

Socialist Worker

www.socialistworkercanada.com

\$2 | no. 538 | February 2012

AS WORKERS STRIKE AGAINST THE 1%

OCCUPY THE PICKET LINES

TAR SANDS



CAPITALIST DISASTER



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AS THE global economic crisis continues, the 1% are increasingly resorting to lockouts and layoffs to force massive concessions on working people. To protect public services and those who provide them, we need to occupy the picket lines to support workers on strike or lockout.

The year 2012 began with the lockout of 1,200 workers across Canada and Quebec, both by billionaire companies demanding massive wage cuts. In London, Ontario, Caterpillar locked out 450 workers, demanding a 50 per cent wage cut. In Alma, Quebec, Rio Tinto Alcan locked out 750 workers, demanding

retirees be replaced with contract workers at half the wage.

It's no better for public sector workers. The upcoming federal and Ontario budgets plan on massive cuts to public services and the workers who provide them—including 50,000 jobs losses federally—and in Toronto, the millionaire mayor Rob Ford intends to lock out thousands of city workers.

Ford rode to office on a backlash against city workers, and as opposition to service cuts has mounted he has increasingly scapegoated city workers as “gravy” and tried to cut services by cutting jobs. Meanwhile Toronto library workers and University of Toronto academ-

ic staff prepare for possible strike action to defend the services they provide.

As the austerity agenda advances, the 1% are showing where their profits lie: the workplace. But this is also where they can be resisted. During the first phase of the Egyptian Revolution, it was mass strikes in February 2011 that finally drove Mubarak from power, and the emergence of independent trade unions has continued to push the revolution forward—uniting women and men across religious lines, combining economic resistance with political demands.

When the Occupy movement exploded at the end of 2011, it cap-

tured the anger of the 99% against the system of war, ecological destruction, oppression and austerity. This was part of a year of revolt that has spilled over into 2012, and which has demonstrated that mass resistance can win reforms—from delaying the Keystone XL pipeline to stopping some of Rob Ford's budget cuts.

The next step is to take the energy and solidarity of the 99% to challenge the 1% where their profits are based, by joining workers on strike or lockout on the picket lines. This also raises the possibility of workers occupying their own factories, raising all our horizons that a world free of the 1% is possible.

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

Harper’s budget cuts

by JOHN BELL

BUDGET CUTS and staff layoffs have paralyzed many federal ministries that provide crucial services. And rumours from Ottawa warn that even deeper cuts will be in the next Tory budget, due early in March.

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency is already facing cuts of \$21.5 million. That will lead to layoffs of up to more than 230 full-time inspection positions.

Some 170 of those inspection jobs were created by the Tories in 2008, reversing earlier cuts. They didn’t do it out of public spirit; they were forced to act to quell outrage following an outbreak of deadly listeria food poisoning in meat processing plants, causing the deaths of 23 people and sickening hundreds more.

Bob Kingston, president of the Agriculture Union representing the inspectors warned: “Food safety costs money, but less safety can cost a lot more—both in terms of money and human suffering.”

Tory Agriculture Minister Gerry Ritz dismissed concerns over cuts as “union tactics,” and claimed that “Canadian families can be assured that the safety of our food supply will not be affected as federal departments and agencies look for ways to be more efficient and more financially prudent with taxpayer’s dollars.”

Harper’s government, which wraps itself in “support our troops” rhetoric, is already cutting \$220 million from Veterans Affairs Canada. The Public Service Alliance of Canada projects that this will translate into 500 lost jobs.

Minister Steve Blaney justified the cuts by saying that 1,500 veterans die each month. His department objects to the use of the word “cuts.” “We simply expect to have a lower uptake for our programs to fewer veterans,” said Deputy Minister Keith Hillier.

As the official unemployment rate rises to 7.4 per cent, Employment Insurance workers are being laid off. In August Human Resources Minister Diane Finley shut down 98 local EI processing centres resulting in 1,200 lost jobs.

“With continuous improvements to the way that we do business, such as increased automation, improved online services, and a nationally-managed workload distribution, Service Canada will be able to manage service demands in a more cost-effective and efficient way,” said Finley’s press secretary. Tell that to EI applicants who have seen their wait times for their first benefit cheque double.

In ministry after ministry, the cuts are breaking down services that workers and their families need most. The only federal sectors declared “off limits” for Tory cuts are the RCMP and military spending.

A mass grassroots campaign pushed back millions of cuts threatened by Toronto Mayor Rob Ford, and much bigger mobilizations are needed to beat back the Harper attack.



Nova Scotia students resist NDP cuts

by DAVID BUSH

ON JANUARY 5, Darrel Dexter’s Nova Scotia NDP government released a three-year memorandum of understanding (MOU) it signed with the province’s 11 universities.

The MOU allows for a yearly three per cent rise in tuition with a corresponding three per cent reduction in funding for post-secondary education (PSE).

The MOU does not place caps on tuition for international students and students in dental, medicine or law programs. The MOU

does provide \$25 million of funding that universities can compete for to enact cuts.

The NDP, in opposition, starkly opposed the under-funding of PSE in Nova Scotia and the high levels of tuition fees students paid. However, since coming to power in 2009, the NDP has scrapped the tuition freeze, slashed funding to PSE and threatened the wholesale destruction of one Canada’s premier fine arts universities, the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (NSCAD).

NSCAD faces a \$2.4 million budget shortfall that is

the result of administrative mismanagement and the false promises of the provincial government. The Dexter government is dangling the appropriate funds to cover the shortfall but at the price of massive cuts.

Students and staff at NSCAD and indeed across the province are being asked to shoulder the weight of the NDP’s attempt to balance the budget deficit of \$365-million. The budget crisis is about choices, and the NDP has been more than willing to spend money on absurd business projects such as the new

downtown Halifax convention centre.

The student movement is not taking this lying down. NSCAD students and staff have been holding town halls and campaigning against their destruction for the last several months.

Students at all 11 universities participated in a massive province wide protest for the National Student Day of Action on February 1. Turnout at this year’s rally matched last year’s mobilization of 2,000 students, who led a historic march to Province House in downtown Halifax.

Federal jobs massacre looms

by JOHN BELL

A NEW report by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) warns that planned cuts to the federal civil service could result in more than 60,000 lost jobs by the end of Stephen Harper’s first majority government.

The Harper government is already warning that the next budget, due in March, will include more severe cuts.

Analyzing already announced budget cuts and layoffs, CCPA author David Macdonald says we will see \$7.82 billion chopped from public services by the end of

next year. That will translate into 20 per cent staff cuts, or 225,000 lost jobs.

Those cuts were announced when the Harper government was patting itself on the back for presiding over a “strong and stable” economy.

Since then, economic reality has sunk in: 19,000 Canadians lost their jobs in November alone. And economists and bankers fear that the housing bubble is overdue to burst.

Fear of a collapse in the over-priced housing market is forcing central bankers to keep interest rates at historic

lows, leaving them unable to address rapidly rising inflation rates. A one-month drop in inflation in December reflects desperation in the retail sector rather than economic health. Even with that drop, food prices are climbing at an annual rate of almost five per cent.

Macdonald reminds us that federal cuts don’t just result in public service job losses. Many agencies providing support for seniors, the unemployed, immigrants and other vulnerable groups rely on federal funding.

The CCPA report says the federal cuts and layoffs will

disproportionately hit the most vulnerable: “programs for Aboriginal on-reserve housing, training and primary health care; support for low-income families, seniors and the unemployed; environmental programs; workplace and food safety inspectors; and Canada’s international profile.”

Not every area of federal funding will be cut. Look for increased spending for prisons, policing, spying and the military. And, naturally, corporate tax cuts will remain untouched.

Read more of the CCPA report: <http://bit.ly/wWITkf>

After Ford’s defeat: stop McGuinty’s attack on public services and jobs

by JESSE MCLAREN

The upcoming Ontario budget will be based on the Drummond Commission on Reform of Public Services, a report drafted by a former bank executive that calls for Ontario public services’ death by 400 cuts. It is the provincial version of the Toronto budget, and like that process, it can be challenged by mass resistance.

Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty clung to minority government last October based on campaign promises to cut tuition by 30 per cent and protect health care. Since then students have challenged his tuition cut promises (including thousands rallying February 1 for tuition reductions for all students). Meanwhile, McGuinty has announced an upcoming budget that will cut up to a third of ministries, based on recommendations from Don Drummond.

Before working as a TD Bank executive, Drummond worked in the federal Ministry of Finance in the mid-1990s, on the budget that slashed \$25 billion in federal spending and transfers to the provinces.

Those cuts resulted in health care taking on statistically larger portion of provincial health care budgets, which is now being used as an excuse for further cuts and privatization.

A quarter of Drummond’s recommendations will target health care, like delisting caesarian sections, hysterectomies, and arthroscopic knee surgery. The recommendations will also target public sector unions, blamed for creating the deficit.

While Drummond was paid with public funds, his report is based on no public consultation, and his mandate is only to cut public services. According to Ontario Health Coalition spokesperson Natalie Mehra, “The McGuinty government

has no electoral mandate for major cuts to public services. Nobody ran an election on it. It was barely mentioned in the provincial election. There’s a biased mandate for the Drummond Commission towards privatization and dismantling of private services, with no consideration of the revenue side.”

There’s a very easy way of addressing the \$16 billion budget deficit McGuinty claims to be so concerned about: tax the rich. McGuinty has continued cuts to corporate taxes that have resulted in billions of lost revenue. Instead of making the rich pay for their crisis, McGuinty has hired one of the 1% to cut services for the 99%.

McGuinty is following the example of Toronto Mayor Rob Ford, who created a deficit by tax cuts, then hired private consulting firm KPMG to dictate which services and jobs should be cut, and then scapegoated public sector workers to justify it.

The Drummond report is finished but the release date is being pushed back as the government sends out trial balloons about the contents. McGuinty’s austerity looks like Ford’s austerity but it doesn’t sound like it. McGuinty has already distanced himself from the report even before it has been published calling it ‘advice.’ McGuinty is saying that the budget will spare health care and education cuts.

But mass organizing put Ford’s austerity agenda on the defensive by organizing amongst rank and file workers and community members, with town hall meetings, deputations, door-to-door campaigns, petitions and demonstrations that defended public services and jobs.

The same kind of grassroots organizing amongst community and labour organizations, defending public services and the workers who provide them, can resist McGuinty’s austerity budget.

SOPA-PIPA threaten free speech

by CHRIS BRUNO

TWO BILLS going through the American Congress have provoked the largest online protest in history. The Stop Online Piracy Act (SOPA) and the Protect Intellectual Property Act (PIPA), commonly referred to as “the Internet censorship bills,” have garnered criticism from thousands of tech companies, professionals, and human rights organizations.

A day of action was organized on January 18 for the Internet to “go on strike.” Wikipedia blocked the English language portion of their site for 24 hours, and over 50,000 websites expressed their opposition to the bills, including Google, Twitter, and Facebook.

Lawmakers were cyber-bombed with petitions and angry emails. Thousands also protested outside their senators’ offices in New York City, San Francisco, Seattle and Washington DC.

Both the bills have the objective of restricting access to foreign web sites that are believed to be infringing upon copyright laws. If enacted into law, the Attorney General would be given the ability to force the removal of all sites that make copyrighted content available or that link to such websites. Since these orders can be made without due process and without probable cause, it is ripe for abuse.

Websites that rely on user-submitted content, like YouTube, Tumblr or Reddit would be unable to continuously remove links to banned web sites and would have to resort to overzealous moderating and censoring.

Unlike other attempts to censor parts of the Internet—like the Great Firewall of China—under SOPA and PIPA, websites would be censored worldwide. The point of these bills is not to block Americans from interacting with sites that host illegal or copyrighted information, but rather to make it impossible to access such sites by compelling American owned websites to remove any references to them; that’s including search engines like Google or Bing.

Supporters of SOPA and PIPA include both Republicans and Democrats. Media corporations and right-wing organizations have heavily lobbied for both laws.

On January 20, the Senate tabled PIPA indefinitely and at least 13 pro-PIPA senators immediately reversed their position. Anti-SOPA/PIPA activists are rightly declaring victory in this battle, but both bills still have enough support to remain alive. The war to control the Internet is not over.

Socialist Worker

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

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



Egypt, one year on: ‘This is a revolution, not a celebration’

by JUDITH ORR

THE ONE-year anniversary of the Egyptian Revolution has marked a new turning point in the struggle. It came in the first week of the newly elected parliament, when the Muslim Brotherhood gained two thirds of the seats.

More people came out on to the streets across Egypt on January 25 than had been seen at any point in the revolution so far. Two days later hundreds of thousands took to the streets again on the anniversary of the “day of anger.” The slogans that dominated were directed against the military council. Millions of ordinary people made the revolution. Now they want to take it back from

the military.

There are also tensions coming to the surface about the newly elected parliament. The Brotherhood’s majority in the parliament is a sign of their deep roots and wide support, yet it is already seen as letting people down.

A key slogan of the 18 days in Tahrir Square that brought down Mubarak had been “Raise your head up high—you are an Egyptian.” On Friday’s demonstrations this was turned against the Brotherhood. “Raise your head up high—you are only a chair,” protesters shouted—meaning the Brotherhood had sold out the revolution to gain seats in parliament.

Egypt is in the middle of a severe economic crisis. The only way

out of this trap is to redistribute wealth, stop paying back debts to the International Monetary Fund (IMF)—and to tax the rich. The demand for nationalization has never been more popular. People want to take back what is rightfully theirs.

The factory and the square

“Tahrir Square is important—we don’t want to lose the square—but holding it does not guarantee victory,” said Dina, a socialist activist. “That’s why the slogan ‘the factory and square are one hand’ is so important.” Every new political upsurge has seen a rise in workers’ confidence to fight. This week’s demonstrations can give confidence to workers in struggle.

One member of Egypt’s Revolutionary Socialists spoke about the effect of the workers’ movement. “Last week dock workers struck. They cut off the main highway. Thousands of workers took the road, chanting slogans against SCAF. Many of the workers took part in a strike wave in August and September and won promises. But these promises have not yet been met. So I believe we will see workers mobilizing again in the coming weeks.”

Socialists have always said that people change the world—and in doing so change themselves. This is what is happening in Egypt.

The full version of this article originally appeared in *Socialist Worker* (UK): www.socialistworker.co.uk

Harper: the real threat to peace and security

by BRADLEY HUGHES

THE WORLD’S most dangerous countries are preparing once again for war, and Canada’s Prime Minister Harper is out in front.

After missing out on the invasion of Iraq, Harper is missing no chance to exaggerate the threat from Iran to try to build support for another disastrous war.

“Iran is a very serious threat to international peace and security. In my judgment, it is the world’s most serious threat to international peace and security,” Harper said early in January in a Calgary radio station interview. Since its 1979 revolution, Iran has been involved in one war: when Iraq, with American assistance, invaded.

Although Canada has been attacked by no one in this period, it has gone to war against Iraq, Somalia, Serbia, Afghanistan, Libya and occupied Haiti. Harper has denied Canada’s own colonial history, which continues to produce human security crises like Attawapiskat, and is promoting one of the world’s greatest threats to planetary security: the Tar Sands.

In the same interview, Harper said that Iran “is clearly trying to acquire nuclear weapons, and it has indicated some desire to actually use nuclear weapons.”

Later in January on CBC, Harper declared that Iran “would have no hesitation about using nuclear weapons.” This sounds exactly like the furor that was raised about Iraq and its supposed

chemical and nuclear weapons that were used as a pretext for a war that killed over a million Iraqis and found no such weapons.

Iran has a military budget that is less than two per cent of the size of the American budget. It has also been the target of numerous terrorist attacks on its soil. In the last two years four nuclear scientists have been assassinated.

Sanctions

Now the US and the EU are implementing new sanctions to try to cut off Iranian oil exports. In response, the Iranian regime has threatened to blockade the Strait of Hormuz, through which around one fifth of the world’s oil shipments pass. Both the US and Britain have now announced “routine” deployment of war ships to the area.

The results of the decade long sanctions against Iraq, after the US led war against it in 1991, created terrible suffering for the people of Iraq including the deaths of over half a million children, while strengthening the regime of Saddam Hussein. The road to democracy in Iran, or anywhere else, is solidarity with its people, not more wars.

A pan-Canadian anti-war movement involving thousands brought hundreds of thousands more into the streets in 2002 and 2003. This movement was big enough to stop then Prime Minister Jean Chrétien from taking us to war against Iraq. We can build such a movement again to stop this next war.



Guantánamo: ten years of human rights violations

by SALMAAN KHAN

TO MARK the 10th anniversary of Guantánamo prison, Amnesty International held a 10-hour event in Montreal demanding Omar Khadr’s repatriation, with participation from Quebec artists and Québec solidaire spokesperson Françoise David.

On January 11, 2002, the Bush administration authorized the transfer of 20 men captured in, Afghanistan to the Guantanamo Bay detention centre. They would be the first of almost 800 men who would pass through this “dark stain on the nation’s soul.” Ten years later, 171 detainees from over 20 countries remain at the facility, almost all without any formal charges laid against them. In fact, to date, only six have ever been convicted of a crime.

To mark the 10-year anniversary, detainees at the facility planned three days of passive resistance and protest. A common form of resistance has been communal hunger strikes. However, these have been quickly quashed by military guards who would “force-feed them with dirty feeding tubes that have been violently inserted and withdrawn as punishment.”

The reckless disregard for human rights and the safety of these men is commonplace at “Gitmo” as countless reports have emerged of systemic torture, sexual degradation, forced drugging and religious persecution. The trauma associated with these violent acts has had a profound effect on the detainees as there were a “reported” 350 acts of attempted suicide in just the first two years of the prison’s operation.

Yet despite calls for its immediate closure, including a report by Amnesty International that was supported by “UN experts, former US presidents Carter and Clinton, and heads of state from Europe and elsewhere,” the Obama administration continues to maintain its operation—two years after he promised to close it. Meanwhile Prime Minister Harper has ensured that Omar Khadr, kidnapped and incarcerated at Guantánamo as a child, has still not been repatriated to Canada.

Support builds for Egyptian activists

by JAMES CLARK

AN INTERNATIONAL petition in solidarity with Egyptian activists is gaining momentum, helping to create a global solidarity network in support of the Egyptian Revolution.

Labour activists, community organizers, academics and writers from around the world have added their names to the rapidly growing list, including filmmaker and journalist John Pilger, feminist and author Judy Rebick, and BDS activists Rafeef Ziadah and Adam Hanieh. The petition expresses its solidarity with the courageous struggle of the Egyptian people, and opposes the repression and violence of Egypt’s Supreme Council of Armed Forces (SCAF).

Sign the petition here: <http://egyptsolidaritycampaign.org/>.

Socialist Feminism: Off the shelf

AS A new generation of activists expresses the anger of the 99%, questions of feminism and socialism are often at the top of the agenda. Feminism, like socialism, bears many different forms and meanings. But a particularly important wing of both currents, socialist feminism, has offered important contributions to the radical tradition.

Where does this radical tradition originate? Origins are contested, particularly in light of the contributions of indigenous women’s voices silenced and buried by colonial settlement and racism. But it is often maintained that in the socialist movement, the centrality of women’s liberation was first described in August Bebel’s *Woman and Socialism*, published in Germany in 1879 (see marxism.org).

Bebel was a leader of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD). The party at the time was, as author Lise Vogel puts it in *Marxism and the Oppression of Women*, the “presumed heir to the mantle of Marx and Engels.”

Though a substantive and lengthy tome, among militants in the German SPD and trade unions, *Woman and Socialism* was one of the most popular of socialist texts. Between the year of its first release and 1895, it had gone through 25 editions; by 1910 this figure reached 50, including numerous translations.

An 1886 review of the first English-language translation of Bebel’s classic, by socialists Eleanor Marx (Karl Marx’s daughter) and Edward Aveling, praised the text, and assailed those who criticized it:

“The truth, not fully recognized even by those anxious to do good to woman, is that she, like the labour-classes, is in an oppressed condition; that her position, like theirs, is one of merciless degradation. Women are the creatures of an organized tyranny of men, as the workers are the creatures of an organized tyranny of idlers.

“Even where this much is grasped, we must never be weary of insisting on the non-understanding that for women, as for the labouring classes, no solution of the difficulties and problems that present themselves is really possible in the present condition of society. ... Both the oppressed classes, women and the immediate producers, must understand that their emancipation will come from themselves.”

Bebel’s work was remarkable for its time. The oppressed condition of women was largely unnamed. And if women’s condition of organized subordination was made visible, it was considered to be ‘natural,’ even within the socialist movement.

Woman and Socialism offered a vision of an emancipated society where women would be freed of these conditions. And it inspired mass opposition to the devastating conditions of the working class as a whole in capitalist society.

Context

Clara Zetkin, also a leader in the German and international socialist movements, observed in 1896 that despite limitations, Bebel’s contribution indicated the essential role of women workers in the socialist movement. In this, the publication was “more than book, it was an event, a deed.”

But the early socialist tradition regarding women’s liberation needs to be placed in the context of what it challenged. Industrial capitalism imposed harsh divisions deep in working-class life, many elements of which continue to the present day. The exclusion of married women from public waged work, the virtual absence of social and civil rights, and the powerful impact of sexist stereotypes, limited women’s participation in the workers’ movement and the left. August Bebel himself, who advanced his reputation through the popularity of his claims for women’s emancipation, was hardly free of such sexist attitudes.

An example of the context is indicated by the experiences of Rosa Luxemburg. She arrived in Germany in 1898 and immediately encountered the type of resistance to her immense and original contributions commonly faced by women intellectuals. An important study by Raya Dunayevskaya, *Rosa Luxemburg, Women’s Liberation and Marx’s Philosophy of Revolution*, addresses this by considering Bebel’s correspondence to fellow socialist leader Victor Adler.

Their exchanges indicate their reaction to Luxemburg’s effective arguments with certain leading figures in the SPD, as she challenged what she rightly perceived as reformist and conservative approaches to capitalist transformation. Dunayevskaya notes the appalling context:

“Just as [Luxemburg] had learned to live with an underlying anti-Semitism in the party, so she learned to live with what in our era has been challenged by name – specifically, male chauvinism.... Here, for example, is a sample of the letters that passed between Bebel and Adler: ‘The poisonous bitch will yet do a lot of damage, all the more because she is as clever as a monkey (blitzgescheit) while on the other hand her sense of responsibility is totally lacking and her only motive is an almost pervasive desire for self-justification’ ... [Victor Adler to August Bebel, 5 August 1910]. ‘With all the wretched female’s squirts of poison I wouldn’t have the party without her’ [Bebel’s reply to Adler, 16 August 1910].”

Engels

Among the readers of Bebel’s *Woman and Socialism* was Frederick Engels, Karl Marx’s lifelong collaborator. On January 18, 1884, Engels thanked Bebel for sending him a copy of the second edition, and indicated “it contains much valuable material.” He promised to send Bebel in turn his forthcoming book, *Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State*. There is little else mentioned, but Vogel suggests an “impression remains of a silent polemic between differing views.” *Origins* was certainly to make its mark as a significant advance in both Marxism and the movements for women’s emancipation.

INTERNATIONAL



Mass strike shakes Nigeria

by KEVIN BRICE

THE MASS strike and public protests that swept through Nigeria from January 9 to January 13 were the largest in the country’s history.

The spark for this mass mobilization occurred on January 1, 2012 when Nigerians awoke to the new reality that the fuel subsidy, which most depend on for their basic needs, was scrapped by the government without the consultation of the people. Overnight, prices had inflated by 250 per cent—from the fixed rate of 60 naira/L (\$0.37) to 150 naira/L (\$0.93). This is in a country where two thirds of the population live on less than \$2 a day and where reliable access to electricity is dependent on fuel-based generators. The immediate explosion in the cost of living was too much for Nigerians to bear.

During the week of the strike, the National Labour Congress and Trade Union Congress were effectively able to shut down most of Nigeria’s

economy at a cost of \$600 million a day. By the end of the week the government seemed to be in no position to negotiate, under the threat of an indefinite general strike, so the People’s Democratic Party conceded—but only partially—to the demands of the people and restored the fuel subsidy at a rate 50 per cent of what it had been originally.

Concessions

Following the concession, leaders of the National Labour Congress called off the indefinite general strike and began the process of demobilizing the movement against the will of many of their member organizations. One of these organizations, the Joint Action Front (JAF), released this statement: “JAF urges Nigerians to continue with the MASS ACTION of street and neighbourhood protests and rallies in the various Freedom Squares created across the country since the commencement of the Strike/Mass Action on January 9, 2012.”

At the same time, the newly founded Occupy Nigeria and other grassroots organizations were holding mass protests on key highways to disrupt traffic while others went from one gas station to another demanding that suppliers not sell above the subsidy level. The government’s violent response to the protests left one dead and hundreds wounded but only served to bring more people into the streets.

Nigeria is Africa’s most populous nation, its second largest economy, and although it is the largest exporter of crude in Africa, due to mismanagement and corruption, Nigeria is dependent on foreign imports for its domestic fuel requirements. Because of this it is clear why the people of Nigeria had no reason to believe that this time the money being taken from the fuel subsidy would be reinvested in public infrastructure and not ‘lost’ along the way, only to somehow find its way into the pockets of Nigeria’s and foreign ruling elites.

Show trial for WikiLeaks whistle-blower

by BRADLEY MANNING

ON SATURDAY December 17, Bradley Manning, the accused WikiLeaks whistleblower, turned all of 24. It was the second day of his Article 32 hearing (the military equivalent of a grand jury hearing) and, while inside the military courtroom evidence was being heard in order to determine whether the case would proceed to court martial, a highly spirited crowd of over 300 supporters (including myself) were demonstrating outside the main gates of the Fort Meade, Maryland base where the proceedings were being held.

At the end of the speeches and musical performance by David Rovics, Manning’s supporters sang “Happy Birthday.” If the outcome of the hearing is any indication, Pfc Manning is facing a possible lifetime of birthdays unjustly incarcerated.

On January 12, Lt. Col. Paul Almanza, the investigating officer who presided over the Article 32 hearing, made the formal recommendation that Manning face court martial on all 22 offences for which he was originally charged, including the most serious, and controversial, “aiding and abetting the enemy.”

For the United States Government, the enemy that Manning “aided” in allegedly downloading and turning over to WikiLeaks hundreds of thousands of classified documents (many of which detail incidents of civilian deaths and cover-ups in the war on terror) was al Qaeda; for his supporters, the real enemy is the United States Government. Indeed, for many people, veterans in particular, Manning is a hero.

The problem, beyond the laying of such severe charges, is that Manning stands little chance of a fair court martial.

At the outset of the Article 32 hearing, lead defence counsel David Coombs moved for Almanza to recuse himself on the grounds that he might appear biased to “a reasonable person.” No wonder. Almanza, an Army reservist, is also a prosecutor with the Department of Justice, which is conducting a separate criminal investigation of Julian Assange and WikiLeaks.

This means that Almanza’s boss is Barack Obama who has already said publicly that Manning is guilty, prejudicing the case before it even began.

But aside from “wearing two hats,” as Coombs put it, Almanza denied all but two of the defence team’s list of

38 witnesses while allowing all 20 witnesses for the prosecution.

Thus excluded from the testimony were expert arguments that the leaked documents didn’t warrant top-secret classification as no damage was done. Contrary to the government’s claim that Manning “has blood on his hands,” there has not been a single recorded instance of harm done to civilians or soldiers as a result of the documents being in the public domain.

Meanwhile, those with real blood on their hands are going free. Staff Sergeant Frank Wuterich admits to ordering his subordinates to shoot 24 Iraqi civilians.

The seven men under his command have all been cleared, while Wuterich has simply been demoted and given a suspended 90-day confinement. Members of the Bush administration, who launched the Iraq War that killed a million people, have never been brought to justice.

If Manning’s court martial is prosecuted in the same fashion as the Article 32 hearing, in other words, as a show trial, it will be readily apparent that “military justice” is but a cruel oxymoron.

For full coverage of the hearing and updates on the case, visit www.bradleymanning.org.

HOW DO WE FIGHT RACISM AND CAPITALISM?

Ritch Whyman looks at the history of the Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement (D.R.U.M.) and the lessons that we can learn for fighting back today

One of the most inspirational chapters in working-class history is the story of black workers in Detroit in the 60s and 70s who challenged both their employers and weak-kneed union leaders in the auto industry.

After the Second World War thousands of African-Americans from the South moved north looking for better paying and unionized industrial jobs in Chicago, Detroit and other industrial cities. Many workers in the plants fought in the Second World War and in Vietnam—ostensibly for freedom and democracy—only to return home to racism and low-wage jobs.

The Detroit rebellion and workplace organizing

It was these factors that created the conditions for the great Detroit rebellion of July 1967. This saw running battles with the police and mass looting. The National Guard was called in, and along with the racist Detroit Police, launched a savage attack on the Black community.

A curfew was imposed, resulting in thousands of black workers unable to get to their jobs. Hastily, Ford, GM and Chrysler got the curfew lifted for those who worked in the plants. The fact that the state was prepared to wave the curfew to keep production running showed to many the importance of black labour in the auto industry.

The rebellion produced a group of black radical students looking to connect with black activists inside the auto plants and a group of radical workers from Chrysler—in particular the Dodge main plant and the Hamtramck Assembly plant.

They began to look at ways of winning larger layers of black workers to revolutionary politics and to challenge the complacency of the United Auto Workers (UAW), which refused to systematically fight for black workers' seniority rights, or to open up the leadership ranks to black workers.

They began to circulate a newspaper called *Inner City Voice*, which carried articles opposing the war and about conditions in the workplaces and community struggles.

On top of the racism of the employers, were the increasingly horrible conditions inside the plants that raised the anger of black and white workers alike. On top of safety issues, layoffs and unjust terminations, the largest issue was that of the speed-up. In the span of one week, Chrysler ramped production up from 43 vehicles an hour to over 60. This speed-up and the union's refusal to fight it meant that workers had to take the issue into their own hands.

Wildcat strike and the birth of DRUM

In July 1968, 4,000 workers downed tools at the Chrysler assembly plant, led by activists from the group around the *Inner City Voice*. The employer responded by firing militants and activists, especially targeting those around the *Inner City Voice*—including a



Members of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers

key leader, General Baker.

The confidence shown by the wildcat spurred the group to launch a new organization and newspaper—Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement (DRUM)—which began to organize black workers to fight for their rights and assert their power in the workplace and community.

DRUM organized a march of over 300 workers and allies to the Chrysler UAW office, to demand increased hiring into higher level jobs by Chrysler and for the UAW to stand up for black workers.

Unsatisfied with the union leadership's response, DRUM called for a wildcat and picketing of the main Chrysler plant by black workers: almost 3,000 black workers struck. Mistakenly, in an attempt to show the power of black workers, DRUM didn't encourage white workers to join them. Nonetheless the strike sent ripples through Detroit.

The ruling class understood the potent combination of the fight for black liberation being tied to the overall fight of workers, and was terrified that other workers would learn from this and spread the strikes. The *Wall Street Journal* devoted a major article to it in the immediate aftermath of the wildcats.

DRUM and its leaders came to represent the anger and resentment felt by thousands of black workers across the United States. DRUM wasn't just a reform caucus in the UAW, it was the spirit of the Detroit rebellion inside the workplace, and it inspired workers in other plants to set up RUMs. Ford workers set up FRUM, hospital workers had HRUM, and workers at the Eldon Avenue axle and gear plant formed ELRUM, Cadillac workers CADRUM, Jefferson Assembly Plant JARUM and so on.

These organizations attracted support from activists and even had a movie made about them: *Finally Got the News*.

The League of Revolutionary Black Workers

From a spontaneous upsurge of black workers, the need to form an organization to try to knit together the various groups in a more coordinated fashion led to the creation of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers (LRBW) in June 1969.

The League initiated fundraising campaigns, book clubs to help political education, rallies and demonstrations against attacks on workers and became a political force in the city.

While friendly with groups like the Black Panther Party, the League argued that the strategy of the Panthers in looking to the "brother on the block" as central to winning liberation was mistaken. The League argued that it was the economic power of black workers that was the key for black liberation and the overthrow of capitalism as well.

The League also tried to raise the political understanding of their co-workers, linking the war in Vietnam and US imperialism to the fights on the shop floor. The opening lines of the LRBW's general statement and policy paper said:

"The League of Revolutionary Black Workers is dedicated to waging a relentless struggle against racism, capitalism and imperialism. We are struggling for the liberation of black people in the confines of the United States as well as to play a major revolutionary role in the liberation of all oppressed people in the world."

The LRBW helped pave the way for a strike wave that rocked the US in the late 60s and early 70s. Postal workers, other Autoworkers in California, and New Jersey truckers all struck. New workplaces also revolted: GM's new model plant in Lordstown, Ohio, built away from the cities and employing mainly young white workers, went out on

a wildcat strike that showed that the rebelliousness of campuses was spreading into the workplace even more.

Even after the League disbanded after internal troubles, the work-sites where it had been strongest continued to have a tradition of militancy. In 1973 workers both white and black staged wildcat strikes that had to withstand both the employer and organized goon squads from the UAW trying to smash their picket lines.

Debates

Unfortunately the League didn't see the necessity of building a revolutionary organization in the workplace of both black and white workers. This meant that once the League moved beyond the confines of Chrysler—which had the highest percentage of black workers, the RUMs ran into the problem of not being able to relate to the majority of the workers. This sometimes led to actions being called without support from larger numbers of workers, leading to the firing of key militants before building a larger base.

It was this political problem which split the League, between those looking for a way to deepen the presence on the shop floor and those looking to forces outside of the workplace.

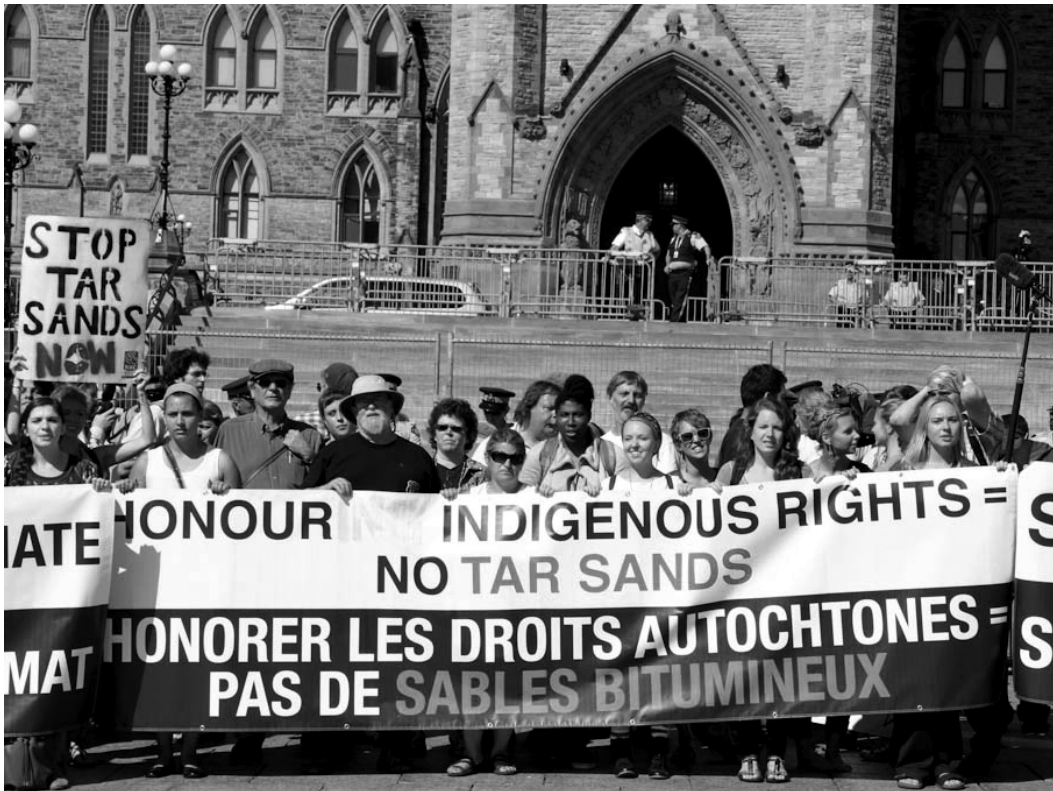
Despite not recognizing the necessity of multi-racial organizing, the League's focus on building resistance in the workplace is a vital lesson for today.

Some on the left continue to argue that power lies in the "community" and amongst the poorest sections of society. They argue that workers are just one of many "groups" in society. The lessons of the League show that if you really want to challenge the system then building a revolutionary organization in the workplace is the most radical thing one can do to threaten the 1%.

'The ruling class understood the potent combination of the fight for black liberation being tied to the fight of workers'

TAR SANDS CAPITALIST DISASTER

John Bell takes a look at Canada’s ecological nightmare, among the greatest threats to the climate, and the epitome of capitalism’s addiction to oil and profit



The tar sands are the second largest oil deposit in the world, and the largest human-made project on the planet, the size of England. Extracting the tar sands requires churning up the earth (resulting in massive deforestation of the Boreal forest), and huge amounts of steam (which wastes four barrels of water for every barrel of oil). The extracted mixture of sand, clay and bitumen then needs to be processed into synthetic crude, a process that burns billions of cubic feet of natural gas (creating huge carbon emissions), and produces massive amounts of toxic tailing ponds (which poison the nearby Athabasca River, leading to an epidemic of diseases in nearby indigenous communities). The oil is then pumped via pipelines that sprawl like a three-headed monster, threatening to cause toxic oil across the continent. The Keystone XL Pipeline proposes a 700,000-barrel/day expansion through indigenous communities and sensitive aquifers to Texas. The Enbridge Northern Gateway Pipeline proposes a 700,000-barrel/day pipeline through indigenous territory, forests and

streams to the BC port of Kitimat. The Kinder-Morgan TMX Trans-Mountain Pipeline currently carries 300,000 barrels/day over the Rocky Mountains to Vancouver, and proposes an expansion to 700,000 barrels/day. Spills are inevitable. Between 1999 and 2008 Enbridge recorded 610 spills that released 132,000 barrels of hydrocarbons into farms, wetlands and waterways on the continent. In the last two years it has suffered three major leaks: in Illinois, in NWT and most famously in Michigan, where the Kalamazoo River was fouled by thousands of barrels of leaking oil. On January 24, during the current public hearings on Enbridge, Kinder-Morgan confirmed a spill in Abbotsford, BC. When the oil arrives in Texas or BC it will then be put into massive oil tankers that threaten to poison the oceans with spills. Finally, oil will be consumed, leading to massive carbon emissions. One of the largest consumers of oil is the military, which it uses to launch more wars to guarantee access to remaining oil—from Afghanistan and Iraq, to Libya and threats against Iran.

Harper’s enemies list

IN THE months leading up to the public hearings into the Northern Gateway pipeline plan, Stephen Harper’s Tories have gone all out to vilify and slander any voices opposing their vision of the Canadian petro-state. That includes spending a fortune of our tax money lobbying to prevent Europe from enacting legislation blocking Canada’s dirty oil because of the extreme environmental damage associated with its production. The Climate Action Network file a freedom of information request and found a government/oil industry strategy paper designed to direct that lobbying. The heavily censored document lists Tory “allies” and “adversaries.” Allies include oil industry corporations and their umbrella organizations like the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers. Shell and BP are singled out for their enthusiasm. No surprise there. But also included is the National Energy Board.

“Canadians should be concerned when a supposedly arms-length agency that is supposed to regulate the oil industry, including conducting hearings on the Enbridge’s proposed new tar sands pipeline across British Columbia, is listed as an ‘ally’ in a political strategy to lower environmental standards in other nations,” said Greenpeace energy campaigner Keith Stewart. Keith would say that. He and his organization are on the enemies list, along with First Nations. Harper and Natural Resources Minister Joe Oliver have done all they can to portray opponents of the pipeline, and of the tar sands, as traitors out to wreck the entire economy. In an “open letter” carried everywhere by media, Oliver wrote: “Unfortunately, there are environmental and other radical groups that would seek to block this opportunity to diversify our trade. Their goal is to stop any major project no matter what the cost to Canadian families in lost jobs and economic

growth.” Oliver slammed the very review process where the voice of Canadians can be heard: “These groups threaten to hijack our regulatory system to achieve their radical ideological agenda. They seek to exploit any loophole they can find, stacking public hearings with bodies to ensure that delays kill good projects. They use funding from foreign special interest groups to undermine Canada’s national economic interest.” Gerald Amos, of the Haisla First Nation responded brilliantly in the *Terrace Daily*: “We are not opposed to development. But we are opposed to stupidity and placing our homelands at terrible risk in order to satisfy the insatiable greed of the international oil industry. We do not accept the Prime Minister’s claim that this project is in Canada’s national interest, and it is certainly not nation building, but rather, planet destroying.” Greenpeace campaigner Mike Hudema also put it clearly: “This government doesn’t

want to have a public discussion on the industry’s disastrous safety record, or the toxic effects that spills from a 1,170-km tar sands pipeline would have on Indigenous rights, the Rocky Mountains, the BC coast, or the more than 1,000 rivers and streams this pipeline would cross.” It has also been reported that the Canadian government directs our tax dollars to spy on First Nations groups and activists, and on environmental organizations. People like Gerald Amos and Mike Hudema are portrayed as terrorists. It isn’t our fault that the vast majority of people speaking out are adamant in opposition to the Northern Gateway. No wonder Harper and Oliver have to stoop so low to discredit the process. Is Harper preparing the ground to sweep aside the democratic regulatory process to build his pipe? Perhaps his trip to Davos, the annual gathering of billionaires, bankers and their political figureheads, holds the clue.



‘Radical’ environmental groups see surge in support

ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS and NGOs can thank Stephen Harper and his henchman Joe Oliver for a sudden surge of financial support and activism. Oliver tried to slander such groups as dangerous “radicals” and as being puppets in the employ of shadowy foreign organizations. Harper called them “enemies of Canada”. The Dogwood Initiative is a BC-based group that has been leading opposition to the supertanker traffic along BC’s coast that would accompany the pipeline. Spokesperson Emma Gilchrist told *Huffington Post*, “We’ve seen an unprecedented surge of support. We’ve got cheques that say, in the memo section, ‘Thanks to Joe Oliver.’” She reported receiving \$12,000 in unsolicited donations and nearly 25,000 new signatures on its anti-tanker petition—more than it got all of last year. Dogwood also increased Traffic to its Facebook site by 10,000 per cent. The Sierra Club, ForestEthics, the Suzuki Foundation, the Pembina Institute, the West Coast Environmental Law group and others report similar surges in fundraising and information sharing. Thanks Harper and Oliver. You can’t buy advertising like that.

First Nations unite against the pipeline

ON DECEMBER 3, the front page of the Vancouver Sun carried a banner headline: “Gitxsan supports Enbridge pipeline: First nation to generate \$7 million as equity partner.” By December 4, what was meant to be a major publicity coup for Enbridge and the Northern Gateway pipeline was turning into a p.r. disaster. The article claimed the “agreement” signed by First Nations employees was decided upon in consultation with Gitxsan hereditary chiefs. It wasn’t true. Within hours of the news the Gitxsan Treaty Society office was barraged by angry messages and protests. The people who had signed the deal were thrown out and the offices were boarded up and blockaded. Just days later, hereditary chief Norman Stephens told the press: “We should be clear that the Gitxsan do not want the pipeline, at any cost. There are not communities behind it.” “We stand together with all the other nations that are opposing [the Gateway project],” Gitxsan Chief Clifford Morgan told the press in January. “There would be too much destruction if an oil spill happened.” The deal has been officially ripped up. The real voices of the Gitxsan people

have been added to others speaking out against the pipeline. Here are some of those voices: Carrier Sekani Vice Tribal Chief, Terry Teegee: “We’ve told the government and Enbridge that Dakelh people do not want their dirty oil going through our territories. The world knows that Canada is a climate criminal for allowing tar sands development to occur and yet they continue to allow it.” Gitga’at Hereditary Chief, Ernie Hill Jr.: “Even with sophisticated safety precautions, shipping accidents still occur. Mechanical failure or human error, the outcomes are the same for our culture and our territory. The oil spills over our elders, our children, our spirit bears and killer whales.” Gitga’at Band Councillor, Cameron Hill: “These incidents confirm to us the risks are more than just about oil spills. Our people and territory would be severely impacted just by those oil-tankers passing through. There is nothing but risk in this whole process for the Gitga’at people. There are no benefits. I have not heard one.” President of the Haida Nation, Guujaaw: “The tycoons expect to further spread the tar sands poison, putting their lavish desires before our lifestyles and our culture. We

depend on these lands and waters and we will not put the safety and well being of our territories in their hands.” Kitimaat Village Chief, Dolores Pollard: “We have fought for untold generations to protect our lands, waters and resources. We have a sacred bond with the land that demands that we be unrelenting in this protection. Let us be clear: we will not allow any project, including Enbridge’s Northern Gateway project, to proceed if it will illegally infringe our constitutionally protected rights. We will take every necessary step, including resorting to the Courts, to continue the protection of our people and our rights.” Nadleh Whut’en Chief, Larry Nooski: “We have provided independent non-biased information to our members and neighbours, and we have heard loud and clear that we cannot risk the health of our land and future generations for short-term financial gain.” Wet’suwet’en Hereditary Chief, Alphonse Gagnon: “Our title and rights to our traditional territories have never been relinquished. We will do whatever it takes to defend our lands and waters against this threat from Enbridge... Enbridge’s plan will

bring oil spills to our coast and to our inland salmon rivers. The fish, the animals, and our way of life will all be destroyed – likely forever. We are here today to tell Enbridge we will never allow this to occur.” First Nations throughout BC have signed on to the *Fraser Declaration*, flatly opposing the Enbridge pipeline. When pipeline hearings moved to Edmonton, First Nations leaders from Alberta and Northwest Territories added their signatures to the document. “If Enbridge tries to disobey our laws, we will use every means available to us under indigenous, Canadian and international law to enforce our decision,” said Chief Jackie Thomas of the Saik’uz First Nation, a member of the Yinka Dene Alliance. The role of First Nations in stopping Harper and the Northern Gateway must be a central and leading one. The land through which the pipe would be laid is unceded First Nations territory. None of these Nations has signed away control of its land. It is up the rest of us to do all we can to empower First Nations and support both their opposition to the pipeline and their sovereignty in their own land.

The petroligarchy: the *real* enemies of the people

THERE IS a revolving door between Stephen Harper’s government and the oil industry. Today an advisor to a Tory cabinet minister, tomorrow a lobbyist for the tar sands. Investigator Emma Pullman, writing for the website Desmogblog.com, has done great work charting the connections between Harper’s inner circle, oil industry corporate offices, supposedly “grassroots” organizations like EthicalOil.org, and the Quebecor media empire that runs Sun TV. EthicalOil was founded by right-wing shill Ezra Levant. On the board with Levant is prominent Calgary oil industry lawyer Thomas Ross. The current spokesperson is Kathryn Marshall. She recently replaced Alykhan Velshi. Velshi had been chief assistant to Deputy Prime Minister Jason Kenney before a series of gaffes prompted him to go work for Levant. Velshi left EthicalOil to work in the PMO as Harper’s director of planning. I invite you to see Kathryn Marshall’s pathetic attempt to defend the oil industry’s line on YouTube (bit.ly/OilSlick) Marshall is the partner of Hamish Marshall. He has been a Harper supporter since the Alliance days, and has served several stints advising Harper’s inner circle for the past decade. Hamish Marshall owns Go NewClear

Productions, which creates and hosts websites for a who’s who of Tory politicians and tar sands insiders. Check out Desmogblog.com for more details. And let’s not forget Bruce Carson. He is the now-disgraced former senior advisor to Stephen Harper, who was caught lobbying for government money for his 22-year-old girlfriend. Before that scandal, Carson left Harper’s employ to start up the Canada School of Energy and the Environment, a tar sands-friendly “think tank.” His work is financed by tax dollars. The oily connections don’t just show up in Harper’s office. BC Premier Christy Clark recently hired a new advisor, Ken Boessenkool. Boessenkool has served as advisor to Preston Manning, Stockwell Day and Stephen Harper. He was a key Harper strategist during the recent election campaign. In between partisan government gigs, Boessenkool paid the bills as an Ottawa lobbyist for—among other energy industry clients—Enbridge Pipelines. His role advising BC’s premier comes at a crucial moment, as the Northern Gateway hearings make headlines across the province. Christy Clark has stated she is “neutral” on the pipeline project.

Harper in Davos: profits trump democracy

STEPHEN HARPER traveled to Davos, Switzerland to reveal his intentions for the Northern Gateway pipeline from Alberta’s Tar Sands to BC’s deepwater ports. Speaking to his real constituency—the billionaires and bankers who epitomize the 1%—he all but declared that he would ignore the outcome of the ongoing hearings into the pipeline project. Here’s what he had to say:

“[W]e will make it a national priority to ensure we have the capacity to export our energy products beyond the United States, and specifically to Asia. “In this regard, we will soon take action to ensure that major energy and mining projects are not subject to unnecessary regulatory delays—that is, delay merely for the sake of delay.” Harper also blamed the ongoing economic crisis on “too much general willingness to have standards and benefits beyond our ability, or even willingness, to pay for them.” Environmental standards are no doubt among those the Tories no longer wish to fund—witness the crippling staff and budget cuts to the Environment Ministry, even as climate change becomes an increasingly destructive reality. Harper, his government, and his friends in the oil industry have been waging a propaganda war around the ongoing public hearings into the Northern Gateway. Specifically, they have been trying to delegitimize the participation of environmental groups and activists, portraying them as “puppets” of foreign interests or as dangerous, almost treasonous radicals. But more importantly, their efforts have been

intended to undermine the public hearing process itself. Some 4,300 groups and individuals registered to speak at the hearings. A few will speak in favour of the project, but Harper knows the majority of voices will be loudly opposed to the pipeline. In his Davos speech, and other comments, Harper has prepared the ground to sweep away the entire hearing process, just as he shut down Parliament when it looked like his agenda might stall. His government has a long and growing record of ignoring the law and democratic bodies. He prorogued Parliament twice. When an immigration judge found that the mass detention of Sri Lankan refugees was illegal, Harpers’s right-hand man, Immigration Minister Jason Kenney, simply ignored the ruling. When a Saskatchewan judge ruled that the Tory plan to scrap the Wheat Board contrary to the wishes of the majority of its members was illegal, Harper and his gang simply stated they would change the laws to suit themselves. The fight against the Northern Gateway pipeline is about more than one badly conceived infrastructure project. It has exposed Harper’s real vision for Canada: to put all his economic eggs in the basket of raw resource extraction. Thanks to trade deals and monetary policies, the manufacturing sector is crumbling and losing good jobs at a record pace. Harper is on record describing Canada’s future as the “Saudi Arabia of the 21st century.” The intimate connections between his government and the oil industry define our new ruling elite: a petroligarchy.



SOLIDARITY

The dead end of Canadian nationalism

FROM CLIMATE justice to good jobs, movements need to avoid the dead end of Canadian nationalism, which blames economic and ecological problems on Americans. The results are xenophobic slogans distracting from Canada’s 1% and ignoring indigenous sovereignty.

There is a long history of Canadian nationalism on the left, which incorrectly sees Canada as an oppressed colony of the US. This perspective ignores Canada’s colonial history, its oppression of Quebec, and its role internationally as a leading imperialist nation.

Left nationalism applied to the tar sands presents it as a problem of “foreign-owned oil companies” taking Canadian resources. These xenophobic statements play into common racist rhetoric against immigrants and refugees, and ignore that “our land” is in fact indigenous land. Seeing “foreign-owned companies” as the problem can lead to the conclusion that the tar sands are fine as long as they are confined to local production, which ignores the catastrophic impact on indigenous communities and the global climate.

Left nationalism in the labour movement frames the Caterpillar lockout of London workers as a “foreign corporation destroying Canadian jobs,” and claims the Rio Tinto lockout of Alma workers represents “foreign corporations invading our country.”

But claiming that austerity is the result of companies being foreign-owned mischaracterizes corporations and ignores their dependence on the state. Canadian companies are just as greedy, and have a long history of demanding concessions. American companies could not get away with their austerity plans without Canada’s 1%—which provides corporate tax breaks, legal injunctions against pickets, and a police force to enforce them.

Stephen Harper gave tax breaks to Caterpillar and gave the go-ahead to corporate takeovers in London and Alma. Rio Tinto can only operate with government-owned hydroelectric plants, and their board of governors includes the Canadian president of McGill University.

But McGill workers represented by MUNACA sent solidarity messages to Alma workers, and American workers joined London workers against Caterpillar. The Occupy movement has been an important challenge to nationalism, and now there is a greater understanding that ecological destruction and austerity are the result of the global 1%. The solution is resistance and solidarity amongst the 99%.

TACTICS

Working-class organizing

FROM THE Occupy movement, to anti-cuts organizing, to picket line support, there are recurring debates about how to harness the power of workers in the fight against austerity.

Some dismiss the ability or willingness of workers to resist, sometimes with reference to the trade union leadership that is often hesitant to lead struggles. In the lead-up to the January 17 anti-cuts demo in Toronto, some activists on the left used their criticism of the labour leadership as an excuse to bypass the membership, counter-posing the defence of public services with those who provide them, and substituting small “radical” actions by a minority for mass organizing among working-class people. But it was mass organizing over the last year that changed people’s consciousness against Ford, and forced city councillors to vote against Ford.

Others recognize the need for economic resistance to fight back against the 1%, but impatiently substitute themselves for workers’ self-activity. During the Occupy movement in Vancouver, some activists tried to shut down the ports on behalf of the workers, which allowed the trade union bureaucracy to distance itself from the movement and limit the potential of workplace occupations.

Some have drawn the conclusion that the trade union bureaucracy is the only impediment stopping spontaneous radical actions by the rank and file. The flip side of dismissing workers as inherently passive is to see rank-and-file workers as inherently radical, being held back only by a monolithic trade union bureaucracy.

For socialists, the self-activity of rank-and-file workers is the key to change, because of their strategic location in the economy: when they go on strike, the profits of the 1% come to a halt. The trade union bureaucracy, by virtue of its position of arbitrator between workers and bosses, vacillates between concessions and the need to reflect its members’ demands.

There can be splits between a right-wing and a left-wing trade union leader, which opens up room for rank-and-file militancy—like the fight to elect the Unity Team at the recent convention of the Ontario Federation of Labour and the labour-led mobilization to London. But this will not guarantee immediate radical action. Consciousness changes through the process of struggle, when workers gain the confidence and experience to make bold collective action.

Real radical action is when masses of ordinary people enter into activity, changing the world and themselves in the process. There are no shortcuts or substitutes to building rank-and-file activity.

OPINION



Caterpillar worker speaks out against lockout

AS THE New Year began in London, Ontario, families across the city saw their worst fears become reality. In a community already reeling from several large plant closings, and with the second highest unemployment rate in Canada, the Caterpillar lockout is a significant blow.

There have been many articles about the corporate greed that this lockout represents, but it’s also important to keep in mind the impact the lockout has on the workers themselves. Here is one perspective.

Like many, she honestly believed that the company would negotiate in good faith, and that the concessions requested in the final offer would be respectful of workers and their families. Instead, Caterpillar put forward a devastating contract that the workers would never be able to accept. It wasn’t their choice not to be working. They were willing to work while negotiations continued, but the company chose to lock them out.

Impact

The impact on families has been even more devastating. “My husband was a welder and union member who was locked out and I was a contract salary employee in the engineering department. On New Year’s Eve, my supervisor called me to tell me my contract was being cancelled due to the fact that they didn’t see a quick resolution to the labour dispute.

“Locked out workers are not eligible for employment insurance. I am eligible but it is still being processed and I have heard the wait times are quite lengthy at the moment. We are quickly going through our savings. Our family still needs to eat and our mortgage and vehicle payment still need to be made. Worrying about money is a stressful event on its own, never mind coupled with two income losses.”

She is also concerned about what will happen to her community if the plant should close. “There will

be a giant hole in the community if this company moves the work from London to another community. Electro-Motive employees not only provide a big tax base for the community, but they also provide huge support to charitable organizations.

“In addition, losing approximately seven hundred employees (including both salary and union workers) removes a lot of well paid families with disposable income to support other businesses.”

Solidarity

When asked how she feels about workers in Indiana (where Caterpillar is sending the jobs), she had this to say: “Muncie, Indiana has an extremely high unemployment rate (I believe about the same as London) and for any community to refuse jobs would be foolish. I think that on moral grounds it feels wrong for Muncie to feel happy about taking jobs at the expense of another community because they have dealt with this very issue first-hand...

“Unfortunately, the employees at the Muncie plant are severely underpaid, in my opinion. To keep skilled workers you have to have some good pay incentives... If all the locomotive plants under the Caterpillar umbrella were to stand together, they would have a much better chance of success.”

The struggle has been enough for them to decide to move to Alberta for the sake of their family. “Ontario just doesn’t have a whole lot to offer workers, or to allow their children to have a secure future when they enter the workforce. We certainly don’t expect riches but would like to retire some day.” She knows other families are considering similar options.

Hope

Despite this decision, she still has hope for the lockout. “There was a lot of positive energy [at the rally] on January 21. It was nice to see and feel the support from union

members around the province and citizens of the community. Every day there are more supporters showing up. Not only the general public but with business owners as well... TSC stores in London have removed all Caterpillar brand products from their store shelves... People can continue to support the strike by boycotting CAT products and urging the government to get involved.

“This may have started out as a lockout of over 450 employees at one company, but you can be sure that many large and small companies are watching closely and waiting for the outcome. If this company is successful with this kind of slaughter, many other companies will attempt the same thing to fatten their bottom line and leave more money for the CEOs’ bank accounts...

“The simple truth is [they are trying] to make more money for their stock holders and the corporate CEOs. So far they haven’t gotten away with anything but people need to feed their families and will have to move on.”

‘Don’t give up’

On a final note, she offers us this warning: “More and more families will be pushed to have incomes below the poverty line, and generations to come will have to fight for a better life that our predecessors have already fought and won for us. We shouldn’t give up without a fight. Any working citizen needs to wake up and pay attention because it won’t stop here.”

The January 21 labour-led solidarity action was an important step in building a broader struggle that unites workers and their communities. and that can help defend Caterpillar workers in the short term, and resist more effectively the neoliberal agenda in the long term.Everyone needs to support Caterpillar workers, since a victory for them will mean a victory for workers everywhere, and will help add momentum to the ongoing struggle against austerity.

-Melissa Graham

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FILM

Iron Lady falls flat

The Iron Lady

Directed by Phyllida Lloyd
Reviewed by Jessica Squires

FROM 1979 to 1990, Margaret Thatcher ruled Britain, and is now a member of the House of Lords. During her regime as leader of the British Conservative Party, she waged a war for the tiny Falklands—against the Argentine military—and bombed Libya; opposed the anti-apartheid sanctions on South Africa and paved the way for decades of neoliberal domestic economic and social policies. In many ways, she paved the way for the descent of Labour into third-way politics under Prime Minister Tony Blair.

Love her or hate her—and supporters of social justice and civil liberties likely fall on the latter end of the spectrum—Thatcher is a formidable historical figure. She presided over the most significant attack the UK working class has ever seen.

So you’d expect a movie about her life to reflect that imposing silhouette, especially when the acting talent of Meryl Streep is in the mix.

Unfortunately, if the movie hoped to be thought-provoking in any way, it fails so dismally as a political picture as to make one wonder if any thought went into it at all. To be sure, it is an acting tour-de-force for Streep. The most convincing moments of the film are those in which Streep portrays Thatcher in the near-present-day, as a recluse who teeters on the brink of dementia. Here, Streep’s Thatcher can even make us sympathetic to her humanity.

But the film’s overreliance on a conventional device of flashbacks is its Achilles’ heel. Everything we see—riots against the flat tax proposal, strikes, speeches, political rallies, protesters banging on Thatcher’s car windows—is from her perspective. The film ends by merely depicting events, refraining from providing enough context for the viewer. Why did workers vote for Thatcher in 1979? How did she hold onto power for so long?

These depictions are so one-dimensional, the movie leaves one with the impression that Thatcher’s success was almost accidental. For instance, her decision to wage war in the Falklands appears to have been motiv-

ated by her desire to prove something to the boys, and to have been based on a less-than-competent approach to foreign policy. Thatcher was at least a bit more cunning than that.

In one pivotal scene, Thatcher expresses her disdain for those in life motivated by “feelings,” saying she cares about “Thoughts and ideas. That interests me. Ask me what I’m thinking.” Unfortunately, by showcasing this moment, and by one-dimensionally treating its subject, we are left with the impression that thoughts and ideas had nothing to do with Thatcher’s real-life motivations. We are led to believe that, like any stereotypical woman, she was motivated by irrationality and emotion, and that her success was mere coincidence.

That’s why claims by the filmmaker (Phyllida Lloyd, who also directed Streep in *Mamma Mia*) that she purposely avoided politics, and was trying to focus on a gender-based examination of experiences of power and powerlessness, are, in the end, pitiable.

Streep’s performance is worth the price of admission, but you might want to wait for the video.

BOOK

Liberal warmonger is not the lesser evil, just the other evil

Michael Ignatieff: The lesser Evil?

Written by Derrick O’Keefe
Reviewed by Ian Beeching

DERRICK O’KEEFE’S new book *Michael Ignatieff: The lesser evil?* sheds light on the ill-fated political life of the Liberal leader responsible for bringing Canada’s longest ruling party of the elite to its knees. In this witty and controversial read O’Keefe holds no punches. With a plethora of contradictory and morally dubious material to draw from, one almost feels pity for the former Liberal leader. All feelings of sympathy are soon washed away when we are reminded of Ignatieff’s prominent role in intellectualizing the murderous drive to war that has defined the last decade.

This delightful read is short and to the point. It is neither a biography nor

an analysis of Canadian liberalism; however it pointedly draws on both. With the attack advertisements about Ignatieff’s long absence from Canada fresh in the readers’ mind, O’Keefe explores the former leader’s political evolution while abroad. From his dabbles with social democracy through to self-proclaimed advocate of American empire, we are shown the blue blood of this descendant of Russian aristocrats.

Ignatieff was seen as a trail-blazer when he defined Israel as apartheid, but his dishonesty is brought to light in his about-face when he referred to supporters of the same analogy as anti-Semites. Ignatieff attempts to apologize for his position on the Iraq War in what O’Keefe describes as a “self serving misdirection,” full of name-dropping and “passing the buck” when compared to the former leader’s multiple flip flops on the Palestine-Israel conflict.

O’Keefe’s roots as an antiwar and

environmental activist are obvious in his writing.

Most of the criticism of Ignatieff’s political positions as leader of the Liberal Party focus on his taste for warmongering and supporting the Tar Sands. The author appropriately highlights Ignatieff’s defining policies, especially in respect to his unwavering support of the Harper government’s war efforts. After reading this book, the average reader would hardly be able to differentiate Harper from Ignatieff, but for the latter’s historic failure.

At times O’Keefe takes cheap shots at Ignatieff by highlighting his poor knowledge of hockey and his analogy of NASCAR as an “American” sport. The author makes no attempt to try to explain the dramatic shift in Canadian politics that lead to Ignatieff’s embarrassing defeat, but instead he gives us a glimpse at the best and brightest of bourgeois leadership in an era of capitalist crisis and decay.

LEFT JAB

John Bell

Time to put aside infantile things

SOME PEOPLE don’t know a good thing when they see it.

In January, Barack Obama declared that, for the present time, the Keystone Pipeline would not receive federal approval. The Keystone project was led by TransCanada Pipeline, and would have pumped Alberta Tar Sands syn-crude to refineries in Texas.

Just a few months ago it looked like the Keystone approval was a fait accompli. The US State Department under Hillary Clinton favoured the project. A lead lobbyist for the deal was a former Clinton staffer. A half-assed State Department environmental assessment gave the project the thumbs up.

But tens of thousands of people mobilized to stop the Keystone. A coalition of environmentalists, First Nations (a disproportionate percentage of the Keystone route passed through US Reserves) and western ranchers (concerned about damage to the Ogallala Aquifer) mobilized protests locally and in Washington, DC.

In late summer, thousands converged on the White House, to take part in illegal sit-ins. Hundreds were arrested, including author and 350.org organizer Bill McKibben, Naomi Klein and actor Daryl Hannah. It was the biggest mass civil disobedience action since the 1960s.

In November, thousands of protestors returned to surround the White House, to keep up the pressure. Despite millions spent on oil industry propaganda, the protests drew broad support and cut deep into Obama’s constituency.

So in January, after months of hemming and hawing, Obama placated that constituency by sticking a cork—if only temporarily—into the Keystone pipeline. This is a good thing.

Who’s the real dupe?

But not good enough for some observers. Writing on the Counterpunch website, Michael Leonardi begins his article entitled “The Great Pipeline Scam” thus: “In another ridiculous moment of political trickery, Obama managed to dupe a major chunk of the American environmental movement yesterday by refusing to authorize the construction of the Keystone Pipeline now.”

Not only is the Keystone decision not a victory, it is nothing more than “a complete farce to manipulate voters.” The thousands who mobilized around the Keystone are “gullible dupes.”

Building a focused campaign to stop the Keystone was a waste of time, Leonardi argues, because the Tar Sands is expanding output anyway, and its toxic products are being refined elsewhere.

Special attack is aimed at Bill McKibben. He is Obama’s “good little foot soldier,” nothing but a front for the Rockefeller and the Democratic Party machine: “It was all set up to pull in the most gullible of the Big environmental groups under one big tent of blinded voters.”

The fact that McKibben and the protests he spearheaded focused on the Keystone project is proof of their collusion. “The very real dangers of our decrepit and crumbling nuclear power industry aren’t on Bill McKibben’s (sic) radar screen it seems and just as with his buddy Al Gore, the issue of car-

bon seems solely on the radar superficially, maybe as a way to sell more books? One has to wonder.”

You are welcome to read Leonardi’s whole silly screed if you wish, but I think I have conveyed its essence. If it were an isolated argument I would shrug it off. But it is emblematic of a recurring political approach that has weakened our movements for far too long. In fact, a fellow named Lenin once wrote a pamphlet eviscerating it, aptly titled “*Left Wing*” *Communism: An Infantile Disorder*.

What are the symptoms of this disorder? To name but a few: a “more-radical-than-thou” elitism, an inability to think tactically, and a confusion about reforms and reformists.

How do we transform society?

Here’s the thing Leonardi and I agree on: we need to massively transform ours society. But how do we do it?

Tactics

We must build campaigns that can pull masses of people into action, around clearly focused demands or reforms, and through the process of struggle expect that many of those people will become truly radicalized.

Such campaigns require working with people who are to our “right.” The campaign to stop the Keystone involved not only Obama supporters from the Democratic Party, but even some Republicans. Sometimes it is right to make such compromises and alliances, sometimes it isn’t—the art of politics lies in being able to assess the next step forward and how to bring as many people along with you as you can.

Socialists active in the Keystone fight would have found an audience for arguments about why the pipeline is just a first step; about climate change; about the dangers of nuclear energy; about the existence of safe energy alternatives; and about a continued dependence on fossil fuels serves only to profit a tiny minority.

I’ll bet Leonardi missed that chance, standing aside from a struggle that did not come fully formed to meet his lofty radical standards. His sneering, elitist references to the “dupes” who built the campaign say it all.

He thinks those in the trenches who built this massive campaign are Obama’s lapdogs. I’ll bet more of them have come to see Obama’s decision as an act of opportunism and political necessity rather than an act of principle or courage.

Obama’s decision is the movement’s victory. That movement is right to celebrate it. And it will be better organized and prepared to fight the next round, whether that be against a Republican or Democratic figurehead.

The next crucial fight for environmentalists on both sides of the border—whether Stephen Harper likes it or not—is to build the campaign against the Northern Gateway pipe. In that campaign there will be allies motivated by the belief that we should stop the pipeline in order to keep refinery jobs in Canada. Should I stand aloof from the fight because its focus is too narrow, or because some allies put forward arguments I disagree with?

Bill McKibben is coming to Canada to speak out against the Northern Gateway. He will be a welcome ally. I suspect Michael Leonardi won’t be coming, and that too is welcome.

WHERE WE STAND

The dead-end of capitalism

The capitalist system is based on violence, oppression and brutal exploitation. It creates hunger beside plenty. It kills the earth itself with pollution and unsustainable extraction of natural resources. Capitalism leads to imperialism and war. Saving ourselves and the planet depends on finding an alternative.

Socialism and workers' power

Any alternative to capitalism must involve replacing the system from the bottom up through radical collective action. Central to that struggle is the workplace, where capitalism reaps its profits off our backs.

Capitalist monopolies control the earth's resources, but workers everywhere actually create the wealth. A new socialist society can only be constructed when workers collectively seize control of that wealth and plan its production and distribution to satisfy human needs, not corporate profits—to respect the environment, not pollute and destroy it.

Reform and revolution

Every day, there are battles between exploited and exploiter, oppressor and oppressed, to reform the system—to improve living conditions. These struggles are crucial in the fight for a new world. To further these struggles, we work within the trade unions and orient to building a rank and file movement that strengthens workers' unity and solidarity.

But the fight for reforms will not, in itself, bring about fundamental social change. The present system cannot be fixed or reformed as NDP and many trade union leaders say. It has to be overthrown. That will require the mass action of workers themselves.

Elections and democracy

Elections can be an opportunity to give voice to the struggle for social change. But under capitalism, they can't change the system. The structures of the present parliament, army, police and judiciary developed under capitalism and are designed to protect the ruling class against the workers. These structures cannot be simply taken over and used by the working class. The working class needs real democracy, and that requires an entirely different kind of state—a workers' state based upon councils of workers' delegates.

Internationalism

The struggle for socialism is part of a worldwide struggle. We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries. We oppose everything which turns workers from one country against those from other countries. We support all genuine national liberation movements.

The 1917 revolution in Russia was an inspiration for the oppressed everywhere. But it was defeated when workers' revolutions elsewhere were defeated. A Stalinist counter-revolution which killed millions created a new form of capitalist exploitation based on state ownership and control. In Eastern Europe, China and other countries a similar system was later established by Stalinist, not socialist parties. We support the struggle of workers in these countries against both private and state capitalism.

Canada, Quebec, Aboriginal Peoples

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

We support the struggles for self-determination of Quebec and Aboriginal peoples up to and including the right to independence. Socialists in Quebec, and in all oppressed nations, work towards giving the struggle against national oppression an internationalist and working class content.

Oppression

Within capitalist society different groups suffer from specific forms of oppression. Attacks on oppressed groups are used to divide workers and weaken solidarity. We oppose racism and imperialism. We oppose all immigration controls. We support the right of people of colour and other oppressed groups to organize in their own defence. We are for real social, economic and political equality for women. We are for an end to all forms of discrimination and homophobia against lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgendered people. We oppose discrimination on the basis of religion, ability and age.

The Revolutionary Party

To achieve socialism the leading activists in the working class have to be organized into a revolutionary socialist party. The party must be a party of action, and it must be democratic. We are an organization of activists committed to helping in the construction of such a party through ongoing activity in the mass organizations of the working class and in the daily struggles of workers and the oppressed.

If these ideas make sense to you, help us in this project, and join the International Socialists.



Why language matters

by JESSICA SQUIRES

RECENTLY THE Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC) denounced the continued downsizing of federal government language training programs. Forcing departments and public servants to use private language schools will make language training more expensive while reducing its quality; but this is only the tip of the iceberg. To really understand language in Canada, and the importance of language in Quebec as well, we need to understand where official bilingualism came from.

The roots of Quebec oppression

For centuries, the mostly French-speaking population of Quebec was a pool of cheap labour, its domestic ruling class consisting of clergy and landlords acting as toady go-betweens for big capitalism. While much (although not all) of this economic repression has been softened, largely through resistance on the part of Quebecers, it has evolved into a more politically-focused oppression of discrimination and scapegoating, based on the dominance of the federal state and the needs of Canadian capital. Official bilingualism has a lot of benefits, but it is still a part of the official fabric of colonial control over Quebec and French-speaking communities outside Quebec.

Trudeau

Official bilingualism and the 1969 Official Languages Act are generally considered to be part of the legacy of Pierre Elliot Trudeau. At the time only nine per cent of federal public service jobs were occupied by francophones. Almost overnight, these workers had the right to work in their first language—when, to date, all of their transactions at work had been with anglophones who insist on using English. This reform took place at a time when the right to work in French (with a focus on large private businesses) was a key demand of unions in Quebec, not yet won.

Today, the right of language of work enshrined in the Official Languages Act is one of only a handful of official policies that actually work to the benefit of workers above managers: managers are required to manage employees in the language of the employee's preference. When conservative

groups complain of the burden of bilingualism, this is often the source of the complaining.

But Trudeau was not acting out of idealistic or pro-worker motives. Social movements were on the rise, and a struggle for independence in Quebec had not only taken deep roots but was enjoying support from movements in the rest of Canada.

Trudeau feared this new situation, and was looking for any way to neutralize it. Official bilingualism was a genius move: it quieted most of the more moderate supporters of Quebec self-determination in the rest of Canada, and reduced Quebec's complaints to a mere question of language. Official languages policy was part of an attempt to win consent, in a Gramscian sense, from a significant majority of people in order to hobble the nascent separatist movement in Quebec.

The other part of Trudeau's legacy for Quebec was the War Measures Act. The coercion flip-side of the consent coin, Trudeau exposed his true intentions for Quebec—and for French—in the process, renewing both national oppression and resistance.

Contradictions

The Quiet Revolution of the 1960s was, in large part, the result of industrialization. So it is no surprise that many of its ideas were based in working-class needs and demands. The most important of these is the right to work in French, but the question of language, with its organic links to identity and culture, is one of the main forms national resistance takes.

Official bilingualism itself is not viewed with hostility in Quebec; but there are several side-effects of official bilingualism which have bred resentment, because paradoxically, they erode Quebec's ability to protect French.

It is no accident that the Parti Québécois took power a few years after the official bilingualism policy—the first time an independentist government had taken power in Quebec. The first side-effect was the exclusion of unilingual francophones from many designated-bilingual federal public service jobs.

The second was the 1982 introduction of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms—another example of Trudeau's legacy. The Charter eroded the provisions of Quebec's Bill 101, its Charter of the French Language, to protect French as

“the language of Government and the Law, as well as the normal and everyday language of work, instruction, communication, commerce and business.”

The basis for this conflict is the abstract symmetry established in official bilingualism between the English-speaking minority in Quebec and the French-speaking minorities elsewhere. In fact, while Francophones outside Quebec have been marginalized and experience rapid assimilation, anglophone Quebecers are a thriving community, with universities, hospitals and many other institutions, always able to attract newcomers in large numbers.

After the repatriation of the Canadian Constitution in 1982, which was itself done in a manner designed to control Quebec, further erosion of Bill 101 came through the Supreme Court of Canada. Successive rulings eroded Bill 101's ability to protect French as the language of instruction and of business.

Although Quebec's language laws regime is much more generous towards anglophones in Quebec than is official policy toward francophone minority populations in other provinces, mainstream media attacks on “the language police” and accusing Quebec of xenophobia continue.

Today, French in Quebec is in a state of slow but steady decline. It may not be solely because of federal policies (the impact of neoliberal economics are major factors); but it is a reality, which is why it is now back in the public eye as an issue deserving of attention.

The PQ is now calling for the provisions of Bill 101 to apply to Cégep instruction. But legislating French as the language of instruction in post-secondary institutions will only result in a segregation of those able to afford it into privately-run Cégeps and to schools outside Quebec—effectively creating two-tiered language policy.

If you want to protect French, you have to do it where most people spend most of their lives: in workplaces.

That was the original purpose of Bill 101. Québec solidaire, the left-wing independentist party of Quebec—a party that also stands for social justice, feminism, ecology, and pluralism—has made this essential element its key demand in the arena of language rights.

international socialist events

TORONTO

#Occupy. Strike. Resist
How do we beat the 1%?
One-day conference
Sat, Feb 4, 11:30am-5:30pm
Galbraith building, 35 St George St
Info: occupystrikeresist.com

Black liberation and socialism

Wed, Feb 8, 6pm
311C Student Centre, York University
Info: yorksocialists@gmail.com

Bayard Rustin and the hidden history of the Civil Rights Movement

Wed, Feb 8, 5pm
Bahen Centre, 40 St George St
Info: international.socialists@utoronto.ca

‘What do we mean by dictatorship of the proletariat?’ Reading circle

Fri, Feb 10, 6:30pm
For location and readings: occupystrikeresist@gmail.com

The Women of Brukman

Dinner and film
Sun, Feb 12, 5:30pm
USW Hall, 25 Cecil st
\$7-12 suggested donation
Info: occupystrikeresist@gmail.com

The Take

Film and discussion
Wed, Feb 15, 6pm
311C Student Centre, York University
Info: yorksocialists@gmail.com

Black liberation and socialism

Wed, Feb 15, 5pm
Bahen Centre, 40 St George st
Info: international.socialists@utoronto.ca

Che Guevara: The man behind the image

Wed, Feb 29, 6pm
307 Student Centre, York University
Info: yorksocialists@gmail.com

The politics of hip hop

Wed, Feb 29, 5pm
Bahen Centre, 40 St George St
Info: international.socialists@utoronto.ca

OTTAWA

#Occupy. Strike. Resist
How do we beat the 1%?
One-day conference
Sat, Feb 4, 2-5pm
Fauteux Hall, room 135
Info: gosocialists@yahoo.ca

International Socialist organizing meetings

Thursdays, 6:30pm
UCU 301, uOttawa
Info: gosocialists@yahoo.ca

VANCOUVER

Education shouldn't be a debt sentence
Wed, Feb 1, 12:30pm
Langara College, A334
Info: vancouver.socialists@gmail.com

Stop the pipeline letter-writing workshop

Wed, Feb 22, 12:30pm
Room TBA
Info: vancouver.socialists@gmail.com

You can find the I.S. in:

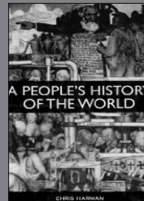
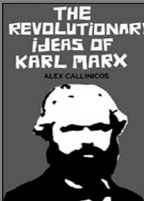
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SALVATION ARMY WORKERS STRIKE

by CARTER VANCE

SIXTY SALVATION Army aid workers in Ottawa, members of the Public Service Alliance of Canada, went on strike on January 6. The strike began over a large wage disparity of \$5 an hour between those workers at the Salvation Army and those doing similar work at organizations such as Union Mission.

The Salvation Army is remaining open and resisting the demands on the grounds that they're concerned about the homeless and low-income Ottawa residents they serve.

But as one striking worker said, "the majority of the clients support this. They feel that we're their family, we've been taking care of them for long periods of time."

Regardless of the sector they work in, all workers deserve to be paid a fair wage, and those the Salvation Army serve seem to agree.

One homeless man was quoted as saying, "They should have equal parity with the Union Mission and the Shepherds of Good Hope. They do exactly the same work just as well."

LIBRARY WORKERS DEFEND SERVICES

by J.Y. HODGE

THE 2,400 members of CUPE local 4948, workers at the Toronto Public Library (TPL), have been prepping for job action in recent weeks in spite of broad public support for libraries and the budget defeat for Mayor Rob Ford.

The library has seen its workforce shrink by over 15 per cent since city amalgamation 12 years ago. Additionally, the TPL board approved an operating budget in December 2011 that calls for a 5.9 per cent reduction—which will mean another 107 full-time (or equivalent) positions will be lost.

Combined with the aforementioned shrinkage, that amounts to the single largest workforce reduction of any city department in the last decade.

In spite of such attacks, the library enjoys record usage and an expanding system, including plans to build (and presumably staff) two new branches over the next four years.

Library workers are not sitting idle. The public relations and pressure campaign that worked so effectively in staving off worse attacks is being re-energized and members are engaging in strike training. CUPE 4948 is prepared for a work stoppage should the employer force one.

In the current climate with the Mayor's popularity at record lows, this should give the city pause in its hell-bent efforts to smash hard-won job security and scheduling provisions. and to attack the city services on which so many residents rely.

NDP LEADERSHIP RACE



TOPP AND MULCAIR - THE APPARATUS MAN AND THE EX-LIBERAL

by PAUL KELLOGG

THE LATE Jack Layton's political presence in Canadian politics owed everything to the social movements.

In the 1980s, he was a partisan of choice on abortion. In 1991, he was a co-founder of the White Ribbon Campaign to combat violence against women. In the run-up to the Iraq War, he made both Tories and Liberals shudder when he again and again used his podium to say "all out" for the great demonstrations on February 15, 2003.

But when members of the party gather, March 24, 2012 to elect a replacement for Layton, the party is likely to be moved very far from this social movement experience.

That would clearly be the case if, as many expect, Thomas Mulcair were to win. Instead of the social

movements, Mulcair comes from the Liberal Party. Three times, he won as a candidate for the Liberals in Quebec. In 2003, this saw him elevated into the cabinet of (ex-Tory) Jean Charest.

And if you doubt his right-wing credentials, he shamefully sided with Stephen Harper and Bob Rae, calling on Libby Davies to resign as NDP House leader when she (correctly) stated that the occupation of Palestine had begun in 1948.

What if his chief rival, Brian Topp, gets the nod?

We will still see a party leader, very far removed from the social movements.

Topp is a lifetime apparatus man, working as a staffer inside the NDP since 1990, and in that role, has been virtually unknown to people in the movements.

He emerged into

prominence in 2008. As a key adviser to Layton, he was one of the principal architects of the shameful attempt to form a coalition with the Liberal Party – something of which, by the way, he is extremely proud (see his book *How we almost gave the Tories the Boot*).

We don't know if either of these two will emerge as the eventual leader. But either of them will mean an NDP more firmly wedded to backroom politics, more likely to be enticed by a coalition dance with the Liberal Party – the architects, if you remember, of draconian cuts to transfer payments in the 1990s, and the party which took Canada to war in Afghanistan.

Mulcair and Topp are two more reasons why we need renewed attention to rebuilding a left rooted in the social movements.

SOLIDARITY GROWS FOR LOCKED OUT QUEBEC WORKERS

by JESSE MCLAREN

ON NEW Year's Eve, the mining giant Rio Tinto locked out 780 workers from its Alcan factory in Alma, Quebec—demanding every retiring worker be replaced with a contract worker at half the wages.

The company, one of the world's largest aluminum suppliers, has been accused of bringing in scab labour by helicopter, and has received an injunction against workers for blocking access. Like the Caterpillar lockout

in London, Rio Tinto Alcan is making profits at the same time it is demanding massive wage cuts from its workers.

But solidarity is growing. The local railway workers refused to cross picket lines to deliver raw materials, until they were suspended and threatened with being fired. The Steelworkers at Rio Tinto have received solidarity messages and funds from MUNAMA (McGill who recently ended a long strike), and from PSAC Quebec, and might be visited by locked-out London workers.

STUDENT DAY OF ACTION

by JESSE MCLAREN

ON FEBRUARY 1, students across the country took to the streets for a pan-Canadian day of action, organized by the Canadian Federation of Students.

In Toronto, thousands of students from multiple campuses converged at the University of Toronto, marched through downtown and rallied at Queen's Park. Students are facing skyrocketing tuition fees and massive levels of debt. On top of chronic education cutbacks and underfunding, students are being made to pay for the economic crisis they did not create.

Students also made links with other issues, chanting and face-painting "drop fees,

not bombs." The money for accessible education exists, but it's being wasted on fighter jets, tar sands, prisons and tax breaks for the 1%.

The labour movement supported the day of action, including members of CUPE, Steelworkers, Toronto District Labour Council and the Ontario Federation of Labour. Solidarity is reciprocal. More than 4,000 teaching assistants, graduate-student instructors, lab demonstrators, invigilators and writing instructors at the University of Toronto (represented by CUPE 3902) unanimously voted to set a strike deadline of February 24, if the administration fails to offer them a reasonable contract.

They are asking for

smaller class sizes, adequate compensation and better funding—in other words, they are trying to improve education.

There is already solidarity growing for CUPE 3902, from a campus organizing meeting drawing the links between students, TAs and food service workers, to an undergraduate-led campaign by OPIRG. As their video states, "CUPE 3902's proposals will improve the quality of education at UofT. What's good for CUPE 3902 members is good for undergraduate students." The February 1 day of action showed the strength and solidarity of the 99% on campus, which will be crucial in the weeks and months ahead to win accessible, high quality public education.

STICKING WITH THE UNION

Carolyn Egan

Movement pushes back Ford agenda

ON THE morning of January 17 over a hundred Steelworkers gathered at a union hall in Toronto preparing to make their way to City Council chambers. They came from workplaces across the city to voice their objections to a budget that would make drastic changes to municipal services that had been built over decades.

For more than a year people have been organizing against the austerity agenda of Mayor Rob Ford and his neoliberal allies on city council. Today was the day that councillors would vote on a slash-and-burn budget presented by the executive committee.

During the past months people have waited through the night to put forward their views against the cuts, community meetings have taken place in every ward, mass demonstrations of thousands besieged city hall. Trade unionists went door-to-door talking to their neighbours about what the cuts would mean to jobs and services.

Hundreds of thousands of emails have been received in council offices. Community councils have heard angry citizens speaking up for public services. The city has been ablaze with organizing efforts to turn back the tide of the austerity agenda that is being forced down people's throats around the globe.

The working class and the poor have been the victims of attacks on pensions, public services, public housing, education, and unions and have been fighting back in Greece, Portugal, Spain and Britain. Workers in China and India have taken to the streets. The Arab Spring has shown the power of ordinary people, who with tremendous courage have used their collective power to topple despots.

Mayor Rob Ford won the election over a year ago promising to cut the gravy at City Hall but without affecting services. It turned out to be impossible and with the help of KPMG, Ford came forward with a long list of service "ef-

ficiencies." Well it didn't wash with the voters and a recent poll showed that a majority in every ward was opposed to his wish list of cutbacks.

His heavy-handed bullying of individual councillors was beginning to backfire. As the Steelworkers packed City Hall chambers with community members from ACORN, Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) Riders, Mothers for Childcare, Toronto Community Housing activists and members of Stop the Cuts, it was becoming clear that the vote would be very tight.

Councillors who had backed the mayor in the past were standing up and saying that their constituents were calling in by the hundreds demanding that they maintain library hours, community programs, childcare subsidies and so many other services that were on the chopping block.

As the day progressed the tension was mounting. Thousands began to gather in City Hall square for a planned rally by Respect Toronto, a coalition of labour and community groups and Stop the Cuts. An omnibus motion was put forward by a middle ground councillor to significantly role back the attacks by millions of dollars and after long debate and attempts at stalling by the mayor's allies, it won by two votes to the cheers of the hundreds occupying the chambers.

Everything wasn't won, but it was a huge setback to the Ford agenda. It showed that people can fight City Hall and that the tens of thousands of community and union activists who have been working night and day were able to mobilize the support necessary to win.

There are still many fights ahead of us and the anticipated lock-out of city workers is the next struggle.

The recent success has given confidence that we can push back and win, and now we have to rally support behind the city workers.

Join the International Socialists

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SYRIA

RESISTANCE VS INTERVENTION

by YUSUR AL-BAHRANI

WESTERN POWERS are threatening to derail the revolution in Syria, intervening directly or through the dictatorships they are arming in Saudi Arabia and Qatar. The best solidarity is stopping military intervention.

The anti-Assad protests in Syria began peacefully, but have now turned into military clashes as the number of army defectors continues to increase. The United Nations says that more than 5,000 people have been killed in the past ten months of the revolution. Assad's regime claims that the militant rebels have killed about 2,000 soldiers and police. Violence is escalating in several cities, putting the country under the threat of a civil war.

"Peace plan"

While the Arab League observers proposed to extend their so-called "peace mission," the Gulf Co-Operation Council that represents oil-rich countries like Saudi Arabia and Qatar withdrew their observers. The Arab League "peace plan" suggested that Al-Assad should hand over power to his deputy.

The League also demanded he accept a unity government with the opposition followed by elections within six months.

In addition, the observers called for UN assistance to end the violence in Syria. According to Reuters, several diplomats said that Britain and France are working with the Arab League to endorse a plan regarding the situation in Syria.



Some Syrian opposition groups have called for Western intervention to put an end to the government violations. The Syrian National Council (SNC) called for a "no fly zone" in Syria, while the Free Syrian Army (FSA) urged the Security Council to intervene considering "the Syrian security as international security."

Intervention

Saudi Arabia and Qatar have called for international intervention in Syria and agreed to supply military aid and weapons to the FSA. This should be a warning to all those who support self-determination of the Syrian people. Saudi Arabia is an ally for the

United States and defends the American policies and plans in the region. In December 2011, the Obama administration announced a \$30 billion arms deal with the Saudi government.

Western military intervention is the worst choice, whether directly or through Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

The turmoil left in Libya as NATO invaded the country gives us a vivid image as to how Western intervention would more likely result in brutal civil war in addition to controlling the wealth of the nation. With several religious groups that are already in conflict with each other, any international interven-

tion in Syria would result in increased sectarian violence.

In order to stop the bloodshed in Syria, activists around the world should stand against the repression and oppression practiced by Al-Assad's regime against innocent civilians. At the same time, any foreign intervention should be condemned.

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by JAMES CLARK

STEPHEN HARPER sparked a firestorm in late January, when he warned Canadians to expect sweeping changes to their pensions. Harper made his comments at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, where world leaders gathered to discuss the global economic crisis.

Harper targeted Canadians' pensions as part of a finger-wagging lecture to European heads of state, urging them to embrace deep cuts and harsh austerity measures. His speech blamed Europe's sovereign debt crisis on public spending for the welfare state: "[I]f it is the case, that in the developed world too many of us have, in fact, become complacent about our prosperity,

taking our wealth as a given, assuming it is somehow the natural order of things, leaving us instead to focus primarily on our services and entitlements?"

Economists slammed Harper for his comments, saying he clearly didn't understand what caused the debt crisis: massive bailouts for private banks. But Harper, like most of those gathered at Davos, have been making this argument for years, trying to find an excuse to slash social programs and extend corporate tax cuts. Harper's attack on Canadian pensions was meant to demonstrate his seriousness about imposing austerity.

Back in Canada, however, a backlash was brewing — and continues to spread. A national debate has erupted

about pensions, as seniors and their advocates speculate about the depth of Harper's cuts. Government insiders have said the Tories want to raise the retirement age from 65 to 67, while restricting eligibility for Old Age Security and cutting benefits. They claim that income security for seniors is an "unsustainable" entitlement, at the same time as pouring billions into fighter jets and prisons.

NDP finance critic Peter Julian took on the government during Question Period: "A single F-35 costs \$450 million. That would pay Old Age Security benefits for 70,000 Canadian seniors. Its prison plan costs \$19 billion. That would pay annual benefits for 2.9 million Canadians seniors." Julian's comments echo the ongoing campaign

by the Canadian Peace Alliance for "Peace and prosperity, not war and austerity" (<http://bit.ly/PPNWA>), which calls for military spending to be redirected toward health, education, seniors and the environment.

As anger spreads, Conservative MPs have been inundated with complaints and condemnation. The Globe and Mail reported that resistance to the cuts is already being felt in the Tory caucus, as MPs struggle to hold back the fury of their constituents. This is a good sign for seniors' groups, trade unions and pension advocates, who have only just begun to build a united opposition to Harper's austerity agenda, and who will need a wider movement outside Parliament to stop it in its tracks.

Pensions in Harper's crosshairs