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SYSTEM CHANGE



NOT

CLIMATE CHANGE

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Number of youth in Attawapiskat who attempted suicide in one day

25

Percentage of Canadian Members of Parliament who bothered to attend an emergency debate on the crisis in Attawapiskat

350

Number of wealthy Canadians, who still remain anonymous, who the Panama Papers reveal are avading taxes

370

Number of shell companies that the Royal Bank of Canada has created to help the wealthy avoid paying taxes, according to the Panama Papers

1000

Number of unemployed oil sands workers who Iron and Earth want trained in solar panel installation

17 million

Number of American workers who have won pay raises through the Fight for \$15

In their own words

“People have to move sometimes.”

-Colonial response from former Prime Minister Jean Chretien in reaction to suicide crisis in Attawapiskat

“The government cares when you care. Things change when the mass of people push and push... Keep listening to the communities and what they say they need.”

-Indigenous speaker outside occupation of INAC office in Toronto, on importance of solidarity

We are skilled workers: electricians, iron workers, pipe fitters, boilermakers, carpenters, and many more trades, and we could easily transfer our knowledge to the green economy.”

-Liam Hildebrand, oil sands workers and founder of Iron and Earth, which is asking for transition to renewable energy



by VALERIE LANNON

On April 9, Attawapiskat First Nation declared a state of emergency. There had been reports of eleven suicide attempts in one single day the previous weekend. Subsequently, there was a report of a suicide pact among eleven people, some as young as 9 years old.

There are also reports of more than 100 suicide attempts and at least one death since September in the remote community of nearly 2,000 people. Other First Nations dealing with recent suicides include Pimicikamak and Shamattawa in Manitoba. Across Canada, suicide rates are far higher among Indigenous peoples than others, as are contributing factors such as extreme poverty.

All of this is the horrific ongoing legacy of colonization perpetrated since day one by Canada's settler ruling class, while corporations like the DeBeers diamond mine near Attawapiskat, exploit the planet.

Colonial response

At the insistence of Attawapiskat's NDP MP

Charlie Angus, an emergency session of the House of Commons was called in order to “discuss the situation.” At the emergency debate some 75 MPs out of a total of 338 (fewer than 25 per cent) bothered to show up. Justin “Sunny ways” Trudeau went to a book launch for an old Liberal buddy instead.

The same day, Mr. White Paper himself, former PM Jean Chretien roamed around Parliament Hill. Reporters asked him about the suicide crisis in Attawapiskat and he suggested the solution for some First Nations people may be to leave their isolated communities, because of lack of economic activity.

In the most condescending tone possible, he stated “They want to be close to the land. They are nostalgic about the past” but that “people have to move sometimes.” He went on to say, as countless colonial governments have done in the past to cast themselves as the cure for an Indigenous problem, that “there's always tragedies of that nature that occur, and the government has to do its best to cure it.”

He was blasted by NDP MPs in the House of Commons and by many others. The chair of indigen-

ous studies at the University of Winnipeg, Jacqueline Romanow, said the government forced Indigenous people onto reserves, which were far away from the resources that were available at the time. Indigenous communities are still feeling the effects, she said: “The problem is that indigenous people have had their rights to their resources and their traditional territories taken away from them, and they've been forcibly impoverished. They've been pushed on reserves...Reserves were never meant to sustain communities or human beings. They were meant as temporary hold-ings cells until they could be assimilated into Canadian culture through things like residential schools.”

Attawapiskat youth and solidarity

The list of demands of the youth themselves is simple and straightforward and nothing more than youth in most places want, and, in economically better off situations, receive. Things like more recreational facilities with staff, better education, a community greenhouse garden, traditional teachings, a recycling centre, dust control

(for the roads), clean swimming pool. The Youth Council has asked for a harvesting centre, a cinema, a youth trust fund, library, emergency mental health responders, firefighters, nurses, and for the Prime Minister to meet with their leadership.

Solidarity protests began in Toronto, where around 30 people from both Idle No More and Black Lives Matter took over part of the Indigenous Affairs office on April 13, demanding the federal government take immediate action to address recent suicide attempts in Attawapiskat First Nation in northern Ontario. One day later, a similar occupation began in the department's downtown Winnipeg office: “We have officially occupied INAC in Winnipeg in support of our brothers and sisters across Turtle Island!!!!” organizer Raquel Lavallee posted on Facebook.

First Nations across Canada need better funding and a commitment from the federal government to address the poverty, overcrowded housing, and other issues, the protesters in Winnipeg say. “It's time ... to honour our commitments of healing and reconciliation in Canada,”

said Ko'na Cochrane, who heard about the protest and drove to the INAC office. “The population of indigenous people in Canada have had enough.”

Demonstrations have since been held outside offices in Vancouver, Regina and Gatineau

More than 150 people took part in a solidarity rally in Toronto outside the INAC office, where protesters remain in the office inside. Speakers familiar with Attawapiskat talked about the ridiculously high cost of living (because most things have to be flown in), the poor water that causes rashes, poor education, housing and health services. As one speaker stated, “The government has no problem selling LCBO products at the same price there as here, but not the same for food and everything else.”

As one speaker at the Toronto solidarity rally said, “The government cares when you care. Things change when the mass of people push and push... Keep listening to the communities and what they say they need.”

Black Lives Matter shows how to win

by MICHELLE ROBIDOUX

By combining mass mobilizing, tactical creativity and a constant push for achievable demands, Black Lives Matter-Toronto has challenged anti-Black racism and showed how to win change.

After nearly two weeks of an unprecedented tent city occupation outside Toronto police headquarters, Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne and Toronto Mayor John Tory continued to remain silent on the police killing of Black people. So Black Lives Matter-Toronto took their demands directly to them.

Wynne

On March 31 activists hosted a vigil outside Kathleen Wynne's home, leaving a wreath and photos in honour of Andrew Loku—who Toronto police killed and the SIU have refused to investigate. As Yusra Khogali, co-founder of Black Lives Matter-Toronto explained, “Both

the SIU and the Toronto Police Services work under provincial jurisdiction. Sooner or later, Wynne will have to answer to her constituents. In light of her silence, we decided to come to her and remind her of the faces of those victimized by institutions under her watch. Their blood is on her hands.”

As Wynne refused to meet with them, Black Lives Matter led a march from their police headquarters occupation to Queen's Park, where Wynne finally emerged to briefly speak with them and acknowledge systemic racism.

Tory

John Tory said he had not even read a one-page report by the “Special Investigations Unit” that cleared police of any wrongdoing in the murder of Andrew Loku. So then on April 1 about 100 members and supporters of Black Lives Matter-Toronto packed Toronto City Council chambers calling for a complete overhaul

of Ontario's Special Investigations Unit (SIU), and calling for the officers responsible for the killing of Andrew Loku to be named.

City councillors Mike Layton and Kristyn Wong-Tam put forward a motion calling for the Province and the Minister responsible for Anti-Racism “to ensure police services and investigations are fair and transparent.” The motion was adopted unanimously.

Activists then unfurled banner-size copies of the SIU report into Andrew Loku's death. On leaving the council chambers, the protest moved to the mayor's office. The mayor was nowhere to be seen, but activists invited John Tory to come and meet with them at Toronto Police headquarters.

A statement on the Black Lives Matter TO Coalition facebook page stated: “#BLMTOtentcity draws our attention to the ways that Black lives are dispensable to Toronto Police Services, the inefficiencies of the Special Investigations Unit (SIU), the uselessness

of the carding regulations, and all the ways that our Black people continue to face violence at the hands of those who should be protecting us... One of our key demands is specifically seeking a complete overhaul of the province's Special Investigations Unit, to be done in consultation with families of victims of police violence, the Black communities throughout the province, and the community at-large.”

In the wake of these mobilizations the Coroner's office announced an inquest into the death of Andrew Loku, and activists have also won the promise of community consultations.

Though Tory tried to organize a meeting that excluded BLMTO, other organizations representing the Black community, like the Urban Alliance on Race Relations, showed solidarity by refusing to meet unless BLMTO was present, and to support its ongoing demands.

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Panama Papers, Canadian connections

by JESSE MCLAREN

The leak of the Panama Papers have not only exposed specific greedy individuals, but the general way in which capitalism works—where imperialist nations create havens for wealth while denying havens for refugees, and governments use the resulting tax losses and further tax cuts to impose austerity.

Tax havens and imperialism

The Panama Papers involve 11.5 million documents from Mossack Fonseca, a Panamanian law firm specializing in tax havens—many in the Caribbean. Canada is not just incidentally named in these papers but has played a central role in the creation of these tax havens.

Canada has a long history of imperialism in Latin America and the Caribbean, where Canadian corporations have benefited from military coups. In 1917 the Royal Bank of Canada set up a branch in Haiti in the wake of the US invasion. Canada was jointly responsible for the 2004 coup in Haiti which has benefited the Canadian garment industry, and Canadian mining corporations have benefited from the 2009 coup and ongoing violence in Honduras.

As Alain Deneault explains in *Canada: A New Tax Haven: How the Country That Shaped the Caribbean Tax Havens is Becoming One Itself*, “If we want to understand the relationship between Canada and today’s tax havens, we need to understand Canada’s direct contribution to the genesis of some of these jurisdictions. Because Canada had trade relations

with British dependencies in the Caribbean long before they became tax havens, and because Canadian banks had played a key role in the Caribbean since the early twentieth century, Canada was a major player in their transformation.”

While the Panama Papers name 350 wealthy Canadians, many previously unknown, there is a long history of the most known and powerful Canadians benefiting from tax havens—from CK Irving, who has sheltered his wealth in Bermuda, to former Prime Minister Paul Martin whose family shipping business (Canada Steamship Lines) has a subsidiary in Barbados

Economic crisis and austerity

The economic crisis created a further drive for the 1% to hide from taxes. The wealthy Canadians have declared in offshore tax havens has skyrocketed, from \$11 billion in 1990, to \$155 in 2012, to \$200 billion today. This creates an estimated \$8 billion annual loss in tax revenue, though the exact amount is unknown because the Canada Revenue Agency refuses to calculate the tax gap.

Reacting to the leak, CRA claimed it “continues to pursue audits related to offshore tax evasion including some Canadian clients associated with law firm Mossack Fonseca.” But how is it supposed to effectively collect hidden taxes if it’s not even aware of the scale of the problem? The Panama Papers reveal that the Royal Bank of Canada alone has created more than 370 shell companies for tax

evasion.

One of the main responses to the leak has been to justify it in legal terms. As lawyer Martin Kenney, brother of Jason Kenney, claimed: “It’s tax efficient. It’s not unlawful. It’s not tax evasion. It’s lawful tax avoidance.” At the same time, and with the same rationale, Canada itself has become a tax haven—with record low corporate taxes after years of tax cuts by both Liberals (like Paul Martin as finance minister and Prime Minister) in the 1990s and Conservatives.

For years the Liberals and Conservatives have used budget deficits to justify slashing healthcare, education and other social services, when these deficits were artificially generated through low corporate taxes and offshore “tax avoidance.” Trudeau and the Liberals supported Harper’s free trade deal in Panama, and in the latest budget Trudeau has continued Harper’s corporate tax cuts—artificially creating a budget deficit to claim he’s spending on First Nations and infrastructure.

Create a haven for refugees, not the 1%

The Panama Papers not only serve as a reminder of the way the 1% hide their own wealth while imposing austerity on the 99%, but also expose the scapegoating of migrants and refugees. While imperialist nations make use of the Global South as a haven for their wealth, they refuse to provide a haven for refugees fleeing imperialist war. While making tax avoidance increasing legal, capitalist

states have increasingly criminalized refugees.

Governments have cut refugee health while scapegoated refugees for cuts to healthcare, and exploited refugees while scapegoating refugees for the economic crisis. While RBC was using tax havens abroad, it was also using the Temporary Foreign Worker Program to exploit migrant workers in Canada.

Now the corporate press is scapegoating the Leap Manifesto for the tens of thousands of workers who have lost their jobs in the tar sands. But the Panama Papers show that money exists for climate job alternatives to the tar sands, if governments go after corporations instead of the climate justice movement. Just think of how many good green jobs we could have if Trudeau closed corporate tax havens abroad and raised corporate taxes at home.

Reacting to the Panama Papers, Trudeau stated that “Our government has long known — indeed, we got elected — on a promise to make sure that people were paying their fair share of taxes.” As well as demanding the release of the individuals and corporations within the Panama Papers, we also need to push Trudeau:

- * demand the CRA disclose and then eliminate the tax gap
- * restore corporate tax cuts so Canada is no longer a tax haven, and use the money to provide good green jobs for all
- * close trade deals and open the borders: create a haven for refugees not the 1%

From WTO to TPP

The massive demonstrations in Seattle in November 1999 alerted many to the dangers of corporate driven trade agreements. The collapse of the millennium round of WTO negotiations didn’t however stop corporations from pushing for more deals.

Instead of packaging all the trade agreements into one broad WTO framework, they were instead broken down for parts and are being implemented piecemeal on newer agreements such as the TPP (Trans Pacific Partnership) or CETA (Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement).

Opposition has been blunted and the result is that you are hard pressed to find any political party—from the right wing to the social democrats—that opposes the agreements. We are told that there is no

alternative since other countries will go ahead with the deals with us or without us.

What we need to know is that these trade pacts have only one goal: increasing corporate profitability at the expense of working people and the environment. They are written by corporations for corporations with the goal of increasing privatization and deregulation.

There are many sections to these agreements that cover everything from intellectual property and patents to limits on what governments are able to do to regulate environmental protections.

Central to the deals is an entrenching of corporate power in relation to the state, which give multinationals the ability to challenge any law that may cut into their profits. The Investor State Dispute Mechanisms (ISDS) are the

heart of these agreements.

The template for the ISDS is Chapter 11 under NAFTA. It gives corporations the right to sue and state that develops laws that may interfere with profits. We have a long history of dealing with those types of disputes in Canada because of the relatively longer tenure of NAFTA.

There have been 35 disputes, which have resulted in more than \$200 million in payments by the Canadian Government. The ISDS provisions have also been used in other parts of the world to target labour and environmental protections. This dispute mechanism is designed to entrench profit as the only goal of domestic legislation.

This power to challenge domestic laws has resulted in some opponents of trade agreement calling for more power of the state

against corporate interests. This is a dead end. The main drivers of the agreements are states themselves. The current Canadian government has a long history of support for these trade deals. Far from being an opponent of the weakening of law an regulations, successive Canadian governments have shown themselves to be—as Marx put it—the executive committee of the bourgeoisie, managing the state in the interests of the ruling class.

Economic crisis will drive more agreements to help prop up flagging profits and we will be told again and again that there is no alternative. But that is false. A world where the interests of working people and the environment is central is the alternative.

Revolt in France

by DAVE SEWELL

Strikes and protests intensified in France in the run-up to a coordinated day of action against the government’s proposed Work Law.

This was expected to see over a million workers strike as well as student mobilisations.

Entertainment workers led an occupation of the Odeon theatre in Paris last Sunday night, along with students and unemployed people. The entertainment workers have a special unemployment scheme since they are mostly in short term jobs and frequently out of work. The Labour-type government is trying to cut this.

But TV worker Sophie Tissier told *Socialist Worker*, “It’s the powerful bosses’ union Medef that’s directing the negotiations, imposing the bosses’ demands and the bosses’ timetable. So we’re occupying the Odeon and holding general assemblies with all unemployed people—because this is about defending unemployment insurance for everyone.”

Up to 1,000 people rallied outside, followed by the latest in a series of national rail strikes against an attack on workers’ terms and conditions to make way for privatisation.

Paris rail worker Axel Persson told *Socialist Worker*, “The strikes are growing, and this one’s bigger than the last. Workers are talking about going from one-day strikes to rolling strikes—and bringing more sectors onboard. In May we want the oil refineries and the dockers out with us, and that’s a real possibility.”

The pressure for more action shaped the conference of France’s biggest union federation, the CGT. Delegates backed a proposal from entertainment workers to make Thursday’s strikes the start of continuous action, renewed by mass meetings every evening.

The union leadership was booed for watering this down. One delegate argued, “We need to shut the country down, notably by blockading the petrol depots.”

Students continue to hold regular walkouts and sit-ins across the country. And the “Night on our feet” (Nuit Debout) movement of square occupations centred on Paris’ Place de la Republique has become a hub of the broader resistance.

Occupiers defied repression by soldiers as well as cops last week. And some of the initiatives and debates in the square seek to break down longstanding divides in the French working class.

A new commission on fighting Islamophobia and state racism held an assembly in the square last week.

And a call for a “Suburbs on our feet” movement has seen assemblies in Paris’ often poor and marginalised outlying areas.

There is an international gathering in the square on Saturday 7 and Sunday 8 May. This is to be followed by a global “Night on our feet” on Sunday 15 May.

This is shared from Socialist Worker (UK)

Arab Spring to Democracy Spring

This May Day there's something in the air: an air of democracy which is running through the American primaries and the millions rallying behind the democratic socialist Bernie Sanders, to the Black Lives Matter two week occupation in front of police headquarters in Toronto, to the subsequent occupation of INAC (Indian and Northern Affairs) offices, beginning in Toronto but spreading across the country, to the Nuit Debout gatherings in city squares across France—which have recently been joined by strikes by French workers against the proposed changes to labour laws by French 'socialist' president François Hollande.

It's not the feeble democracy our leaders are always talking about, which doesn't deserve the name. For them democracy is used as a way to shut up any criticism of their actions or to wage wars on other countries in order to bring them this "democracy" they are constantly touting.

No, the democracy we are seeing in action is the opposite of this sham freedom our governments claim to bestow upon us. It is democracy from below. It's the oppressed and exploited organizing themselves to challenge the racism, colonialism, inequality and injustice of a system where the 1% hold more wealth than the bottom 99%.

Feel the Bern

Even though Bernie Sanders lost to Hillary Clinton in the New York primary, the level of organizing by Sanders supporters was truly impressive. And it was not the kind of organizing that we often see where people are supposed to avoid talking politics but simply talk up their candidate in a totally apolitical way.

Sanders message, that what the US needs is a political revolution, is resonating with youth, with Blacks, with Latinos, with workers, with women—because he is challenging decades of the status quo under successive cynical Republican and Democratic politicians. He is saying things that many Americans know to be true through their own experience: that the banks and corporations were bailed out at the expense of ordinary Americans, that there is something fundamentally wrong with the richest capitalist country in the world not being able to afford universal healthcare for all its citizens, that young people shouldn't graduate from university or college with life-long debt, for those who are even able to get there in the first place, that the US has the highest incarceration levels (particularly for Black men) in the world.

That is why it will be a criminal betrayal if Sanders tries to get his supporters to back Clinton in the event he loses the primary. A significant proportion of Sanders supporters have already said they will not vote for Clinton should she win the nomination. Everything Sanders has stood for is the exact opposite of the war-mongering, privilege-driven, corporate-backed Clinton campaign.

Occupy

Likewise the Nuit Debout movement in France is another example of self-organization by the people themselves to take over public spaces and to challenge recent changes to French security laws. Beginning on March 31 thousands of people began meeting in the evenings at Place de la Republique, a central square in Paris. Nearby on the river Seine, a huge graffiti reads, "We would rather be on our feet at night than on our knees during the day."

The gatherings can include book stalls, speeches, debates about feminism. The Nuit Debout protests are becoming a hub of bigger protests as workers and students are striking over the proposed changes to French labour law. They have also been a focus for the French government to try and divide and conquer using their preferred tool—Islamophobia—but so far they haven't been successful.

When people organize together to challenge the way things are they can begin to build unity against the attempts by rulers and governments to sow division. In Toronto this was seen very clearly in both the Black Lives Matter occupation of police headquarters and the subsequent occupation of INAC offices. Black and indigenous activists supported each others' actions, as well as drawing many others in Toronto to solidarity rallies.

Protest, strike

In Egypt where the Arab Spring saw the ousting of Western-backed dictator Hosni Mubarak in 2011 after 30 years of repression, the last few years have seen the return of military dictatorship under Abdel Fattah el-Sisi. But el-Sisi has no answers to the economic crisis and unemployment other than repression, torture and stamping out any moves by the people towards popular democracy.

However, protests in Egypt held in late April show that there is a growing confidence to take on the regime. These protests have been met with repression and arrests but they will not serve to stop people questioning and organizing.

Ultimately these movements for democracy and freedom can be a real challenge to so-called capitalist democracy, when they come together with a push for democracy in the place from which all democracy flows – the workplace. That is why the strikes by French workers and students should be supported whole-heartedly by the activists in Nuit Debout or the Verizon strikers in the US by those organizing around Bernie Sanders' campaign.

May Day can be a powerful reminder of how much there is to gain in this democracy spring and how little capitalist democracy has to do with freedom for the vast majority.



Remembering Viola Desmond

by STEPHEN ELLIS

Some have referred to her as the Canadian Rosa Parks. But Rosa Parks could be called the American Viola Desmond. On Friday, November 8, 1946, nearly a decade before Rosa Parks sparked the Montgomery bus boycott, Viola Desmond became a symbol of resistance to racism in Nova Scotia.

While driving through New Glasgow, Nova Scotia, her car broke down and she decided to take in a movie at the Roseland Theatre while it was being repaired.

Desmond went into the theatre and asked to buy a downstairs ticket. The cashier, however, sold her a balcony ticket and gave her change. As she proceeded downstairs, the white ticket taker told her that she would have to go up to the balcony. Confused, Desmond returned to the cashier and asked to be given a downstairs ticket. The white cashier stated, "I'm sorry but I'm not permitted to sell downstairs tickets to you people."

The cashier never used the word "Black," "Negro" or "colored," but Viola Desmond knew exactly what was meant by "you people" and proceeded back into the theatre to sit in the partially-filled downstairs section of the theatre.

Soon, the theatre manager confronted her in the theatre. She politely, but firmly, asked him to provide her a proper downstairs ticket as she would not be able to see very well from the balcony. The angry manager went off to find a police officer.

The state

As Viola Desmond wrote of the incident: "The policeman grasped my shoulders and the manger grabbed my legs, injuring my knee and hip. They carried me bodily from the theatre out into the street. The policeman put me in a waiting taxi and I was driven to

the police station." She spent the night in the jail.

The next morning she was brought before the magistrate. She had no lawyer, was not told of her right to seek bail or request an adjournment, and was not given the chance to cross-examine the three white witnesses at her trial. She was convicted of having violated the Theatres, Cinematographs and Amusements Act by not paying the price differential between the balcony and the lower seats. It was clear to all to see, however, that this was an incident where the state had again chosen to use provincial legislation to enforce racially discrimination in Nova Scotia. She was fined \$26 and had to pay it forthwith or risk spending a month in jail.

This was not the first time the Roseland Theatre was the centre of legal controversy. In 1942, Carrie Best brought a civil suit against the theatre for its racist seating policy. She lost the case and was forced to pay the theatre \$156.07 in legal costs.

Influence and legacy

Viola Desmond believed that Black women should not have to be relegated to domestic work. She operated her own hair salon and inspired other Black women to follow an independent path. Accordingly, some saw her as an inspiration; others, a troublemaker.

Many noted activists took up her cause, including Pearleen Oliver, who convinced the Nova Scotia Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NSAACP) to provide legal and moral support. Eventually, she challenged her conviction to the district court of Nova Scotia but justice there too was nonexistent.

Viola Desmond died alone in her apartment in 1965.

The passage of time, however, had not dampened interest in the Roseland Theatre incident. Over the decades,

activists in the Black community continued to insist that the injustice of her conviction had to be addressed.

Finally, in 2010, The Royal Prerogative of Mercy Free Pardon was declared in a ceremony at Province House. This was a free pardon – a signal that the original conviction was a miscarriage of justice. A stamp featuring Viola Desmond was unveiled in February 2012.

Black Lives Matter

As Graham Reynolds, author of *Viola Desmond's Canada: A History of Blacks and Racial Segregation in the Promised Land* writes, "We have felt a sense of moral superiority with the Americans because of the extent of the problem in the United States. We look south and see violent racism and we are shocked. But if we have a close look at our own history, we have the same problems...In general, Canadians are not willing to accept the reality that we had racial segregation. It wasn't enforced in the same way it was in the U.S. with Jim Crow laws. But in some ways it was worse. There was a practice of racial segregation quietly enforced by theatres, hotels, restaurants...In Canada, we don't talk about these problems but they are quietly under the surface."

For many struggling against racism in Nova Scotia, the Roseland Theatre incident was just one of many indignities suffered by Black Nova Scotians over the decades. With wounds like destruction of Africville still fresh in mind, Black Nova Scotians and their allies can take pride in the courage and audacity of a "troublemaker" like Viola Desmond. Seventy years after Viola Desmond's fight against segregation, the fight against anti-Black racism continues, through movements like Black Lives Matter that are challenging carding and police violence.

10 years of Québec solidaire

Chantal Sundaram examines the origins and growth of Quebec's left alternative party, and lessons for English Canada

Ten years ago, people in Quebec who want a better world—to eradicate poverty, environmental destruction, sexism, racism, homophobia, the oppression of Indigenous peoples, and to bring an end to austerity in favour of the redistribution of wealth and reinvestment in public services—got a party they can vote for in good conscience.

And no, it's not the NDP. It is Québec solidaire.

The NDP is still the only party to cast a vote for in English Canada, as the only party connected to the labour movement and therefore not beholden to Canada's corporate elite.

But in Quebec, Québec solidaire has emerged as a realistic electoral alternative despite the fact that its party programme and electoral platforms are far to the left of the NDP's. In part this is because mass mobilizations against austerity and issues like war and climate change are larger and more advanced in Quebec.

But it is also because QS was a conscious and direct creation of social movements based not just in parliament but in activism outside it, in order to provide a political and electoral expression to that activism. This is a reality captured in the party's goal to remain both "a party of the ballot box, and a party of the street."

Nevertheless, its party colour is orange, and it is not an accident that it seeks to identify with the desire in both Quebec and English Canada for a mass electoral alternative that people who want change can vote for with pride, and can feel they are given a voice along with that vote.

History

QS emerged from two organizations: the Union des Forces Progressistes (UFP), formed by socialists, labour activists, and former members of the Quebec NDP; and Option Citoyenne, an organization grounded in environmental activism, feminism, and notably the founding of the World March of Women.

Both got a boost from the huge mobilization by ordinary Quebecois against globalization, which culminated in a protest of 80,000 against the Summit of the Americas in Quebec City in April of 2001. And after 9/11, and particularly after the US invasion of Iraq, Quebec saw the largest anti-war protests anywhere in the country.

Since the sixties, it was the Parti Quebecois that had held the unofficial allegiance of the left, labour and social movements in elections. But in the lead-up to the Summit of the Americas protest the UFP ran a candidate in one key riding—the Montreal riding of Mercier—and demonstrated that it was possible to pose a new electoral alternative.

As the UFP continued to make increasing breakthroughs in the popular vote in this riding, they began talks with Option Citoyenne, a larger organization that had wide reach in organized community movements. The talks culminated in a founding conference for a new political party of the left in 2006, where the name "Québec solidaire" was chosen by vote on the conference floor.

Early on, the party was led by individual activists with profile and credibility. In the party's



QS's founding convention in 2006

short history, three of them went on to be elected to the Quebec national assembly: Amir Khadir, an Iranian-Quebecois who worked with Doctors Without Borders in Palestine; Françoise David, a founder of the World March of Women and author; and Manon Masse, a long-standing figure in the LGBTQ community and now a high-profile climate activist.

The election of three deputies within ten years of its creation is nothing short of impressive. But so has been the party's role in helping transform Quebec's political landscape beyond elections.

They have built local riding associations with an activist profile in social movements and grassroots campaigns. They are currently conducting regional tours about growing local, sustainable economies and good, green jobs. And the three QS deputies have used their place in the National Assembly as a platform to denounce the austerity and pro-oil politics of the Liberals, PQ, and the CAQ, and to speak out against Islamophobia and racism.

Today

There has been wave after wave in Quebec of mass mobilization against austerity, from the 2012 student strike, to the movement by parents to form human chains around public schools to restore funding, to the Common Front public sector general strike of half a million people last fall. This movement needs a political voice.

To celebrate the 10th anniversary of QS, "À Babord!", an independent progressive magazine published by QS supporters, interviewed intellectuals, artists, and trade unionists about the importance of QS. Of the many glowing testimonials came two from the leaders of the major labour federations in Quebec and leaders of the Common Front.

CSN president Jacques Letourneau wrote: "Even though the debate on sovereignty is never over, at a time when the National Assembly is dominated by right-wing or centre-right currents and

where austerity measures are fully unleashed against Quebec civil society, QS no longer has to prove itself."

And Daniel Boyer, president of the FTQ, the other major labour federation in Quebec wrote: "Québec solidaire adds an important and necessary voice at the heart of the broad collective movement in favour of Quebec independence, a political project to which the FTQ adheres."

The growth of QS has gone hand in hand with the growth of support for the federal NDP in Quebec, from the Orange Wave that made Jack Layton to the solid NDP popular vote in Quebec that survived the Liberal sweep in the last federal election. QS activists are in no small way responsible for this electoral shift to the left on the federal level.

Not because the people of Quebec are becoming more federalist, but because a vote to the left has become more compelling than supporting the right-wing Bloc Quebecois on sovereigntist terms alone, making it possible to vote NDP despite its federalist politics.

The NDP in Quebec

The NDP hasn't run candidates provincially in any Quebec riding since 1994. And yet now, just at the moment when QS has created a new and successful pole of attraction away from the Parti Quebecois towards a genuine left alternative rooted in Quebec's particular context—all at the same time helping create a bigger base of Quebec support for the NDP federally—the NDP is now planning to field candidates in the 2018 Quebec election.

Tom Mulcair was the first to plant this seed a couple of years ago, just after the last provincial election. But even with his departure the idea seems poised to persist.

At the last NDP-Quebec convention, at the end of November 2015, a motion was passed to run NDP-Quebec candidates in the next provincial election. Although

it never came to the floor of the federal NDP Convention in April, where delegates were more consumed with the debate over Mulcair's leadership, the NDP in Quebec appears to be planning to challenge a few specific ridings in 2018.

There was a pernicious falsehood spread about the last federal election which blamed Quebec for the NDP's own failings. The notion that somehow the Islamophobia of the niqab debate is what cost the NDP the election in its loss of Quebec seats over its principled stance has no legs given that the Liberal stance on the niqab was indistinguishable. What was distinguishable between the two parties was their position on the deficit. And now Mulcair is paying the price for that with his ousting from leadership of the party.

The NDP has not lost its potential federal electoral base in Quebec, far from it; but trying to revive the provincial NDP to compete with Québec solidaire would do nothing to restore it. And in terms of provincial politics, running NDP candidates would only encourage Quebecois sympathetic to federalism to vote on that basis rather than voting left. This would pose no real threat to Québec solidaire, but it would be a disservice to its attempts to build a united movement across traditional federalist-sovereigntist lines.

While many at the Edmonton NDP convention debated the future of a party that can be truly progressive and have an orientation on political life outside of watching Parliamentary debates, the left in Quebec is thankfully past that debate.

And that must be supported by anyone in English Canada who supports both a better Parliament and a better world.

THE FIGHT FOR CLIMATE JOBS

Whereas Harper refused to support green jobs, Trudeau has greenwashed his budget by using the language of “clean growth” to justify giving more money to oil and gas. But workers themselves are challenging this through campaigns for real climate jobs.



‘Clean growth’ vs green jobs

By Brian Champ

The 2016 federal budget climate change programs are included in a section titled “A Clean Growth Economy.” In amongst the details of how much (little) money is to be spent on different programs is included a commitment to move “towards a pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change that will meet or exceed Canada’s international greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions targets.” But what is “Clean Growth”?

‘Clean growth’

In early March of this year, Trudeau and the premiers met in Vancouver and subsequently released their declaration on “clean growth and climate change.” The declaration makes promises to meet Canada’s GHG emissions reductions targets and to transition to low carbon economy. But this declaration and any government actions stemming from it are unlikely to make a dent on Canada’s emissions, due to three key components of the declaration—which replicate the “Alberta Climate Leadership Plan.”

Firstly, far from identifying fossil fuel development as the main problem to be solved, the declaration recognizes “the economic importance of Canada’s energy and resource sectors, and their sustainable development as Canada transitions to a low carbon economy.” The budget has borne this out, where not only have oil and gas sector subsidies not been cut, but \$50 million more has been added to improve the “efficiency” of extraction. They’re really saying to the big oil and gas corporations to not worry, we won’t be coming after you. Which means more pipelines, more tar sands extraction and expanding carbon emissions. This is a serious flaw in any real attempt to combat climate change when the main thing that must be done is to keep carbon in the ground.

Secondly, one of the key components of this plan is to price carbon. According to the budget, “Pricing carbon will be a key element to transition Canada to a stronger, more resilient low-carbon economy while also improving our quality of life.” Putting a price on carbon emissions and trusting that market mechanisms will gradually reduce emissions highlights the lack of political will to pursue real action that would require real public money, commitments and a confrontation with the fossil fuel industry. Pricing carbon allows polluters to pay to keep polluting, instead of actually reducing emissions. It also opens the door to emissions trading and offset schemes that are good ways to make money for some companies, but do little or nothing to reduce emissions in reality.

Finally, while there is a language around promoting renewable energy production, a great deal of the solutions on offer in the plan are for improved energy efficiency. And there is a widespread belief among many people that the more efficient use of fossil fuels will help reduce carbon emissions. But the truth has been known for a long time: a 19th Century economist, William Stanley Jevons noted, that there was a paradox involved in the improving steam engine efficiency: as the efficiency of coal burning steam engines improved, the cost of the coal dropped, allowing its use to be expanded dramatically leading to the overall increased use of coal in production. Efficiency improvements in the extraction of oil from the tar sands have to be seen in this light, and are part of the problem, not the solution: leaving the carbon in the ground.

Climate Jobs

While our so called leaders make flowery speeches to cover up their inaction, the growth of the climate justice movement in recent years has seen the coming together of Idle No More, environmentalists and labour activists into a growing movement. One of the crucial components of a winning strategy for the climate justice movement is the demand for the development of, and just transition to Climate Jobs for workers.

The One Million Climate Jobs campaign originated in the UK after workers at the Vestas Wind Turbine plant on the Isle of Wight occupied the plant in August 2009, after the multinational company announced its closure, demanding that it be nationalized to save their jobs. It grew into an international campaign, in South Africa and now in Canada. Developed by the Green Economy Network (GEN), a coalition of national union, environmental NGOs, and social justice groups, the campaign asserts that if the Canadian government spends a mere 5 per cent of the

annual federal budget “in renewable energy, energy efficiency, and public transportation, over five years Canada could create one million new jobs while reducing our annual greenhouse gas emissions by 25 to 35 per cent.”

This requires a total investment of \$81 billion in these three areas over 5 years. The details of the exact dollar amounts, job numbers and greenhouse gas emission reductions associated with the plan can be found on the GEN website: greeneconomy.net.ca. The entire amount being spent on “Clean Growth” over the next two years is on the order of a few billion dollars, and much of this money will not curtail GHG emissions.

As seen above, the plan identifies jobs in the following three sectors as being climate jobs: renewable energy production, energy efficiency and public transportation. Basically a climate job is a job that keeps carbon buried in the ground.

So, for example, factory jobs manufacturing renewable energy systems (e.g. wind turbines or solar panels, etc.) are climate jobs. But so too would those jobs required in the operations and maintenance of these renewable energy systems in the field, as would the associated clerical jobs. These jobs help keep carbon buried by replacing fossil fuel energy production.

Improving energy efficiency in the stock of buildings across the country by retrofitting the estimated 90 per cent of buildings that have low energy efficiency could employ half a million construction tradespeople in climate jobs. These jobs help keep carbon buried by reducing the amount of energy consumed per building. This is necessary in the short term, but insufficient in the long term to curtail the growth of emissions because home and building heating has to be converted to renewable sources to continue to keep carbon in the ground.

Jobs in any part of the public transportation sector are climate jobs. This includes jobs to manufacture the vehicles and other components of the public transportation systems and any job involved with the operations or maintenance of a public transportation system. These jobs help keep carbon buried by reducing the number of cars on the road and thus reducing the amount of energy consumed per kilometer travelled. In the long term public transportation has to be converted to renewable energy in order to continue to keep carbon in the ground.

In addition to climate jobs that lower carbon emissions through energy production and efficiency, there are also many jobs that are green by the fact that they are low-carbon jobs. As the Leap Manifesto explains, “Shifting to an economy in balance with the earth’s limits also means expanding the sectors of our economy that are already low carbon: caregiving, teaching, social work, the arts and public-interest media. Following on Quebec’s lead, a national childcare program is long past due. All this work, much of it performed by women, is the glue that builds humane, resilient communities.”

Grow the Movement

A key element of expanding climate and low-carbon jobs is government spending.

Clearly, given the small relative levels of investment in renewable energy across the economy and the continued dominance of a handful of global oil companies, the drive for profits is a barrier to the development of the green economy: witness the drive to fully exploit the tar sands even though the world scientific consensus is that this is a sure recipe for climate chaos. While there are privately based climate jobs, significant public investment is necessary to ensure that there are enough of them to make a difference on the direction of the economy.

Trudeau claimed his budget spends lavishly on green infrastructure, but it’s a fraction of what’s needed for a just transition—and it’s a fraction of the funds available, as is clear from the leaked Panama Papers. There are growing numbers of workers demanding federal and provincial governments invest in climate jobs, including oil sands workers themselves: as the organization Iron and Earth writes, “We’re calling on the government of Alberta to invest in training programs, starting by retraining one thousand out-of-work oil industry electricians in Alberta in solar panel installation...By preparing the renewable energy workforce it is a win-win for Canadian workers, our families, our economy and the environment.”

Only by continuing to build the movement and push for real solutions can we force our governments to act, and ultimately build a better world run on the power of people and renewable energy.



Iron and Earth: oil sands workers demand climate jobs

by Bradley Hughes

Since spring of this year a small band of oil sands workers have come together to fight against the growing layoffs in the tar sands and to fight for a greener future. Together they have created Iron and Earth, an initiative led by oilsands workers “who are passionate about building the renewable energy future that Canada needs.”

Iron and Earth is trying to get together the resources to provide training to 1000 unemployed oil sands workers to build solar power. Their plan is to work with “unions, oil and gas companies, clean energy entrepreneurs, contractors, politicians, and other leaders in the energy industry” to create new jobs in green industries despite our governments’ claims that we can have jobs or save the environment, but not both.

This new organization hopes to become a member-driven advocacy organization. Their first annual general meeting will be in July, when they will ratify bylaws and decide on the path for the organization for the next 12 months.

The organization is made up of oil sands workers who have lost their jobs and want to be involved in networks that can create new jobs in renewable industries. Their first project is to retrain 1000 electricians to install solar panels.

The founding director, Liam Hildebrand, is a boilermaker

originally from Victoria. As he explains in the organization’s video, “A fourth generation boilermaker, I grew up on the BC coast and I’m passionate about protecting our environment. I’ve tried to find work in renewable energy, but year after year the only jobs available to me are in the oil and gas sector. While leading industrial nations like China, America and Germany are creating millions of green jobs, Canada is stuck on one idea: the fossil fuel economy. I think that needs to change, and I’m not alone: many of my fellow oil sands workers are starting to think this way. We are skilled workers: electricians, iron workers, pipe fitters, boilermakers, carpenters, and many more trades, and we could easily transfer our knowledge to the green economy.”

In a press conference in April, Hildebrand introduced Iron and Earth and it’s first project. He explained that he and his fellow oil sands workers are grateful for the work they have had and that they “see a place for the oil sands in the Canadian economy into the future.” However since many workers are out of work, it’s time to diversify into renewable energy. “We need policies that will put oil sands workers to work in the renewable energy economy.”

He pointed to his own experience where he could put his training to use on renewable projects without the need for new training. However, some renewable industries will require some retraining. Iron and Earth’s first campaign is their Solar

Skills Campaign. The goal is to put 1000 electricians to work installing solar arrays on public buildings. The retraining program that is required will take five days.

Adam Cormier is a journeyman electrician and writer based in St. John’s, Newfoundland, he spoke about the fate of East Coast workers who have migrated to Alberta to work and now can’t find work at home or in Alberta. He pointed out that “the amount of potential renewable energy on the East Coast of Canada is massive.” He announced their plans for a Maritime project in the near future.

Liam Hildebrand ended the conference by declaring that “We want to be the bridge that is going to tie oil and gas and the environment and the workers to create a future that we can all believe in. We believe that energy development must prioritize the health and equity of workers, their families, our communities, the environment and the economy. And we believe that all of those things can be accomplished. We believe that climate change is a considerable threat and we want to ensure that Alberta and Canada meet their climate targets and exceed them. We believe that meeting these climate targets is going to be the largest job creator that our trades have seen in a long time.”

For more information, and to endorse their campaign, visit www.ironandearth.org

NDP convention

From April 8-10, a convention took place in Edmonton to decide the future of the NDP. At the end of the weekend, the future was cloudy, though perhaps brighter than before.

Snatching defeat from the jaws of victory

The NDP made historic gains in 2011, based on anger at the Conservatives, disillusionment with the Liberals and Bloc Québécois, and inspiration from movements around the world from the Arab Spring to the occupation in Wisconsin. For the first time the Official Opposition was not the twin parties of Canadian capitalism but Canada's labour party, which is supposed to represent the working class.

Then the NDP took Alberta, the heartland of wild west capitalism and social conservatism, from a PC government that had run the province into the ground with reckless disregard for the climate, the provincial infrastructure, and the workers. The federal NDP began the election campaign in the lead, by echoing movement demands for \$15 minimum wage, childcare and an end to Bill C-51.

But in an election defined by expense scandals, police state omnibuses, attacks on refugees and "barbaric cultural practices," and austerity, the party that should stand against all those forces managed to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory.

This has seemed a strange occurrence upon reflection, because Canadians voted overwhelmingly for the idea of progress and change. With the Liberal party positing themselves as left wing, there was only one party that the media pegged as centrist or right wing. That big tent Conservative party received only thirty percent of the vote from Canadians, in what was one of the highest voter turnouts in years. So why did the NDP, who ran high in the polls and in public approval, get such a bad result, and why do they continue their decline? Those questions were asked before the convention, and the answers were twofold: the leader, and the platform.

NDP removed the symptom, not the problem

Mulcair failed his leadership referendum, winning only 48 per cent of the vote from his party delegates. This was a man who praised Margaret Thatcher, the enemy of labour unionists. Someone who had removed the word socialist from a party, and who lost the election by promising to "balance the budget," allowing the Liberals to monopolize the surge in vote for change.

While he might have been effective in question period, he ran the party as a top-down manager, silencing members of the party who were too pro-Palestine, too anti-oil, too anything that approached radical.

The party agreed, after stirring speeches by the leaders and the membership, that there's no room in this country for two liberal parties. But removing Mulcair won't transform the party. For years the NDP have moved towards the centre, federally under Jack Layton, and provincially across the country. The NDP, like social democratic parties around the world, exist to manage capitalism not to overthrow it. From Britain's Labour Party, to PASOK in Greece and the ANC in South Africa, social democratic parties have subordinated movements to the capitalist state. Mulcair is merely the latest expression of this behaviour, and removing him does not do away with the reformism at the heart of the party.

Stumble or leap?

Another issue at convention that highlighted the party's predicament was the debate over climate justice. In addition to removing Mulcair from the leadership, the NDP made a second welcome move: to study the Leap Manifesto.

The Leap manifesto declares, in no small words, that the time for austerity and moderatism are over. Large steps must be taken to curb and reverse climate change, income inequality, militarism, and infringement of indigenous rights. The NDP has committed to analyze the points outlined in the manifesto, and adapt the appropriate points into their electoral platform.

A great deal of ink has been spilled by, as Avi Lewis calls them, the "Very Serious Pundits" of Canada. They've attacked the Leap manifesto and the vote against Tom Mulcair as the end of the NDP, a renewal of an age where the NDP were a fringe party. These are the same pundits who have railed against the rise of Bernie Sanders, and of Jeremy Corbyn. The same pundits who lauded Tom Mulcair for his dedication towards balanced budgets. These same pundits continue to misread the Canadian working class and the needs of the planet. They advocate for austerity and slow movement on climate action, for a continuation of failed neo-liberal policies.

But the Leap Manifesto has also been attacked from within the NDP leadership and section of the trade union bureaucracy, who echoed the mainstream pundits and lashed out at their own membership for engaging in the climate justice movement. The same reformist logic that led the NDP to chose Mulcair as leader and campaign on "balancing the budget" is leading the right-wing within the party to attack the Leap Manifesto rather than fight for climate jobs. If this continues it could derail the hope and unity of the climate justice movement.

The two votes at the Edmonton convention have demonstrated that the bulk of the NDP are interested in returning to their roots, though this won't happen automatically. It's by continuing to build the climate justice and other movements with those inside and outside the NDP that we can push the party back towards the left, or build the basis for a left-alternative if it continues its rightward track.



Ghomeshi trial shows justice system is guilty

Last month saw a wave of anger appear as Jian Ghomeshi was acquitted of sexual assault and choking charges. After Ghomeshi's lawyer, Marie Henein, aggressively cross-examined the women who brought forward the complaints, the judge overseeing the hearing determined that the complainants' accounts were not believable and cast doubts onto their credibility.

Unsurprisingly, there was a furious reaction among women and allies who have grown tired of a legal system that puts victims of sexual assault on trial and fails to punish the vast majority of victims of sexual assault.

According to Holly Johnson's article "Limits of a Criminal Justice Response," out of every 1000 case of sexual assault only 33 are reported, 29 recorded as a crime, 12 result in charges, 6 of which are prosecuted, and only 3 end up with a conviction.

There are a variety of reasons why these numbers are so staggeringly low. Many women who are assaulted choose to avoid the "justice" system completely. Going forward to the police often results in their own sexual pasts or conduct being put on trial. If a complaint actually results in prosecution, a victim will often face public backlash of people doubting their story and then have to confront defense lawyers willing to attack them as they testify before the courts.

Whacking the witness

In many ways, the Ghomeshi trial revealed some of the worst aspects of "acceptable" criminal defense practice. In sexual assault cases, defence council often resort to the practice of "whacking the witness," a practice that law professor David Tanovich describes as follows:

Whacking the complainant includes humiliating or prolonged cross-examination that "seek[s] to put the

complainant on trial rather than the accused"; specious applications to obtain the complainant's records; and the invoking and exploiting of stereotypical assumptions about women and consent, including assumptions about communication, dress, revenge, marriage, prior sexual history, therapy, lack of resistance and delayed disclosure

While legislation has sought to curb the practice, the Ghomeshi hearing revealed that it is still a widely used and accepted practice. In her cross-examination of the three complainants, Henein went into extensive questioning about their recollection of events that were only tangentially related to the actual assault. Henein used the victim's failure to be fully forthcoming about post-assault communication with Ghomeshi to suggest ulterior reasons for their account of the assaults. While Ghomeshi exercised his right to not testify, the defense was able to turn the entire case into a trial about the motives of the complainants in bringing their accusation forward.

The end result was not surprising. The criminal justice system has a high bar of "beyond a reasonable doubt" to convict and when a trial turns into examining the minutia of recollection of the accusers it is very difficult to convict.

However, when Justice Horkin's made his decision he did not stop there but went to great lengths to further stigmatize those who bring forward sexual assault accusations, labelling the complainants as "deceptive" and "manipulative" and warning against the "dangerous false assumption that all sexual assault complainants are always truthful," as if that is the most pressing problem facing sexual assault in the justice system.

In many ways the Ghomeshi trial showed everything that is wrong with our criminal justice system's handling of sexual assault. It showed a prosecution that was not up to the

task for the trial and who obviously failed to prepare its key witnesses. It showed defence bar culture that sees it appropriate to eviscerate witnesses through "whacking techniques". And in the result, it showed why so many victims of sexual assault chose to not come forward, afraid of being humiliated, blamed and accused of deception and manipulation.

Moving forward

Whether Ghomeshi will get justice in the future or not, things need to change in our criminal justice system. There needs to be greater openness in accepting that complainants' stories are messy, scarred by the trauma of sexual assault. Their testimonies are never going to be crystal clear accounts of what happened, and just because they aren't does not mean they lack legitimacy or credibility.

There needs to be self-reflection among those who practice criminal defense. The principle of not letting someone's freedom away without the state proving its case beyond a reasonable doubt is an important one, but does this require cross-examination techniques that aim to destroy the complainants? And judges need to be cognizant that decisions that vilify victims discourage reporting.

Beyond this, projects such as the one launched by Linda Redgrave, one of Ghomeshi's victims, will try to provide a safe space for victims of sexual assault to come forward. Additionally, the Ontario government has agreed to pay for legal advice for victims, which will hopefully give complainants a better sense of what they are going up against and leave them more prepared.

Further reading: Jon Krakauer's "Missoula: Rape and the Justice System in a College Town" is a brilliant recount of the American justice system's own failings with sexual assault that echo all the things we saw in Ghomeshi.



Remembering Prince's life and politics

MUSIC

In reaction to Prince's passing many mainstream press focused on how many records he sold, but for his fans it was the combination of his musical talents and his politics that caused such an outpouring of emotion.

Whereas the press is obsessed with how he died, we want to remember how he lived.

Prince pioneered wildly popular fusion of pop, rock, and funk, but never took on the mantle of a celebrity artist—choosing instead to live in his home city of Minneapolis (and a home in Toronto).

He embraced sexuality through his performances and lyrics, in a gender non-conforming way that challenged conventions and encouraged people to be themselves—as he sang in 1984, “I’m not a woman. I’m not a man. I’m something that you’ll never understand.”

One of his many innovations was the highly visible role he gave to women as the musicians in his band. Traditionally women were only backup singers or backup dancers, or not visible at all. Their presence

as highly talented musicians was something of a first in this genre of music.

A turbulent period in his career was the latter part of his relationship with Warner Brothers. Unwilling to allow him to exit his contract, Prince deliberately subverted their power by changing his name to an unprintable and unpronounceable symbol (which merged the traditional symbols for male and female), and writing “slave” on his face to protest his conditions.

His popularity despite this change forced the mainstream media to begin calling him “the artist formerly known as Prince.” His management sent out floppy discs with the symbol/font loaded onto it, so that papers could print articles with his correct name. As a member of the American Federation of Musicians for 40 years, he also supported the musician’s rights more broadly.

Prince, a Jehova’s Witness, refrained from publicising his acts of charity due to his religious convictions. Though he never sought recognition, he was a strong supporter of the Black Lives Matter movement.

He devoted a benefit concert in Baltimore to the movement in memory of the murder of Freddy Gray, and introduced last year’s Album of the Year at the Grammy’s by stating, “Albums, like books and black lives, still matter—tonight and always.” Prince also used his success to support others, including radical female musicians such as Janelle Monae and Erika Badu.

For the benefit concert, Prince wrote a song called “Baltimore.” In it he honours the memory of Michael Brown and Freddy Gray and the BLM movement fighting anti-Black racism:

“Nobody got in nobody’s way
So I guess you could say it was a good day
At least a little better than the day in Baltimore
Does anybody hear us pray
For Michael Brown or Freddie Gray?
Peace is more than the absence of war
If there ain’t no justice then there ain’t no peace.”

The anti-war movement on screen

MOVIE

Film: We Are Many
Directed by Amir Amirani
Review by Paula Greenberg and Faline Bobier

On Tuesday April 12 2016, the War Resisters Support Campaign presented a special screening of We Are Many.

This excellent documentary by internationally renowned director and producer Amir Amirani, focuses on the 2003 invasion of Iraq, the resistance against the war and the outcomes from those protests. It covers over 50 interviews of people involved in the global action that brought an estimated 30 million people to march in over 72 countries.

It clearly explains the build up that the USA and UK towards their project of war with Iraq. The clips of Bush and Blair are shocking to think of their blatant lies for an illegal war. It was inspiring to see the level of organization, that brought ordinary people out to protest and call for a global day of action pre-facebook/twitter era. The protest was entirely global, including a scientific research station in Antarctica!

There were great interviews with people such as Jermei Corbyn, MP now UK Labour leader, Egyptian Revolutionary Socialists, and women from US organization CodePink.

Here in Canada, thanks largely to the large mobilizations of Feb 15 and

thereafter, particularly in Quebec, the peace movement was able to prevent the government of then Prime Minister Jean Chrétien from participating, however much he may have wanted to.

However, Amirani does more than simply freeze a moment in time. He understands the anti-war movement as a phenomenon which did affect the course of history in ways that were unimaginable at the time.

There was a real cross-pollination of anti-war movements in the West building solidarity for their sisters and brothers in places like Egypt and Palestine, and of the struggles in those places feeding back into the peace movement globally. For several years, starting in the early 2000s, anti-war activists from around the world converged in Cairo, Egypt for an international peace conference, which also acted as a support for anti-Mubarak protests and strikes within Egypt. Through the process the global anti-war movement contributed to the Arab Spring.

There is a tendency now in some sections of the left to claim that these movements never really existed, or if they did, that they were in any case doomed to fail because the forces ranged against us were too powerful.

But if we want to be true to those who continue to struggle in extremely difficult circumstances we need to understand that the anti-war movement documented in Amirani’s film is

not the end, but the beginning of a process, in which ordinary people have resisted their respective governments to say no to bloody imperialist wars in which we are all losers.

Here in Canada we finally got rid of Stephen Harper and his hated Tories but the struggle for justice continues. The WRSC is now organizing to push Justin Trudeau to let US war resisters remain in Canada. It’s not enough to sound different from the war-mongering Harper government; Trudeau must show in practice that his government represents a different path. If the Iraq war was immoral and illegal then it follows that American soldiers who refused to participate in the slaughter of Iraqi citizens should be supported, not sent back to the US to face court martial and military prison.

In the same way, we must keep faith with that movement which brought out over 30 million of us on February 15, 2013.

The main lesson of Amirani’s film is that ordinary people have the capacity to organize movements that can change the way we see the world. Our movement has not yet achieved what is necessary to make the world a safe and peaceful place but we are on that road and there is no turning back.

For more information visit <http://wearemany.com>

The Irish Citizens Army of 1916

By Paul O’Brien

In their efforts to present the 1916 Irish Rising as a purely patriotic affair and to minimise its radical and revolutionary implications the establishment tends to play down the role of James Connolly and the Irish Citizen Army.

The ICA was formed in August 1913 during the great Lockout. Both Larkin and Connolly were convinced that workers needed an organisation of their own to protect picket lines and union meetings from assault by the police and the hired thugs of the employers.

Within a fortnight the first ‘red army’ anywhere in the world had been formed; 1,200 had enrolled. In reality the difference between those who enrolled in a fit of enthusiasm and the numbers who turned up for training was substantial. The ICA was not exactly a ‘Red Army’ perhaps a ‘Red Guard’ is a more apt description.

The Citizen Army was not central to the Lockout, but it made the police more circumspect about attacking the workers. As the dispute petered out in early 1914 attendances at parades diminished and the organisation was practically moribund and in the changed circumstances, a number of workers transferred their support from the ICA to the nationalist Irish Volunteers. The active membership of the ICA fell to about fifty.

Reorganisation

In 1914 it was completely reorganised and Sean O’Casey wrote its constitution, stating the army’s principles as follows: “The ownership of Ireland, moral and material, is vested of right in the people of Ireland” and to “sink all difference of birth property and creed under the common name of the Irish people”.

Jim Larkin threw himself into rebuilding the Irish Citizen Army. The two strands that made up the core of Larkin’s politics were socialism and republicanism. Given the dearth of working class militancy after the defeat of the Lockout, Larkin’s republican politics came to the fore.

After Larkin’s departure for America in late 1914, James Connolly assumed command and knocked the ICA into shape. The members worked hard at drill and military tactics evenings and weekends. Guns were obtained by any means possible. They looked smart in the new uniforms, topped off with the famous slouched hat, one side pinned up with the union red hand badge engraved with the initials ICA.

Resurgence

The resurgence of the ICA coincided with an upturn in the political atmosphere. Opposition to the war was growing, especially as the threat of conscription in Ireland became a possibility. The republicans were determined to use the war as an opportunity to strike at the old enemy. A hint of rebellion was in the air and Connolly in the pages of the Workers’ Republic fanned the flames. He wrote:

‘Hitherto the workers of Ireland have fought as parts of the armies led by their masters, never as a member

of any army officered, trained and inspired by men of their own class. Now, with arms in their hands, they propose to steer their own course, to carve their own future.’

Beginning in May 1915 in a series of articles in the Workers’ Republic Connolly tried to develop military tactics for modern revolutionary warfare. He set out the basis for a ‘peoples warfare’ based on the experience of the revolutionary upheavals starting with the bourgeois revolutions in the nineteenth century and up to the socialist revolution in Moscow in 1905. In particular he was trying to develop a strategy for urban warfare such as the Citizen Army might be called upon to participate in.

Connolly’s pamphlet *The Reconquest of Ireland* was published by the ITGWU in 1915. This pamphlet is the key to understanding the direction that Connolly took the Citizen Army after he took command. His aim was to put labour in the forefront of the national struggle.

Given the crisis thrown up by the war in Europe; the ICA would be the catalyst that could unite all sections of the nationalist movement in a revolutionary fight against the British presence in Ireland; while maintaining its political independence within the broader movement.

In the months before the Rising all ICA members were asked to confirm their support for the forthcoming Rising.

This was always going to be a difficult political tightrope for Connolly to walk. The danger of liquidating the labour movement into the broader nationalist camp was always present, or of making political concessions that marginalised the labour programme in the name of unity with the nationalists.

During Easter week about 175 members of the ICA mobilised. They were mainly attached to the garrisons in the GPO and in the College of Surgeons. The ICA was the first unit into action. Just after midday on Easter Monday a contingent of the ICA attempted to take Dublin Castle, but they were beaten back.

Women, such as Constance Markievicz, Dr Kathleen Lynn, Mollie O’Reilly and Rosie Hackett, played a significant part in the ICA, serving as equals alongside the men.

Connolly’s execution after the Rising left the ICA leaderless and without any political direction. They were active in the War of Independence and the Civil War, but were totally isolated from the working class movement and only played a support role with no independent class position during those turbulent years. Members of the ICA were prominent in rebuilding the socialist movement in the late 1920’s, but by the late 1930’s the ICA had ceased to exist in any meaningful sense.

Nevertheless in 1916 the deeds of the ICA and its leaders such as James Connolly, himself, Michael Mallin and Constance Markievicz left an indelible socialist and revolutionary mark on Irish history, which should never be forgotten.

This is shared from Socialist Worker (Ireland)

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 threatens our sustenance through unsafe and unsustainable farming, and kills the earth itself with pollution and unsustainable extraction of oil, minerals, animals, trees, and water. Capitalism leads to imperialism and war. Saving ourselves and the planet depends on finding an alternative.

A system that is killing the planet

Capitalist profits depend on extracting the world's blood and bone. The devastating impact of capital's assault on the planet affect the world's most vulnerable populations and threaten the long-term meaningful existence of humanity. Capitalism cannot regulate the catastrophic effects of climate change. We stand for climate justice, including the concept of "just transition" for affected workers.

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.

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 environmental racism. We oppose discrimination on the basis of religion, ability and age.

Canada, Quebec, Indigenous Peoples

Canada is not a "colony" of the United States, but an imperialist country in its own right that participates in the exploitation of much of the world. The Canadian state was founded through the repression of Indigenous peoples and the people of Quebec.

We support the struggles for self-determination of Quebec and Indigenous peoples up to and including the right to independence. In particular, we recognize Indigenous peoples' original and primary right to decide their fate and that of their lands, heritage, and traditions. Socialists in Quebec, and in all oppressed nations, work to give the struggle against national oppression an internationalist and working class content.

Internationalism

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

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 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.

Reform and revolution

Every day, there are battles between exploiter and exploited, 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 the NDP and many trade union leaders say. Nor can the system regulate itself to prevent environmental destruction and climate injustice. It has to be overthrown. That will require the mass action of workers themselves.

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.



Activist calendar movement events



breakfree2016.org

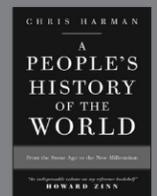
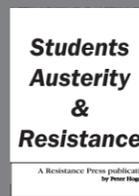
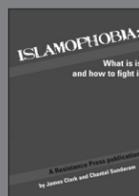
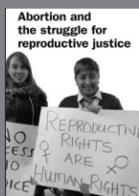
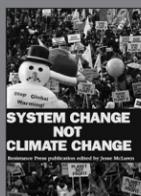


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FIGHT FOR \$15 AND FAIRNESS

by Paula Greenberg and Pam Frache

On April 1 the Chicago Teachers' Union and the Fight for \$15 launched joint strike action. Then on April 15, there was a national day of action for the fight for a \$15 minimum wage, spanning 7 provinces and 30 cities.

In the city of Toronto, activists from the Fight for \$15 and Fairness campaign, union members, community groups and students gathered in front of the Ontario Ministry of Labour demanding their voices be heard. Over 1000 people attended the rally.



Shut down Chicago

Brynne Sinclair-Waters, a worker for the OCUFA and organizer of The Toronto Young Worker's Network, spoke to *Socialist Worker* about her experiences of the April 15th action as well as the April 1st Teacher's Union action in Chicago.

In an extraordinary display of partnership and solidarity, teachers walked the lines with fast food workers and fast food workers marched with teachers.

Chicago State University students and the Black Youth Project hosted teach-ins about the need to end racist violence and deliver economic justice, including decent work and high quality, free public education. Airport workers, bakery workers, young workers, and other community organizations mobilized in their thousands to #Fightfor15, #FightforFunding and #ShutDownChi.

From Brynne's experience from the April 1st action, she remembers activist Roxanne Dubois telling the audience that movements like the Fight for \$15 are like tools for activists to use and learn from.

When asked about the objective of the April 15th day of action, Sinclair-Waters remarked that the action was to show power of a working class movement and to fight for decent work for all. She went on to say that since the preceding fight for \$14, the government would try to contain the demands with subsequent reviews.

This day of action was to show the Ontario Ministry of Labour that even small victories cannot subdue the movement, it raises expectations.

Ontario We Want

The government's Changing Workplaces Review wrapped up its formal consultation process last fall and the initial report is expected to be issued shortly. The April 15 mobilization was well-timed to put elected representatives on notice that

Ontarians want meaningful changes to the province's labour standards.

"Ontarians have big expectations for this review," said Deena Ladd, Coordinator of the Workers' Action Centre, one of the member organizations of the of the campaign. "Whether it's parents trying to make ends meet on poverty wages, recent graduates struggling to pay student debt on short-term contracts, temp workers with no guarantee of hours, workers losing their wages and benefits when contracts flip, or unfair exemptions that leave some workers with no protection at all - more and more Ontarians are saying: Enough! We need changes now!"

The Fight for \$15 & Fairness is calling for sweeping reforms, including fair scheduling; further regulating temporary agencies; investing in pro-active, public enforcement of employment laws; imposing meaningful fines for labour law infractions; legislating seven paid sick days; an end to contract flipping; easier access to unions; and more. Central in the campaign is the demand for a \$15 minimum wage for all workers, regardless of age, student status, job or area of work.

Day of action

In Toronto, April 15 began early when dozens of frontline health workers gathered at 7:30 am outside the Dufferin Medical Centre to call for paid sick days and job-protected emergency leave for all workers. Nurses, clinicians, students and doctors leafleted, collected signatures on petitions, and handed out tissue packages adorned with Support Paid Sick Days stickers.

Later, young workers from a variety of unions and students' unions gathered at Toronto's College and University intersection at 11:45 am to participate in a feeder march that joined the central 12:30 pm rally

outside the Ministry of Labour.

At the same time, several hundred OPSEU members, in Toronto for their annual convention, joined the Fight for \$15 & Fairness rally, carrying their own Fight for \$15 & Fairness placards and chanting rhythmically to the beat of the Samba Squad.

About 1,000 workers from community organizations, student groups, and trade unions converged on the streets outside 400 University Avenue. There, the crowd reclaimed and renamed the Ministry of Labour: the Ministry of Decent Work

As the lunchtime rally and street party wrapped up at the Ministry of Labour, some participants boarded a bus and headed north to the GTAA (Greater Toronto Airport Authority) in Brampton to show solidarity with airport workers demanding \$15 and Fairness at Pearson International Airport. The International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAMAW) had taken the lead on this rally bringing dozens of their members to this important event.

Next steps

The next Fight for \$15 & Fairness action in support of airport workers will take place on May 1 from 1:00 pm to 2:30 pm at Terminal 1, Departures. To RSVP on Facebook, click here.

The next steps of the group is to continue to build networks of activists and rank and file workers. The Fight for \$15 and Fairness plans to have another day of action on October 7th, the International Day for Decent Work and have their objectives as an election issue in 2018.

For more information visit <http://15andfairness.org/>

STICKING WITH THE UNION

Carolyn Egan

The Leap manifesto and labour

The discussion over the Leap Manifesto which erupted after the NDP Convention seemed to reopen the debate over jobs versus the environment.

It was suggested that it was a document written by Toronto elites out of touch with the economic needs of the country.

The recent Op Ed in *The Globe and Mail* written by Crystal Lameman, an Indigenous woman from Alberta who was a part of the gathering of activists who produced the document, took this claim on.

As she wrote, "I was one of the first to sign the Leap Manifesto, and I helped write it. You might find that strange if you've read the media reports calling its authors latte-sipping Toronto elites. I'm not exactly part of that class: I'm an indigenous mother of two from the Beaver Lake Cree Nation, in the heart of Alberta's oil industry."

"From where I stand, the Leap Manifesto isn't an attack on Albertans or its workers. It's a gift, offering us a pathway to a more humane, healthy and livable province, one that honours the treaty rights of indigenous peoples and meets the needs of all its inhabitants."

The group who developed the Leap Manifesto was made up of Indigenous peoples, environmentalists, trade unionists and community activists from across the country.

What the pundits are putting forward is a total misreading of the aims of the manifesto, which is a thoughtful document linking the fight against the austerity agenda with the climate justice movement. It speaks of the situation of Indigenous people and the need to create climate jobs and a just transition for workers presently in the resource industries, as we create an environmentally sustainable future.

Oil workers

Workers in the resource industries understand the situation in which they find themselves, trying to make a living and at the same time dealing with the health and safety and environmental issues that are at play.

A recent strike by workers in the oil industry in the United States is an example of this. The United Steelworkers walked off the job at fourteen refineries in 2015; 6,500 struck for six weeks. In the words of a

local leader, the members were out because of, "onerous overtime, unsafe staffing levels, dangerous conditions the industry continues to ignore, the daily occurrences of fires, emissions, leaks and explosions."

They took on the spills and pollution which were affecting local communities as well as the health and safety of the workers. They took on the contracting out of maintenance to poorly trained, non-union workers that was putting everyone at risk, the local population and the workers. They were in the best place to raise the call to protect the environment in which they worked and lived. Workers are not divorced from communities. It is they, their families and their children, as well as those of their neighbours, who are directly affected by spills and pollution.

They witnessed the BP explosion of an oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico a number of years back that killed workers and created a massive oil slick which was devastating to the environment. There have been more explosions and deaths since as profits continue to rule over lives and the earth.

The action by the Steelworkers did not go unnoticed by the climate justice movement. They were joined on the picket line by 350.org, the Sierra Club and Rising Tide as well as other unions including nurses. These workers withdrew their labour in the name of health and safety protections and defense of the environment and this was understood in their communities.

They won their strike with this broad local support and gained significant improvements that made the six weeks of lost wages worthwhile. There was also the threat of a nationwide strike in the oil industry that pushed the employer to agree to a settlement.

This is a concrete example of what an alliance between trade unionists and environmentalists can achieve, which will bring gains to both because in truth it is the same struggle.

The discussions going on locally on the Leap Manifesto gives us a tremendous opportunity to bring both a class, and anti-racist perspective to the developing climate justice movement and build the unity we need to win against the corporations.

Conference highlights movements for change

The International Socialists' annual Marxism conference tackled some big issues and saw attendance from socialists and other activists from across the country.

2016's Ideas for Real Change brought together around 150 activists from diverse social movements and speakers from around the world—including activists from Europe fighting fascism and anti-migrant racism.

Friday night's opening panel featured former Ontario Federation of Labour president Sid Ryan, leading member of the IS Carolyn Egan, and Steelworker activist, Mike Seaward discussing the Easter Rising of 1916—which was one of many anti-colonial struggles that took place in the 20th century, where women played key roles. The speakers—members of the Irish diaspora from Dublin, Boston and Newfoundland respectively—discussed the importance of the fight for Irish freedom and the role of James Connolly, a socialist and trade unionist

who played a leading role in the 1916 rebellion.

The Saturday of the conference opened with a moving session hearing from speakers directly affected by Bill C-51 and the Canadian government's security certificates program. Azzezah Kanji, Sophie Harkat and Crystal Sinclair shared their experiences of racism and surveillance by the Canadian state and explained the impact of the government's attacks on civil liberties.

At the lunchtime session on "How do we win real change," Ontario NDP MPP Cheri DiNovo expressed sharp criticism of the party's direction, emphasized the importance of the Leap Manifesto and advocated her vision for the future of the party. André Frappier joined the conversation from Québec solidaire, speaking on the work they are doing to build a left alternative party of the ballot box and the streets. From the International Socialists, Ritch Whyman emphasized the need for parties of the left to speak to the big ideas facing the

working class today while seeking to build fighting movements outside of Parliament.

At a time when the environment and jobs are being pitted against each other, the "Climate Justice Now" discussion brought together Ken Smith, a member of Unifor who works in the Tar Sands, on a panel with Myeenghun Henry of the Chippewas of the Thames First Nation. Facing 50,000 layoffs, Smith emphasized the urgent task of transitioning oil workers into a sustainable economy. Myeenghun Henry spoke of the battle against pipelines on their territory, and the meeting raised almost \$1000 for the Chippewa of the Thames' upcoming Supreme Court challenge.

The weekend featured more than a dozen sessions and a Sunday "Skills for Socialists" workshop. These powerful presentations provided spaces for discussion and equipped activists with ideas and connections to continue these struggles.



Socialist Worker

FIGHT FOR \$15 AND FAIRNESS

April 14 and 15, 2016 marked a new high point in the Fight for \$15 movement in North America and around the world when workers in over 300 US cities and 40 countries mobilized together to demand fair wages and decent work.

Since its beginnings in 2012 when fast food workers and Walmart employees launched strike action to demand a \$15 minimum wage, workers have been winning victories on minimum wages, paid sick days, fair scheduling, union rights and more.

Victories

The US National Employment Law Project (NELP) estimates that, as a result of the Fight for \$15, some 17 million workers across the US have won pay raises, far exceeding the employer-centred approach that characterized the living wage campaigns of the 1990s.

In just a short period of time, several cities won \$15 minimum wage legislation, including SeaTac and Seattle, WA and San Francisco and Los Angeles, CA. Last year in New York, the state wage board implemented a sector-wide \$15 minimum wage for all fast food workers.

On April 4, 2016, New York governor Cuomo and California governor Jerry Brown both signed into being the first two statewide \$15 minimum wage laws in the US.

Rebecca Cornick joined the April 14 Fight for \$15 rally in New York's Times Square. Four years ago, she was working at KFC and was among the first workers to strike for \$15 as part of the Fast Food Forward movement. Today, she's a Fight for \$15 organizer:

"Right now I am in the South trying to help out and make sure that they win \$15,



photo credit: OFL

because not only New York and California deserve it. We all deserve it."

Even though she's now organizing in the south, she wanted to be in New York City for the national day of action in part to celebrate the NY wage victory and to inspire workers to fight elsewhere.

"I am here to support all workers. One by one we are going to knock down every state until they win \$15 like we did."

Working class unity

The energy and excitement of the Fight for \$15 – including its remarkable victories – has been contagious, drawing previously fragmented sections of the working class into united, concrete activity. Even sections of the working class who more typically identify as "professionals"

and therefore separate from working-class concerns are finding their own pathways into the Fight for \$15.

For example, contract faculty joined the movement in 2015 organizing under the banner of Fight for \$15K – \$15,000 per course, instead of the current rate of \$3,500 to \$4,500. They formed "Faculty Forward" inspired directly by the success of New York's Fast Food Forward movement.

"I'm 35 years old and still need some support from my parents," explains Matt Hoffman, contract faculty at Loyola University in Chicago: "I never considered myself a laborer or someone who would be part of a labor union because I always thought that those were for working-class people in industries that required manual labor... It took me a long time to real-

ize that I was actually part of the working class."

This shift in consciousness is not surprising: according to a 2015 study by the University of California Berkeley's Center for Labor Research and Education, fully one-quarter (25 per cent) of part-time university professors rely on some form of public assistance to make ends meet.

The situation for home-care workers is even worse. The data show nearly half (48 per cent) of US home-care workers are reliant on social assistance to supplement inadequate wages.

But by connecting their collective bargaining strategy to the demands of the Fight for \$15, unionized homecare workers in Massachusetts and Oregon have won a starting wage of \$15 and paid sick days in Minnesota.

One reason the Fight for \$15 has been so successful is that it offers a framework that poses the campaign in class terms—not merely union terms. It's a frame that relies on workers' self-activity, on networks of activists in union and non-union workplaces, in communities and on campuses.

No matter where they are situated, workers can adapt the campaign to suit their particular circumstances, yet still be part of a movement where a victory anywhere nourishes the movement everywhere.

Ontario

On April 15 thousands of union and non-union workers joined forces to demand meaningful changes to the province's labour and employment laws, in 20 cities across Ontario. In Toronto the day of action

included health workers gathering petitions and distributing leaflets outside the Dufferin Medical Centre to support paid sick days; a rally outside the Ministry of Labour that united students and workers from a variety of different unions and community organizations; and then a rally at the Toronto airport, including members of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers and other members of the Toronto Airport Workers' Council, building momentum for a May Day rally at the airport.

Global movement

In addition to variations of the Fight for \$15 across the US and Canada (BC, Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick all have launched campaigns over the previous 18 months), the movement spans continents.

Workers are mobilizing for a decent minimum wage from Bangladesh to the Philippines and from Belgium to Brazil. In Japan, workers are fighting for \$1,500 Yen. In Britain, the £10 Now! movement draws directly from the \$15 Now campaigns in the US (where \$15 US converts to about £10).

David Rolf, president of SEIU Local 775, was one of the organizers of the Fight for \$15 campaign. In an interview about the Fight for \$15 in *The Guardian*, a British newspaper, Rolf noted that in previous eras, "It took decades for the eight-hour day movement to have its first success, but it took a matter of months for the Fight for 15 to have its first success. Now a \$15 minimum wage is rolling through the US... It has inspired hope in millions of workers."

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Join the World Social Forum

The goal of World Social Forum 2016 is to gather tens of thousands of people from groups in civil society, organizations and social movements who want to build a sustainable and inclusive world, where every person and all peoples have a place and can make their voice heard.

Social Forums began in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in 2001, in the context of the anti-globalization movement. Since then they have spread around the world, serving as a meeting place for activists from various movements to share their experiences and organize.

In the lead up to the 2003 Iraq War, the European Social Forum of November 2002 in Italy and World Social Forum of January

2003 in Brazil played an important role in calling for and helping to organize the historic protests of February, 2003 when millions marched against war.

Social Forums have taken place around the world: in India in 2004; Venezuela, Mali and Pakistan in 2006; Kenya in 2007; Senegal in 2011; Tunisia in 2013.

The format has also been adapted locally, like the Peoples Social Forum in Ottawa in 2015, or the Toronto Social Forum in 2016.

Learn from Quebec

This August the World Social Forum will take place in Montreal, August 9-14.

As with all social forums the bulk of the participation will be from the host city, but it will also draw activists from across the country and

around the world.

For activists in English Canada this is a critical opportunity to learn from struggles around the world and from those in Quebec that the English Canadian mainstream media ignore.

The corporate media love to bash Quebec, because it has been the high point of struggle.

In 2001 Quebec drew 70,000 people to protest the Free Trade Area of the Americas.

In 2003 Quebec had the largest of the anti-war protests across the country, which played a key role in stopping the Liberals from going to war.

Quebec has had two mass student strikes in the past decade, first in 2005 and then in 2011, the latter of which stopped a tuition hike and toppled the government.

Just a few months ago Quebec had the largest general strike in a generation, with nearly half a million workers going on strike.

Join!

Activists across the country should try to get to Montreal for the World Social Forum. Whether or not you think you will be present in Montreal from the 9th to 14th of August 2016, you can participate in the WSF 2016 by simply registering. This creates an account that allows you access to a social network, keeps you in touch with participants, with NGOs, and with the WSF collective. A better world is possible!

To register and to see the programme of WSF activities and events: wsf2016.org