

NDP's bitter betrayal

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IN 2018....

JOIN THE RESISTANCE



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January 2017 saw the inauguration of Donald Trump in the US, and the situation seemed bleak to anyone fighting for a more just world. Racists were on the march, there were plans for legislation which would be devastating to working people in the US and a real fear that Trump may be leading us to World War III.

In Canada, the Trudeau Liberals were proving themselves just as right-wing as the Conservatives on everything from pipelines to war to indigenous rights. Yet the popularity of

the government seemed unassailable.

But then the resistance exploded. The women's march on Washington and in other cities was one of the largest mobilizations in US history. The Islamophobic ban on Muslims entering the US was opposed with mass rallies at airports across the US. The heroic resistance, primarily of people with disabilities, destroyed Trump's attempt to repeal Obamacare.

It seemed that, as scary as the situation was, the prospect of real opposition and real victories was possible.

The Nazi rally in Charlottesville exposed the real nature of the bigots organizing in the US and around the world. The response was immediate and massive. Planned demonstrations by the far-right in Vancouver and Boston were shut down by thousands of anti-racists. Wherever they showed up they were opposed and pushed back.

Closer to home, the fight against the pipeline politics of the federal Liberals forced the cancellation of the Energy East pipeline. Tenants in Parkdale went on a rent strike against

greedy landlords and won. Strikes by Ontario college faculty, workers at Ippolito at the Ontario food terminal and Aramark workers at York University all resulted in victories.

These strikes show that workers are fed up and when properly organized can push back against the bosses.

And in Ontario, the Fight for \$15 and Fairness secured a huge victory for all minimum wage workers, raising the wage to \$14 an hour on January 1st 2018, with more increases planned for the future.

The last year proved that we can

have a serious fightback against the bosses and bigots. But they are on the move, and the situation remains fraught with dangers. They will threaten every gain made and try to push their agenda of racism and austerity. We need to be ready.

It is becoming clearer to masses of people each day that a better world is possible, but it won't come easy. It will require organization and political clarity.

Make this the year that you resolve to join the socialists and build the fight for a world of peace and justice.

Tories double down on double talk

by John Bell

I sincerely regret to report that Jason Kenney has won a seat in the Alberta legislature.

Kenney, former Igor to Stephen Harper's Frankenstein, is the newly minted leader of the United Conservative Party. The UCP is a fusion of the Tories and the Wild Rose Party, an attempt to recreate the Conservative dynasty that ruled Alberta from the time the dinosaurs roamed. With Kenney at the helm, Calgary's petrocracy hope to see dinosaurs come charging out of the tar sands yet again.

But, Tories nationwide have a problem. When people discover what they really think, the majority tend to say "Thanks, but no thanks." This is posing something of a challenge for Jason Kenney, Patrick Brown and Andrew Scheer.

For instance, more than seven out of 10 Canadians support the right to same sex marriage. Four out of five support legal abortion rights. And a similar number say immigration is good for the country and economy. Since most Tory supporters and candidates are anti-queer, oppose abortion and portray immigration as a drain on our resources and threat to our "values", this puts them at a disadvantage.

So they lie to us. They have to convince us that they are nice middle of the road folks and slowly, stealthily, make us see the error of our neighbour-loving, rights-respecting ways.

Thanks to Preston Manning, patron saint of reactionary rhetoric, and his Manning Centre "think tank," they have a plan.

Not long ago someone leaked details to the Press Progress news site. Starting with their own research findings, that two thirds of young Albertans reject Tory "values," Manning asks his corporate friends to pony up at least \$500,000 to "increase support among Millennials for conservative values, policies and candidates."

The news is good (for us) or bad (for Manning, Scheer, Kenney, Brown, et al): "... Only 16% of Millennials self-identify with the current conservative brand as compared with 66% who self-identify as liberal, moderate or progressive. The term 'conservative' elicits more negative perceptions than positive..." The people who came of age under Stephen Harper consider Conservative politicians among the least trustworthy people in the



Kenney, former Igor to Harper's Frankenstein Daily Xtra (CC BY-NC 2.0)

country.

The answer? Reconceptualising! It's sort of like lying. According the Manning tank-thinkers: "Socially conservative positions are less of a 'deal breaker':"

- When they are reconceptualised to be less polarizing (i.e. rather than asking people if they're for or against immigration – shift the debate to the appropriate level of immigration).

- When they are framed within the context of conservative support for 'individual rights and freedom of choice' accompanied by an acceptance of responsibility for the consequences of those choices."

So in Ontario Patrick Brown has to "reconceptualise" his voting record as a Harper MP – he voted against access to abortion, against equal pay for women, against childhood pharmacare and against a liveable minimum wage. As Ontario Tory leader he has used every dirty trick in his playbook to take over the grassroots where right-wing ideas are strongest, and parachute in hand-picked candidates based on their cosmetic media appeal. Can he rebrand himself from right-wing storm trooper to slick, urban metro-tory? Can he hold on to seats when whole riding associations are quitting in disgust and taking him to court? The Wynne Liberals are mired in scandal and it would take a major doofus to

blow this chance—and Brown might just be the kid to do it

Jason Kenney faces the same challenge if he is to regain the throne in Alberta. Will his years as Harper's hitman give him an aura or an odour? Can he pretend to be middle of the road, when his party is bullying queer school kids in gay-straight alliances?

To do so he'll have to keep his creepy UCP followers out of the headlines, no easy task.

Take Alberta MLA Ron Orr, whose fear of legalized marijuana takes him to previously uncharted territory. After asserting that the Communism was a result of opium smoking, he reasoned that opium "was just a flower, and it was smoked, just like marijuana was smoked."

How about UCP house leader Jason Nixon, who opposed workplace anti-harassment legislation. It happens that in his previous life as a corporate dude he fired a single mother shortly after she lodged a sexual harassment complaint.

Get reconceptualising, Kenney.

Scheer, Brown, Kenney and many more double-speakers will be gathering at the 2018 edition of the Manning Centre Tory love-in to network and exchange "ideas to make Canada a better governed country." To sell that as anything other than a right-wing shit show will take a lot more than reconceptualising.

QS convention and radical independence

by Chantal Sundaram

In December 600 delegates of Quebec solidaire (QS) gathered to vote on a merger with Option nationale, another electoral party formed out of disillusionment with the PQ, and to approve the electoral platform for the Quebec election of October 1, 2018.

Expectations are high with the exponential growth in members since student strike leader Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois threw his lot in with QS last spring and won a seat in the National Assembly. QS started polling first or second in the 18-35-year-old demographic.

Ballot and street

QS was always intended to be a party that gives voice to social movements in the Assembly. It has succeeded in doing so, but the goal in the upcoming election is to prove that QS is going forward at the ballot.

The campaign will try to connect with people whose anger will also be courted by the other non-traditional party competing with QS: the Coalition pour l'avenir du Québec (CAQ). The CAQ also sees the crumbling allegiances with the Quebec Liberals and PQ. They are an alt-right party that supports austerity and opposes movements like the student strike and seeks to channel anger towards racist scapegoating. And they have a much larger electoral machine.

But QS has an activist base that can reach people who feel excluded by the political establishment by campaigning on the ground, as in the Corbyn and Sanders campaigns – on issues like climate change, the minimum wage, cuts to health and education, and oppression. The question will be how successfully QS will position itself against the politics of hate.

Merger with Option nationale

The story that reached the media outside Quebec was the vote to merge with Option nationale (ON), a party that shares many of the same values of QS but puts more emphasis on independence from the Canadian state as a goal in itself. For QS independence is a tool for a radically progressive government to implement policies that will

immediately contradict the interests of Canadian federalism.

The vote to merge passed by a large majority and shortly after passed at a convention of ON. Obviously there is a desire for unity of the left, but there was also much careful discussion about the details of the merger deal and the different emphasis placed by the parties on the independence question.

As one QS member said: "Until last night I wasn't sure why I felt like a supporter of Quebec independence. I don't support any kind of Quebec identity. But then I heard from our speakers from Catalonia: it's about what kind of society we want, and the one we are in is broken."



QS in Solidarity with Catalonia

The speakers were from the CUP, Candidatura d'Unitat Popular. They represent a group within the Catalan independence movement that, like QS, is radically anti-capitalist. One said: "we are in a fight against the Spanish state, not against the Spanish people." They thanked the MacKenzie-Papineau battalion, francophone and anglophone volunteers who went to Spain to stop Franco in the 1930s, despite opposition from the Canadian government at the time.

They finished by saying: "we are not more important than Palestinians or Kurds; but if there can be such a denial of fundamental democratic rights in Western Europe, then where can democracy survive?"

Helping people believe in the QS slogan "a better life is not just a dream" is something the newly merged party will aim to do in 2018. But the path forward will continue to be full of struggle and debate, like all movements that challenge the priorities of capitalism from within the political structures created by it.

No deportation to torture – let Harkat stay

by Chantal Sundaram

On December 8, protesters outside Parliament Hill and speakers inside the Hill media room marked 15 years since the unjust arrest of UN Convention refugee Mohamed Harkat under a Canadian Security Certificate.

Declared unconstitutional in 2007 then reinstated with a minor alteration, Security Certificates allow for secret hearings where the accused and their lawyers are not allowed to see the heart of the allegations and evidence used against them. Securi-

ty-cleared lawyers are allowed to see some of the secret case, but neither the detainee nor their public counsel is allowed to be present.

And mere weeks after Prime Minister Trudeau solemnly declared that "No one, ever, deserves to be tortured," the protest and press conference drew attention to the fact that this is exactly what Harkat now faces after living in Canada since 1995: the federal government's continued intention to deport him to torture in Algeria.

Yet more irony, Harkat was arrested on International Human Rights Day, December 10, 2002, and subse-

quently detained without charge for 3.5 years, often in solitary confinement. He has struggled under a brutal series of house arrest bail conditions and now continues to fight efforts to have him deported.

Though Harkat was arrested under the Harper security regime, the efforts of his supporters to appeal to the Liberal government to let him stay in Canada have so far gone unheeded—despite any ability to show that he presents any kind of threat.

"My husband has not only been unjustly detained or under surveillance for fifteen years, but has been repeatedly forced to justify that he is not a

security risk, despite all evidence that he is not. CSIS did not even bother providing a risk assessment at his latest bail review: the last one they produced was back in 2009 and Moe was labelled a very low risk even then. Also, Canadian Border Security has never even bothered reading any of Moe's risk assessments. I think it speaks volumes," said Harkat's wife Sophie Lamarche Harkat.

Speakers at the press conference represented the Campaign to Stop Secret Trials in Canada, Amnesty International, the International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group, the National Council of Canadian Muslims,

and Monia Mazigh—human rights author and wife of torture survivor Maher Arar. They all drew attention to the fact that Canada, and now the Trudeau government, has obligations under the UN Convention Against Torture that it must live up to by letting Harkat stay.

The protest outside included student and labour activists, community groups, Canadian Unitarians for Social Justice, Solidarity Ottawa, the Raging Grannies, and others who demonstrate that Harkat's persistence is matched by a community of supporters who refuse to allow his deportation to torture.

Catalonia's ongoing struggle

by Kevin Taghabon

Despite severe repression against Catalonia's October referendum in favour of independence, pro-independence parties won a majority of seats in regional elections on December 21. Socialist.ca spoke with David Karvala, an activist in Barcelona and a member of Marx21.net, about Catalonia's ongoing struggle for self-determination against the repression of the Spanish state.

What are the faultlines developing in capital? Has there been significant credible threats of capital flight?

There is a myth that the Catalan bourgeoisie is behind the independence movement. This myth is defended by many on the Spanish and European left, but the facts don't sustain it. In reality Catalan big business, like Spanish big business, is strongly against not only independence but also the right to decide. That's why thousands of businesses moved their official headquarters from Barcelona to other parts of the Spanish state at the height of the struggles in September and October. This was something that the right-wing PP government explicitly promoted.

Do you see the repression of the current independence movement as [...] perhaps a nostalgia for Francoism during the dire economic situation in Spain today?

It's typical to say that what's happened here with the police violence and the repression is because the PP are the inheritors of Francoism, but I think this is wrong. Those links are there, of course, but every ruling class has specific characteristics, whether it's the Jacobinism of the French ruling class, the elements of the aristocracy in the British ruling class, or whatever. But what makes them behave as they do is the fact that they are the bourgeoisie; the ruling class of a capitalist state.

What we've seen in Catalonia over the last few months is the bourgeoisie in action when its interests are at stake. Nobody in a country without this specific historic element of Francoism should think their ruling class would behave



Solidarity mobilization in Toronto before the December 21st election in Catalonia

Photo: John Bonnar

fundamentally any better.

El País journalist John Carlin says he was fired for ideological reasons for writing an article critical of the Spanish state. Is there fear of repression for political speech, and how does this affect the climate in civil society?

This repression has been going on for years. Before it affected the Basque struggle, with newspapers closed down and journalists imprisoned and even tortured. More recently, like in most of Europe, there's been a clampdown on Muslim people. Now it's the turn of the Catalan struggle. So there are the cases of the journalists like you mention.

The latest aspect is the use of the laws against hate crimes to repress protests against the police. Two councillors in a town near Tarragona are being tried for hate crimes for having signed a manifesto criticizing the police violence on October 1. They're saying the people who

protest against the paramilitary police being billeted in their towns are guilty of hate crimes, as if they were racists or fascists. We should remember that they hardly ever prosecute fascists under these laws. So the repression is serious, but by and large it is counterproductive; it leads more people to conclude that the only answer is independence.

What are the goals of the independence movement should they succeed? What does a Catalan Republic look like?

The independence movement is very diverse. There is a right-wing sector that basically wants to change the frontiers, the flag and the official language and not much else. However, a large part of the movement sees the fight for independence as part of a fight for more social justice and democracy. We've already seen hints of this.

The pro-independence government that was in office for the last few years introduced laws against sexual harassment, against fracking,

against house evictions, against energy poverty, against bullfighting... all of these laws were overturned by the courts in Madrid.

Some people do exaggerate the changes that independence could bring but I think it's clear that the opportunities for change will be there. There is a broad consensus that independence should be associated with a Constituent Process; this would be an opportunity for raising questions about what type of society we want and it would be different in many ways from the society we're living under now.

If Madrid refuses to engage in good faith, do you anticipate more elections? More mobilization?

It's difficult to predict what will happen. One thing is clear: Madrid has no interest in negotiating on the fundamental question, which is Catalonia's right to decide its future. This means that the main strategy until now of the moderate pro-independence parties — forcing Spain

to negotiate, with the help of the European Union — will not work. The EU has already shown that it supports the Spanish government. So the formation of a pro-independence government in itself can't solve the problem.

The left will need to look for ways of strengthening the movement from below; and this has to be on a mass basis, it's not enough just to mobilize the radical left. In this, one key element will be the CDRs, the Committees to Defend the Republic. These are neighbourhood assemblies that emerged around the referendum and were a key organizing force in protecting the electoral colleges on October 1. They continue to exist, some of them involving hundreds of people in a given area.

So our best option for change are the CDRs, broadening them to involve the organised working class. Only with this counter power do we have any chance of breaking from the Spanish state. The idea of change from above agreed with Madrid is impossible.

Hondurans won't give up their democracy

by Gustavo Monteiro

Hondurans are suffering another attack on their democracy. Juan Orlando Hernández, who supported the 2009 US-backed coup, has been named the new president after the November 26 vote, which was marked by electoral interference.

During the US-backed coup in 2009, left-leaning president Manuel Zelaya was forced to leave the country. Canada supports the U.S. government in pushing Central and Latin America governments to move forward with resource extraction.

Socialist.ca spoke with Grahame Russell of Rights Action in Canada, a non-profit organization that funds human rights, environmental and development organizations in Guatemala and Honduras. Its mission is to hold accountable US and Cana-

dian governments, companies and investors.

Russell explained that the Honduran ruling class cares about two things: maintaining economic relations with the international community, primarily the US and also Canada, and maintaining support from the U.S. military.

Since the 2009 US-backed coup:

- North American tourism operators have used government corruption and repression to evict Indigenous Garifuna communities from their Caribbean coastal lands to build cruise ship ports, resorts and condos for "snow birds"

- mining companies, like Golcorp and Aura Minerals, have expanded their widely opposed mining operations

- investors have financed the production of bio-diesel fuels for interna-

tional "green energy" markets; over 150 small farmers in the Aguan region have been killed by the military, police and Honduras' land-owning oligarchy

- textile companies like Nike have expanded production in low-wage, unregulated sweatshops

- international investors developed the Agua Zarca hydro-electric dam, widely opposed by the indigenous Lenca communities. This resulted in the plot to assassinate Berta Caceres, the widely respected Indigenous leader.

For the Honduran elites and their international partners, the 2017 elections were supposed to rubber-stamp four more years of "Honduras is open for business". Whenever an anti-establishment candidate seems to be winning, Washington quickly moves its people and tools to make sure

they keep the status quo with their approved leaders in power.

This year, Salvador Nasralla and current president Juan Orlando Hernández were the two candidates leading the polls. Hernández supported the US-backed coup in 2009. Nasralla was a candidate from an alliance between a center-left party called LIBRE (Liberty and Refoundation) and the Anti-Corruption Party (PAC). He had a lead with 45 per cent of votes against 40 per cent for Hernández. But results were put on hold until the electoral commission announced a larger percentage of votes for Hernández.

Resistance and solidarity

This made Hondurans take over the streets to show the government they won't accept any manipulation. But seeing all the corruption involved

within Hernández's activities, a special forces police unit decided to no longer obey Government's orders to repress people.

The situation in Honduras is unstable. Grahame says "... if Nasralla is permitted to become the rightful President... it would mark the beginning of a complicated but desperately needed transition away from the 2009 coup... towards — slowly — what should and can become a decent and fair society and country."

New elections could be called with an independent agent. Otherwise, protests will continue and Hernández will respond with more violence. On December 6, a cacerolazo/rally was organized in Toronto by LACSN (Latin America and Caribbean Solidarity Network) in solidarity with Hondurans.

• More info: www.hondurassolidarity.org

A BITTER BETRAYAL

The BC NDP was elected last spring to bring in a new era of reconciliation, build climate jobs, and prioritize social spending over tax cuts. In December, they approved continuing construction on the Site C dam and betrayed all of those hopes.

by Michael T. Fenn and Bradley Hughes

During the recent provincial election in British Columbia, the NDP pledged their support for the principles of “free, prior and informed consent” as outlined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

And in the first few minutes of announcing approval of continued construction on the Site C dam, Premier Horgan described the decision as in keeping with NDP values, “that true reconciliation with Indigenous peoples is part and parcel of our quest to create jobs in an environmentally sustainable way.”

Yet during the reporters’ questions he admitted, “I am not the first person to stand before you and disappoint Indigenous people.”

Responding to the announcement, Assembly of First Nations (AFN) National Chief Perry Bellegarde said “The B.C. NDP government pledged to work towards reconciliation and this decision is completely contrary to that. We will ensure governments respect our peoples, our rights and our lands. I commend the people of Treaty 8 for their action and advocacy against Site C and we stand with them as they continue this fight.”

After the announcement Robert Phillips of the First Nations Summit Political Executive said “the previous provincial government chose to completely ignore their constitutional duty to consult and accommodate Treaty 8 First Nations prior to making the original decision to move forward with the Site C project. We are bitterly disappointed that Premier Horgan and the NDP government has chosen to stay on that same destructive path. This approach is unacceptable and an affront to the cultivation of constructive government to government relationship between the provincial government and BC First Nations.”

Chief Roland Wilson of the West Moberly Band, one of the original Treaty 8 nations of the Peace River

region, explained back in 2014 how destructive this project will be. “The joint review panel clearly stated, ‘You haven’t done a cumulative impact assessment. You don’t know if there’s enough usable land left for the First Nations.’ Well there isn’t. Two-thirds of the territory has been taken up. We have a third left and Site C is a big part of that...At what point do they cross a threshold of too much land taken up? I think they’ve crossed it already.”

Site C has been challenged in both BC and Federal courts by the West Moberly and Prophet River nations, who have refused to sign Impact Benefit Agreements (IBAs). But even nations who felt compelled to sign these agreements with BC Hydro, have filed a litany of lawsuits over related industrial and LNG development on their lands. For example, Blueberry River nation, who signed the original Treaty 8 agreement in 1900 have ongoing lawsuit claims that the cumulative impacts from extensive industrial development, including site C, has violated.

The claim asserts that Blueberry River members can no longer access uncontaminated land and resources

“The B.C. NDP government pledged to work towards reconciliation and this decision is completely contrary to that.” – Assembly of First Nations National Chief Perry Bellegarde

capable of sustaining traditional patterns of economic activity and land use, as guaranteed by the treaty. These include hunting, eating moose, harvesting berries and medicinal plants and teaching children their language while on the land.”

“Our backs are against the wall,” said Yahey. “We’ve tried all the time to come up with a solution. This was our only way to get them to the table

to protect our way of life.”

Liberal shenanigans all over again

After the election, the new NDP government commissioned an independent review by the BC utilities commission (BCUC) on the Site C project. Its findings, released November 1, confirmed what Site C opponents have been saying since 2014: that it was more expensive than alternatives, would destroy 100 square kilometres of pristine habitat and farmland, and would continue Canada’s colonial tradition of displacement of First Nation peoples in violation of their Treaty Rights.

The previous Liberal government touted Site C as a “green” energy alternative that would provide clean energy, bringing with it good jobs, economic growth, and prosperity to all in British Columbia including First Nations. But the BCUC report exposed these lies.

Construction on the dam began without any independent, in-depth examination of the costs of the project or the demand for the project. The B.C. government skipped the regular

review process and instead ploughed ahead with a megaproject with no idea whether it was needed or the most cost-effective source of electricity. Marc Lee, a senior economist with the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives said, “I would like to see a full inquiry to investigate how BC Hydro executives and the previous government essentially conspired to manufacture the case for Site C... billion just to cancel the project, to remediate the site.

As someone who strongly believes in public sector institutions and Crown corporations, to have our electricity utility lying to us, making up numbers and doing all sorts of spurious comparisons between its preferred option and the alternative is shameful.”

The BCUC report found that BC Hydro had greatly inflated the demand forecasts while seeming to wilfully underestimate the cost efficiencies of alternatives (wind, solar, geothermal and demand management techniques such as industrial curtailment). In one example Carol Linnitt described how “BC Hydro submitted to the BCUC that it had screened out solar energy on the basis of a cost estimate of \$97/MWh in 2025. In response to a follow-up question from the commission, BC Hydro admitted the cost of solar is now only half that at \$48/MWh.”

The BCUC also found that the project originally budgeted at \$8.3 billion, already in its third year of construction (costing the province roughly \$2 million a day) is likely going exceed well over \$10 billion. Construction has already cost \$2 billion in public expenses, and would cost another \$2

Despite \$4 billion of sunken costs the BCUC found that there would be no fiscal benefit in continuing the project, and it recommended cancellation.

Climate crisis

The report also found BC Hydro’s assessment process seriously underestimated the ecological impacts of

the project.

Whatever the “green” credentials of hydro, scientists have long warned of the ecological destruction of dams of this kind. Site C will destroy large areas of carbon-sequestering boreal forest, replacing it by stagnant lakes and swamps producing methane, high and create widespread mercury contamination in the land, water, and fish.

This “green” energy is to expand BC’s natural gas industry, proven to be more CO2 emitting over its entire production cycle, than even coal. As climate science is quite clear: to avoid ecological tipping points with catastrophic consequences, we need an 80 per cent reduction in fossil fuel use over the next few decades, having to reach zero soon afterwards.

The BCUC report also made clear that alternatives to Site C, geothermal, solar, wind and conservation would be cheaper even including the money already spent on the dam.

The fiscal impact of cancelling the dam is only unsustainable because the NDP won’t rescind Liberal tax cuts. For example, a program to repeal the Liberal tax cuts to corporations and on those earning more than \$100,000 a year would give the treasury an extra \$5 billion annually.

By choosing to pit supporters of public services against Indigenous rights and a just transition, the NDP is pulling its supporters to the right. Unfortunately, until the NDP is willing to consider reversing the Liberal tax cuts, their supporters again and again will be asked to pit one social need against another. This is the politics of austerity, and we can expect that this is the strategy that the NDP will use again and again.

Not everyone was disappointed with the decision, the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade, the Independent Contractors and Businesses Association and the BC Liberal party all supported the governments deci-

pulling the strings.”

promised to vote against the budget in February and trigger an election that would then be mainly about Site C. This would have added to the pressure on the NDP and might only give faint hope of cancelling the project, but it would give hope. Instead the Greens will allow the government to stand and then oppose the NDP in the next election when any chance of stopping the dam is long gone.



What we stand to lose. Photo: Emma Gilchrist CC BY 2.0

Bulldoze Indigenous rights to save social programs?

The Premier returned to one justification for building the dam again and again. He said, “It’s clear that Site C should never have been started. But to cancel it would add billions to the Province’s debt – putting at risk our ability to deliver housing, child care, schools and hospitals for families across B.C.”

Later he expanded, this debt would result in “foregoing very important capital projects like schools, hospitals, bridges and transit, and other initiatives right across British Columbia.” He claimed this would mean “massive cuts to the services they (people) count on.”

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“Settler Monday”

The decision to continue site C has caused widespread and bitter disappointment among the NDPs more environmental and social conscious supporters. Many have taken to refer to Dec 11th - the day of the announcement - as “Black Monday”. (One social justice critic calling it “Settler Monday”). And many vowed to never vote NDP again.

Marc Eliesen, former BC Hydro CEO, called the decision “sad and stupid,” noting that “It looks like the referral for the independent review was inauthentic.” “Since the NDP for good economic and social reasons prior to the election argued against Site C, the only conclusion one can reach is that the entrenched bureaucracy, including that of BC Hydro, are

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sion to continue construction.

Sadly, this fits a rather all too familiar pattern occurring throughout recent history, from Obama in the US after the financial crisis and recession in 2009, to Syriza in Greece, and Trudeau in 2016. And the list can go on and on. But its features are the perplexing not to mention profoundly frustrating, backstabbing by the parties of the left against their own base. Thus alienating -and dividing- them, only to pave the way for their own defeat at the hands of the political right come next election. British Columbians know this trend all too well from the NDP administrations in the 90’s, and lukewarm platforms since, that led to Liberal domination of the legislature for 16 years.

Just days before the announcement, Grand Chief Stewart Phillip of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs promised, “With every court case, every delay, every budget lift, and every rate hike, we will remind British Columbians that it may have been the BC Liberals that got us into this mess, but it was the BC NDP who chose to abandon us there.”

It is urgent that the anger over this decision does not lead people into the arms of the Liberals or the Greens. There is no wedge between jobs and environment, nor between workers and the public good, only between the interests of big business and the wealthy against the rest of us!

Site C has proven once again that real change is not something that will be given from up on high. People must create it through solidarity. A truly progressive platform will not be created by political brokers in the system, but by, and through, the mass based Indigenous, labour, and environmental movements. These movements need to come together, and in this process creating a political party of its own that can then take on the 1%, and win!

Toronto talks climate reform, walks austerity



by Valerie Lannon

Immediate action is needed to make sure the City of Toronto implements its climate action plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (GGE).

Transform TO

The plan, called Transform TO, was passed by city council in July 2017, and aims to reduce GGE by 30% by 2020, 65% by 2030 and 80% by 2050.

Like similar plans such as the Toronto and York Region Labour Council’s “Greenhouse for Greater Toronto”, Transform TO looks to reduce GGE through extensive building retrofits and near zero GGE emissions on new building, more mass transit, increased use of sustainable energy sources and diverting waste from landfills.

The plan also includes guiding principles like social equity, affordability, poverty reduction, local jobs, public health and resilient communities.

While the 80% reduction in GGE by 2050 is much too late, the main themes of Transform TO are worth supporting.

Do Mayor and Council actually care?

We all know how the Liberals like to talk a good line, thinking people will be fooled when the government doesn’t actually deliver and instead carries through massive austerity measures. Toronto city politicians are doing the same thing with Transform TO.

While they unanimously approved the plan earlier this year, now they refuse to fund its implementation, which means it won’t go ahead.

In its November 2017 deliberations on the city’s estimated 2018 budget of nearly \$11 billion, Council allocated virtually no funds for the climate action plan! City staff recommended that \$6.7 million would be required in 2018 to get this plan off the ground.

In a page from the senior governments’ handbooks, Council appears thrilled to

be delivering a so-called “balanced” budget, saying that there is \$9 million leftover.

The trouble is, about \$40 million is needed to fund not only Transform TO but other critical initiatives such as the Fair Fare Pass for low-income transit riders, two-hour transfers for the transit system, “Tenants First” – improvements to Toronto Community Housing, and the very important Poverty Reduction Strategy. Toronto also has the highest fees in the country for child care. But rather than help low and middle-income people, the city wants a “balanced” budget that still manages to find funds for a one-stop subway in Scarborough and rebuilding the Gardiner expressway.

And this is the same Council that refuses to open additional, much-needed shelter beds as winter begins in earnest.

Community fighting back

Groups like the Toronto Environmental Alliance and the Toronto Climate Action Network have been monitoring Transform TO since its inception. They are calling for everyone to put pressure on the Mayor and Council to fully fund Transform TO.

For the online petition, go to torontoenvironment.org, “Take Action”, “Action Alert: Climate Action in the City Budget.” Please use or adapt the petition wording to contact the Mayor and members of Council.

These groups are also clear that Council will not get away with trying to pit environmental activists against anti-poverty advocates to fight for crumbs from the budget.

Linking issues

Meanwhile, the Canadian Union of Postal Workers is urging its members to demand Council open 1,000 additional shelter beds needed for this winter. Other unions and organizations should follow this lead.

We must stay united and link the struggles for climate action with social and economic justice.

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 transgender 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.

Socialized medicine, 1917-2017

by Jesse McLaren

In 2017 millions felt the Bern for single-payer healthcare in the US, and have continued to mobilize against Trump's attacks on healthcare and social security. With increasing interest in both socialized medicine and socialism, it's useful to review their rise and fall 100 years ago in revolutionary Russia.

Most discussion of the Soviet Union falls into two camps who both see continuity between Lenin and Stalin: right-wing anti-Bolshevism condemns the 1917 revolution and sees it leading inevitably to the gulag, while Stalinist apologists defend the repressive state that emerged from counter-revolution. In 1977, during the Cold War, public health researcher Vicente Navarro wrote *Social Security and Medicine in the USSR: A Marxist Critique*, which challenged the right-wing dismissal of the gains of 1917 while exposing the Stalinist reversal of these policies.

Russian revolution and counter-revolution

As Navarro explained, "It is symptomatic of its priorities that the first decrees signed by the new [Bolshevik] government... were the peace offer to Germany (not accepted until 1918), the legalization of the peasantry's and workers' takeovers, and the establishment of a comprehensive social security system."

The Bolshevik slogan "all power to the Soviets" meant power over the healthcare system as well, including a deprofessionalization and democratization of the health sector that would see all health workers within the same union at the same pay and at the service of local soviets. Similar developments emerged in revolutionary Egypt in 2011, when hospital unions began organizing all health workers together, undermining the traditional hierarchy in health care.

The massive expansion of social security was accompanied by a quantitative and qualitative expansion of physicians, tripling the number of doctors and reversing historic inequalities. As Navarro explained, "Prior to the Soviet Revolution, women composed less than 10 percent of all medical students... Similarly, Jews were allotted a special quota of no more than 3 percent of

total enrollment. In contrast to that situation, the Soviet Revolution made a commitment to open the university to both sexes and all classes and races

by the population. In other words, nationalization is socialization only when it is part of a process toward the democratization and self-government



previously discriminated against, and in medical and all other schools preference was given to applicants from the working class and peasantry, as well as to women."

Without successful revolutions elsewhere, revolutionary Russia was isolated by economic blockade, invaded by a dozen armies and forced into focusing on production at all cost to survive—which the rising Stalinist bureaucracy turned from a necessity into a virtue.

As Navarro explains, Stalin killed most of the old Bolsheviks and reversed every gain of the revolution: using social insurance as a weapon to force workers to produce, reducing maternity benefits, recriminalizing abortion, reintroducing a hierarchy of labor and income differentials, and turning healthcare into a tool to increase the efficiency of labour and the accumulation of capital.

Nationalization vs socialization

By exposing the Stalinist conception of top-down management, Navarro draws a distinction between nationalization and socialization (though he doesn't apply this same distinction to the Cuban regime): "the nationalization of a sector of economic or social activity (like the health sector) can only be referred to as the socialization of that activity when it improves the direct control over the activity

of the people. And the degree of socialization in that activity can be measured by the degree of popular participation in the running of that activity."

This applies to current national health systems, from the NHS in Britain to Medicare in Canada, which have been vaguely defined as socialized. These were the result of popular demands and broadened access to healthcare, but did not revolutionize the control of health resources—which has made it easier for the gains to be gradually stripped away.

As Navarro concludes, "a socialist process in medicine is not the change of the control over medicine from one party to another or from one minority to another, but most importantly, the process whereby the concept and meaning of medicine change as well, ie, from the bourgeois, individualist understanding of medicine to the collective, political, and mass understanding of medicine, resultant from massive popular participation in the decision-making and implementation of whatever form of medicine may evolve in a socialist society... Second, another conclusion to be drawn from that initial experience of the October Revolution period is that a socialist process in medicine is not possible unless it is part and parcel of the larger process of democratization of the entire society."



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Challenging Islamophobia

by Carolyn Egan

On a dark night in December, trade unionists from the rapid response team of the Toronto and York Region Labour Council gathered at the Ontario Federation of Labour building. They were joining community members from the Coalition Against White Supremacy and Islamophobia who had called a demonstration against bigotry.

Just two blocks away on the same street, the Canadian Christian College was hosting Pamela Geller, a notorious Islamophobe. She was speaking to a crowd of the far-right and was trying to inflame anti-Muslim sentiment in our community. Not even a year has passed since six men were gunned down while praying in their mosque in Quebec City. The number of hate crimes has been steadily growing, and building a strong response is critical.

Just south is Flemingdon Park, the home of thousands of Muslim Canadians, where a woman wearing a hijab was viciously attacked by a racist. Members of that community spoke to those assembled before they marched the short distance to the college. Arriving, they saw security for the meeting made up of La Meute, the Northern Guard and other members of the alt-right. They appeared to be itching for a confrontation, many of them holding small clubs. The police presence was heavy in the surrounding area, including on horseback.

The anti-racist march was committed to a peaceful protest, making clear that this bigotry was not welcome in our community. There were members, including local leadership, of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union, CUPE Local 79, the United Steelworkers, labour council and the Ontario Federation of Labour. They made up the majority of the protesters.

Chants rang out, “No hate, no fear, Muslims are welcome here”, “All of us or none of us”, “Immigrants in, racists out”, “Black lives matter here”. This continued in front of the building, stating clearly to the media present and passers by that our community as a whole will stand shoulder to shoulder with those subjected to Islamophobia, anti-Black racism, antisemitism and bigotry of any sort.

We have seen the demonstration of 60,000 neo-Nazis in Poland, Marine Le Pen leader of the National Front in the run-off in the French elections, Golden Dawn in Greece and the far right marching in Charlottesville. In these times of economic uncertainty and political volatility where the neoliberal agenda is running roughshod over the poor and the working class, scapegoating is rampant. Divide and rule is the recipe of the day for the capitalists and governments all over the world.

We can not allow the politics of division to weaken our struggles against the one percent. The most vulnerable amongst us, racialized communities, women, LGBTQ are particularly under attack. It is very important that the trade union movement be front and centre in the fightbacks that are taking place. The working class has a central role as we build the movement for change. Labour councils all over Ontario have been mobilizing against this threat and this must continue.

We must remember that we are also having victories such as the fight for the \$15 minimum wage in Ontario through a strong grass roots movement. Pipelines have been stopped and women are speaking out strongly against the misogyny, harassment and assault they are being subjected to. Trump’s election was met by one of the largest demonstrations we have ever seen and his Muslim ban was objected to at airports across the US with New York City cab drivers refusing to take fares from arriving flights. Continuing to build from below is the way we can defeat the growth of the far right and develop an inclusive movement that can not only protest the attacks but bring an alternative vision of a world without oppression and exploitation.

REVIEW

How the truckers won: socialists in 1934 Minneapolis

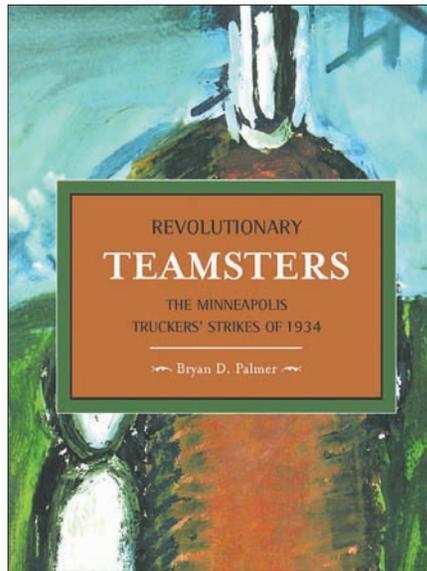
by Peter Hogarth

The word socialism is everywhere these days. Corbyn and Sanders have shown the popularity of it in their campaigns but what is socialism? How do we get there? What should socialists be doing right now to help make it happen? On these questions, Bryan D. Palmer’s *Revolutionary Teamsters* is a great place to start.

Palmer tells the story of a small group of Trotskyist activists in Minneapolis who helped change the course of labour history in America. The group, organized as the Communist League of America (CLA), saw socialism as the remedy to the ills of capitalism. They saw socialism as the product of the radical collective action of the working class to replace capitalism with a system based on the collective ownership of the means of production, for human need not profit. The story of Minneapolis in 1934, is the story of how a small group of like-minded socialists took concrete steps to try and advance towards their vision of a socialism.

Rank-and-file

Minneapolis was a city whose business class was organized in the ruthless Citizens Alliance and bragged about being a non-union town. The struggle of 1934 took place over union recognition in unorganized coal fields. The prevailing climate of unions at the time was a narrow craft-unionism that sought to make peace with the boss and organize only “skilled” workers, mostly ignoring racialized and immigrant workers. Minneapolis truck drivers local Teamsters 574 had 75 members (including a few members of the CLA) and broke with the prevailing craft-unionism



at the time to help organize into their local workers in non-union coal fields including inside workers, shovelers and other workers involved in the coal business in Minneapolis.

The CLA members and their close political allies played a leading role in the project. Because they had a vision of the revolutionary transformation of society, their idea of working class organizing extended far beyond the one or two coal fields and few drivers that were in 574. They wanted to raise the level of struggle and build working class power. Therefore, their trade unionism meant organizing unorganized workers and, contrary to the narrow unionism of the Teamster bosses, raising expectations and helping those workers see that only through their collective strength would it be possible to win.

The vision of the CLA leaders was always to broaden and strengthen the support for the truckers’ demands. Rather than relying on official union leadership to finesse the best deal, the Trotskyists saw their strength coming from the members’ ability to stay strong, stop goods from being moved throughout the city, and continue the strike. This perspective led to the creation of Women’s Auxiliary Strike committees by spouses and family of truckers and women CLA activists. These committees had the dual effect of strengthening the strike and challenging sexist gender roles in the Minneapolis working class.

Organization

The fact that this rank-and-file perspective could be implemented owes to the organization and coordination that the CLA had created in Minneapolis. Trotskyist militants like Ray Dunne and Carl Skoglund were organized around a set of politics, revolutionary socialism, that saw the working class as the key to a better world. They spent years patiently explaining their understanding of the world and what it would take to make it better for themselves and their coworkers. Through a climate of anti-unionism, complacent Teamster leadership and vicious employers, they spread their message to individual co-workers and tried to find political followers and allies who would help them to make their vision of class struggle come to life.

Their patience paid off as they were able to expand the influence and reach of their politics many times over. Trotskyists soon commanded an earned influence over thousands of 574 members, tens of thousands of workers, the unemployed and other supporters.

Net neutrality: call for public broadband

by Kevin Taghabon

Since its inception the internet has been touted as a tool with radical democratic potential. Despite some broken promises, it has been used widely to organize towards justice. Net neutrality has been integral for this, and it has just been struck down.

Net neutrality dictates that access to the internet should be neutral and non-discriminatory. Once someone is on the internet, they can freely connect to any website they wish without throttling or censorship from Internet Service Providers (ISPs).

The Republican-majority Federal Communications Commission (FCC) voted on December 14th 3-2 to repeal net neutrality. ISPs now have the right to set up tiered internet packages. ISPs have every incentive to prioritize customers with more money and turn the internet into the nightmare of cable all over again.

As this is uncharted territory, it remains to be seen how each company will react. ISPs have little reason not to price gouge people accustomed to universal access. There is every reason for say, Disney, to push “premium” placement and streaming of their movies on Netflix. Netflix could transfer this cost onto consumers who will pay for Star Wars no matter what, or ask Disney to pay for this privilege. This would eventually bury content created by teams without mountains of cash. Either way, consumers lose.

The net neutrality repeal poses larger political problems as well. In 2005 Telus blocked access to a pro-union website during a dispute, and blocked 766 other sites to achieve this. This is now legal in the US. Movements



Seattle councilwoman Kshama Sawant calls for municipal public broadband.

like Occupy and Standing Rock would never have gotten off the ground without coverage provided by independent outlets, viable only under net neutrality.

Net neutrality is not a domestic American issue. The American public funded the creation of the internet through projects in the 1970s. It was a mistake for web service to end up in private hands. But this current reality means that the country with the most physical internet infrastructure is the US. American laws have global effects.

While the CRTC has repeatedly upheld net neutrality provisions in Canada, this does not mean we are safe. Bell is currently lobbying for the right to block websites directly. Additionally, investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) clauses in active and coming free trade deals have been used to sue sovereign states that have laws that interfere with max-

imum profits.

For now there are legislative options as well to block the repeal. Democrat Chuck Schumer has promised to force a vote in the Senate. Many states attorneys are banding together to sue the FCC.

These uphill battles should be framed as what they are – a desire to return to the status quo. Much like healthcare, it is possible to use a bad situation (Obamacare repeal efforts) to move the needle towards justice (universal healthcare). Socialist Alternative’s Kshama Sawant among many others has called for public broadband. Canadians can choose to organize towards this, or rest under the shade of our own telecom giants.

● Sign the petition demanding that Bell’s ISP censorship powers proposal be struck down: <http://bit.ly/2CA040G>



Sexual harassment: a systemic problem

by Faline Bobier

This month is the one-year anniversary of two earthshaking events: the inauguration of US president Donald Trump, and the Women's Marches in Washington and around the world the day after his inauguration.

This was the largest single-day protest in US history, and saw sizeable marches in many other countries, including 60,000 in Toronto.

Time magazine underlined the importance of Trump's election by choosing him as last year's 'Person of the Year'. This year, *Time*'s 'person of the year' is the #MeToo movement – and rightly so.

Black feminist activist Tarana Burke founded #MeToo ten years ago as a grassroots movement to help sexual assault survivors in underprivileged communities, where rape crisis centres and sexual assault workers were not often available.

No one could have foreseen how relevant this movement would become. Revelations about Hollywood figures such as producer Harvey Weinstein started with one courageous actress, Rose McGowan, speaking out about her rape and victimisation at his hands.

Many more women (and some men) followed with their own stories of rape, harassment and abuse. Several Hollywood and media icons have seen their careers ended. The difference this time is that women were actually believed when they spoke out.

The success of the #MeToo movement at this moment speaks in part to rage at the spectacle of a president who has himself been accused of sexual harassment by 20 different women, but who continues in power nonetheless.

It was largely due to Black voters – and Black



Black feminist Tarana Burke founded #MeToo movement

Photo: Democracy Now

women voters in particular – that Republican judge Roy Moore lost the recent election to the Senate in Alabama. Multiple women alleged that Moore had made unwanted advances when they were in their teens (the youngest was 14 at the time). In spite of this, Trump endorsed Moore in the election – one sexual predator to another.

But the phenomenon of sexual harassment and violence is much broader than what happens in Hollywood. As American writer and activist Barbara Ehrenreich tweeted recently, "Our current sex harassment discussion is woefully class-skewed. Too much about actresses and not enough about hotel housekeepers."

The point is not that actresses should not speak

out about their experiences of sexual harassment and violence, but that this is a systemic problem also faced by working class and poor women on a daily basis. Statistics on the Canadian Labour Congress website highlight the following facts:

- 1 in 10 women aged 18 to 24 report having experienced sexual harassment at work within the previous 12 months
- On any given day, over 3000 women (along with their 2500 children) are staying in an emergency shelter to escape domestic violence.
- Indigenous women are 3 times more likely to report being the victim of a violent crime.

Oppression is experienced by individuals, but it cannot be systematically resolved on that level.

We need collective action.

That is why the announcement that the Women's March Alliance has called a demonstration in New York City on January 20 to mark a year since Trump's inauguration is a welcome sign. There will also be a march in Toronto on the same date.

Trump's recent tax bill will benefit only the wealthy, and will bring cuts to Medicare and other programs that poor and low-income people depend on. An expected 13 million Americans will lose access to healthcare as a direct result of the tax cuts for the superwealthy.

Only an organized, collective response to Trump and the politics he represents can pose a real challenge. And that challenge cannot rely on the Democratic Party. Although Hillary Rodham Clinton is a woman, she represents the interests of the American ruling class just as much as Trump. In fact, it was the failure of the Democrats to offer anything better for the majority of Americans that led to Trump's election in the first place.

We need to heed the words of this Appalachian great-grandmother, on the day after the Republican tax bill was passed:

"Last night the Senate voted to rob the working middle class and the working poor, the elderly, our children, students and veterans to further enrich the filthy rich and large corporations. These so-called Christians say they follow the teachings of Jesus. They do not... Listen very carefully Mr. Ryan, Mr. McConnell and your greed-filled ilk. We the people see your tax scam for what it is and we will overcome."

Let's work to make sure the Women's marches in January are as big, as diverse and as militant as they can be, as we organize for an end to sexism, racism and homophobia, and the rotten economic system that underpins them all.

In 2018 keep fighting for \$15 and fairness

by Peter Hogarth

This New Year's workers across Ontario can celebrate the passing of Bill 148, which will give 1.7 million workers a pay raise on January 1st. The victory was not a Christmas present from the Liberals but a product of workers campaigning, agitating, fighting and striking to win \$15 and Fairness.

Business backlash

The business community has come out against improvements to labour laws. Metro grocery stores are saying that they are looking to automation, price increases, job cuts and getting rid of 24 hour grocery service. Loblaw's has warned that it will cut jobs. The Ontario Chamber of Commerce and the Canadian Federation of Independent Businesses claim that recent minimum wage increases have been a disaster for small business.

These are cynical attempts to sow fear and confusion among the public. Metro and Loblaw's had profits of \$132.4 million and \$201 million respectively, increases from the previous year. The OCC and CFIB are ignoring the many studies showing that recent minimum wage hikes have brought positive benefits to



The increase in the minimum wage was won through campaigning and striking

places like Seattle and New York.

June election

Patrick Brown and the Conservative Party are promising to delay the \$15 raise to 2022 rather

than cancel it. Nevertheless, the election of a Tory government in Ontario would put the \$15 and Fairness victory in jeopardy.

Polling suggests that the Tories did not receive the bump they had hoped for with their platform

announcement. Voters are not so quick to trust the party that has suddenly become defenders of workers after campaigning last election on cutting 100,000 jobs.

The Liberals, who have been plagued by scandals have benefited from tying their future to Bill 148. The NDP, who have the most to gain by being advocates for decent work, have been reluctant to celebrate the bill's victory or embrace the \$15 and Fairness campaign, emphasizing instead the opportunism of the Liberals. They do however officially endorse the \$15 minimum wage raise and have called for improvements to the legislation.

Fight for \$15 and Fairness

We know the Tories are out to destroy our gains. The way to counter that is not by putting our hopes in the Liberals or leaving it to the NDP, but rather by demonstrating the power of the workers in Ontario.

The \$15 and Fairness campaign needs to continue to show its power in the streets and in the workplaces to defend what we've won and demand more.

For more information visit 15andfairness.org