

Canadian genocide



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After almost three years of hearings, the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls has issued its final report. It concludes that the thousands of deaths and disappearances are part of a “Canadian genocide” fueled by “state actions and inactions rooted in colonialism and colonial ideologies.”

Some politicians are more upset about the use of the term genocide than the systemic violence. Bernard Valcourt, a Minister of Aboriginal Affairs during Stephen Harper’s Conservative regime, dismissed the report as “propagandist”. “I take offence to Canada being accused of genocide. My comprehension of genocide is measured by what genocide really is.”

The use of “genocide” is in line with research co-authored by Bernie Farber, past CEO of the Canadian Jewish Congress. “Genocide is the sum of the social practices, assumptions, and

actions detailed within this report. The national inquiry’s findings support characterizing these acts, including violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQIA people, as genocide.”

Police obstruction

The authors acknowledge that they cannot accurately count the victims largely because police forces—especially the RCMP—refused to cooperate. Of almost 300 documents and reports requested by the Inquiry, the RCMP has delivered only 107. And many of those were so heavily redacted and edited as to be useless.

The obstruction by the state police is evidence that genocidal practices are not a thing of the past, but bred in the bone of the colonial Canadian state. Witness Senator Lynn Beyak, who posted racist letters to her website defending the residential schools, and portraying Indigenous

people as lazy freeloaders. When challenged she refused to remove the letters, calling them “edgy and opinionated” rather than racist. It took months for the Senate to censure her, a slap on the wrist in the form of a brief suspension.

Trudeau words ring hollow

Justin Trudeau supported the Inquiry verbally, but refused to acknowledge the word “genocide”. As long as he is bent on forcing oil pipelines through Indigenous territories his words ring hollow.

The Report, entitled *Reclaiming Power and Place*, is over 1200 pages and contains more than 200 recommendations. There are chapters on confronting oppression, the Right to Culture, the Right to Health, the Right to Security, and the Right to Justice.

As well as challenging federal and provincial governments the Report calls for more solidarity

from the settler population.

There’s a long way to go. The latest stats show that 60% of Indigenous children on reserves live in poverty. Indigenous youth counted for 46% of young people admitted to youth correctional services (2016-17) while accounting for only 8% of the population. Governments refuse to acknowledge environmental racism, like the mercury poisoning in Grassy Narrows. And reports of racist abuse of Indigenous sexual assault victims at the hands of police continue to surface.

The MMIWG Inquiry and labeling Canada’s colonial past and present “genocide” is an important step forward. But the lack of implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Report recommendations is a warning that the Canadian state will not change its ways without struggle.

• For full coverage socialist.ca/node/3872

Greens profit from climate movement in by-election

by **Brian Champ**

The Green party is on a roll. And the climate crisis is a key election issue. After forming the official opposition in PEI in April, in May they won their second federal seat in the Nanaimo-Ladysmith by-election.

Paul Manly captured 37.3% of the vote, rising 17.5% over his share of the vote when he ran in 2015. The NDP and Liberal vote both dropped by over 10%.

The NDP lost the seat and came in third due to their terrible environmental record. In government, they approved the Site C dam and rammed through the Liberals' failed Liquid Natural Gas terminal. The federal NDP has supported the same oil interests as the two main parties, and are unable to consistently oppose pipeline projects. A new, more radical environmental platform has been rolled out, but too late to affect the by-election.

The BC Greens hold the balance of power in BC, and could have threatened to bring down the government on these issues, and possibly swayed the NDP, but they did not.

All political parties have failed on this issue. The latest reports from the IPCC show that there are only 11 years left to reduce emissions enough to prevent runaway global warming that would devastate the earth's ecosystems and make life very hard indeed for those who survive.

Paul Manly was able to voice



The streets help Greens at the ballot box

Julia Hawkins CC BY 2.0

climate crisis concerns with talk about “bold solutions to the challenges we face”; that we need to “stop subsidizing fossil fuels and invest in green jobs”; and that politicians need to “plan beyond a four year election cycle and ensure a secure future for our children.” He also called for a national moratorium on fracking.

The Green party doesn't see itself as 'right' or 'left'. But this means they accept the logic of capitalism, and claim that profits can be made while transitioning to the carbon neutral economy.

But the climate science is clear that to avoid the worst ravages “would require large-scale transformations of the global energy–agriculture–land–economy system, affecting the way in which energy is produced, agricultural

systems are organized, and food, energy and materials are consumed”. In this system the key decisions are made by an unelected elite that ensure it is an exploitative, oppressive and environmentally destructive system so the profits are maximized. And the development of capitalism is intertwined with the development and exploitation of fossil fuels.

Sending signals to the market, with a carbon tax or a cap-and-trade emissions scheme is not enough. A credible plan would invest massively in renewable energy jobs, jobs improving energy efficiency and jobs in the public services to which workers in dirty industries could transition. Instead of a regressive tax on the consumption of dirty energy, the profits of corporations should pay

for the transition.

To achieve this we need a massive, united movement for urgent climate action that must attempt to address historical grievances, including racist oppression of first nations who have stood up against the degradation of their lands, waters, skies and bodies. The scale of the crisis and the failure of our rulers to reform the system has made revolutionary change seem more and more realistic.

Green New Deal and student strikes

Good news is that many are not waiting for electoral politics. The fantastic student climate strikes that are happening every Friday, mobilized 1.6 million students on March 15 demanding real action to reduce carbon emissions. This happened alongside the direct action group Extinction Rebellion (XR) that clogged 5 major London thoroughfares for 11 days and forced the UK parliament to declare a climate emergency.

The Green New Deal (GND) that has shaken up US politics is a plan to tax the rich's profits to pay for the just transition to an environmentally sustainable economy, while addressing economic and racial inequality. It's popular because it speaks to the hopes of millions who are concerned about the future, but are also not satisfied with the status quo.

The future of the GND is not guaranteed but there is a movement mobilizing to build it.

A grayer shade of Green



The recent surprise by-election win in Nanaimo gave the greens two seats in parliament. In the PEI election they came from nowhere to become the official opposition. The party is consistently polling above 11 % heading toward a national election. Pundits are gushing that perhaps this is a breakthrough moment for Green leader Elizabeth May.

The Greens are the beneficiaries of growing concern about climate change. Their popularity bump was the result of voters dismayed over Trudeau's bailout of the K-M pipeline project and the NDP equivocation over fossil fuels.

The glimpse of power, however dim and distant, must have been too much for May. She chose this exact moment to remind everyone that her party is Green in name only. Her call for a ban on “foreign” oil, coupled with greater support for the Alberta tar sands caused a national outbreak of jaw-dropping and spit-takes.

“As long as we are using fossil fuels we should be using our fossil fuels,” May explained. And with that her environmental policies aligned with Andrew Scheer's Conservatives, and even oil industry shill Ezra “Ethical Oil” Levant. The business press – the same folks who endorse the Tories in every election – responded with equal parts approval and confusion.

People who have scrutinized the Greens' platform are less perplexed. May's party has always endorsed “market solutions”. For instance, subsidies and handouts to petro-corporations are a problem because they interfere with “free” markets. May is not opposed to the K-M pipeline in principle, because it violates Indigenous sovereignty or threatens to pollute the environment; she just prefers pipelines carrying bitumen sludge that has been refined in Alberta first.

To be clear, May is not even calling for nationalizing energy development. When she says “our fossil fuels” she means corporations profiting from Alberta's tar sands and BC's fracking megaprojects. This ignores evidence that shows that tar sands energy projects are far dirtier than conventional sources. The amount of energy required to extract energy from the tar sands makes them equal parts environmental disaster and economic sinkhole.

May's pronouncement is less about addressing the climate emergency and more about grasping for a shred of electoral power. No amount of tinkering can resolve the destructive contradiction at the heart of capitalism. People looking for serious action on climate change would do well to ignore May's gray Green Party. Far better to back the rising international youth protests, or Green New Deal town-halls that are drawing full houses across the country to debate the way forward.

Mark Norman, Big Business and military excess

by **Kim McAuley**

While Grassy Narrows endures endless suffering waiting for a treatment centre, funding and clean-up of their community, the Conservatives and Liberals instead focus their energy on finger pointing and playing politics over Big Capital (SNC Lavalin and shipbuilding companies Irving, Davie and Seaspan.) These scandals reek of vote swaying in the lead up to the fall election. It's a disgusting ploy and a long-ago exhausted scene.

The last weeks of May provided a strong example of the injurious and insulting nonsense our two main competing parties serve up as leadership. Lets look back to the Fall of 2015:

In 2015, Vice Admiral Mark Norman, under the Harper Government, was authorized to negotiate and award a contract to Davie Shipbuilding in Quebec to build an interim supply ship for the Canadian Navy. That contract was worth \$668 million. It had a cancellation clause worth \$89 million, in the event it wasn't signed by November 30, 2015. (Almost exactly the same amount – \$88.7 million – promised to Grassy Narrows).

Court filings reveal that RCMP investigators believed two government officials, not acting together, leaked government “secrets” regarding shipbuilding negotiations, starting in Sep-

tember of 2014, to Davie Shipbuilding, its lobbyists and the media. Vice Admiral Mark Norman was charged with Breach of Trust in relation to these allegations.

On October 19, 2015 – the day Har-



per lost his throne to Trudeau – Harper's government awarded a contract to North Vancouver shipyard Seaspan. Seaspan had promised it would prepare its shipyard for the work, at no cost to Canada, as had Davie.

Later in October 2015, Scott Brison as the newly appointed President of the Treasury Board under the Trudeau Liberals asked Cabinet to consider an unsolicited proposal from New Brunswick's Irving Shipyard to build the interim supply ship instead.

In December, 2015, a confidential report for the Liberal government – obtained by the CBC – noted the program by Seaspan was ill-managed,

chaotic, inefficient and suffering from delay.

Trudeau's new government ultimately finalized the contract with Davie in 2015. And the fact that Irving even got a pause on Davie in the first

place speaks volumes about the power of vote swaying Capital that Irving and their ilk has. The Irving operations are a virtual monolith in New Brunswick, are the largest private sector employer in the province, and have a monopoly on the media there. They own and operate Irving oil and gas, as well as lumber, pulp & paper and construction companies, and have business interests in real estate.

The Trial of Vice-Admiral Norman was scheduled for August, 2019. But on March 28 Mark Norman's defence team presented new evidence and on May 8 the Breach of Trust charge against Norman was stayed – with the

Crown alleging it didn't have enough evidence to convict him.

On May 14, Scheer asked Trudeau to apologize to Mark Norman. Jason Kenney pledged his undying love of Norman as a Canadian hero. The *Toronto Sun* ran a front page comparing the “hardship” endured by Norman to the allegedly soft treatment of Omar Khadr.

Trudeau instead raised the fact that Harper was the one who initially awarded the contract to Davie.

Soon after he announced \$15.7 billion to re-build the Canadian Navy (contracts awarded to Seaspan and Irving) and another \$351.3 million to “enhance the capacity of the coast guard, strengthen management and oversight and promote a greener way of doing business”.

While the Tories proclaim themselves the defender of the people, in this case it seems they were in bed with big business just as much as Trudeau. Both parties reek from this.

So while tens of millions in government funds are thrown around and sometimes just thrown out to try to curry favour with the bosses and buy a few votes, the people of the country – most notably Indigenous groups like those of Grassy Narrows – have to wait for basic life saving services while trying to stay alive on their poisoned lands.

Sudan shows working class power

As we go to press, the Sudanese military has launched a deadly assault on a peaceful sit-in, killing at least 30 and wounding many hundreds. The movement has called for an unlimited strike until the military regime falls. In late May, *Socialist Worker* spoke with Ibrahim, an Egyptian socialist, about the events unfolding in Sudan.

What about the situation in Sudan is similar and different from the Egyptian revolution of 2011?

The most important thing in the Arab world today is the idea that revolution is dead. Now, no one can talk about this. Now, all people have seen revolution on TV in Algeria and Sudan and remember the Egyptian revolution. Answers to difficult questions come very easily now. What is the role of the military? They are the enemy of the people, they are not one hand with the people. In 2011, we chanted “Army and people: one hand!” Now in Sudan, “the Army is the enemy of people!”

What is the state of the left in Sudan?

The situation of the left in Sudan is much better than in Egypt. There is the Sudanese Communist Party, and we have an Egyptian Communist Party. While both are Stalinist, the Sudanese CP is a fighting party. They have strong contact with trade unions and with peasants in villages. When they held their first conference after the overthrow of Gaafar Nimeiry, they filled a stadium with tens of thousands of people! The Sudanese CP is in the heart of this revolution, because they are in all middle-class trade unions like doctors or engineers. But now we are beginning to see some radical organizations, more radical than the Sudanese CP. Their strategy and tactics have been inspiring young people to sit in in



No to military rule: Sudanese revolution demands a civilian government

front of the military headquarters [in Khartoum].

The Gulf States, the military, the Sudanese Muslim Brotherhood call this revolution a ‘communist revolution’. The situation in Sudan is different than Egypt – they learned from the Egyptian revolution. The Egyptian Revolution is very useful for them. In Sudan, Islamists are anti-revolution from the beginning and try to crush the general strike. Now it is very clear: revolution is left. If you want to make a social revolution, you have to go left.

How significant was the May 28-29 general strike? How does it compare to strikes during the Egyptian revolution?

In Egypt in 2011, we had great worker movements – especially in the beginning, from February 5th to 9th – over four days, we saw a lot of workers’ strikes. But we did not have a general strike in the form of a political strike. We saw workers come

to Tahrir square, factory by factory, one by one. But a general strike like Sudan, we did not see this in 2011.

The Sudan general strike was very successful, we can say 80%. After the general strike, people are talking about “power to the people”. It is not only small groups or organizations on the left in Sudan talking about taking complete power from the military. Before the general strike, we heard this idea, but only whispered: “We need all the power”. After the general strike, where the military wants seven seats in the Sovereign Council and three for civilians, now civilians are talking about having all ten – “We don’t need any for the military, all of them belong to Bashir”.

We are now in a moment where we will see repression. The military shot and killed people May 30th, one of them a pregnant woman, and two young people in the sit-in. They threatened to crush the sit-in by force.

The question of Sudan does not belong only to the Sudanese people, it belongs to all the regimes in the Middle East, especially the Gulf States. The Sudanese military played a bloody role in the war in Yemen. The second in command, General Hemeti, was a leader of massacres in Darfur, and led Sudanese forces in Yemen. They have an alliance with Saudi Arabia and the United Emirates. These countries, and Egypt of course, their intelligence meets every day to consider the situation and how to face it. So the Sudanese people don’t face only the Sudanese military. Counterrevolution is not just the military and capitalists in Sudan, but all the regimes.

When [Lt-General] Abdel Fattah al-Burhan visited Egypt, he saluted Al-Sisi – as if he was an officer in his army! This is a sign. This shows the role of Egyptian intelligence in what happens in Sudan now. I don’t know what will happen in the coming days. Sudan as a country is

very poor. But we will see. People are always suprising us, especially in revolutions. We can’t predict what people will do in a revolution.

What role do young people play?

On May 29th, a youth march was blocked by police on Nile Street as they were trying to walk to the square. This is a very strategic street. The military killed people on this street because if the protesters occupy it, they occupy the capital. It’s like a war. There is no media. They shut down the Al Jazeera office May 30th. The journalists for Reuters are Sudanese, and they are afraid. You can’t tell the truth. In Egypt they killed journalists, so they know the consequences.

In the general strike, workers in the electricity sector struck because the military arrested many in the sector. Workers threatened to cut electricity to the generals’ building. Can you imagine? The military released all of them. This shows what we are talking about, working class people’s power.

If the Egyptian revolution did only this, it is good, you know? Because the people in the region learned about difficult questions. You remember the Russian revolution of 1917 – after February, the situation was very clear. Because the ordinary people know the answer of the question without any complicated debate.

A sign of great revolutions is that answers to difficult questions come easily: who is an enemy, who is a friend. And lies are not as useful as before in Sudan. The military lied, and people say “We heard this before in Egypt”. Some in Sudan say “It’s like we watch the Egyptian revolution – every day, the same tactics. But we don’t have the answer”. We don’t know what will happen. But until now, this is inspiring all people in the region.

European elections: collapse of the centre

The European union elections on May 26 showed, once again, that the traditional parties are collapsing as people are looking for a new political direction.

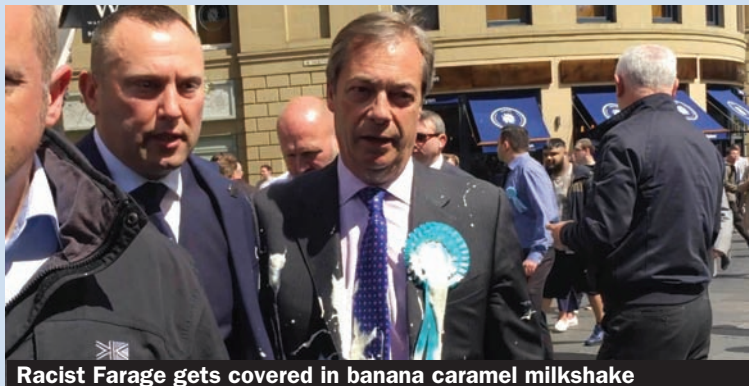
The far right made gains in some countries and the Greens, riding a wave of increased concern about the environment, also grew. Below is a round-up of coverage including a report from Greece where the elections have deepened the political crisis for the ruling Syriza party.

United Kingdom

The European election results have underlined the political crisis in Britain and the wholesale collapse of the Tories.

Anti-racists were celebrating in North West England as, after a campaign by Stand Up To Racism, fascist Tommy Robinson failed to be elected. He took just 2 percent of the vote and lost his deposit.

Nahella Ashraf, from Manchester Stand Up To Racism said, “We have shown that there is no place in mainstream politics for a fascist. I’d like to thank the hundreds of activists that came out across the North West to make this happen.



Racist Farage gets covered in banana caramel milkshake

“The campaign run by Stand Up To Racism showed that we can pull people together regardless of how they voted in the EU referendum.

“However, we cannot be complacent.”

The main gainer across Britain was Nigel Farage’s Brexit Party. It won almost a third of the vote, far more than the Tories and Labour combined.

The far right across Europe had mixed results.

In France fascist Marine Le Pen’s National Rally was the largest party, profiting from the unpopularity of president Emmanuel Macron.

The AfD in Germany advanced, but not strongly. In the Spanish state Vox took seats for the first time but won a lower percentage than in the recent general election.

The far right Sweden Democrats made further gains. Meanwhile the racist Lega party topped the polls in Italy.

But the Freedom Party in Austria was down on 2014’s result and Golden Dawn in Greece saw its vote reduced sharply.

In the Netherlands the far-right Freedom party, led by Geert Wilders, collapsed and didn’t win a seat.

The Greens did very well in Germany, coming second with over 20 percent of the vote as the Labour-type SPD plummeted.

And Greens also had successes in Ireland, Portugal and France.

Much wider awareness of climate chaos and the mobilisations around it played a part in that advance.

—from *Socialist Worker* UK

Greece

The Sunday May 26th election results brought a hard defeat for SYRIZA and Alexis Tsipras personally. The numbers are relentless. The gap with New Democracy reached close to 10 points. Candidates of the governing left Syriza in the local elections record a drop everywhere. But beyond the numbers, there is the political admittance of defeat by Tsipras who said he would ask the President of the Republic for the immediate announcement of parliamentary elections.

The responsibilities for this development are beyond any doubt the disastrous adaptation of the SYRIZA government to the political choices of the ruling class and to the needs of Greek capitalism. None of the

ministers of Tsipras can blame their responsibilities on the “rightward looking electorate”. Those who indeed turned provocatively to the right are the government officials of SYRIZA.

Even in the area of the treatment of refugees, the government of Alexis Tsipras has managed to betray the great solidarity movement that has welcomed the refugee wave. Cooperation with the EU-Fortress, Frontex, the drownings at sea, shameful detention camps in the islands, murderous “repatriation” in Evros.

The common denominator of these failures is the political cowardice of reformism in the face of challenges and its willingness to search for “realistic” solutions in the context of “real correlations”.

One hundred years after the inauguration of the Comintern, all of today’s battles are embedded in the same great prospect of overthrowing this system that is not reformable but can only be shattered by the activity of everyday people of the working class. Forward and all together in the common struggle.

—from *Statement of SEK in Greece*

How abortion rights were won

With renewed attacks on access to abortion in the United States, Carolyn Egan takes a look back at the fight that led to a historic victory in Canada, and the lessons for the struggle for reproductive justice today.

An historic battle took place in this country in the late twentieth century between the women's movement, its allies and the Canadian state. A major victory was won when the Supreme Court of Canada overturned the federal abortion law in 1988. At the time the campaign was situated in the broader context of reproductive freedom. Abortion rights was seen as one of a number of demands that the women's movement was struggling for in the fight for reproductive rights.

Before the law was struck down there was access to abortion, but it was a very privileged access. In 1969 legislation had been passed which allowed abortions to be performed if they took place in an approved or accredited hospital with the consent of a therapeutic abortion committee. The committee was made up of three doctors whose role was to determine whether the continuation of a pregnancy would impact the physical or mental health of the woman.

In practice it resulted in very inequitable access. Women with economic resources who could afford a private gynecologist or travel to the US or Montreal could get an abortion. Many racialized women, Indigenous women, working class, rural and young women did not have access. In spite of the claims that Canada had universal health care, there was a two-tiered system.

In Toronto, workers from the Immigrant Women's Health Centre, the Birth Control and VD Information Centre and Hassle Free Clinic decided that they had to challenge a system that was denying abortions to many of those using their services. They felt strongly that the federal law was fundamentally flawed in that it took the decision out of the hands of women and was racist and class biased in its application. They and others formed the Ontario Coalition for Abortion Clinics (OCAC) in 1982.

The group thought long and hard about how best to change an increasingly desperate situation for so many women. We looked at the circumstance in the province of Quebec where clinics were providing abortions to women in their own communities. A lesson was learned

from Quebec and we modeled our campaign after theirs. The strategy was the combination of a doctor willing to challenge the law and a broad and representative movement willing to fight for the necessary changes.

A mass action, United Front approach
OCAC was a grass-roots, activist organization; a united front. The immediate objectives were to overturn the federal law and to legalize freestanding clinics providing medically insured abortions. OCAC took a mass action approach. We did not leave the campaign to lawyers or to the lobbying of politicians. We believed that tens of thousands of women and men would come into the streets across the country to fight for women's reproductive freedom.

Groups took up the cause in every province and the Canadian Abortion Rights Action League fought side by side with us. Members and allies spoke to labour unions, to community organizations, on campuses and to faith communities.

At the very start we won a resolution at the Ontario Federation of Labour convention supporting the campaign and individual unions followed suit. Women Working with Immigrant Women, a coalition of immigrant and racialized women's organizations, helped to organize meetings and active support in diverse communities. More and more groups and individuals joined the struggle.

We set out to win full access to free abortion for all women. OCAC made clear in its organizing that it should be a fundamental right for all women to make the decision to terminate a pregnancy and that fully funded facilities must be in place to allow them to do so. It also felt that the movement needed an analysis that went much further. The group believed that women must also have the right to bear the children they choose to bear. This was a perspective that activists from the Immigrant Women's Health Centre had put forward in earlier campaigns to remove barriers to abortion, sexual health and the support services

required to continue a pregnancy.

Expanding the definition of 'choice'

We were aware of the limits of the notion of "choice". Full access to free abortion, as significant an advance as that would be, does not guarantee that all women have choices over their lives or having children.

OCAC stated that for all women to have real choices in our society they require safe and effective birth control services in their own languages and their own communities, decent jobs, paid parental leave, childcare, the right to live freely and openly regardless of their sexuality, an end to forced or coerced sterilization,



Dr. Henry Morgentaler celebrates victory on January 28, 1988

employment equity, and of course, full access to free abortion. All were required for reproductive freedom.

OCAC tried to ensure that the demand for abortion access was never seen in isolation but as one of a number of interdependent struggles. We tried to make this concrete by challenging the coerced sterilization that First Nations women, Black women and women with disabilities were facing.

We heard from healthcare workers who said that therapeutic abortion committees sometimes refused abortions unless a woman agreed to be sterilized. We fought for child care as a woman's right and campaigned

against extra billing by doctors. AIDS activists spoke at our rallies outlining the pressures on HIV positive women to have abortions and tubal ligations. We worked very closely with the Midwives Collective fighting to have their services paid for by the state and available to all.

We believed that the choice to have a child can never be free in a society where many women earn so much less than men, in which quality childcare and affordable housing are not available, where inequity and discrimination are systemic.

We found this reproductive rights perspective to be vital to the success of our organizing because it reflected the reality of women's lives,

the movement risking exposure and arrest, but they continued to come. Safe houses were established in the neighbourhood, and volunteer escorts accompanied women to the clinic protecting them from anti-choice harassment.

It did not take long before the facility was raided by the police and Drs Morgentaler, Scott and Smoling were arrested and the medical equipment seized. This was not unexpected and OCAC had been building broad support. We knew we were going to be in a long drawn out campaign. We had to change the balance of power in the country, and while the issue had to be in the courts because of the arrests, the critical task was mobilizing the strong support that we knew was there for women's reproductive rights. Judges do not sit in isolation and we had to show that the law was unenforceable and make sure that a jury would not convict the doctors.

In linking struggles OCAC was able to build a wide campaign through demonstrations, marches and rallies in which thousands participated.

Through our organizing we were able to broaden the participation of trade unionists, students, AIDS activists, people of colour, and immigrant women's organizations in the campaign. We understood that without active participation and the support of thousands no change would occur.

After the raid we were caught in the courts for almost a year on a constitutional challenge through which the state tried to demobilize the movement. An Ontario Supreme Court Justice ruled that the federal abortion law was constitutional. He stated that the Charter of Rights and Freedoms protects only those rights that are spelled out in law or "rooted deeply in our traditions". Well abortion is certainly rooted in women's traditions. In the actual trial the jury unanimously rejected this by finding the doctors innocent. The government appealed the acquittal but the clinic reopened and the movement gained a tremendous momentum.

Defending the Morgentaler clinic in Toronto

OCAC worked with Dr. Henry Morgentaler and in 1983 he opened a clinic challenging the federal law. The clinic became a symbol of women's resistance.

Women were making appointments for abortions at the clinic knowing full well that the government viewed it to be "illegal". They faced police surveillance and anti-choice harassment.

They were the true heroines of

Building a mass movement

The goal was to build a visible, mass

movement which fought together for women's reproductive freedom. The full message was often lost in the media presentations where most attention was given to the single issue of overturning the federal abortion law.

There were many debates about the best way forward. Strategic complexities and dilemmas were not

This was a huge breakthrough for women without status.

Attempts to recriminalize abortion fail

It did not take long before the Conservative government in Ottawa began the process of introducing new legislation recriminalizing abortion.



Protesting anti-choice bigots in Toronto, May 2019

movement easier in a movement that was constantly under direct attack from the state and the conservative right.

When the Supreme Court finally overturned the existing abortion law it was through the strength of a broad and representative movement.

There was a spontaneous demonstration of thousands of supporters outside the Morgentaler Clinic when the decision of the Supreme Court was announced. Women and men were dancing in the street! Similar rallies erupted across the country. Freestanding clinics were legalized in Ontario fully covered by the healthcare system and clinics began to open in other parts of the country as well. There were a number of facilities in Ontario that were able to provide abortions to women without health cards as a result of our organizing.

Because of the strong roots that had been developed a major campaign against a new law was launched. "Women are not Criminals" was the slogan.

There were national days of action and large numbers came out into the streets. Tragically during this period a young woman, Yvonne Jurewicz, died in Toronto of a self-induced abortion because she believed a legal procedure was not available.

During the campaign against the new law and for increased access, anti-choice forces began another assault. "Operation Rescue", as they called it, started in Toronto in the fall of 1988 and attempted to blockade the entrance to the Morgentaler Clinic. They physically and verbally harassed women seeking abortions. OCAC organized defense of the

clinics rejecting the argument that it should be left to the police to protect the facilities.

Because of the strong mobilization and community support, "Operation Rescue" was stopped. This speaks to the strength of the movement building strategy and the active alliances of the united front.

Success and the ongoing struggle for full access

There are now over thirty freestanding clinics providing funded abortions across the country. Access is much wider than when the campaign began in the early eighties and sexual health services are more widely available, but the fight for reproductive justice is far from over.

There is no national childcare program. Equal pay for work of equal value is still a dream for many. Employment equity has not been implemented. Systemic racist and sexist discrimination still exists and many of the other services necessary for women to have real choices in their lives are not in place. Private members bills are regularly being introduced in the House of Commons to create barriers for women. To date all have been defeated.

Support for reproductive justice is still very strong across the country. While the overall strategic situation has changed, the lessons of the campaign that was waged still remain relevant.

The principles and tactics that were used created a broad united front for reproductive rights. This overturned the federal abortion law and created a network of clinics making abortion much more accessible for women who were previously denied, initial and partial victories for sure, but still major gains for women's reproductive freedom.

We continue to fight for reforms, and the longer-term goal of women's liberation for all will only occur with an end to capitalism and the creation of a society where exploitation and oppression are things of the past.

• Reprinted from **Abortion and the struggle for reproductive justice**, a Resistance Press pamphlet (June 2014)



We must maintain a broad-based movement to defend gains

The fight for reproductive justice is a fight for us all

by Carolyn Egan

The horror of what is happening in the United States to women and all those seeking control over their bodies and their lives is causing a reaction worldwide. Although it represents a minority of the population, the anti-choice movement is extremely well funded and has been putting pressure on state legislatures to pass bills taking away the most basic rights of those seeking abortions.

As countries like Ireland, that had been dominated by the Catholic Church, break free through strong campaigns overturning restrictive anti-abortion laws, people are horrified by the steps backward by states in the US. The contempt for women and all those who have been struggling against oppression in this exploitative system is obvious. The anger of progressive peoples everywhere has shown itself in demonstrations around the globe.

Where there is a Republican majority, there is a clear strategy by anti-choice forces to have state after state enact anti-abortion laws in the hope of eventually overturning Roe versus Wade at the Supreme Court. The Trump administration is enabling this with its racist, anti-woman, Islamophobic, anti-immigrant policies that have impacted millions.

Alabama is the third-poorest state in the union and has only three abortion clinics. The director of one of them, a Black woman obstetrician/gynecologist, spoke to Democracy Now saying that vulnerable women will be the most affected. Black women and poor white women don't have the resources to travel out of state and they will be forced to carry to term a pregnancy or seek an illegal abortion, putting themselves at risk of dying or having severe complications. In the late 1970s, after the Rowe v. Wade Supreme Court

decision, the Hyde Amendment was passed which denied the use of Medicaid funding for abortions. The first who died was Rosie Jimenez, a young Latina woman from Texas, who went to an illegal abortionist and developed septicemia.

A chant that was often used in Canada was, "Campaign Life Your Name's a Lie, You Don't Care If Women Die". That is the reality. The most recent statistics show that 47,000 deaths occur worldwide each year due to illegal abortions.

The reproductive justice movement in this country has made it clear in its organizing that to have real choices we must have childcare, decent jobs, affordable housing, birth control available in our own communities and our own languages, an end to forced or coerced sterilization, an end to racial and gender harassment, and of course full access to free abortion.

The trade union movement has historically worked along side the women's movement to fight for reproductive justice and it must come out strongly in the United States against these retrogressive steps attempting to roll back all the gains that we have made. These measures are racist and class biased, and must be stopped.

We also have to do all we can to protect reproductive freedom in this country. An anti-choice premier, Jason Kenney, has been elected in Alberta. New Brunswick will not pay for abortions at the only clinic in the province. Hospital amalgamations and reduction in service all affect access. Attacks on public health will cut funding to sexual health clinics that provide both birth control and abortion referrals without requiring a health card. Our gains are fragile as well and we must maintain a broad-based movement to protect what we have, and go on to win greatly needed improvements so that everyone has full access to the all services they require.

Becoming the global cop

by Tom Leonard

Second in a three-part series, on the 70th anniversary of NATO. The previous installment looked at the founding of the alliance, and its history through the Cold War. It exposed NATO's stated goal – defending freedom and democracy – as a hollow boast. But deprived of its main “evil empire” opponent, how could NATO powers continue to justify massive arms spending?

A clue to this question can be found in the basic structure of NATO. Overall command of all NATO forces rests with the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR), who has always been a U.S. general. The SACEUR is appointed by the U.S. President and confirmed by the U.S. Senate before being approved by the North Atlantic Council, NATO's highest decision-making body. The SACEUR is concurrently head of U.S. European Command, the U.S. military organization responsible for U.S. military forces and operations within the European region (including Russia and Greenland).

This means he not only commands NATO forces in Europe, but all U.S. forces as well. The SACEUR is therefore directly responsible to the U.S. President, not just the NATO Secretary General. This structure clearly demonstrates that U.S. preponderance is built right into the basic functioning of the alliance.

A Decisive Shift – 1990s

A further clue can be found in the history of NATO since the collapse of the Soviet Union and its satellites from 1989 through 1991. With that collapse the principal target of NATO's force posture, and the first part of Lord Ismay's troika, (“to keep the Russians out, the Americans in, and the Germans down.”) disappeared. In July 1990 a second aspect of Ismay's troika likewise disappeared when West Germany, a NATO member since 1955, reunified with East Germany. NATO appeared to have run out of opponents but the world had not yet run out of NATO.

In April 1993 NATO members launched Operation Deny Flight, the enforcement of a United Nations-mandated no-fly zone over Bosnia-Herzegovina, part of the former Yugoslavia and at that time engulfed in a major war.

This was the first time that NATO forces had conducted operations outside the territory

of a NATO member state, and an air battle in February 1994 marked the first time NATO forces engaged in active combat. NATO further intervened in the Bosnian War in August 1995 with Operation Deliberate Force, a sustained campaign of airstrikes in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the first explicitly combat mission undertaken by the alliance, and a decisive intervention into the affairs of a non-member state.

By doing so, NATO had established the precedent of being willing to engage in “out of area” operations, that is, military action outside the boundaries of its own territory.

This precedent was reinforced and amplified in 1999 with Operation Allied Force, a

Also in 1999, NATO formally added new members Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic, all of which were previously members of the Warsaw Pact. This was described by former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev as “definitely a violation of the spirit of the statements and assurances made to us in 1990,” alluding to remarks made that year by U.S. Secretary of State James Baker that if a reunified Germany were to join NATO “not an inch of NATO's present military jurisdiction will spread in an eastern direction.”

In 2004, NATO added a further seven former members of the Warsaw Pact, including the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and

Lithuania (previously part of the USSR), which border directly on Russia.

So NATO's response to the demise of its main adversary in the early 1990s was not to retreat or dissolve, but the reverse. NATO used the historic collapse of the USSR and the Stalinist bloc to establish a more aggressive and interventionist military policy targeting other countries, and to grow.

Expansionism

NATO is committed to a policy of enlargement, stating explicitly that membership is open to “any other European state in a position to further the principles of this Treaty and to contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area.”

As noted, NATO membership has grown from an initial twelve to a present 29 states, with two others – Bosnia & Herzegovina and North Macedonia – currently participating in Membership Action Plans aimed at preparing them for membership, and both Ukraine and Georgia openly discussing the possibility of joining.

The alliance now directly touches Russia's borders in the Baltic, and if Ukraine and Georgia were to join, would add thousands of

kilometres of shared border in Russia's west and south. This at a time when the Russian state probably controls less territory than at any point in history since the reign of Catherine the Great.

As has been noted elsewhere, NATO has now achieved what neither Hitler nor Napoleon were able to – the encirclement of a territorially reduced Russia by a hostile military alliance.



78-day bombing campaign over Serbia and Kosovo which NATO conducted entirely in its own name, without the authorization of the UN. The air strikes destroyed substantial infrastructure within Serbia, including the headquarters of Serb Radio and Television in the capital Belgrade, as well as seven bridges that had no military function, and killed an estimated 500 civilians, according to Human Rights Watch.

Foodsters united



by Pam Johnson

“Gig economy same old crap, exploitation in an app!” was the chant of over two hundred Foodora bicycle and car couriers and supporters as they marched through downtown Toronto. The march was organized by the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) who are hosting a convention in town. CUPW is supporting the Foodora workers' drive to form a union.

The organizing campaign, Justice for Foodora Couriers, is calling for better wages, including compensation for dangerous work, time to recover if they are injured or sick, and an intimidation free workplace. Foodora, like Uber, calls its workers ‘independent contractors’ to avoid employment standards and labour law. The pay-per-order model means that during slow periods workers receive wages lower than minimum wage. This is after each courier has sunk hundreds or thousands of dollars keeping their bike, car or scooter in good working order. One courier told Socialist.ca, “This is the second time that we have tried to organize. We have momentum now, it is a bigger movement. It is not just Canada, it is global. People are pissed off, they want to see change.”

Former CUPW president, Jean-Claude Parrot whose sign quotes the song solidarity forever, “not a single wheel can turn”

Also marching was former CUPW president, Jean-Claude Parrot, who was famously jailed for defying back-to-work legislation in 1980. “I'm 82 but I'm here today supporting these workers. Organizing today is very important, you have to be determined.”

• To get information or show your support for these workers: Justice for Foodora Couriers foodstersunited.ca

Territorial acknowledgment

As settlers, we acknowledge our occupation of lands that are the Indigenous territories of Turtle Island. Furthermore, we support all struggles for Indigenous sovereignty in whatever forms they take by the hundreds of First Nations and Inuit communities that have resided here for many thousands of years, and by Métis communities that have developed in the last hundreds of years.

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WHERE WE STAND socialist.ca/ourstand

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. Capitalism cannot regulate the catastrophic effects of climate change. We stand for climate justice, including the

concept of “just transition” for affected workers.

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 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.

Read the full statement at:
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Solidarity march with locked-out Québec workers

by Carolyn Egan

Over 6,000 primarily industrial workers from all over Quebec traveled to Trois-Rivières on Saturday, May 25th to show solidarity with locked out Steelworkers at ABI, a smelter owned by ALCOA.

Members of USW Local 9700 have been on the picket line since January 2018, through two long winters, standing up to corporate greed and attempts to take away hard won union rights. The most recent agreement was rejected by 93% of the workers, showing their courage and determination.

They say that they are fighting not just for themselves but for the working class of Quebec and all of Canada. The members feel that if they give in to concessions it will be a slippery slope, and workplace after workplace will be subject to the same demands.

It is worth noting that a full bus of Steelworkers from Toronto made the nine-hour trip back and forth to show their solidarity. Four van loads came from Local 1005 in Hamilton as well. These very diverse, English speaking members were greeted with great enthusiasm by the almost all white, Francophone Metallos. Very few could speak each other's language but there was a real camaraderie. There were also Unifor



members as well as workers from United Food and Commercial Workers, and the Machinists.

The smelter, situated on the St. Lawrence River, is a major part of the ALCOA empire and the company has lost over \$200 million since locking out the workers. There have been strong strike votes by Steelworker locals at ALCOA facilities in the US. The hope is that with aluminum tariffs being lifted, the possibility of further work actions, and the resolve of the Quebec workers, a win could be had.

The event was meant to show the owners that these workers were not about to back down and that they had strong support beyond themselves and their families. Unifor has been the largest contributor to the strike fund, which shows the cross-union solidarity in tough times.

The march wound through the streets of the small city and there was clear enthusiasm from the residents, even Ursuline nuns were waving. Quebec Solidaire was the only political party invited to speak, which is very significant because of the progressive policies it espouses and the battle it is waging against the public ban on religious symbols.

These types of actions are critical to winning against employers and giving confidence to the workers that they should stay the course. Working class solidarity is key, particularly across racial, gender and language lines. This was a very important action and hopefully will bring the workers closer to a victory over ALCOA.

REVIEWS

Planned economics under capitalism: The People's republic of Walmart

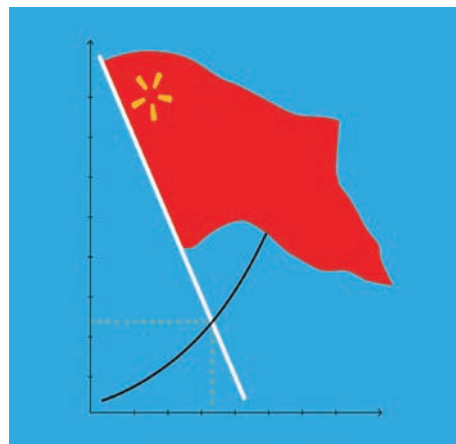
by Ryan Schebek

What can socialists learn from companies like Amazon and Walmart? A lot! and a socialist future might depend on it. Leigh Philips and Michal Rozworski's new book, *The People's Republic of Walmart*, explores the logistical wonders that are Walmart and Amazon in order to contradict arguments against socialism.

These arguments fall under what is commonly referred to as the economic calculation problem or the socialist calculation debate which began in the 1920s. The debate centres around a number of arguments attempting to find the best way to plan an economy. Whether that is through centralized planning or free market logic. The book also includes an economic history of planned economies stretching from Stalinist Russia to Allende's Chile to present day firms.

People's Republic of Walmart explores the idea that Walmart and Amazon are not the epitomes of capitalism one might think they are. In fact their day to day operations look more like a planned economy of an authoritarian state. It is from this point the book frames the socialist calculation debate. Economists have argued that socialism cannot work because the economy is too complex to plan out rationally from a centralized point of view. The book argues that not only does socialism not imply centralized planning but the same centralized planning that right wing economists argue is impossible is happening right under our noses with the logistics behind big corporations.

Of course, the heart of socialism is not centralized planning but radical worker democracy. This leads us to one of the books central



maxims: socialism does not work in theory but only in practice.

Before you brand this statement heretical, hear me out. The book argues socialism cannot be planned out because socialism requires constant feedback from workers' councils in order to operate democratically and efficiently. There is no way to plan this out ahead of time. As soon as socialism stops taking information and decisions from the bottom up it no longer is socialism but a top down, authoritarian system. The book cites examples of Stalinist Russia in which information from collectivized farms was suppressed or censored. If any information did not fit top down goals it was altered in fear of prosecution. This repression and terror is clearly not socialism. For socialism to work we need democratic feedback. When it comes to planning an economy it is impossible to plan out the decisions that will be made by workers' councils as they operate in real time and adjust their needs in the most democratic way possi-

Smart, funny and feminist

by Faline Bobier

"The young generation are like: 'You've put us in a fucked-up political situation, the Earth is dying, there are maniacs in power, you've created this binary way of thinking about gender and sexuality, which we don't accept. We'd actually like to shift this paradigm – you're done!'"

This is a quote from director Olivia Wilde about her new movie *Booksmart*. Run don't walk to see this film. It's a story about two young girls and best friends, about to graduate from high school: Molly (Beanie Feldstein) and Amy (Kaitlyn Dever). On the last day before their graduation ceremony Molly inadvertently learns what the other kids think of them – nerds who care only about studying and have no life outside of their books.

When Molly learns that those kids she disdained because they were out partying and fooling around have also made it into Ivy League colleges she decides that she and Amy need to change their reputations. They have to spend their last night before the high school graduation ceremony proving how much they can party with the best of them.

Some have called *Booksmart* a female companion piece to *Superbad*, a movie about male high school friendship starring Jonah Hill. In some ways it is that. It's certainly just as side-splittingly funny. But this movie is about a different era, one in which gender norms are being challenged on all sides in the midst of attempts by Trump-like politicians to push millennials, and particularly young women, back into rigid gender roles.

One of the refreshing things about *Booksmart* is that it doesn't play to the stereotypes often seen in movies about high school.

The jocks are not just jocks, the 'nerds' are not just nerds. This is a movie that allows high school students to be their own quirky and individual selves to hilarious and touching effect.

But the real revelation and heart of the movie is the friendship between Molly and Amy.



They both have crushes on other people – Molly on the high school jock, Nick, who has also been the totally ineffectual vice president for her tenure as class president – and Amy on a young woman who she's not even sure is gay. As Molly says to her, "You've been out for two

ble. Nor is there a real need to.

It is true, Walmart and Amazon are marvels of the 21st century. They can efficiently move product from a warehouse on one side of the world to the front step of someone's house on the other in within days. However this book makes it very clear to the reader this does not mean they endorse the companies' horrible working conditions. This makes for a rounder critique and points out what we can learn from Walmart to make the world a better place. Imagine using the advanced algorithms or immense profit of Amazon for the betterment of society and not just for making Jeff Bezos more money. If big firms like these are ever to be expropriated an understanding of how they can be used is critical.

As well, understanding how capitalism and the free market generate immense inequality and suffering but maintaining an understanding of how one can use capitalism against itself is a tradition that goes back to Marx's critique of capital and Lenin's theory of state. For example, Lenin, in *The State and Revolution*, describes capitalism as creating the prerequisites of its own transition to communism. Capitalism concentrates workers into one place and intensifies their struggle. Lenin argues these struggles teach us how to come together to fight the system and gives workers insight into how to run the system themselves. Potentially we can use capitalism's tools of oppression against it in the struggle to overthrow it.

So to be clear, Walmart and Amazon are horrible and both they and capitalism can go away forever. However studying Walmart occupies a unique space in the history of economics. The question is how do we use this understanding to move forward.

years but you haven't kissed a girl yet."

A lot of the action involves following Molly and Amy around Los Angeles as they try and track down the 'A+' party being held at Nick's aunt's place, in the process meeting up with their high school principal (working as a Lyft driver to supplement a bad teacher's salary), a potential serial killer and one of their favourite high school teachers who provides them with sufficiently sparkly clothes to wear to the party.

This is Wilde's first foray as a director and it's a wonder. Not only is her casting of all the parts spot on but there are some amazing sequences – a hilarious stop motion bit where the two girls feel the effects of the drug-coated strawberries they innocently ingested and a beautiful underwater sequence where Amy, mermaid-like, searches for the girl she has a crush on, amidst a crush of swarming teenagers in the swimming pool at Nick's aunt's.

Compared to the usual bloated superhero movies and bad romantic comedies that are summer's usual movie fare, *Booksmart* is a gem of a movie. It's funny and smart and feminist with two amazing actors – Feldstein and Dever – at its heart.

It's also a bit of a cautionary tale. Molly has her future mapped out, or so she thinks. It includes becoming the youngest female justice on the Supreme Court. Given the current trajectory of American politics where a disgusting misogynist like Brett Kavanaugh has ascended to the Supreme Court and where a woman's right to choose is in danger in several states across the US, the millennials portrayed in Wilde's film have their work cut out for them if they want to live as free human beings, not shackled by sexist and homophobic outmoded constructions of gender and sexual orientation.

To beat Scheer, fight Ford

by John Bell

As the fall federal election looms, the strategic voting rhetoric is coming to a boil. Not surprisingly, most of the talk originates with the Liberals who are anxious to erode Andrew Scheer's lead in the polls.

The Tories have been able to attack Trudeau on two fronts: from the hard right, by portraying him as soft on "illegal immigration", and by playing up the SNC-Lavalin scandal as evidence of Liberal corporate corruption.

Of the two claims, the only one Trudeau could legitimately refute is the first one. In the spring omnibus budget bill the Liberals included an attack on refugee claimants that pandered to the Conservatives' base.

As far as corporate corruption goes, the truth – that the Liberals and Tories are alike as two profiteering peas in a pod – is side-stepped. Trudeau supporters show an uncanny ability to strap on the blinkers and say: "Bad as we are, the Tories are worse."

Scheer's support is declining. But even mainstream observers attribute this to the meteoric collapse of support for Doug Ford's Ontario Conservative government.

Ford's cuts and attacks on public services have been so violent and swift that even other right-wing politicians, from Toronto's Mayor John Tory to Scheer himself, have distanced themselves from him.

In just a year the tide has turned so decisively on Ford that the politician who made his reputation for never backing down has, at least temporarily, retreated from some of his



Scheer may want to hide these pictures before the election

cuts. Given Ford's track record, and ideological commitment for attacking public services and organized workers, that retreat is not likely to last past the federal election.

And the worst of the cuts, like the cuts to education and health care, remain in place.

It would be a huge mistake to ease up on the fight against Ford now, when opposition is widening and deepening.

The pressure will be on to back off from the protests and demonstrations that have fueled opposition to Ford's cuts so far, to put

energy into electoral campaigns instead. This will include falling into the trap of supporting the Liberals as a lesser evil.

Go on the offensive

When the cracks in the Tory façade appear is precisely the time to increase the offensive, not back off. Protests and demonstrations against Ford's policies have been a weekly, almost daily, occurrence for the past year. The problem hasn't been a lack of will to fight back; it has been that the fightback has been

fractured and disorganized.

The blame for this scattering of resources and anger has to be laid at the door of the leadership of the trade unions (although it must be noted that some unions, like the Canadian Union of Public Employees and teachers, have a better record than others). Calls for action from the rank and file have been met with half-hearted measures at best, and outright betrayal at worst. Just ask the Oshawa GM workers.

We don't have to wait for the next election to beat Ford, and we don't need to back the slightly less vicious cuts of Liberal austerity to save us from Andrew Scheer.

The Ontario Federation of Labour has put out a call for a Day of Action on June 7 to mark one year of Ford's government. The call is too timid by far, but it would be a mistake to just sit on the sidelines and pooh-pooh it.

Rank and file activists have to grab opportunity and resources that are there, make the most of them, and use that platform to demand bigger and better action. And we can already see the snowball of Ford opposition growing as it rolls down the hill.

At the recent CUPE Ontario convention, delegates voted unanimously to defy any back-to-work legislation that may be introduced in the education sector. That motion will now be sent to the Ontario Federation of Labour convention.

That shows where the mobilizations can lead and should be supported. But the fight needs to grow. Failure to do so will mean a lost opportunity to fight Ford, set back Scheer and turn on Trudeau. Now is the time to expose the austerity agenda they all represent.

Vancouver Tenants Union Two years of fighting the landlords

by Ryan Schebek

Earlier this year, the Vancouver Tenants Union (VTU) celebrated its second anniversary. Members gathered at the Carnegie Community Centre to share success stories of the past year, organize further action and (most importantly) eat cake!

The past year has been a battle for renters in Vancouver. The cost of living continues to rise and landlords continue to exploit vulnerable tenants to make a profit at the expense of their tenant's health and safety.

It has been six months since the elevators broke at the eighty-six unit Solheim apartment building leaving many of the disabled and elderly tenants feeling trapped.

The building is run by a B.C. social service organization called S.U.C.C.E.S.S which told tenants they would have to wait another eleven months before the elevator could be fully repaired.

Tenants received no compensation or alternative living arrangements until the repairs could be finished. No accommodations were made for the tenants despite S.U.C.C.E.S.S. running a \$1.5 million profit from revenues between 2017-2018.

VTU helped organize Solheim building residents to demand that not only the elevator be fixed in a timely manner (which is law under B.C. Safety Standards Act) but also to receive



Fighting high rents in Vancouver

compensation for suffering.

Some tenants have had to leave their wheel chairs and climb, step by step, to their floor. The organized demands of the building's tenants have been heard and those that require an elevator are now being accommodated and compensated.

The ongoing battle between Solheim and S.U.C.C.E.S.S is only one of many VTU campaigns.

Since its inception the VTU has done everything it can to protect renters and reaffirm that housing is a human right. Sometimes that battle takes them to city hall where the VTU fought

for bans on renovictions. Other times that meant taking to the street.

Throughout the year the VTU has mobilized renters at the grassroots level. It has done this by tabling on street corners and organizing entire neighbourhoods by going door to door and building by building.

Their efforts have been successful as the VTU has seen a rapid growth in neighbourhood chapters. This year has seen the beginnings of a number of neighbourhood chapters including the West End, Mount Pleasant, Hastings Sunrise and Kensington-Cedar Cottage.

During the birthday celebration members worked together, democratically, to create action plans for how the VTU will move forward.

There is plenty of work to be done as specific actions and directions identified by members in small break out groups. Despite the amount of work ahead the general atmosphere was that of energy and excitement.

Capitalism will only intensify the point of struggle between those seeking housing and those looking to make profit off of exploitation.

It is comforting to know the VTU is growing in its second year and continues to give voice to those in need.

• To get involved:
www.vancouvertenantsunion.ca