

# The Agitator

www.socialist.ca/agitator

5 October 2011

## OCCUPY WALL STREET NOT AFGHANISTAN

**As imperial powers continue to slash jobs and public services to funnel billions of dollars into the endless oil war in Afghanistan, a new anti-capitalist movement is emerging from the Wall Street occupation—and spreading around the world—that challenges the corporations driving the war.**

### **Afghanistan war: a decade too long**

October 7 marks the 10th anniversary of the war in Afghanistan. It was supposed to bring peace and human rights to Afghans and security to Canadians, and instead has done the opposite. Countless Afghans have been killed and quality of life indicators are abysmal. After a decade of war costing NATO half a trillion dollars, life expectancy and maternal mortality for Afghans is one of the lowest in the world. Meanwhile 150 soldiers from Canada and Quebec have been killed and veteran benefits have been slashed.

To justify a war Prime Minister Harper repeatedly stoked Islamophobia, declaring recently that “the main threat is Islamism”. But the real threats are Islamophobia, state-imposed austerity measures and restrictions on civil liberties, and climate chaos.

Muslim-Canadians have been held for years without trial on bogus “security certificates”, Tamil refugees have been incarcerated, and the Harper government wants to spend billions on prisons and tar sands while imposing austerity on workers, students and the poor.



### **The cost of war**

In addition to the human toll, the war is a major drain on resources. The past decade of war in Afghanistan has cost Canada \$22 billion. The so-called “end of combat” has left 1,000 Canadian soldiers in Afghanistan, at a cost of \$3 billion.

These massive sums are just the tip of the iceberg of the Harper government’s plan for military spending. New fighter jets—used for new wars like in Libya—will cost more than \$30 billion. Under the Canada First Defense Strategy, the government plans on spending \$490 billion on the military.

Meanwhile, increased military spending is accompanying increased militarism—as recruiters invade campuses, and the military is given increased presence at parades and ceremonies.

### **Drop fees not bombs**

Over the past two decades, students across Canada and Quebec have seen their tuition quadruple, while student debt has climbed above \$25,000.

Students are repeatedly told there isn’t money for education, especially in times of austerity. But the billions wasted on a bloated military budget makes it clear that we have the resources to guarantee accessible public education.

Education doesn’t have to be a debt sentence. With \$5 billion—a quarter the cost of the past ten years of occupation—we could provide free post-secondary education for all students across Canada and Quebec. With \$13.5 billion—less than half the costs for new fighter jets—we could eliminate all student debt. A better world is possible.

Mass anti-war protests in 2003—especially in Montreal—stopped Canada from joining the Iraq War, and in 2005 a mass student strike in Quebec stopped the provincial government from imposing cuts to education.

As we face a deepening economic crisis and a Harper government addicted to war and austerity, the pan-Canadian peace movement is connecting to the growing anti-austerity movement and the new anti-capitalist movement.

On October 15 people around the world are organizing occupations against corporate greed. At the same time Ryerson University will host the biannual convention of the Canadian Peace Alliance. From October 14-16, join the conference “Resisting war and militarism: building a movement for peace and justice”, and help build the campaign demanding “Peace and Prosperity, not War and Austerity.”

**Peace & Prosperity**  
~~NOT~~  
**War & Austerity**

**Redirect  
Military Spending**

**for  
Healthcare  
Education  
Housing  
Good Jobs  
Environmental Programs**



Canadian Peace Alliance  
www.acp-cpa.ca | cpa@web.ca

# A green world is possible

**Long before talk of climate change, the tar sands, or gas-guzzling SUVs, Marx analyzed capitalism's assault on our planet. Summarized by John Bellamy Foster in *Marx's Ecology*, Marx had a very deep understanding of ecology, the changing relationship between nature and society, and the way in which capitalism destroys the natural world, and how a green world is possible.**

A central feature of capitalism is the drive to accumulate profit. One of the ways it does this is through the ever-increasing use of resources, including the extraction of raw materials from the environment to fuel new means of expanding production. Radical environmental sociologists used Marx's critique of capitalist political economy to develop three interrelated ideas: the metabolic rift, the treadmill of production and the second contradiction of capitalism.

## **Metabolic rift**

Marx focused on how the capitalist mode of production changed society's relationship with nature, creating a "metabolic rift".

Capitalism physically drove people off the land and into cities to work as labourers in the production of commodities, creating an inherently unsustainable system.

As Marx wrote, "capitalist production collects the population together in great centres...disturbing the metabolic interaction between man and the earth, i.e. it prevents the return to the soil of its constituent elements consumed by man in the form of food and clothing, hence it hinders the operation of the eternal natural condition for the



lasting fertility of the soil. All progress in capitalist agriculture is a progress in the art, not only of robbing the worker, but of robbing the soil; all progress in increasing the fertility of the soil for a given time is a progress toward ruining the more long-lasting sources of that fertility. Capitalist production, therefore, only develops the technique and the degree of combination of the social process of production by simultaneously undermining the original source of all wealth—the soil and the worker."

## **Treadmill of production**

The treadmill of production describes capitalism's need to continually increase the scale of energy and raw material production as part of its quest for profit and accumulation, until Earth's capacity has been reached.

A strong example of this is the quest for oil. Now that we have reached peak oil, the ruling class is forcing workers to extract oil from the

deepest and dirtiest sources, like the tar sands and deepwater drilling.

## **Second contradiction of capitalism**

The second contradiction of capitalism refers to the ways that this endless drive for profit and accumulation destroys the natural system it relies on—it takes resources from a finite world and pumps waste, in the form of pollution, back into its resource base, thereby destroying it.

Nothing illustrates this concept better than the energy industry, which relies so heavily, on the production and use of fossil fuels—most notably oil, gas and coal—which are in turn the major contributors to green house gas emissions, which are the cause of global warming.

Through its addiction to oil, capitalism threatens our survival not only by contributing to global warming, but the pursuit of oil has led to imperialist intervention and wars.

## **System change**

Capitalism and sustainability are antagonisms. In order to build a sustainable world, we need to fundamentally transform the way we humans relate to nature, and resistance movements around the world are showing glimpses of how.

From South Africa to India to France, workers fighting austerity have shut down oil production and car factories. Around the world there is a growing movement demanding good green jobs for all, to solve the economic and ecological crises together.

The strength of Marx's ecology is that by identifying human labour as central to our relationship with nature, it reveals the growing force capable of restoring a sustainable world: the working class, who collectively have the power to "govern the human metabolism with nature in a rational way, bringing it under their own collective control.

*Melissa Graham, Toronto*

# Protesting war, tar sands and austerity

Protesters greet war criminal Dick Cheney in Vancouver

**Protesters rallied outside the exclusive Vancouver Club as former US Vice-president Cheney arrived to promote his book to supporters who paid \$500 each.**

In the book he defends the torture his government authorized and the illegal invasion of Iraq that killed over one million people.

“Overwhelming evidence of torture by the Bush administration, including at least two cases involving Canadian citizens, obligates Canada to investigate Cheney to comply with the Convention Against Torture,” Human Rights Watch said.

Despite these obligations written into Canadian law, our government allowed Cheney to freely enter and leave the country again.

This is unlike American and British peace activists who have been barred from entering Canada, and several American Iraq-War resisters who have been deported.

“We’re very angry that he has chosen Vancouver as the first location outside of the United States to do a book tour event, and we feel it’s important that citizens of Vancouver show that we won’t tolerate a war criminal coming and speaking in our town,” said Derrick O’Keefe, co-chair of the StopWar Coalition.

“We’re going to keep protesting until we get a government that respects international law, takes a stand against torture.”

*Bradley Hughes, Vancouver*

Thousands oppose tar sands on Parliament Hill

**The tar sands are truly the stuff of nightmares. Harper and big oil have conspired to turn vast forests in Alberta into toxic deserts that stretch as far as the eye can see.**

They’ve destroyed water systems and communities alike for the sake of profit. But on September 26, the people fought back.

Over 2,000 people converged on Parliament Hill, protesting the government’s support for the Alberta tar sands and the Keystone pipeline XL.

Two hundred people were arrested attempting to stage a sit-in in the House of Commons. The police were kind enough to let Dennis Bevington, NDP MP from the riding of Western Arctic, into their cordoned area so he could show his support.

Despite the seriousness of the issue at hand, the rally never once turned for the worse. But neither police nor protester ever resorted to violence and the mood was triumphant.

Now it is time for us to build on this action and continue the fight for climate and social justice.

*Shane Davis-Young, Ottawa*

Wall Street occupation spreads

**Since September 17, hundreds have camped out in Liberty Plaza and organized daily general assemblies and demonstrations.**

While originally built very loosely without clear strategy or demands and instead

just calling on others to “join us”, the occupations have clearly touched a nerve and have drawn a lot of support.

The movement gained solidarity as its peaceful protesters were targeted by police and beaten, pepper-sprayed and arrested en masse. Combined with some not-too-subtle hints at repression by mayor Michael Bloomberg, the attacks and kettling tactics displayed by the NYPD most recently on the Brooklyn Bridge has drawn the sympathy and support of a wide layer of the public from the mainstream media.

The messages coming out of the OWS is that “we are the 99 per cent”; we are in debt, out of work, and the system is hurting us; we are not the richest one per cent and we want something more.

This sentiment is reaching people across America and the world and drawing support from forces beyond the angry young people who started the occupation. It has drawn the support of the United Steelworkers, SEIU 1199, the National Nurses United coalition, and the train and bus drivers of Transport Workers Union local 100, who are now refusing to transport those arrested at the demonstrations. It has also inspired solidarity marches from the United Federation of Teachers, New York Communities for Change, SEIU, TWU and over 700 pilots from the Air Line Pilots Association. Marines have even offered to act as protection from the police and some police are refusing to police the demonstrations.

The movement is coming to Canada as solidarity occupations are planned in Toronto, Ottawa, Vancouver and Montreal.

*Peter Hogarth, Toronto*

Solidarity builds for McGill support staff

**Over 1,700 clerical workers, library assistants and technicians (represented by MUNACA) at McGill university have been without a contract since November 2010 and went on strike September 1.**

McGill’s reaction has been severe. A Quebec labour board inspector found McGill using scab labour in some departments. McGill then got an injunction from the Quebec superior court limiting picket lines to groups of 15 and to within four metres of all McGill property. McGill has also banned wearing t-shirts and buttons supporting the strike. A student union (SSMU) VP Finance and Operations refused to remove his button and was denied entry to a management career fair recently held at the Hotel Omni.

Shocked by McGill’s attempt to silence on-campus support for strike members, faculty and students covered their mouths with tape and marched on-campus. Support staff have been receiving widespread solidarity coming in. Pictures of students holding “I heart MUNACA” signs along with other support efforts can be found at [www.facebook.com/McGillStrike](http://www.facebook.com/McGillStrike).

Hundreds of unionized Quebec workers recently joined McGill students and faculty in a solidarity rally. Other on-campus unions have issued support statements and also joined the rally. The undergrad student union and the McGill post-graduate student society have passed motions supporting the union, and the Mobilization Committee—a student committee—walked out of classes and marched to join the rally.

*Deborah Murray, Montreal*



# Activist calendar

## International Socialists

### LANGARA COLLEGE vancouver.socialists@ gmail.com

UNDERSTANDING  
CAPITALISM  
Wednesday October 5  
12:30-1:20pm, room A347  
Two years after the "Great  
Recession", the world is  
heading into another  
economic slump. This is after  
governments around the  
world have spent trillions of  
dollars to try to fix the  
economy. Join us for a  
discussion on the crisis-prone  
nature of capitalism.

I.S. ORGANIZING MEETING  
Wednesday October 12  
12:30-1:30pm room A218

WHAT IS MARXISM?  
Wednesday October 19  
12:30-1:20pm room A218

### YORK UNIVERSITY yorksocialists@ gmail.com

I.S. ORGANIZING MEETINGS  
Every Wednesday at 3:30  
email yorksocialists@gmail.  
com for details

2011: A YEAR OF REVOLT  
Wednesday October 5  
3:30pm Student Ctr rm 321

WHAT WOULD A SOCIALIST  
SOCIETY LOOK LIKE  
Wednesday October 12  
3:30pm Student Centre

### UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA gosocialists@yahoo.ca

I.S. ORGANIZING MEETINGS  
Every Monday at 6:30pm  
Turcott University Ctr rm 301  
10am-4pm, University Centre

### UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO international.socialists@ utoronto.ca

EYE-WITNESS REPORT FROM  
WALLSTREET OCCUPATION  
Tuesday October 11  
6pm, Bahen Centre rm 3008

I.S. ORGANIZING MEETING  
Wednesday October 12  
1pm Sid Smith room 1080

MARXISM AND FEMINISM  
Wednesday October 12,  
1pm Sid Smith room 1080

REPORT-BACK FROM  
OCCUPY TORONTO  
Tuesday October 18  
6pm Bahen Centre rm 3008

I.S. ORGANIZING MEETING  
Wednesday October 19  
1pm Sid Smith room 1080

ANTI-CAPITALISM: FROM  
SEATTLE TO WALLSTREET  
Tuesday October 25  
6pm Bahen Centre rm 3008

FILM:  
KENT STATE: STUDENTS  
AGAINST THE WAR  
Wednesday October 26  
Sid Smith room 1080

## Campaigns/movements

### VANCOUVER

OCCUPY VANCOUVER:  
a non-violent movement for  
social, economic and political  
change  
Saturday October 15  
Vancouver Art Gallery  
For more information visit  
occupyvancouver.com

### OTTAWA

OCCUPY OTTAWA  
Saturday October 15  
For more info visit facebook.  
com/occupy.ottawa

### TORONTO

OCCUPY TORONTO  
MARKET EXCHANGE  
Saturday October 15  
130 King St. West (at York)  
Bring the Wall Street  
occupation to Toronto, to  
protest corporate greed and  
global inequality  
For more information visit  
www.occupyto.ca

RALLY FOR  
ABORTION RIGHTS  
Saturday October 22  
1-4pm, College/University  
Anti-choice organizations in  
Ontario are mobilizing to  
attempt to pressure the  
provincial government to  
defund abortion. Join this  
counter-rally to defend  
reproductive rights!  
Organized by the Ontario  
Coalition for Abortion  
Clinics and the Abortion  
Rights Coalition of Canada.

RESISTING WAR AND  
MILITARISM: BUILDING  
A MOVEMENT FOR PEACE  
14 Oct 7pm to 16 Oct 5pm  
Ryerson Student Centre  
55 Gould St (Dundas subway)  
Join the Canadian Peace  
Alliance biannual convention  
to discuss next steps to  
building the peace movement.  
Featuring panel discussions  
and workshops on  
Afghanistan, Canada and  
NATO, the 'war on terror', war  
resisters, the Arab Spring,  
Palestine, civil liberties,  
Islamophobia and racism,  
indigenous sovereignty,  
militarism and society,  
nuclear disarmament, war and  
climate change, war and  
austerity, and much more!  
For more info visit [www.acp-cpa.ca/en/Convention2011.html](http://www.acp-cpa.ca/en/Convention2011.html)



## Socialist Worker

e-mail: [reports@socialist.ca](mailto:reports@socialist.ca)  
web: [www.socialist.ca](http://www.socialist.ca)  
letters: [letters@socialist.ca](mailto:letters@socialist.ca)  
reviews: [reviews@socialist.ca](mailto:reviews@socialist.ca)  
listings: [listings@socialist.ca](mailto:listings@socialist.ca)  
phone: 416.972.6391

To subscribe to Socialist Worker, please send  
a cheque or money order made payable to  
"Socialist Worker". Prices per year (CAD  
dollars): Regular subscription: \$30; Institu-  
tions, First Class delivery and U.S.: \$50;  
Other international: \$60. Mail to:  
**Socialist Worker**  
P.O. Box 339, Station E  
Toronto, ON M6H 4E3

## The Agitator



read  
write  
resist

[www.socialist.ca/agitator](http://www.socialist.ca/agitator)

## Join the International Socialists

To fight for a world without  
oppression, imperialism and war,  
join the International Socialists

Contact us by email:  
[iscanada@on.aibn.com](mailto:iscanada@on.aibn.com)

Or visit us at  
[www.socialist.ca](http://www.socialist.ca)