for refugees not sponsored by the government. However, those with illnesses affecting public safety are covered, though many will not seek care, as they will not know when their health condition meets such criteria. No dental, vision or psychological medical care will be provided to any refugees.

The government claims the cuts will save taxpayers \$20 million a year over five years. As many doctors have pointed out, this number is highly misleading as those deprived of medicine will find themselves increasingly in emergency departments where costs for a single visit can cost thousands.

Are we losing the fight for civil liberties in Canada?

by JAMES CLARK

IN THE wake of 9/11, governments around the world, including Canada's, passed harsh "anti-terrorism" legislation that attacked basic civil liberties and gave extraordinary powers to the police and the RCMP. Muslims, Arabs and other racialized groups have been disproportionately targeted, through practices such as racial profiling, security certificates and "no-fly" lists.

In the years since 9/11, many of these "temporary" measures have become permanent, and are increasingly deployed to clamp down on political opposition. The widespread repression in the lead-up to and during the G20 Summit in Toronto in June 2010 is the most notorious example: the Conservatives spent over \$1 billion on "security" which resulted in the largest mass arrest in Canadian history—more than double the number detained during the War Measures Act in 1970.

These and other attacks have led some to suggest that Canada is becoming a police state, or that the Conservatives are fascist. But this argument ignores the long history of repression in Canada—of indigenous communities, people of colour, immigrants and refugees, and Quebec—and the repressive nature of "liberal democratic" states in general. It also ignores the fact that, despite increasing repression, it is still possible (and legal) to organize, mobilize and demonstrate openly.

Perhaps a better question is this: how can we most effectively mobilize to defend civil liberties? Although the last decade has seen set-backs, there have also been impressive push-backs—though not without extraordinary effort. For example, the legal fight against Security Certificates,

supported by a high profile political campaign, has been long and difficult (especially for the detained men and their families), but it has stayed the hand of the state and so far prevented deportations. In response to cases like these, and the numerous protests that followed the G20 Summit, public opinion has shifted dramatically—a sign that civil liberties is a mainstream issue that a majority of people care about.

In recent months, the most successful mobilization to defend civil liberties was the Quebec student strike. As soon as Quebec premier Jean Charest introduced Bill 78 (later Law 12), which attempted to criminalize student strikes and demonstrations, the student movement shifted its focus from the demand to stop the tuition fee hike to the demand to defend civil liberties. The broader mobilization attracted even those who supported the fee hike, and made possible the single largest demonstration for civil liberties in Canadian history: up to 400,000 people marched on May 22 against Charest's repressive law. Within months, the pressure of the mobilization created a social crisis, provoking an election that saw the Liberals defeated and Charest lose his seat. Also feeling the heat, the incoming government scrapped the law.

The Quebec student strike shows the most effective way to challenge repressive laws and practices: build broad, mass mobilizations that attract support from the widest possible segments of society, and that encourage their active participation in the movement—on whatever level they can. Even in the face of increasingly hostile governments, mass mobilization has the greatest potential to defy and defeat repressive legislation, and to demonstrate in practice the real expression of civil liberties.



photo by Tania Liu (flickr)

Temporary foreign workers denied basic labour rights

by JOSH LALOR

AFTER TWO high-profile incidents in northern British Columbia, Canada's Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) has come under public scrutiny in recent weeks.

In the first incident, a group of Mexican workers filed a human rights complaint against their employer, the owner of a Tim Hortons franchise. The workers allege that they were forced to live in overcrowded housing and perform menial tasks, and were subjected to racial abuse. In the second incident, trade unions exposed the plans of HD Mining Ltd. to recruit hundreds of Chinese workers for a new coalmine development. The company claims it could not find workers with the required skills in Canada.

Since 2002, permanent immigration to Canada has remained at approximately 140,000, whereas the TFWP

has tripled. It is estimated that over 300,000 TFWs are employed across Canada in the agricultural, service, food processing, oil, and manufacturing sectors. Jim Stanford, economist for the Canadian Auto Workers, argues that "temporary foreign workers...account for almost 30 per cent of all net new paid jobs created in Canada between 2007 and 2011...this represents the core of [the] labour market strategy by employers and this obliging [Harper] government."

Furthermore, recent changes in the TFWP allow Canadian employers to pay migrant workers up to 15 per cent less than Canadian workers. Most of the low-skilled workers in the TFWP, which make up half of the workers in the program, are only allowed to work for the employer that hired them. Consequently, TFWs are often coerced into working long hours for little money and under de-

plorable conditions for fear of being deported if they complain. Ken Georgetti, President of the Canadian Labour Congress, states, "We support people coming to Canada as landed immigrants to fill demonstrated skills shortages. But the government's plan is unfair. It will simply provide low-wage labour to business at the expense of Canadian communities and migrant workers trying to provide for families they left behind."

By pitting workers against each other, the TFWP controversy has the potential to generate nationalistic and xenophobic sentiments. However, the erosion of workers' rights through the maximum exploitation of migrant workers is a class issue that transcends national borders. TFWs deserve all the rights and protections that Canadian workers have fought for, and the labour movement must fight to expand those rights to everyone.

Jason Kenney: Canada's next Prime Minister?

by EVAN JOHNSTON

JASON KENNEY'S tenure as the Minister for Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism has been characterized by a relentless attack on civil liberties in Canada, with targets ranging from immigrants and refugees, freedom of speech, and the reproductive rights of women.

As immigration minister since October 2008, Kenney has been dubbed by his critics the Minister for Censorship and Deportation, and there is no shortage of reasons why. One only needs to take a quick glance at his legacy so far to understand why we need to send Kenney packing.

Attacking immigrants

Feminist scholar Sunera Thobani argues in her book *Exalted Subjects* that "the central contradiction of Canadian citizenship, deeply rooted in its earliest stages of development, is that the citizenship rights of settlers, nationals, and immigrants remain based in the institution of white supremacy." Nowhere is this more evident than in Bill C-31, introduced in Parliament by Kenney last February.

Ironically named Protecting Canada's Immigration System Act, the "reforms" introduced under this bill have had the effect of further entrenching a two-tiered refugee system, imposing unrealistically shorter timelines for refugee claimants, and denying refugees basic medical treatment, all the while scapegoating them for ongoing cuts to Medicare.

More broadly, Kenney's agenda has been to expand temporary work programs while turning a blind eye to the unsafe conditions many are forced to work under, restricting and obstructing family unification, and increasing the number of deportations, including those of US Iraq War resisters.

Perhaps what best sums up Kenney's and the Harper regime's inhumane approach to immigration "reform" is the revelation in recent weeks that the federal Conservatives have denied chemotherapy treatment to a refugee in Saskatchewan who has stomach cancer. Under Kenney's watch, immigrants and refugees have become increasingly criminalized and depicted as exploiters of "Canadian generosity," resulting in an immigration system that shows callous disregard for human life.

Targeting Palestine

Notoriously pro-Israel, Kenney has also used his position to silence critics of Israel's apartheid state. In March 2009, Kenney attempted to ban British MP George Galloway on "security grounds" because of his outspoken criticism of Israel and his support for Viva Palestine, an aid caravan that attempted to break the blockade of Gaza. According to Kenney, to provide aid to the people of Gaza—mediated through the democratically elected Hamas government—constituted an explicit endorsement of terrorism, thereby rendering Galloway a threat to Canada's national security.

In a Federal Court ruling, Judge Richard Mosley dismissed Kenney's rhetoric, stating: "The main reason why the respondents (the Federal government) sought to prevent Mr. Galloway from entering Canada was that they disagreed with his political views."

Another clear example of censoring critics of Israel occurred in February 2012, when the government cut \$1 million in funding to Palestine House, an educational community centre based in Mississauga, Ontario. Kenney, in his letter to the centre, justified the cut by referring to three instances "that could arguably be seen as extreme." In reality, as the Defend Free Speech Campaign pointed out at the time, Kenney's decision was "entirely political, and part of a broader pattern of government-led censorship and intimidation of anyone who is critical of Canada's foreign policy, especially in relation to Israel and Palestine."

War on women

Kenney has also emerged as a leading anti-choice figure within the Conservative ranks, with respect to both his attacks on a Muslim woman's right to choose what to wear, and on the right of all women to control their own bodies.

On the advice of Mississauga Tory MP, Wladyslaw Lizon, Kenney introduced a ban on the right of Muslim women to choose what they wear during citizenship ceremonies. In a potent mix of racism and a disingenuous concern for women, Kenney described the practice of wearing a niqab "frankly bizarre" and claimed "we want women to be full and equal members of Canadian society."

But if that is what he truly believed, he wouldn't be leading the Tory attacks against the reproductive rights of women. As a member of cabinet, he has backed a number of private members bills that have been aimed at recriminalizing abortion, though his stance on abortion stretches back to his university days where he was known as a staunch anti-choice activist on campus.

In 2008, Kenney supported Bill C-484 ("Unborn Victims of Crime Act"), and in 2010, he supported Bill C-510, which claimed to be about preventing "coerced abortion." Most recently, Kenney supported Conservative backbencher Stephen Woodworth's private member's motion that called for a committee to "study" the point at which a fetus becomes a person. The motion failed, but ended up receiving the support of 87 Conservative MPs, despite the expressed wishes of Prime Minister Stephen Harper to vote against it.

With such a high-profile minister breaking ranks with the Prime Minister's office and courting the party's social conservative base, Kenney is making clear his intention to succeed Harper as the leader of the Conservative Party. It's all the more reason why we need to have a clear assessment of Kenney's agenda, for if we want to know where the Conservatives would be headed under his leadership, we have to pay careful attention to the numerous attacks on civil liberties that are the hallmark of his legacy.

ONTARIO TEACHERS

Rank-and-file activity and solidarity are keys

ON DECEMBER 10, Ontario teachers start rolling job action against the draconian Bill 115—the “Putting Students First Act.”

After wasting billions of dollars on corporate tax cuts, Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty claimed teachers needed pay cuts. In addition to imposing a pay freeze and removing sick days, Bill 115 strips teachers of their democratic rights to collective bargaining and gives control to the Education Minister of the austerity-driven government. McGuinty has since broadened the attack on democracy—from collective bargaining to social democracy—by proroguing the legislature.

The Tories are calling for firm action against teachers, but the vacillation of the Liberals show they have a better sense of popular opinion, as exemplified by the repeated waves of high school walkouts in support of teachers. The same weakness that drove the Liberals to prorogue the legislature is making them ambivalent about their own legislation.

Education Minister Laurel Broten has narrowed the blame to union leaders, which is ironic since the union bureaucracy has been trying to negotiate with the prorogued government. Yet it's rank-and-file teachers whose rejection of tentative agreements set the stage for job action.

Rank-and-file activity and mutual community support are critical ingredients in resisting austerity, as recent victories show: from Toronto library workers, to Quebec students, to Chicago teachers. In each case the austerity agenda was stopped not by the trade union bureaucracy at the bargaining table nor by waiting for social democracy at the polls but by rank-and-file workers fighting back alongside community members, a process that took years to develop.

Ontario teachers don't yet have the same rank-and-file networks in place, but the high strike votes and high school walkouts have created the potential for building a broad movement to defend public education and the good jobs on which it depends. To put students first, we should join them and their teachers in walkouts, and join with everyone else at the January 26 Rally for Rights and Democracy outside the Liberal party convention.

DISABILITY RIGHTS

Poverty and violence should not be synonyms for disability

by JANET RODRIGUEZ

UNDER THE theme “Removing barriers to create an inclusive and accessible society for all,” the world celebrated on December 3 for the twentieth time the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. But, can we really celebrate when there is no action behind the words? No funds budgeted for structural improvements in the system?

Creating an inclusive and accessible society for all seems a secondary goal when every day poverty and violence snatch more lives and souls out of persons with disabilities. We need to remove barriers now! Barriers to employment, to education—policies that keep many disabled persons systemically oppressed and with no way out of the double trap of poverty and disability.

Even the World Bank declared that “the linkage between poverty and disability is strong and goes in both directions. Poverty causes disability through malnutrition, poor healthcare and dangerous living conditions. Disability can cause poverty by preventing the full participation of disabled people in the economic and social life of their communities, especially if the proper supports and accommodations are not available.”

This is true in Canada, in Ontario and, if you look closely, it is patently true right here in Toronto. The vicious circle of poverty leading to disability and disability leading to poverty needs to stop. We have the resources to implement better supports for care and accommodation; we are missing the political will to make those programs available.

The Council of Canadians with Disabilities (CCD) states that the overall poverty rate for Canadian adults was 10.5 per cent in 2006, and for people with disabilities the rate was 14.4 per cent. Moreover, the lack of an affordable housing program put many at risk. The CCD links poverty to living arrangements: “For instance, amongst people who live alone, 31 per cent with disabilities live in poverty compared with 21.3 per cent of their counterparts without disabilities.”

The challenges of living with a disability are not limited to the attitudinal discrimination that denies many access to employment, it also puts disabled people at a higher risk of suffering violence.

A report published in July 2012 by *The Lancet* states, “Children and adults with disabilities are at much higher risk of violence than their non-disabled peers,” and children with mental or intellectual impairments are “most vulnerable, with 4.6 times the risk of sexual violence than their non-disabled peers.” These details appear on a WHO webpage.

Canada has signed the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Ontario enacted the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act seven years ago. When are we going to have something to show for it?

This should be a time for celebration, and we will celebrate: all the achievements of the Disability Rights Movement—of grassroots groups who forge ahead despite the challenges. We must include the cause of disabled persons in everything we do, everywhere we go.

Janet Rodriguez is a pain survivor and advocate for greater awareness about accessibility and inclusion.



Still fighting HIV/AIDS

Tim McCaskell, a founding member of AIDS Action Now!, provides a brief history of AIDS activism in Canada

IN THE early 1980s, the nightmare of AIDS broke like a tsunami over gay communities in Canada's major cities. Young, healthy gay men were suddenly and inexplicably dying. No one knew the cause of the epidemic. There was no treatment, no cure.

With medical science impotent and government largely silent, gay communities were mostly thrown back on their own resources. The first wave of AIDS activism established organizations offering support and counselling, hospices to care for the dying and, once HIV had been identified, prevention campaigns urging safer sex.

By 1987, impatience with government inaction and lack of research for treatments finally erupted in the United States. The AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) emerged in New York, quickly leading to the formation of chapters across the US. This second wave of AIDS activism, characterized by in-your-face actions, drew on the women's health movement's considerable skepticism of the medical establishment as well as the strategies and tactics of lesbian and gay liberation, and soon had its counterpart in Canada. AIDS ACTION NOW! (AAN) formed in Toronto in 1988. Most of AAN's activists were HIV-positive. A new “Poz” identity was emerging—one that brought together all people living with AIDS, no matter what their sexual orientation.

Funding

Unlike in New York, Canadian AIDS activism avoided a civil war between established AIDS service organizations and the new radicals. In Toronto, a rough division of labour was established. The government-funded AIDS service organizations did the support, counselling and education. That left AAN free to challenge government policies and practices, since the activist group refused to accept state or corporate funding.

The first focus of this new activism was on access to treatment. This was an implicit criticism of the Public Health approach that was so focused on prevention that it ignored the needs of those already infected. The first fights were around concrete access to new

and experimental drugs. The targets were government regulatory authorities that blocked access to unapproved treatments, and then the pharmaceutical industry that refused to release experimental treatments for compassionate use.

Once the legal right of sick people to access unapproved treatments was established, the second focus was on access to information. AAN set up the Treatment Information Exchange in 1989. Over the years, this project has morphed into the Canadian AIDS Treatment Information Exchange, a federally funded body that is the national clearinghouse for information on both HIV and Hepatitis C.

Treatments

By the early 1990s, more treatments were becoming approved and a third issue emerged: financial access. The new drugs were expensive. Many people living with HIV did not have medical plans. Their choice could be stark. To get a provincial drug card, one had to be on welfare. That meant not working, exhausting one's savings and impoverishing oneself. Then while people had access to free drugs they were probably too poor to adequately nourish, house and clothe themselves. From 1990 to 1994, AAN waged a relentless campaign against the Ontario NDP government, demanding a drug plan for the province. The government finally relented and the last major piece of legislation to come out before the NDP's defeat by the Harris Tories in 1995 was the Trillium Drug Plan, which now provides access to medicines when their cost exceeds someone's capacity to pay.

The next period was characterized by attempts to fight back and limit the damage caused by the Harris government's neoliberal restructuring of society, with its drastic cuts to health and social services. This was a long and grueling fight with as many losses as victories.

By 2001 much of the energy of the second wave of AIDS activism had dissipated. Most of the original activists had died. But the emergence of new and more effective anti-viral treatments meant that the dying had been stanchied. The worst part of the crisis

seemed to be over. After a decade and a half, many in the community just wanted to get on with their lives.

Access

The AIDS tsunami might have receded in Canada, but it continued its destruction in other parts of the world. After the International AIDS Conference in Toronto in 2006, there was a resurgence of activism, this time often focused on international issues. In South Africa, the Treatment Action Campaign, with solidarity from activists around the world, led a huge struggle to demand access to treatment from an unwilling Mbeki government. When the ANC government finally backed down and agreed to a treatment roll-out, a second battle needed to be fought as the international pharmaceutical industry sued South Africa, demanding that the country forgo inexpensive generic medicines and buy only name-brand drugs at inflated prices. Due to international pressure, “big pharma” was finally forced to drop its suit. A few years later, the battle had to be refought as Abbot Pharmaceuticals tried to blackmail Thailand to prevent it from purchasing cheaper copies of one of Abbot's drugs.

Poverty

Now, as poverty increases due to neoliberal restructuring, the focus has come back home. AIDS has become a disease of poverty that disproportionately affects the most vulnerable. We fight to maintain services in the face of cuts, demand harm reduction strategies to protect drug users, and challenge the increasing criminalization of HIV in the “justice” system.

Back in 1989, when I was in Montreal scouting out the site of the impending International AIDS conference, a young HIV-positive man told me, “AIDS is like a lens. When you look through it you see all of society's problems magnified.” This has never been more true than now. The barriers to ending the epidemic are structural inequities and global inequalities. AIDS will not be defeated until we see fundamental social change. The challenge for AIDS activism is to be part of that change.

For more information, please visit: www.aidsactionnow.org/

REVIEWS



ALBUM

The Coup: still putting the Boots to the ruling class

Sorry to Bother You
Album by the Coup
Reviewed by John Bell

THANKS TO Boots Riley, revolutionary party takes on a whole new meaning. With *Sorry to Bother You*, the Coup's main man continues to hook rap's most political lyrics onto some of the funkier and funnest beats on offer.

Rap purists may mourn the Coup's continuing forays into funk and rock, but Riley has never stayed still musically. In the six years since the last Coup recording, he has been recording and touring with Tom Morello under the banner of Street Sweeper Social Club, recording—in Riley's words—rap/rock “anthems for the revolution.”

Some of that spirit lives on in *Sorry to Bother You*. Opener “Magic Clap” is rousing and danceable, and I defy

anyone not to start shuffling along to “The Guillotine.” And Riley pulls no punches lyrically:

“They got the TV, we got the truth; They own the judges and we got the proof; We got hella people, they got helicopters; They got the bomb and we got the...we got the...we got the guillotine.”

On *Sorry to Bother You*, the Coup sacrifice the thematic cohesion of past efforts like *Genocide and Juice* (has it really been almost 20 years since they recorded that rap masterpiece?) in favour of surprise and diversity. The loopy “Your Parents’ Cocaine” sounds like a mash-up of the Clash and Frank Zappa. The lush, tender love song “Violet” is a sharp change of pace and tone.

If the sense of musical fun and jumping across genre lines are an attempt to reach a broader audience, that's a good thing. I wish every kid on the continent was rocking out to “Strange Arithmetic” (a plea for real, liberating education) and “You Are Not A Riot” (a witty slam on hipster poseurs).

Boots is a proud Marxist (the very first line on the Coup's first recording was “Presto, read the Communist Manifesto”) and has been a driving force in the Occupy movement in his native Oakland. He writes in the liner notes, “Changing the system is actually on the table, if we don't take it off the table ourselves.” That clarity and optimism buoys even the harshest lyrics, reminding us that revolution is, among other things, a festival.

BOOK

The oily Roman empire

Energy of Slaves: Oil and the New Servitude

Written by Andrew Nikiforuk
Reviewed by Anna Roik

SLAVE LABOUR built the Roman Empire. Territorial expansion required thousands of soldiers and a society to support them. Huge agricultural estates farmed by slaves grew food for Ancient Rome's growing population. Aqueducts, temples and public baths were all built and maintained by the energy of slaves.

Few in Roman society thought of slavery as a moral question; the need for their energy to fuel the empire was simply too great. Roman philosopher Seneca, however, worried that the institution of slavery had given godlike powers to many masters. Eventually so much slave energy was required that there were not enough slaves to meet the need. The price of slaves increased, economic surpluses decreased, and the Roman Empire's economy collapsed.

Investigative journalist Andrew Nikiforuk, in his latest book, *Energy of Slaves*, argues that twenty-first century society is in a similar situation, except that our slaves are machines. He claims that, just like the Romans, modern society is entirely dependent on vast amounts of energy—mainly from fossil fuels—to function, and in fact requires so much energy that it is doubtful any other fuel can provide the energy needed to maintain our standard of living. He argues that we are now “slaves to petroleum and its masters” and must find a way to use energy on a “moral, just and truly human scale” before our own society faces collapse.

Unsustainable

Nikiforuk is not exaggerating. He cites a UK experiment where cyclists pedaled generators as they tried to meet the daily energy needs of an average family. It took 24 cyclists to heat the oven, and 11 to make two slices of toast. Overall, the cyclists consumed more energy in food than they produced. Canadian energy analyst David Hughes calculated it would take a little more than seven years of cycling a 40-hour work week to produce the energy stored in a single barrel of oil. Given that the average North American consumes 23 barrels of oil (about 3680

litres) each year, it becomes obvious that we are living on borrowed energy.

Even the food we eat is highly oil energy dependent. Fertilizers, pesticides and farm machines all come from oil, and Nikiforuk shows how farming is now closely tied to the petroleum industry. While more food can now be grown in less time and with fewer people, the drive for profits means that the food industry is incredibly wasteful. More food is being produced than can be eaten, so people now consume more daily calories than they actually need. Estimates show that households waste 20 to 30 per cent of food purchased. It also takes more energy inputs to produce food than is contained in the food itself, especially in the processed foods invented to absorb these food surpluses.

Oil industry

Fossil fuels are non-renewable, though they have not been treated as such. Nikiforuk outlines the history of the oil industry, showing how government subsidy has allowed corporations to monopolize the energy market and hinder the development of alternative fuel sources. He also shows how even as far back as the 1920s there have been voices calling for Big Oil and its dependent industries to use oil more wisely. He quotes John Ise, an economist writing in 1926, who said, “The history of oil exploitation in the United States is a history of criminally rapid, selfish, and wasteful use of an exhaustible resource which, as far as present knowledge goes, will be indispensable in the economic lives of the next generation, as in our own.”

But these warnings were not taken, and now the oil industry is finding itself in a situation of having to extract difficult oil—as Nikiforuk expertly outlines in another of his books, *Tar Sands*—that actually returns less energy than it takes to get it out of the ground. It used to be that one oil barrel of input yielded 100 barrels output; today it is only five barrels of output.

Solutions?

While Nikiforuk states the obvious, that renewable energy sources like wind and solar must begin to be used, he shows that it will not be an easy task. First, he explains that the petroleum industry will not be willing to give

up its profits. Renewable energy will not provide the same monetary return, and oil companies will suppress its use for as long as possible. Nikiforuk also shows how “petrostates”—the close ties of government and the oil industry—have acted together to stifle the science and implementation of renewable energy. But he also states the uncomfortable truth that it is unlikely renewable sources can provide the same amount of energy as oil and that society will need to downsize.

Nikiforuk rightly places the problem with rationing our fuel use and implementing renewables with the fact that the capitalist economic system depends on continuous growth and accumulation, that is, production and consumption. For Nikiforuk, the Benedictine order founded after the fall of the Roman Empire offers some ideas. The Benedictine order strived to be adaptable and flexible, and deemed one virtuous if they “served God by living and working in a community that provided its own sovereign energy.” Through this, the monasteries sustained themselves—with much surplus time for artistic pursuits—for hundreds of years.

In early October, I heard Nikiforuk speak about this book. He shared with the audience his opinion that we have to start living more and consuming less, using fewer energy slaves, and choosing quality over cheaply made items, for example. According to Nikiforuk, communities need to change because we cannot wait around for it to happen another way. The same solutions are echoed in the book's epilogue. As Nikiforuk said during his talk, we need to “be ready when the system falls, with open hearts and ready hands to pick up the pieces.”

Making changes at the individual and community level is one step, but it cannot be the only one. As the roots of the oil-based consumer economy are firmly planted in the capitalist system, the struggle to detach our society from oil must also include a fight against the very system that wants to continue to live outside the means of the planet. Nikiforuk's book, *Energy of Slaves*, is important for understanding just how entangled our lifestyle is with oil, and how we urgently need to unravel ourselves from it and find ways to live sustainably.

LEFT JOB

John Bell

Down the rabbit hole... into a pipeline

A FEW weeks ago Michael Harris at the iPolitics news web reported on the case of Jill Winzowski, freelance reporter for the *Selkirk Record* in rural Manitoba—whose story shows how media and government collude to greenwash the Tar Sands. You probably missed it, so let me recap.

When Winzowski wrote hard-hitting articles about environmental issues, and particularly the Tory decision to shut down the internationally renowned Experimental Lake Area project, the local Tory MP James Bezan was not impressed. He complained to the editor and withdrew his constituency advertising from the *Selkirk Record*. The paper asked Winzowski to refrain from covering national politics, and she complied.

Six months passed. Then Winzowski signed an online petition opposing the pending “free trade” deal with China (FIPPA). Copies went to her local MP, Bezan, and to the PMO.

Soon she received an interesting email response from Bezan stating he shared her concerns about the deal, and about the impending sale of Canadian oil company Nexen to China National Offshore Oil Company (CNOOC). The email said: “I would like to note that I am strongly opposed to this deal, and I have raised my concerns directly with Cabinet as well as with the Prime Minister.”

Within hours she received a second Bezan email, repudiating the previous one as a clerical error, and espousing whole-hearted support for the deal: “Our Conservative government is committed to creating the right conditions for Canadian businesses to compete globally... Our government's ambitious pro-trade plan is opening new doors for Canadian businesses in dynamic, high-growth markets like China...”

As a constituent, Winzowski wrote back for clarification, asking the real James Bezan to please stand up. The following day she was informed the *Selkirk Record* no longer required her services. I encourage you to check out the full story at www.ipolitics.ca.

There's a lot to boggle the mind here.

Censorship

First, there's the whiplash-inducing change of direction between two email messages sent just hours apart by a Tory backbencher. It shows that the Prime Minister's Office has its foot on the neck of every MP. If Bezan wants to get ahead—and he is said to be a rising star in Tory caucus—he had better learn to toe the party line. That second email is a cut-and-paste of official Tory talking points.

Second, there is the ease with which the newspaper threw Jill Winzowski under the bus, even when she was victimized for simply expressing an opinion as a citizen and one of Bezan's constituents, a clear violation of her rights.

Doing so not only reveals the lack of moral fibre of those who own and run the *Selkirk Record*, it shows an utter absence of journalistic instincts. “Local politician threatens crusading *Record* reporter” would have made a hell of a front-page story. But I'm sure it never crossed their minds.

Third—and I hate to say it—Winzowski was just as willing to follow questionable orders from the head office as was Bezan. Journalism has become a miserable business, and freelancer Winzowski clearly knew how the game was played. She was willing—perhaps unhappily, but willing none the less—to stop rocking Bezan's boat in hopes of gaining fulltime employment at the *Selkirk Record*.

What a tangled web. And like most of the snarls of falsehood, media manipulation and personal attack in Harper's world, when you start to pull the threads, you are led inexorably back to the Tar Sands.

Tar Sands

The media reports approvingly when Liberal leader wannabe Justin Trudeau embraced the Nexen deal, and with it unimpeded development of the Tar Sands. *National Post* columnist John Ivison calls him “brave” for saying that it would be economically stupid to leave billions of barrels of crude in the ground.

Chen Weidong, Chief Energy Researcher for CNOOC, has a different way of looking at “under-developing” the Tar Sands. Chen wrote: “It's the same situation as the leftover single women... It will be the same for the oil sands, they will be outdated just like unmarried single women.”

As far as I'm concerned, Chen's sexist analogy exposes the vacuity of his point of view. It is the same a saying a tree has no value unless it is sawed into two-by-fours.

What did the media say about Chen's insulting views? They reflect China's growing and justifiable “frustration” at not being able to get their hands on Alberta syncrude. Peter Foster of the *Financial Post* even made the astounding logical leap that the “embarrassing political incorrectness” results from the delicacy of dealing with a “State Owned Enterprise.”

When Deloitte—“a leading financial advisory firm”—published a report that said the Tar Sands would necessarily be Canada's “economic engine” for the next quarter century, it was played on every front page in the country. The universal message: Tar Sands development is not only good, it is essential. As for the environment, no problem. Deloitte's bean counters say that the petro-industry hasn't been good enough at communicating its environmental success stories. Opposition to the Tar Sands is based on “second-hand knowledge that is inaccurate.”

In no mainstream report did I see anyone questioning Deloitte's findings. No business writers complained that Tory monetary and economic policies undermine Canada's industrial sector, destroy jobs and artificially favour the Tar Sands and the rest of the resource extraction industries. Nowhere did I see reporters balance the rosy picture of corporate profits with the rising social costs of pollution and global warming.

About the same time came a report by Keith Stewart at Greenpeace, documenting how Environment Minister Peter Kent had met with oil and gas industry lobbyists 48 times in the past 18 months, versus seven meetings with environmental organizations. Front-page news? Not so much.

Oily money and petro-politics rules the PMO, the boardroom and the newsroom. Why does a press release from Greenpeace rate barely a mention, while one from the petro-industry and its financial backers gets splashed uncritically across the front page?

You know the answer.

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.



The struggle continues for Bahraini students

by YUSUR AL BAHRANI

STUDENTS AND workers in Bahrain have played a primary role in what's known as the Pearl Revolution. They continue their fight against the Western-backed Al-Khalifa monarchy, despite systematic and ongoing state repression.

More than a year ago, protesters flooded the streets of Manama and other Bahraini cities and villages in February 2011. They occupied the Pearl Roundabout, which was the Bahraini version of Tahrir Square. The government forces raided the roundabout, killing, injuring and arresting peaceful protesters. The Bahraini monarchy invited troops from Western-backed Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates to aid in the crackdown on peaceful protesters. Since then, forces have attacked protesters, besieged villages and cities, raided homes in search for activists, and thrown US-made tear gas canisters on people's homes.

Student protest

Outraged by the government's attack on peaceful demonstrators, students at the University of Bahrain decided to protest against the violations. They organized a peaceful protest on March 13, 2011. The university granted permission to protest, but Mohamed Al-Khaqani described this as "a trap" to launch a crackdown. Al-Khaqani was a professor at the University of Bahrain and was dismissed after the attack on peaceful students and professors.

Pro-government thugs attacked the university, vandalizing buildings and threatening students. Eyewitnesses report that the police surrounded the university, protecting and giving a legitimate cover to thugs who were holding batons, knives and swords, and thus not letting students escape the brutality of the attack. Instead of investigating the case and holding the thugs responsible for the attack, the government of Bahrain held the innocent peaceful pro-democracy students responsible for vandalizing the university and intimidating others.

Many students were arrested, tortured and forced to confess to crimes they have never committed. Al-Khaqani was at the university on that specific day. He confirmed that thugs were the ones who vandalized the building. He tried to prevent them from entering the building where he was, but he could not. He defended his students from the vicious attack of the pro-government thugs. As a consequence, "homes of professors and instructors were raided," said Al-Khaqani. Al-Khaqani was dismissed from the university, and was separated from his students who loved him.

Repression and brutality

The regime in Bahrain has attempted to silence protest but has not been successful. Massive numbers of students and workers have been struggling. "At least 4,000 people who stayed away from their jobs during the arrest or believed to have participated in the protests were sacked or suspended, including nearly 300 from the state-owned Bahrain Petroleum Company. Dozens of students were dismissed from universities, and others studying abroad had their grants suspended," reports Amnesty International.

Jassim Al-Hulaibi is a 19-year-old first-year student at Bahrain Teachers' College with outstanding academic achievements—and a goal to become a teacher and influence his students to build a better future for Bahrain. The regime decided to shatter his dreams (and some of his colleagues'). On March 27, 2011, police raided Al-Hulaibi's home at two in the morning. Numerous police cars surrounded his home. They terrorized the children and arbitrarily arrested Al-Hulaibi. They dragged him out of his home, and started verbally and physically abusing him.

Al-Hulaibi was subjected to torture. Prison guards covered his eyes, tied his hands, beat him regularly and offended his religious beliefs. He was forced to confess under torture, and charged with vandalizing a university building during the protest in the University of Bahrain on March 13,

2011, and attempting to kill some of those who were in that building. But medical reports prove that on March 13 he was recovering in hospital after being shot in the leg by regime police. He was sentenced to 15 years in prison, and he remains in prison today.

So far, Al-Hulaibi has spent more than a year in prison, he was dismissed from university and his grants were suspended. In addition, Al-Hulaibi's father received an official document from the Ministry of Education demanding him to pay BD 1,416 (\$3,766), compensating for the suspended grants.

There are many students like Al-Hulaibi (including children) facing unbelievable sentences for exercising their rights to freedom of expression and assembly. There are other students who lost their lives fighting for freedom and democracy. One of them is Ali Al-Moemin, whom Al-Khaqani saluted during his lecture at the University of Bahrain. "Yes, I needed to salute my student. Ali Al-Moemin was my student. He used to sit on the front. He is my student and I love him. You killed my students and charged us for our solidarity with them. You are charging me for loving my students, and my students love towards me," said Al-Khaqani. Al-Moemin remains a symbol of a martyr who scarified his soul for real democracy.

Protest and solidarity

The fight for freedom continues in Bahrain, despite the government's brutality. Their demands are basic—an end to the ongoing repression, oppression, and discrimination that the majority of the Bahraini population face by the Al-Khalifa ruling family.

Imperialists have played a major role in the crackdown on pro-democracy activists, students, workers and protestors. The West's support to the monarchies in the Gulf provided impunity for human rights violators. The only way to help students in Bahrain is to denounce the hypocrisy of the Western governments (including Canada) that sells arms to the oppressive monarchies in the Gulf.

international socialist events

TORONTO

Grassy Narrows Blockade: 10 Years in Resistance

Fundraising dinner and film-screening
Sat, Dec 8, 6pm
Organized by the Coxwell-Gerrard branch of the I.S.
Info: 647.393.3096

Kill Bill 115: Socialist Worker paper sale & discussion group

Campaigning paper sale to stop the attacks on workers' rights and build solidarity for Ontario teachers, followed by discussion on "Socialists in the Movements"
Sat, Dec 15, 1pm
Info: reports@socialist.ca
416.972.6391

The Comintern and Social Hegemony (1922): Communist Parties, Unions, Co-operatives, Youth, Women and International Solidarity

Fundraising dinner and study session
Sat, Dec 15, 4pm
Organized by the Pape-Danforth branch of the I.S.
Info: pape.danforth.branch@gmail.com

MISSISSAUGA

A People's History of the War of 1812

Speaker: John Bell
Thur, Dec 13, 7pm
Mississauga Central Library, 301 Burnhamthorpe Road West, Room CL3
Organized by the Mississauga branch of the I.S. and the Mississauga Coalition for Peace & Justice

OTTAWA/GATINEAU

Tsar to Lenin: the definitive film record of the 1917 Russian Revolution

See the film that both Washington and Moscow didn't want you to see!
Mon, Dec 17, 6:30pm
Cafe Alt (basement of Simard Hall), 60 University, University of Ottawa
Organized by the Ottawa/Gatineau branch of the I.S.
Info: ottawa.socialists@gmail.com

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

Info: uoftinternationalsocialists@gmail.com

YORK UNIVERSITY

Info: yorksocialists@gmail.com

HALIFAX

Info: halifax.socialists@gmail.com

ALBERTA

Info: reports@socialist.ca

VANCOUVER

Info: vancouver.socialists@gmail.com

peace & justice events

TORONTO

Rally for Rights & Democracy

Sat, Jan 26, 1pm
Rally at Allan Gardens (Jarvis & Carleton), followed by march to Ontario Liberal Convention at Maple Leaf Gardens (Church & Carleton)
Info: http://ofi.ca/

You can find the I.S. in:

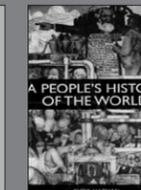
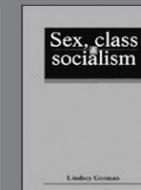
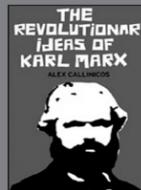
Toronto, Ottawa, Gatineau, Vancouver, Victoria, Montreal, London, St. Catharines, Mississauga, Scarborough, Halifax, Belleville & Kingston

e: reports@socialist.ca
t: 416.972.6391
w: www.socialist.ca

For more event listings, visit www.socialist.ca.

OPEN SATURDAYS, 12-3pm

427 Bloor Street West, suite 202, Toronto | 416.972.6391



RESISTANCE PRESS BOOK ROOM

MORE JOBS NOT CONDOS

IN LATE 2013, the 60-year-old Mr. Christie's Bakery facility at Lake Shore West is set to close and, by doing so, take 550 good jobs from the community.

Why is the factory closing? One of the reasons given by Mondelez Canada (the factory's owners) was that a changing residential landscape had led to production constraints. What this means is that because of the massive encroachment of condo development in the area the 27-acre property was now "in the way" but also incredibly valuable.

In other words, Mondelez Canada wants to ditch 550 good jobs and 27 acres of employment-zoned land (which guarantees no possibility of similar jobs ever coming back) for 27 condo towers. We are in no way short of condos and in everyway short of good jobs, as one worker who has worked at the factory for 21 years summed it up: "In a way, I understand. It's all about money. People mean nothing. Cash is king."

The factory has been around for nearly a century, and the factory's workers have vowed to fight the closure. The rest of the 99% should support them.

Contact Councillor Anna Bailao if you want our community to have good jobs, not more condos. Email councillor_bailao@toronto.ca or call 416-392-7012

OBITUARY: RUSSELL MEANS

RUSSELL MEANS, a well-known figure in the American Indian Movement (AIM), died on October 22 at the age of 72.

AIM was a militant organization demanding that the US re-examine its treatment of indigenous people both in the past and present. The movement was shaped by the broader radicalization of the 1960s.

Means' activism started with his participation in a brief occupation of Alcatraz Island in 1964, a precursor to the 1969-1971 occupation of Alcatraz.

Means led the 1973 occupation of the village of Wounded Knee, South Dakota, on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. The government sent over 200 federal marshals, FBI agents and BIA police to surround the perimeter of the occupation.

The occupation gained sympathy throughout the US. Actor Marlon Brando would refuse to accept his Oscar in solidarity with Native rights. Means and fellow AIM leader Dennis Banks were put on trial for their role in the occupation, but the charges were thrown out. Nevertheless, the case drained AIM with fees and time spent in court, which contributed to the decline of the movement.

We should celebrate Russell Means' life and draw lessons and inspiration from him and the work of the AIM in our fights for justice today.

Excerpted from Socialist Worker (US); read full obituary at <http://bit.ly/TGdnDq>

NOVEMBER 16 RALLY AGAINST SEXISM AT UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO



A participant holds up a sign at the rally. (photo by Yusur Al Bahrani)

TORONTO CONFERENCE LAYS BASIS FOR PIPELINE CHALLENGE

by JOHN RIDDELL

THE NOVEMBER 17 conference, "The Tar Sands Come to Ontario: No Line 9," was a big success. Three hundred people jammed into a lecture theatre at the University of Toronto for the plenary session.

The initial session featured 16 speakers in six simultaneous workshops, each taking up a different form of the tar sands' challenge: to communities, to unionized and migrant workers, to the Global South, to climate stability, to native-non-native relations, and to environmental movements.

The conference highlighted the role of First Nations both as victims of

the tar sands threat and as leaders in resisting it.

Art Sterritt, Executive Director of Coastal First Nations, described how a strategic alliance has been forged in BC. "We now have support of 80 per cent to stop Northern Gateway. That is what you will need to do to stop Line 9."

Contrary to the NDP's position, Council of Canadians chairperson Maude Barlow made clear that the main problem with tar sands is not foreign corporations or export of crude, but tar sands themselves. At the same time, Barlow called for ongoing dialogue with the NDP and tar sands workers. Both Canadian Auto Workers and CEP (the

union representing tar sands workers) mobilized for the recent Victoria sit-in, and Art Sterritt emphasized that Alberta workers deserve healthy green jobs.

The teach-in was not geared to the discussion or adoption of specific proposals, but the unexpectedly large turn-out delivered a clear message from the grass roots: there is a strong basis to begin organizing broadened education and collective action to stop Line 9.

That is the challenge now facing climate justice activists in Toronto and southern Ontario.

To contact the organizing committee, write boliviaclimatejustice@gmail.com or visit <http://t.grupoapoyo.org>

URANIUM PROCESSING OUT OF OUR NEIGHBOURHOOD

by REG MCQUAID

RESIDENTS OF Lansdowne-Davenport were surprised to learn recently that we have a uranium processing facility down the street.

Since 1965, General Electric's plant at 1025 Lansdowne has been processing uranium oxide into nuclear pellets, which are then shipped to Peterborough for insertion into nuclear fuel rods. Nowadays the plant, which employs 53, is operated by GE Hitachi—a joint venture of the two giant engineering firms.

Flags were raised about the Toronto plant by Peterborough activists,

who noted that while 50 people from their community attended the licensing hearings, there was no one from Toronto. An enquiry among neighbours of the Toronto plant revealed that nobody knew 1,800 tons of radioactive material is being processed each year in our community.

This in spite of the fact that GE Hitachi was supposed to make people in the neighbourhood aware of their renewal application. Only after residents organized their own community forum did GE hold public events, designed to dismiss safety concerns.

"Frankly, nothing has gone wrong in 50 years,"

said a spokesperson. The plant's manager of environment, health and safety said, "It's a similar technology that goes into making pharmaceuticals, like Aspirin."

But past safety doesn't safeguard the future, and unlike spilling aspirin a nuclear disaster has catastrophic consequences. The same safety claims were made about Japan's nuclear reactor, before Fukushima was flooded with radioactive waste. Renowned physician Dr. Helen Caldicott says such a plant should not be located in a residential area, and the least a highly profitable company could do would be to relocate its plant.

TAMIL STUDENTS ORGANIZE 'CIRCLE OF SOLIDARITY'

by PRIYANTH NALLARATNAM & JAMES CLARK

TAMIL STUDENTS and their allies throughout the Tamil youth diaspora organized a global "circle of solidarity" on December 4, to protest the Sri Lankan military's recent attacks on students at the University of Jaffna.

On the morning of November 28, Sri Lankan security forces violently repressed a peaceful demonstration of Tamil students who were trying to observe Maaveerar Naal, the Tamil day of remembrance of all those who have died in the decades-long struggle for Tamil liberation. Ten students were injured and four were detained, including Paralingam Tharshananth, Secretary of the University of Jaffna Students' Union; Ganesamurthy

Sudarsan, a medical student; Kangasundaraswamy Janamejyanth, president of the Arts Union; and Sanmugam Solomon, a science student. Pictures and video footage of the demonstration are available online.

In response to the attack, the Canadian Peace Alliance issued a statement, condemning the actions of the Sri Lankan military and echoing the demands of the Jaffna students, who are calling for the four detained students to be released. Other organizations also issued statements, including the York Federation of Students, the Scarborough Campus Students' Union at the University of Toronto, and the Tamil Youth Organization—Canada.

At York University on

December 4, the Tamil Students' Association (TSA) organized a "circle of solidarity" in Vari Hall. Dozens of York students participated, with support from United South Asians at York, the Indian Cultural Association, the Malayalee Students' Association, Students Against Israeli Apartheid, the Ontario Public Interest Research Group, and the Middle Eastern Students' Association.

Similar events were organized on campuses around the world. "This is not the end, but just the start of what will follow," said York TSA president Mithilen Mathipalan. "If the students are not released immediately, this will grow bigger and we will ensure the world hears us, and this time louder than before!"

STICKING WITH THE UNION

Carolyn Egan

How workers can win

WE HAVE recently witnessed mass strikes across Europe, protesting the austerity agenda's devastating effects on workers and the poor. People rose up in country, after country letting their rulers know that it will not be so easy to make them pay for the excesses of the wealthy and the corporations.

I have heard so many in Canada lamenting the fact that we have not had that same type of worker fight-back. We have seen defeats at Caterpillar in London, Ontario. CUPE 416 and 79, representing municipal workers in Toronto, accepted concession contracts. OECTA, the Catholic teachers in Ontario, did the same. The Canadian Auto Workers did not put up a fight against the Big Three automakers in recent negotiations.

We know that with the Occupy movement and the magnificent student strike in Quebec that sections of society are taking up the gauntlet, fighting back and winning gains. Quebec student organizers worked hard mobilizing their members through mass assemblies, face-to-face contact in departments and broad mobilizations. The Charest government fell and the tuition fee increases were rolled back.

If we examine some of the recent workplace struggles where workers have made gains in North America, there is a similar method of organizing.

The library workers in Toronto did not win a total victory but pushed back the worst of the concessions. They had been actively involved with those who use their services for a significant time before their strike. Major literary figures such as Margaret Atwood came on board. Workplace organizing was taking place at every work site. The membership was actively involved at every level and after a two-and-a-half-week strike they got a decent collective agreement.

In Alma, Quebec, Rio Tinto locked out almost eight hundred workers. These Steelworkers demanded that their union take up the fight. The entire community in rural Quebec was organized to fight the company.

Members joined with the Quebec students, did a march to Quebec City and celebrated International Women's Day. Solidarity buses drove all the way from Toronto and Hamilton. An international campaign was developed (off the podium) to protest the use of Rio Tinto materials in the Olympic medals. The rank-and-file ran the lockout, and they won—not everything, but they pushed back massive concessions.

In the recent Chicago teachers strike the same method proved to be successful. A group of rank-and-file activists began organizing in their workplaces and with the community in 2008 against school closures and won the leadership of the local in 2010. When the membership struck against the imposition of merit pay, other concessions and privatization, the rank-and-file was out in force because they had been building for years. Contract Action Committees were set up in each school a year before the contract expired. The students and community strongly supported their teachers because of their work together to stop school closures and this collective strength beat back the attempts by the city to discredit the teachers and force so-called "reforms" down their throats. It was a model of rank-and-file organizing.

If you look for the common element in these wins, it is the mobilization and leadership of the rank-and-file. In these hard times this can make the difference between victory and defeat. Workers cannot depend on their leaders but must use the collective strength that is their own. The more experience they gain in struggle, the more their confidence will grow to fight back and win.

The Ontario Federation of Labour has called a mass demonstration against the austerity agenda and attacks on unions by the McGuinty government for January 26. Demand that our leaders organize to get members out in their thousands. Where we can, committees should be set up in our workplaces, organizing our fellow workers to come out and join in the struggle. This is our opportunity to show that workers in Ontario are not prepared to accept these attacks.

Join the International Socialists

Mail: P.O. Box 339, Station E, Toronto, ON M6H 4E3
E-mail: reports@socialist.ca / Tel: 416.972.6391

Name: _____
Address: _____
City/Province: _____
Phone: _____
E-mail: _____

Socialist Worker

Victory against the mega-quarry, now shut down the tar sands!

by JESSE MCLAREN

A MASS campaign succeeded in stopping the proposed mega-quarry that would have devastated rural Ontario. The lessons from this victory should give confidence to the growing fight against the tar sands.

In 2006, Highland Companies, backed by multibillion-dollar corporations, began buying up thousands of acres of farmland in Melancton Township—100km north of Toronto—claiming they would continue to farm potatoes on the land. But when they began burning farmhouses, destroying bird habitat and conducting geological surveys, local residents began to investigate and to organize. As Carl Cosak said, “We’re not experts or activists or anything. We’re mostly farmers in our 60s, and we really don’t want to have to fight for our land at this point in our lives.”

Mega-activism

But local farmers discovered that Highland Companies was planning on building the largest open pit quarry in Canada. The mega-quarry would destroy 2,300 acres of farmland by creating a 200-foot crater. This would displace 600 million litres of water a day, threaten the drinking water of over a million people in Ontario, and undermine wildlife. The operations would blast, drill, and crush limestone 24 hours a day, requiring 7,000 trucks each day to remove the dusty rubble. Despite this massive attack on an environment that provides food, water, and animal habitat, the company claimed there would be “no adverse effects on its neighbours or the environment.”

Last month, Highland Companies stopped its plans for the mega-quarry, stating, “While we believe that the quarry would have brought significant economic benefit to Melancton Township and served Ontario’s well-documented need for aggregate,



we acknowledge that the application does not have sufficient support from the community and government to justify proceeding with the approval process.”

The Liberal government provided no opposition, and initially didn’t even require an environmental assessment for the historic and destructive mega-quarry. But opposition was built from below, beginning as a trickle and becoming a flood. In 2009, local farmers and community members established the North Dufferin Agricultural and Community Taskforce to expose and challenge the mega-quarry.

The campaign was based on

the simple demand “stop the mega-quarry” that mobilized a broad movement of local farmers, indigenous people, environmentalists and even chefs. There were letter-writing campaigns, speaking tours, lawn signs, a 5-day march from Toronto to Melancton, and a “Foodstock” festival that mobilized 28,000 people including chefs, musicians and artisans. Forcing the Ontario government to order an environmental assessment showed the company the groundswell of opposition, and it stopped its plans. As David Suzuki said, “together, tens of thousands of people accomplished something that only

months ago seemed impossible: stopping the mega-quarry.”

Next step: tar sands

This successful campaign against the mega-quarry, and the methods it used of unity and creativity, should give confidence and inspiration to the fight against the tar sands—and we’ll need it, to shut down this much bigger planetary threat.

Multiple powerful corporations support the tar sands, which for a much longer period of time have been wreaking much greater havoc on nature and the surrounding communities—including oil spills that could dev-

astate the west coast, and carbon emissions that threaten the entire planet’s ecosystem. The tar sands have more than just passive support from a provincial government, but active support from the national government—economically in the form of funding for the tar sands and cuts to scientists, and ideologically in the form of campaigns to smear opponents and defend tar sands as “ethical oil.” The 1% are so invested in making tar sands a central component of the Canadian economy that they have the support of every major party, including the NDP leadership, on this issue.

The growing opposition is

using similar strategies of unity and creativity to the ones that stopped the mega-quarry. For years indigenous groups have exposed and challenged the tar sands and the corporate lies about them having “no adverse effects” on surrounding communities or their environment. Indigenous groups have come together on the west coast to refuse the passage of tar sands pipelines, and organized speaking tours and a freedom train that crossed the country.

There are growing alliances with the environmental movement and municipalities, and the start of alliances with the labour movement. There is growing mass civil disobedience—from hundreds who were arrested on Parliament Hill last year, to thousands who joined a sit-in at the Victoria legislature this year—including members of the Canadian Auto Workers and CEP (the union representing tar sands workers).

The involvement of the labour movement is critical. The campaign against the mega-quarry was to preserve the farming economy, and it succeeded in stopping one corporation from starting a disastrous project in rural Ontario. But the movement against the tar sands is up against a firmly established ongoing catastrophe that intends to spread through pipelines from coast to coast, all the while entrenching itself even more firmly in the fabric of the Canadian economy. Stopping the pipelines, and then shutting down the tar sands, is not just a defensive battle against pipelines, but an offensive battle against the oil-dependent economy. Success will mean imposing a massive shift to green jobs. This fight against the Canadian state will require mobilizing rank-and-file workers across the country. The fight against the tar sands is an essential part of the struggle for a better world of indigenous sovereignty and good green jobs for all.

Never miss an issue.

Mail in this form with a cheque or money order made payable to “Socialist Worker”.

Prices per year (CAD dollars):

Regular subscription: \$30
Institutions, First Class delivery and U.S.: \$50
Other international: \$60



Name:

Address:

Phone:

E-mail:

Mail to: Socialist Worker, PO Box 339
Station E, Toronto, ON Canada, M6H 4E3
Phone: 416.972.6391 / E-mail: reports@socialist.ca

Europe rocked by general strikes

by DAVE SEWELL & SIÂN RUDDICK

ON NOVEMBER 14, general strikes spread across Portugal, Spain, Italy and Greece as well as parts of Belgium.

In Spain this is the second general strike in a year—and more workers have been joining in. There were also to be massive evening protests in Madrid and other cities.

Thousands marched in Lisbon. There were organized blocs of dockers with flares, local government and education workers, university students and more. People waved Greek flags and placards harking back to Portugal’s revolution—and even briefly invaded a supermarket.

By early evening thousands of protesters in Lisbon were laying siege to the Portuguese parliament. They tried to break police lines, and when pushed back started to build barricades in the side streets.

All the unions have hailed the strike as a success—even those that didn’t support it—and a national demonstration has been called in two weeks time.

“We need to follow the example of Greece, and get more action after today” said unemployed Kyria Kos on the Lisbon demonstration. “The people of the world are rising up. Together we can do it.”

Thousands of workers and students converged on city and town centres across Italy as part of a four-hour general strike. In Turin students occupied the central railway station and raided the police station there. They also occupied local government offices.

In Rome there was a “guerrilla war” between police and protesters as students made shields and barricades to use against police lines. In Naples protesters lay on the tracks in the central train station and Metro workers walked out, bringing the city grinding to a halt.

“There is high support for the

strike,” Leopoldo Tartaglia from the CGIL union told *Socialist Worker*. “The crisis of unemployment, a reduction in working hours and the wage freeze means that everyone has less.”

“We are now heading to a situation where the mass of people are working poor. We will not hesitate to strike again to defeat these attacks.”

In Greece unions called a three-hour stoppage from noon. Around 10,000 marched on the parliament in central Athens, and many more held meetings and demonstrations nearer their workplaces. Local government workers protested at the town halls, many of which are occupied. And one of the liveliest contingents on the main demonstration was of the workers who have been occupying the main senate of Athens University.

These two sections of workers face massive job cuts from the cuts package narrowly voted through parliament last week.

“The union leaders want to

wait and see what happens at the meeting of Eurogroup finance ministers next week, where it will be decided if Greece will get its bailout money,” said Panos Garganos, editor of *Workers’ Solidarity*. “But still, people came out and demonstrated across Greece.”

There was also a general strike called in the Belgian city of Liege, where 6,000 people came out and marched. Across Belgium rail workers also struck and blocked the rails, in protests at rail cuts planned next month, and there were strikes at a number of factories and power stations.

“And we especially didn’t want to leave our colleagues in southern Europe to fight alone. We need a real fight for a different kind of Europe, instead of the catastrophe we see now.”

There were also protests in cities across France, as well as in other major capital cities around Europe.

Originally published in Socialist Worker (UK)