

Voter fraud scandal deepens for Tories

by ALLAN WOOD

THE MAY 18 rejection of last year's federal election results in Etobicoke Centre is the tip of the iceberg of the Tories' voter fraud scandal.

Judge Thomas Lederer overturned Conservative MP Ted Opatz' slim victory over Liberal MP Borys Wrzesnewskyj and ordered a new by-election, over voter irregularities including people voting without showing proper identification, casting votes in a riding in which they did not live, and being allowed to vote despite not appearing on the electors list.

Meanwhile, Elections Canada investigators believe that the computer used to make more than 7,000 fraudulent and potentially illegal robocalls to Guelph voters on the day of the May 2011 federal election is the same computer used by Andrew Prescott, the deputy campaign manager of Guelph Conservative candidate Matthew Burke.

Elections Canada is following up on 700 actionable complaints in more than 200 ridings. Its investigation has expanded to Conservative Party headquarters in Ottawa.

In addition, Annette Desgagne, a former employee of Responsive Marketing Group Inc., has filed an affidavit in the Council of Canadians' lawsuit seeking by-elections in seven ridings. Desgagne claims that three days before the election, she was given a new script (written by the Conservatives) that erroneously told voters that their polling stations had changed.

The Conservatives continue to deny everything—including the facts—but they are facing an increasing crisis of legitimacy on the political front, as anger builds at their economic policies.

Movement against anti-choice motion

On April 26, an anti-abortion motion by Conservative MP Stephen Woodworth had one hour of debate in Parliament. A second debate is scheduled for June 8 and a vote on June 13.

The motion—which seeks to establish rights for the fetus as a bridgehead to roll back abortion rights—is unlikely to gain a majority of votes in Parliament, as Harper balances between playing to his anti-choice base and denying any intention of recriminalizing abortion.

Since 1991, when the last attempt to recriminalize abortion in this country failed, anti-choice politicians have attempted to use “stealth” to erode women's reproductive choice. That is because despite the claims of anti-choice bigots, more Canadians today believe that it is up to a woman to decide whether she will carry a pregnancy to term or not. In 2010, an Environics study showed that 74 per cent of Canadians agree with the statement that “every woman who wants to have an abortion should be able to have one.” This is up from 66 per cent in 2000. A pan-Canadian day of action is in the works for the fall to highlight the lack of access in many regions in the country—especially in PEI and New Brunswick—and to unmask the anti-choice agenda of Harper's Conservative majority.



Jason Kenney, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration

Stop Bill C-31 and Kenney's assault on refugees

by EVAN JOHNSTON

Jason Kenney, the “Minister for Censorship and Deportation,” has been on a rampage against refugees, scapegoating them for the economic crisis. On February 16 he introduced Bill C-31 to criminalize refugees, and on April 25 announced cuts that will deprive them of basic healthcare. But opposition is growing.

Immigrant and refugee rights organizations have

rejected Bill C-31 (the so-called Protecting Canada's Immigration System Act) as a dangerous violation of the Canadian Charter of Rights and of international law. These new “reforms” are aimed at creating a two-tiered refugee system, imposing unrealistically shorter timelines for refugees to prove their claims, and further consolidating power into the office of Jason Kenney.

Under Bill C-31, individuals as young as 16 and 17

will be placed in detention, children under the age of 16 will be forcibly separated from their parents, and “irregular arrivals” will face a minimum one-year detention.

On June 30, drastic changes to the Interim Federal Health Program are due to take effect, depriving refugees of the most basic healthcare, like treatment of heart attacks and diabetes, and providing safe childbirth. These cuts are cruel, a threat to public health and costly—by downloading

costs to provinces and forcing refugees to seek expensive emergency care instead of cost-effective preventive care. The goal is to scapegoat refugees for Tory cuts to healthcare, including plans for \$21 billion in cuts announced just a few months ago. Doctors and medical groups across the country are protesting the proposed changes, but a much broader opposition will be needed to stop the cuts and build solidarity with refugees against austerity.

Harper slashes Aboriginal health agencies

by VALERIE LANNON

“RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS effectively separated aboriginal children from the influence of everything that could sustain, perpetuate and define them. When you cut funding for the National Aboriginal Health Organization and the Native Women's Association of Canada's health program and ended the mandate of the Aboriginal Healing

Foundation, you did the same thing” – Richard Wagamese, in an open letter to Stephen Harper, publicized in *The Globe and Mail*.

Tory cuts include the health organizations named by Richard Wagamese, as well as the Pauktuutit Inuit Women's Association, and the health budgets of Inuit Women of Canada and the Métis Nation of Canada. They also include other Aboriginal agencies that

support policy and planning related to the well-being of indigenous people, such as the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, the First Nations Governance Institute and the First Nations Statistical Institute. The Assembly of First Nations and the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami were cut by 40 per cent. Most of these cuts mean that these agencies will no longer exist.

These cuts are particularly resented in light of Harper's apology for the residential

schools and his appointment of Leona Aglukkaq, an Inuit woman from Nunavut, to head up Health Canada.

When the outcomes for indigenous people continue to lag far behind those of other Canadians, these attacks could not be more disastrous. Because the affected agencies advocate for improvement in the lives of indigenous people, they stand in the way of Harper's agenda. One more reason to fight austerity.

West Coast opposition to Enbridge grows

by SAKI SERIZAWA

THROUGHOUT THIS year, the opposition to Enbridge's proposed Northern Gateway project has continued to grow. Specifically on the West Coast, environmental groups, First Nations groups, residents and politicians are voicing their concern with the proposed project that would carry 525,000 barrels of oil a day from the Alberta oil sands to the coastal city of Kitimat.

The BC NDP caucus has officially stated its opposition. The entire caucus signed an 11-page letter to the National Energy Board's Joint Review Panel, stating that “under the Enbridge proposal, British Columbia would assume almost all the project's risk, yet would see only a fraction of the benefits. By any measure, such a high-risk, low-return approach simply isn't in BC's interests.” The letter outlines their concerns such as lack of long-term jobs, the uncertainty and risk that

First Nations communities will face, environmental risk, and increased oil prices for Canadians.

Unity

Furthermore, First Nations groups across Canada are standing together to stand up against Big Oil.

On May 9, the Yinka Dene Alliance of Indigenous groups arrived in Toronto on the Freedom Train to stand in protest of the Northern Gateway project with hundreds of others at Enbridge's annual general meeting. Chants of

“No Pipelines, no tankers, no problem” could be heard as concerned students, faith groups, socialists and other participants stood in solidarity with the Yinka Dene.

Their cross-country train journey stopped at various Canadian cities to gather support, and spread awareness of the Northern Gateway project. Here in Vancouver ForestEthics delivered its latest batch of over 5,000 signed postcards opposing the project to the CEO of Enbridge corporation.

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The law is a direct attack on student unions, their right to organize, collect fees and demonstrate. It imposes severe fines on anyone either organizing, encouraging or participating in demonstrations on campus or within 50 metres of a campus, and anyone impeding access to classes.

Worse still, it requires all protest organizers, no matter where in Quebec or what reason, to notify police eight hours in advance of any gathering of more than 50 people. And it requires unionized workers to deliver classes, no matter the working conditions. It holds demonstration organizers responsible, legally and financially, for any “misbehaviour” by participants—effectively requiring organizers to police their own ranks.

The law has a sunset clause of just over a year, thus ensuring it will be in force during the next Quebec general election, which must be called between now and next spring.

But it is already clear that the people of Quebec, students in particular, are not ready to take this lying down. “When laws become unjust sometimes you have to disobey them and we are thinking seriously about this possibility,” said Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois, head of the CLASSE student union, during a media conference with all three major trade union leaders.

Unions were quick to denounce the law, as were the bar association and many other important social movement groups. Although it is now technically illegal to do so, some, including left-wing Québec solidaire MNA Amir Khadir, have begun talking publicly about massively organized civil disobedience.

If Charest was seeking social peace through this law, or hoping to distract from the scandals dogging his administration, he is sadly mistaken. Tens of thousands of people demonstrated on the evening of May 18, in the 24th consecutive night-time demonstration since a brutal police crackdown almost a month ago. The demonstrations, expected to continue daily across Quebec, have taken on a new tone—jubilant, determined, defiant.

Charest may be hoping the summer will cool things down. But Quebec's spring shows no end in sight.

There is an urgent need for solidarity. The legal team of CLASSE has appealed to people across Canada to bring motions to local union councils, community organizations and neighbourhood associations against Bill 78 and for legal support funds. Solidarity against Bill 78—with demonstrations, petitions and collection of legal defence funds—is the first step towards spreading the Quebec Spring.

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Saudi Arabia and the Arab Spring: the West's counter-revolutionary force

by AHMED EL BASSIOUNY

RECENT HUMAN rights violations in Saudi Arabia highlight its role in countering protesters. During the whole of the Arab Spring, the Western-backed kingdom has played a counter-revolutionary role across the region.

First, Saudi Arabia provided shelter for Western-backed Tunisian dictator Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali, after being overthrown. Riyadh refused to give up Ben Ali for trial in Tunisia, proving the kingdom's strong opposition to the uprising in Tunisia and acting as a solid wall standing between the Tunisian protesters and their

demands for justice. A very similar incident happened in Yemen: after the injury of Ali Abdullah Saleh during the bombing of his presidential palace, everyone could safely bid that Saudi Arabia would kick in to save him. Saleh fled to Saudi Arabia for medical treatment, and then to the US.

It's unforgettable that Saudi Arabia (armed with US and Canadian weapons) sent troops to Bahrain to "deal" with the Shia-dominated demonstrations. The main goal was to amputate any uprising action in the Gulf area, and protect the US Fifth Fleet.

When it came to Egypt—another Western-backed dictatorship—Saudi Arabia rushed into trying to

strengthen its ties with the Supreme Council of Armed Forces (SCAF), by offering financial support. At the exact same time, Saudi Arabia offered financial, political and media support to the major parties in Egypt—the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafists. That was an attempt to win an ally and shape the region's politics according to Saudi Arabia's interests. Saudi Arabia has also been arming sections of the Free Syrian Army tied to the Western-backed Syrian National Council, in order to undermine the revolutionary movement in Syria and pave the way for confronting Iran.

Surprisingly, Saudi Arabia's counter-revolution measures did

not stop at backing corrupted regimes; it extended to manipulation of the media. The resignation of Wadah Khanfar, the director general of Al-Jazeera, happened after a week of extensive visits between Qatar and Saudi Arabia. Al-Jazeera provided outstanding coverage of the political changes in Tunisia, Egypt and Yemen. Khanfar was replaced by a member of the Qatari Royal family, as punishment to the satellite network's independent coverage.

Any discussion of "humanitarian intervention" in the region needs to remember the Saudi-American alliance, at its strongest in years, which is trying to undermine the Arab Spring across the region.

Historic victory for Palestinian prisoners

by AMELIA MURPHY-BEAUDOIN

HUNGER STRIKES have historically been the only way that prisoners in Israeli jails have won demands for their basic rights. Since Israel began its occupation in 1948, there have been more than 15 open-ended hunger strikes by Palestinians in Israeli jails.

The most recent mass hunger strike has become known as "the battle of the empty stomachs." It began on April 17 and ended on May 14 when a deal mediated by Egypt made

Israeli authorities agree to comply with the prisoners' central demands.

Over 2,000 Palestinian prisoners participated in the hunger strike. Three were striking for nearly 80 days. They were near death when the deal was brokered.

Under the deal, Israel agreed to release all prisoners from isolation. Some detainees had spent 10 years in solitary confinement. Israel agreed to end the prohibition on family visits and to revoke the "Shalit" law that restricted access to educational materials and newspapers. They guaranteed an improvement to the overall con-

ditions of imprisonment, and vitally they promised an end to the administrative detention (a renewable imprisonment order without charges or trial) except for very serious cases.

This victory is bittersweet. It coincided with the 64th anniversary of the Nakba ("catastrophe" in Arabic), the campaign of ethnic cleansing when over 700,000 Palestinians were forced to leave their homes and over 300 Palestinian villages and towns were destroyed. Nakba Day events around the world demonstrated support for the Palestinian political prisoners.

The hunger strikes proved the power of non-violent resistance. The courage and determination of the strikers has inspired people in a way similar to the first Intifada when street actions and hunger strikes mobilized Palestinians.

Historically, Israel has failed to respect the agreements it executes with Palestinians regarding prisoners' issues. The Palestinian liberation struggle continues, and it is vital that the international community continues to exert pressure on Israel to comply with international human rights and humanitarian law.

Bahrain: Western hypocrisy and government oppression

by YUSUR AL BAHRANI

THE GOVERNMENT of the United States resumed arms sale to Bahrain, which is also the home for the US Fifth Fleet, while condemning Russia for selling arms to the Syrian government.

Demonstrators continue protesting against the crimes of the Al-Khalifa regime that has been ruling Bahrain for more than 200 years. However, activists and protestors have changed their approach and demands as oppression in Bahrain increases. A new series of campaigns, protests and rallies has been launched after the announcement of the US arms sale to Bahrain. "America—your arms kill us" is the new message of protestors, activists and even

ordinary citizens who have been continuously attacked by Bahraini and Saudi forces using US (and Canadian) arms.

Young protestors angry at their oppressive regime and the hypocrisy of the Western governments, have no other choice but to face the Bahraini forces with rebellious new techniques. Burning vehicle tires and gas cylinders is their only way to defend their villages from the continuous armed attacks by the government forces and Saudi troops. So far gas cylinders and vehicle tires left no life casualties, but the military forces raid Bahraini cities and villages every night in search of activists. Some of the young activists are arbitrarily arrested, while many of them are

tortured in front of their families.

Saudi Arabia

In addition to the arms deal, some Arab reporters and analysts anticipate the announcement of a union between Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. Last year, on March 2011, troops from Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates joined Bahraini forces in attacking peaceful protestors—killing, injuring and arbitrarily arresting thousands. Any union formed between the Bahraini and the Saudi states means more oppression and brutal crackdown on opposition in both countries.

The crackdown has targeted leading activists, including the Bahraini human rights defender and hunger striker Abdulhadi Al-

Khawajah, and the President of the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights, Nabeel Rajab.

In response to the US' hypocritical support for Bahrain, pro-democracy protestors and activists feel abandoned: their key figures are arrested, their families are teargassed daily, and their youths are arbitrary arrested and tortured. Recently, the Ministry of Interior in Bahrain published the photos of twenty young men who participated in peaceful protests and accused them of committing "terrorist acts."

If Western governments abandon people in Bahrain, it is our solidarity that will encourage them to keep fighting for real democracy, independence and freedom.

Syria: revolution is the only peace plan

by JESSE MCLAREN

AS THE UN "peace plan" falls apart in Syria and imperial powers battle for control, the future of Syria depends on the spread of the revolution and solidarity against military intervention.

The UN's proposed cease-fire is based on bringing together two mutually opposed forces: the dictatorship of Bashar al-Assad, and the Syrian Revolution. As the head of the UN observer mission has discovered, "no volume of observers can achieve a progressive drop and a permanent end to the violence if the commitment to give dialogue a chance is not genuine."

But Assad has no interest in dialogue, and a UN diplomat described his response to the cease-fire: "it is the same strategy with a different tactic. Instead of killing 100 they kill 60 and arrest 500."

But Western powers are cynically using the regime's violence to promote their own. While Russia has rightly been criticized for continuing to arm Assad, the West is intervening via arms from Saudi Arabia and Qatar, while the threat of direct NATO intervention (being discussed at the summit in Chicago) still looms. As a senior Western diplomat said of Kofi Annan's failing plan, "If Annan does not call off the attempt, then it could put us in confrontation with him."

As in Libya, NATO is trying to use military intervention to gain political control over the revolution, promoting pro-West exiles like Sorbonne professor Burhan Ghalioun—head of the Syrian National Council (SNC). But the ongoing revolution is exposing the failures of the Western-backed exiles. Ghalioun was recently forced to step down as head of the SNC, under pressure from the Local Coordinating Committees (LCC) that are much more representative of the revolution. As a letter from the LCC stated, "we have seen nothing in the past months except political incompetence in the SNC and a total lack of consensus between its vision and that of the revolutionaries."

Real peace will only come from deepening the Syrian revolution and keeping it free from Western interference, and there is hope from recent mass student protests in Aleppo. As with the Egyptian Revolution, the spread of protests to mass strikes will be key to dislodge the dictator and confront the dictatorship. The best way we in the West can help is by stopping any military intervention, and taking inspiration from the Arab Spring to challenge our own regimes.



Comintern Fourth Congress: revisiting the ‘woman question’

The Communist International, or Comintern, gathered in annual delegated congresses in the years following the Russian Revolution to discuss next steps in advancing international socialism. The first four congresses, prior to the consolidation of Stalinism, offer rich lessons for socialists today.

The Comintern proceedings were recorded in various languages, but only now are complete English translations becoming available. Translated and edited by John Riddell, the proceedings of the first two congresses, and related events leading up to the founding of the Third (Communist) International, were published in six volumes between 1984 and 1993.

Riddell has recently completed the detailed research on the Fourth Congress. Titled, *Toward the United Front: Proceedings of the Fourth Congress of the Communist International, 1922*, a new generation of activists can now study some of the most important conversations among socialists at the time.

The 1300-page edition is published in hard cover as part of the Historical Materialism series, available in paperback in the fall, published by Haymarket Books.

Toward the United Front was launched in Canada in May at the Historical Materialism (HM) 2012 conference at Toronto’s York University. Discussed over a series of three panel presentations, the launch included contributions by Riddell and a diverse, international group of socialists and activists who have closely followed the lessons of the Comintern. Over 150 participants attended the panels.

Then and now

What was referred to at the time as the “woman question” was a central concern of the Comintern.

Unlike the conditions of 1922, when women first won the right to vote in many countries around the world, ninety years later socialists are able to discuss the legacy of the Comintern in hard-won conditions of free assembly. And, unlike the month-long Fourth Congress meeting in Petrograd and Moscow, women speakers at the HM Toronto conference made up half the panelists.

Riddell has helped bring to light not only the notable contributions of Lenin and Trotsky, but also the leader of the Communist women’s movement, Clara Zetkin. Zetkin (born in 1857) was a senior spokesperson in the Comintern proceedings. She led the one-day session devoted to addressing Communist work among women. Zetkin also opened and closed the Congress proceedings, and shared the pivotal discussions on lessons of the Russian Revolution with Lenin, Trotsky and Hungarian socialist Béla Kun.

Toward the United Front also introduces Zetkin’s comrade and sister, Hertha Sturm (born in 1886). Sturm was also a leader of work among women, as well as a member of the German section of the Comintern, a teacher, and a former political prisoner following her role in the short-lived Bavarian workers’ republic in Germany in 1919.

As Riddell notes in the introduction: “A session of the Congress was devoted to reports from leaders of the Communist Women’s Movement (CWM), an auxiliary organization of the Comintern... Women in Europe were then only beginning to exercise their newly won political rights. The workers’ movement had helped lead the struggle for those rights, but, even so, the reports by Zetkin and Sturm showed that women were weakly represented in Communist parties... Both Sturm and Zetkin commented on the prevalence in the parties of what is now termed male chauvinism...”

Zetkin celebrated the gains among women workers in revolutionary Russia. “The masses of working women and peasant women are being drawn into all arenas of the economy and of social life. They are being drawn into collaboration in building new relationships and in overcoming the difficult challenges that arise, for example, with respect to unemployment or food shortages—problems that are bound up with social transformation under the given historical conditions. They are being drawn into collaboration in reorganising society in a Communist direction.”

But in other countries, Zetkin and Sturm chastised their comrades for failing to organize among women and neglecting the potential for radical social transformation. This was despite formal agreement at the previous Congress of this priority area.

Context

Reading the Fourth Congress demands an understanding of the difficult conditions in the years after World War One.

Much discussion was devoted to assessing, in Riddell’s words, “the ebbing of the post-1917 revolutionary upsurge in Europe and a general offensive by the capitalist class.” The delegates struggled to adjust to new conditions, convinced that renewed prospects for international socialism would soon be on the horizon. It was in this context that the Congress discussed building alliances based on the united front. But some events were beyond prediction.

By 1924, the Fifth Congress took place under the yoke of a deep bureaucratization in Russia, led most prominently by Joseph Stalin. Then came the purges of the 1930s. Of the 60 delegates attending the Fourth Congress who were, in Riddell’s words, “within Stalin’s reach,” and about whom information is available, 39 were killed and four jailed in the repression.

It is not surprising then, that it has taken some effort to revive the contributions of the revolutionary Comintern generation. The women of the movement, comprising only 10 per cent of the membership of the Comintern parties, could easily have been forgotten.

But this valiant minority changed the world. And John Riddell’s new translation helps us pick up the thread.



Sarkozy’s defeat is our victory, but there are bigger battles to come

by JOHN MULLEN

HUNDREDS OF thousands were on the streets of Paris on the night of Sunday, May 6 to celebrate the fall of the monster, and they had every reason to be happy about Sarkozy’s defeat. Champion of tax cuts for the rich and public service cuts for the rest of us, his election campaign moved further right every day in the desperate hope of attracting the votes which went to the fascists in the first round.

In addition, some of the policies proposed by Hollande, the first Socialist president in 17 years, are very welcome—the right to vote for immigrants at local elections, immediate withdrawal from Afghanistan, gay marriage, more nursery school places and a women’s rights ministry, higher taxes for the creation of

60 000 jobs in education, to limit rent rises, to defend public sector health services and to renegotiate European-wide agreements which impose ever harsher austerity policies.

But the Socialist Party, just like the right wing, has been involved in Islamophobic scaremongering of late. Hollande will keep in place the neoliberal reforms of universities and public utilities and will no doubt add more of his own. In a vain attempt to “reassure the markets” left governments in Spain and in Greece who have introduced vicious austerity programs. If push comes to shove, Hollande will be prepared to do the same.

The deepening social crisis has led to a political polarization which is the essential feature of French politics today and which determines what anticapitalist activists need to be doing. Four mil-

lion people voted for the Left Front, headed up by Jean-Luc Mélenchon. The revamped fascist National Front, led by Marine Le Pen, got 6.4 million votes in the first round, the highest score in their history. A national, very broadly-based, active antifascist organization is urgently needed.

There will be legislative elections in June which the Socialist Party is most likely to win. The new Socialist government will come under attack at once from the financial markets, and will be immediately put to the test. The Left Front will be put to the test too: we will see if it can take a major role in organizing resistance to Socialist Party austerity policies. These are exciting times: revolutionaries must be in the thick of the reconstruction, fighting, organizing and explaining, and not heckling from the sidelines.

Austerity and resistance in the Czech Republic

by KATERINA KREJCOVA

THE WHOLE European Union faces austerity and massive cuts in public services due to the Eurozone crisis, and the Czech Republic is no exception. After great disappointment two years into a right-wing government, massive demonstrations are taking place and trade unions are talking about a general strike.

The Czech Republic, like most of Europe, has been haunted by the economic crisis. The current right-wing government in the Czech Republic won the election two years ago, in 2010, arguing the necessity of belt-tightening measures, but simultaneously promising the impossible: growth and revitalization of the economy and an end to the growing debt.

Austerity and scapegoating

The government used for its election campaigns strong and aggressive propaganda that attacked not just the old, rotten structures among the left-wing social democratic Czech parties, but also people who are suspected of abusing social benefits. These attacks on vulnerable groups became very popular and people started to align themselves with this rhetoric, blaming the poorest citizens, such as the Roma minority, immigrants and the unemployed for the growing depth of the economic crisis,

while at the same time buying in to the argument that people need to tighten their belts in order to help solve the situation.

The biggest changes the Czech government is pushing through are freezing pensions, increasing retirement age, privatization of pensions, hiking of the VAT (a regressive tax on consumer goods), privatizing healthcare and increasing fees in hospitals, introducing university tuition fees, making distinct anti-worker changes in the Labour Code and introducing strict controls for drawing unemployment benefits.

Frustrated citizens living in the poorest areas have started to turn their hatred against the Roma minority, which is constantly blamed by politicians and media for abusing financial aid. The conflicts have increased rapidly during the last two years and are regularly turning violent.

Students and workers resist

But recently the trade unions and social initiatives started to collaborate, due to their mutual antagonism toward the government, although separately they have organized many demonstrations since the government took office.

April 2012 saw the biggest demonstrations against the government since the Velvet Revolution in 1989, which were the result of these connections. Organized by the “Stop the Government” platform which consists

of 75 organizations, including trade unions, civil initiatives, students, unions for healthcare and disabled people, the largest protest attracted more than 100,000 citizens from all over the country to join a rally in Prague.

One of the most progressive groups recently formed is the students’ Initiative for Independent Universities, which decided to collaborate with trade unions in the “Stop the Government” platform and managed to pull many previously apolitical university students into the discussion about neoliberalism and the common context of austerity and government reforms all over Europe. Together, these formerly apolitical and newly critical students and the Initiative for Free Universities successfully forced the incompetent Education Minister to resign after massive student protests in March but they faced unseemly attacks by Czech President Václav Klaus, who sent a message to students that everybody who is studying for free and refuses the idea of university tuition fees is a social parasite.

Inspired by the worldwide Occupy movement, there are already some Occupy actions in the Czech Republic but solidarity with the Quebec student protest—spreading of the Maple Spring across Czech campuses, demonstrations organized by Czech students in solidarity with Quebec students—and discussions about the ideological contexts of global austerity imposed by the ruling class must and will be the next steps.

RAGE AGAINST THE MACHINES

Bradley Hughes *looks at the 200th anniversary of the Luddite Rebellion*

“IT IS Agreedon to Shoot All masters that Puls Down wages or invents things to hurt the Poor.” Two hundred years ago this direction from General Ludd was posted in Macclesfield and the Luddite rebellion against “machinery hurtful to the commonality” was in full swing. This early anti-capitalist movement, challenging the priorities of a system that subordinates people to profit, is still relevant today.

In 1811 in a triangular shaped region of central England, many workers made their living in the textile industry. Croppers, shearers, weavers, combers, spinners and others were highly skilled workers who produced cloth, lace and clothing. The demand for their goods was greatly reduced by an economic slow-down made worse by the British embargo of goods from the countries of Napoleon’s Europe and countries like America that traded with them. The government’s need for food for its soldiers, combined with a poor harvest, raised the price of food at the same time wages were falling.

Around this time, the new factory system was introducing machines that could do the work of many people while tended by only one or two. Unlike the skilled work that was mostly done at home, the new factory work involved long hours, terrible noise, great pollution and frequent injuries from tending the machines. As a consequence the pay for clothing made by hand plummeted and most were put out of work.

These textile workers could see what the introduction of new machines would mean for them and their family: unemployment and extreme poverty at worst, or at best long hours (up to 14 hours a day) for their children and wives and dire poverty. In no possible case would their lives improve as a result of mechanization, but the factory owners lives would surely improve.

They began to take action to try to defend themselves.

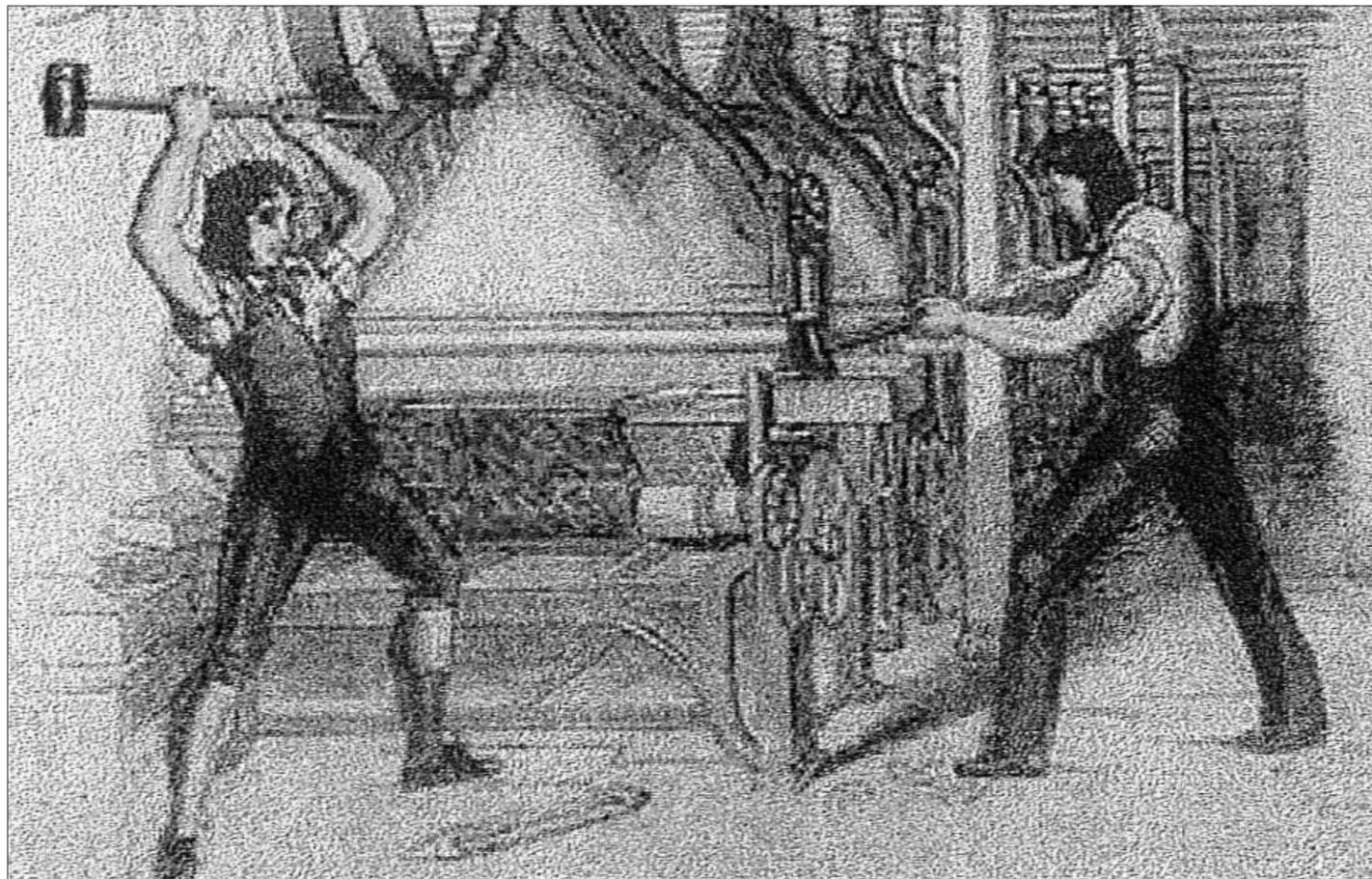
The movement emerges

On November 4, 1811 in the village of Bulwell a band of workers who made lace stockings gathered after dark and marched to the home of a master weaver named Hollingsworth. He was the owner of a number of stocking frames that were used to make inferior lace stockings. Using the new machinery, less skilled workers could produce more stockings than a skilled worker. The resulting products were often so poorly made that they would fall apart with the first wearing. These drove down the price of all.

The workers forced their way into Hollingsworth’s house and destroyed six of these frames. The Luddite movement was born.

Over the next two months hundreds of frames would be broken. The Luddite Rebellion continued through 1812 and into early 1813. By January of 1813 over 1,000 machines were destroyed, several warehouses and factories burned down, several factory owners shot, and one Prime Minister assassinated.

By the beginning of December letters to factory owners,



Parliament, and local military commanders began to appear, signed by Edward, or Ned, Ludd. The mythical Ludd was sometimes a king, sometimes a General, and occasionally demoted to Captain. It is still not known exactly how the name originated. Before the uprising there was a common saying amongst weavers when a machine was damaged that, “Ned Ludd was here,” referring to a story about a recalcitrant apprentice who destroyed his knitting frame rather than submit to his master.

The rebellion involved more than just attacks on machinery; there were also over 20 food riots in which people took over markets and gave the food away or sold it for what they determined was a fair price, leaving the proceeds with the seller. The ring leaders of the food riots were usually women, sometimes identifying as Lady Ludd, and occasionally even the local militia would assist in distributing the food.

Repression and resistance

The owners were terrified, and demanded that the state protect them. In February 1812 Parliament introduced a bill to make frame-breaking punishable by death. Lord Byron, the poet, gave his first speech in the House of Lords in opposition to the bill. As his poem on the subject ends:

Some folks for certain have thought it was shocking,

When Famine appeals and when Poverty groans,

That Life should be valued at less than a stocking,

And breaking of frames lead to breaking of bones.

If it should prove so, I trust, by this token,

(And who will refuse to partake in the hope?)

That the frames of the fools may be first to be broken,

Who, when asked for a remedy, send down a rope.

The government of the day did not stint in efforts to catch the Luddites. Spy networks were recruited and large rewards were offered. Many workers took the rewards and, in exchange, gave testimony that was useless for the prosecution, and then donated the reward money to the defence of the accused. The government fielded around 14,400 soldiers to the areas of the rebellion, the equivalent of four times the number of troops per population that NATO had in Afghanistan in 2009.

By early 1813 51 accused Luddites were transported to Australia, 18 were imprisoned, 24 were hanged and two dozen or so were killed while attacking factories.

As the violence deployed against the Luddites increased, so did their efforts to defend themselves. As 1812 progressed the Luddites turned to robbing rich houses of their arms and any lead objects that could be melted down to make musket balls. This turn to arms raids, and the increasing violence threatened in letters from General Ludd, put the ruling class in fear of a revolution. Since they were at war with revolutionary France, this was no small problem.

The textile workers did not abandon reformist methods either. Several petitions of several thousand signatures, asking Parliament for various reforms, were collected and submitted, but to no avail.

By the spring of 1813 the Luddite movement was mostly stalled. A combination of brute force, police spies, legal punishments and determination from the factory owners and Parliament that no obstacles could be put in the way of profit wore down the movement.

People over profit

The pejorative meaning of the word Luddite as someone who is unhappy with or afraid of new technologies only dates back to the 1950s or 60s. Even the real

Luddites are dismissed by extolling the benefits we have acquired due to improved technology since their time.

Both the caricature, and the more nuanced criticism, are completely beside the point. The workers and their families of early 19th-century England, did not receive any of these benefits. In exchange for control over their work, a living wage, and reasonable work hours, they received unemployment or hellish employment for low wages in the din and pollution of the new factories. All the immediate benefits went to the factory owners in the form of profit.

Similarly today, the Internet and the computers, tablets and phones that we have may allow us to create and communicate in ways that we never could before. However, first and foremost they create profit for our bosses or for other corporations, as this technology is used to sell us even more stuff and spy on us and sell our personal information. Most importantly, the workers who assemble our computers in factories far away pay for this technology with their low wages and poor health as they are exposed to noxious chemicals.

The battle of the Luddites was not primarily against machines. They were fighting over the priorities of society. The most important activity to the owners and law-makers of their era and ours is making profit. Those machines were not introduced to make better clothing, or to reduce the work involved, or even to satisfy the curiosity of the inventor to see if something could be improved. They were introduced to increase profits. The costs to workers or the environment never entered into it. The same is true of every innovation since then, from motor cars to smart phones.

Imagine what our world might look like if the only question that was asked about any innovation was, “Will this make people’s lives better?” Imagine the return of Ned Ludd.

‘Imagine what our world might look like if the only question asked about any innovation was, ‘will this make people’s lives better?’

MARXISM

THE ART & SCIENCE OF LIBERATION

Because capitalism is a profit-driven system based on the exploitation of the majority by a minority, it could not survive without oppression—which sharpens exploitation and divides the working class. Each form of oppression is unique, and the overthrow of capitalism is contingent upon the overthrow of all forms of oppression, so we need a method to unite the fight for liberation.

Fighting women's oppression

by MICHELLE ROBIDOUX

While capitalism did not create gender oppression, it has perpetuated it. This serves both to ensure that the cost of reproducing the next generation of workers is carried by individuals in the private family, and to divide and conquer.

At the same time, the laws of motion of the capitalist system also constantly undermine the family and the basis for the specific oppression of women.

The ideology of women's principal role being a caregiver in the home clashes with the reality that the majority of women work for a wage outside the home. For working-class women, this has meant a double-burden of underpaid work in the workplace and unpaid work caring for young children and the elderly, as well as a greater burden of daily labour maintaining

the household.

Yet not all women experience gender oppression in the same way. While wealthy women hire nannies and housekeepers and enjoy vacations, working class women increasingly scramble to stay afloat as governments cut social programs like childcare and healthcare, pushing more and more of the burden of care into the private home.

The ideology of women as mothers and caregivers is being ramped up blatantly by governments and employers everywhere as they try to make working-class people bear the cost of the crisis.

In the face of these attempts by the 1% to push the burden of the crisis onto the 99%, a united movement of women and men, gay and straight, black and white, can deal a blow to exploitation and oppression, and point to an alternative—a world run for human need, not profit.



Quebec, First Nations and national liberation

by CHANTAL SUNDARAM

ON EARTH Day this year, hundreds of thousands filled the streets of Montreal, causing some commentators to marvel at the connection made between the environment and the fight against austerity by Quebec students. But there was another connection made that day: opposition by both the Quebec people and First Nations to the exploitation and selling-off of northern resources to mining companies, in what is known as Plan Nord.

This stands in sharp contrast to the depiction of First Nations and Quebec interests as inevitably opposed to each other, notably in the Oka standoff and in the fight by the James Bay Cree against the Great Whale hydro-electric project in northern Quebec in the 90s. This Earth Day, Cree, Mohawk, and other First Nations contingents marched should-to-shoulder with Quebec artists, students and trade unionists.

But Quebec and First Nations have long been pitted very consciously against each

other in ways that have undermined the legitimate demands of both. In the 90s in particular, the constitutional crisis was used by the federal government to deny any recognition of Quebec as a distinct society on the basis of insincere concern for First Nations rights. The 1995 referendum on Quebec sovereignty was followed by federal threats to partition Quebec in the event of separation, supposedly to protect the Cree.

But the oppression of First Nations, like the national oppression of Quebec, is rooted in the Canadian federal state. The 90s was a time of struggle by First Nations communities from coast to coast, from the standoff at Gustafsen Lake in BC, which was met with federal military intervention, to the occupation of Ipperwash Provincial Park, which resulted in the murder of Dudley George by Ontario Provincial Police. The result of scapegoating Quebec for racism against First Nations was to fuel the rise of the anti-Quebec Reform Party in the 90s, the Party that brought Stephen Harper to prominence.

The history of Quebec's oppression as a

nation dates back to the British conquest and military victory on the Plains of Abraham, but it lived on in the cultural, political and economic backwardness that was imposed on Quebec up until the Quiet Revolution. Until that time in the late 60s, to be francophone in Quebec truly meant being a second-class citizen, without even the right to French as your language of work. Bilingual francophones earned less than unilingual anglophones. Quebec was dominated by an unholy alliance between a wealthy anglophone elite with its own hospitals, schools and universities, and the Catholic Church, which extolled the "quebecois" virtue of suffering in silence.

Even after the Quiet Revolution won secularized public education in French and other language rights, a national consciousness remained, expressed in the "I remember" slogan on Quebec licence plates.

The fact that university and college education is such a recent and hard-won right is the reason why it is so valued as a social good—and the main reason why the Quebec student movement has been strong enough

to maintain a tuition freeze for the better part of forty years.

The pundits who now crow about Quebec tuition being the lowest in the country would do well to remember this history themselves. They are quick to point out that despite low fees, the university participation rate in Quebec is lower than in Ontario—in order to make the case that high fees don't inhibit access. In fact, the lower participation rate is itself a legacy of oppression, the result of a very recent history of access to post-secondary education in Quebec.

Writing about Ireland in the 19th century, Karl Marx remarked that a nation that enslaves another can never itself be free. In the 90s English Canadians certainly forged their own chains by embracing the anti-Quebec chauvinism that made Stephen Harper's career.

But that history is changing. The "Quebec Spring" could now point a way to freedom not only for the Québécois but for First Nations and for workers and students in English Canada as well.

Understanding Islamophobia

RACIAL PROFILING and the targeting of Muslims throughout the West has become a terrible reality of the post-9/11 world. This has gone hand-in-hand with intense scrutiny of the religion of Islam, and attempts to demonize it as a faith by equating it with terrorism.

Islamophobia is fundamentally a form of racism, even though it is associated with a religion that transcends ethnicity and nationality. But it is a racism of a new kind, since it has a very important link connected with present-day imperialism. During the Cold War, when the West was in competition with Russia and the Eastern Bloc for control of territories, the threat of Communism

was constantly raised to justify the West's imperialist interests around the world, and to keep the population, especially in the US, living in fear.

It was after the attacks of September 11, 2001 that the construction of the so-called "Islamic threat" took on strong parallels to the methods and atmosphere of the McCarthy era, and not just in the US. Canada has introduced its own anti-terror legislation and a no-fly list; racial profiling and finger-printing procedures at airports and border crossings abound, as do visits at work and home by CSIS and RCMP agents.

But there is an important difference between the McCarthy era and the current

context: politicians and the media today cannot rely exclusively on the threat of terror to justify intervention and occupation of the Middle East. They must also appeal to people's better natures under the guise of defending "humanitarian causes" in the Muslim world. This has involved the demonization of Islam in other ways in order to equate it with social repression such as the oppression of women.

The reason Islamophobia is perpetuated is twofold: first, the need to justify the invasion and ongoing occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan and to justify the expansion of the war to other Muslim countries like Iran; and secondly, the need to drive a wedge

between the increasingly anti-war non-Muslim populations of Western countries and Muslim populations living both in the Middle East and within the West itself.

There is an urgent need for unity and solidarity between non-Muslims and Muslims, both internationally and at home, if we are to have a hope of ending the barbarity of the so-called "war on terror." But this unity cannot be taken for granted: it can only be built on the basis of a principled opposition to Islamophobia.

This is an excerpt from the booklet *Islamophobia: What it is and How to Fight It* by Chantal Sundaram and James Clark

Capitalism and LGBT oppression

THE ROLE of the family and expressions of gender and sexuality seem to be deeply-rooted and part of our inherent nature as people, but these are all socially constructed and have changed over time.

For most of human history, nobody considered there to be any such distinction between people as lesbian, gay, bisexual or straight. People participated in sexual relationships without having these activities define them.

In the second half of the nineteenth century the nuclear family was promoted as a key part of the strategy of maintaining capitalism. Women were excluded from some paid work—such as in mines—and children from most of it. The sick and the old were to be looked after in respectable, working class homes—without costing the state any money.

The Victorian promotion of the family involved attacks on any kind of sexuality outside of this norm. Prostitution, which was common at this time, faced new legal sanctions. Doctors were obsessed with stopping children from masturbating. Sex between men and between women also faced attacks. All sex between men was criminalized in Britain in 1885.

Today, the family continues to be extremely important to capitalist society. Governments save billions of dollars each year because children, sick and elderly people are looked after for free within the family—often by women. The family is also important ideologically, with Conservatives, Liberals and New

Democrats all championing respectable "hard-working families" just as their Victorian forebears did.

But there have also been huge changes in the last 40 years. Women and LGBT people have fought for liberation, and made significant gains in formal legal equality when it comes to issues concerning employment, housing and health care—even marriage.

Now the dominant idea is that sex should underpin the loving relationships on which families are based. Sex, gay or straight, has become to some extent acceptable and it has entered the mainstream—pornography is big business, and sex is used to sell everything from magazines to cars. But this is a limited and contradictory advance when cultural expressions of sexuality are just a money-making caricature of real sex between real human beings.

And LGBT people continue to be oppressed—facing violence, abuse, discrimination, bullying in school and under-representation in the media—with advances for transgender people lagging far behind those for gays and lesbians. There is also no guarantee that things will continue to improve.

We need to continue fighting for LGBT freedom and a truly liberated sexuality. We need a society where people can decide how they want to live, not struggle to hold a family together or else feel they are a failure. Because LGBT oppression originates from capitalist society as a whole, it can only be eliminated by the overthrow of capitalism.

The disability movement: a look Forward

by MELISSA GRAHAM

FOR PEOPLE with disabilities, the struggle to be heard is still an uphill battle as we fight to define ourselves as a movement. In some ways we can relate well to the history of the women's movement. We have an international day of recognition, we struggle for gains politically, economically, and socially, but still many question if there is such a movement, or why one should exist in the first place.

Many of us living with disabilities see the need for activism and change. We've moved a long way from our history of raising our voices and fighting back. Many organizations that were once active advocates for people with disabilities are now relying on government legislation to provide funding scraps.

While there are individual activists rising to the challenge, in general the movement is still divided by disabilities and class. As a result, the rich and active history of people with disabilities, those who chained themselves to buses and started their own organizations, has gotten lost. The movement will need to draw from this history in order to make further progress.

There is hope: in 2011 new voices and issues were thrust into the spotlight, leading to revolution—and solidarity—in many parts of the world. Activists have changed the conversation to the point that Time magazine's person of the year for 2011 was "The Protester." People with disabilities have been a part of this change, and many are not content to sit back and wait—they are fighting for their rights, increasing the visibility of the movement

with a kind of radical activism that seems to be growing.

In Montreal, an organization called Défense et revendication des droits des personnes en situation de handicap—Defending the Rights Of People With Disabilities (RAPLIQ), has been working for the elimination of discrimination faced by people with disabilities. In response to the lack of accessible transportation in the city, they called on people with disabilities to fill city hall—and they did.

In Toronto, close to 100 people with disabilities and their allies gathered at Nathan Philips Square in response to proposed cuts and the cancellation of the city's annual International Day of Persons with Disabilities celebration. They took to the streets and marched down Bay Street to the site of Occupy Toronto chanting: "Equal Access, Equal Rights," "Build Ramps Not Bombs," "No Cuts! No Way! Tell Rob Ford we're here to stay!" The march received a positive public response: truck drivers honked in solidarity as the group marched by, and a crew of construction workers paused to applaud.

What's next?

So, what's next for radical disability activism? The best thing we can do right now is build connections and learn more about what's happening across Canada; reach out to people with disabilities that we see doing activist work, and connect them with related struggles. We also need to encourage each other to continue the work that we are doing. As the summer of 2012 approaches, let's continue to build that solidarity with students, labour, and other movements, so that together we can build a better—and more accessible—world for all.



Man in a wheelchair leading the queer contingent in the Los Angeles May Day celebration

Students and workers: the spark and the flame

THE MAGNIFICENT student strike in Quebec—and the draconian law trying to smash it—shows both the strengths and the limits of campus organizing, and the role of working-class activity.

Like their sisters and brothers across Canada, the people of Quebec have endured years of cutbacks to healthcare, education, jobs and the environment. A spark of resistance was desperately needed, and came from students. Historically student movements have been explosive: their high concentration in institutions that claim to encourage debate, their lack of being tied to the workplace all day, and their freedom from the demoralization of past defeats mean they can rapidly radicalize.

But the same material conditions limit what students are able to accomplish on their own: shutting down campus does not affect the profits of the 1%. So the first strategy of Quebec Premier Jean Charest was to try to outlast the students, dividing them and waiting for the strike wave to dissipate.

But the students maintained their unity and showed how campus organizing can act as a detonator for broader struggles. The historical demonstration on April 22, the largest in Canadian history—which united students with workers, environmentalists and everyone fed up with austerity—shows how student movements can draw others into activity.

Charest is desperate to put out the student spark before it spreads any more, and is attacking the weakness of student movements. Charest would never shut down all workplaces, but he can shut down campuses, and is using this as a pretext for broader bans on street protests.

The Achilles heel of Charest and his corporate backers is that their profits come from working people. Workers do not radicalize as quickly as students, but when they do they can shut down the economy. In May 1968, French president De Gaulle sent the police to smash the student strike, but student and labour activist spread the movement to workplaces, and a general strike briefly drove De Gaulle out of the country. In 2011 dictators Ben Ali and Mubarak tried to outlast and crush Tunisian and Egyptian protests, but the movement spread to workplaces and mass strikes drove out the tyrants.

The student spark can trigger the worker flame, but it won't happen spontaneously or by yelling at the trade union bureaucracy. Rank-and-file networks of activists in every workplace are required to spread the spirit of the student strike and organize their own strikes against the 1%.

How do we spread the Quebec Spring?

THE QUEBEC student strike is inspiring people across Canada who would like to see a similar mass movement against austerity. But how do we spread the Quebec Spring?

Some say the Quebec Spring is unique, and Quebec and Quebec certainly has its own particular conditions that are important to understand.

From the experience as an oppressed nation within the Canadian state, the people of Quebec have a strong history of resistance—including the biggest anti-globalization protests in 2001, the biggest anti-war protests in 2003, and the biggest May Day protest in 2004.

Quebec students also have a tradition of mass strikes, most recently the 2005 strike that forced the government to give back \$103 million in cuts.

That experience cannot be spontaneously summoned across English Canada, but that doesn't mean that the struggle can't spread.

The Quebec Spring is a combination of past local experiences along with inspiration from global revolt. That people in Quebec have called the strike wave the "printemps d'érable"—meaning Maple spring but sounding like Arab spring—shows the links with the global revolt. But how do we spread it?

Some are impatiently demanding that the leadership of the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS) simply call a strike, or arguing that radical students organize on their own—counterposing the Quebec student organization CLASSE with other student unions. But this ignores the way in which the Quebec student strike—and strikes in general—are built.

Hundreds of thousands of students didn't go on strike because CLASSE told them to. The strike was built from below since the end of last year, and CLASSE—which numbers in the tens of thousands—has built unity with other student unions FECQ and FEUQ.

We can't turn our backs on mass student organizations or expect them to call a strike that has not been built from below (which would invite failure).

The CFS organized a pan-Canadian day of action against tuition fees on February 1 and occupied the Ontario Education Minister's office on April 5. If we want to spread the Quebec Spring, we need to learn the lessons and build a mass student movement from below, uniting with and strengthening the CFS.



Syriza leader Alex Tsipras

The politics of the rising European left

Alex Callinicos from the UK's Socialist Workers Party takes a look at Europe after the elections

EUROPE'S POLITICAL leadership is bankrupt. This is true literally, as we can see with the latest stage of the banking crisis unfolding in Spain. If the eurozone continues to unravel, there simply won't be enough money to save it.

It is also true morally and intellectually. And everyone knows it. This is the main lesson of the recent elections.

The pattern is clear. The centre—which stands for the austerity policies that Angela Merkel is determined to hardwire into the institutional structure of the European Union—is being squeezed. And there is polarisation further to the right and to the left.

The advances the extreme right are making are very frightening. Chrysi Avgi (Golden Dawn), which won seven per cent of the vote in the Greek elections, aren't Euro-fascists in suits. They are hard, street-fighting Nazis.

But it's the growth of the radical left on which I want to focus. The clearest case is of course Syriza, the Coalition of the Radical Left in Greece, which got 16.8 per cent of the vote in the elections ten days ago. Polls suggest that it might win 25 per cent or more if there is a re-run in June.

To this we have to add Jean-Luc Mélenchon of the Left Front, who polled 11.01 per cent in the first round of the French presidential elections last month. And there are other cases.

The Dutch government collapsed recently under the weight of the austerity policies it had helped Brussels impose. It was the right-wing populist

Geert Wilders who pulled the rug from under the ruling coalition, but the radical-left Socialist Party is top of the polls.

What are the politics of this rising left? Over-simplifying a little, it is essentially some version or other of left reformism. It's true that Syriza includes within its ranks an assortment of far-left groups, but the dominant force, Synaspismos, originates in the more accommodating and pro-European wing of the Greek Communist movement.

Breakaway

Mélenchon led a left-wing breakaway from the French Socialist Party after serving as a minister in the disastrous Plural Left government that held office in 1997–2002. The most powerful organised force within the Left Front is the French Communist Party (CP) which for decades has hung onto the coat tails of the Socialist Party.

A marked feature of the French presidential elections was the poor performance of the revolutionary left. Olivier Besancenot ran ahead of the CP in 2002 and 2007. But this time the candidates of both his New Anticapitalist Party and of Lutte Ouvrière, which in the days when Arlette Laguiller ran for it had a high profile, were eclipsed by Mélenchon.

It's not surprising that left reformist parties are making the running against austerity. They are filling a space left by the rightward shift of mainstream social democracy. Parties like Labour

and the French Socialists are now called "social liberal" because of their embrace of neoliberalism.

Figures such as Mélenchon, the Syriza leader Alex Tsipras, and, in this country, George Galloway are able to reach out to traditional social-democratic voters by articulating their anger in a familiar reformist language. Ed Miliband and François Hollande are trying to recalibrate their parties' messages to relate to this anger, but their unwillingness to break with social liberalism leaves a big space to their left.

In any case, whether it is mainstream social democrats or their more radical challengers who are able to ride to office thanks to the rebellion against austerity, they will come under enormous pressure to accommodate with the German government and the financial markets.

After the Greek elections, Tsipras made an excellent statement demanding an end to the "barbarous" austerity programme. But then he wrote a much less confrontational letter to the presidents of the European Council and the European Parliament.

This kind of ambiguity is inherent in any version of reformism, which seeks simultaneously to express workers' resistance to capitalism and to contain it within the framework of the system. But it underlines the necessity of building a revolutionary left that is part of this great movement sweeping Europe but maintains its own political identity.

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\$25,000



Quebec conscripts at a mass "Hands off Russia" meeting organized by socialists in Victoria on December 13, 1918

BOOKS

Which side are you on? Canada vs the Russian Revolution

From Victoria to Vladivostok
Written by Benjamin Isitt
Reviewed by Jesse McLaren

"Influenced by labour agitation, their morale weakened by poor weather and the Spanish flu, two companies of Québécois conscripts refused to leave Victoria for Vladivostok, and the military authorities used force—revolvers, canvas belts, and bayonets—to ensure their deployment to Russia."

The little-known mutiny of December 21, 1918 served as the focus for Victoria-based historian Benjamin Isitt's important, and well-documented, recent book. (For an accompanying online resource, visit www.siberianexpedition.ca).

The Russian and German revolutions had put an end to the barbarism of WWI, but Canada joined a dozen other nations to invade Russia—with Canada sending 4,200 troops. Through the war, Russia became the 7th largest market for Canadian goods—including submarines, rifles, ammunition, saddles and railroad cars—and Canadian corporations were keen to see their profits of war continue. Meanwhile, Canadian elites were increasingly anxious about growing labour unrest, and hoped that crushing the Russian Revolution would eradicate radicalism at home.

Quoting working-class papers of the

day, Isitt documents growing labour militancy, which identified with the Russian Revolution. Socialists like Ginger Goodwin organized rank-and-file resistance, with strikes shutting down the production of munitions on which the war industry depended. The killing of Goodwin triggered a general strike in Vancouver on August 2, 1918, the first city-wide general strike in Canadian history.

Meanwhile, socialists in Victoria invited hundreds of Quebec soldiers to mass meetings against the Siberian expedition: "at this junction of social forces—the converging interests of working-class Québécois and BC socialists—a violent standoff erupted in Victoria."

The troops were eventually forced onto the ship, and Isitt traveled to Vladivostok to document the revolution they were sent to suppress. Vladivostok was an important transit point for western war materials flowing into Russia, and gold to repay loans flowing out. As Isitt recounts: "under the leadership of Sukhanov, the 24 year-old student, and three young Bolshevik women, the Soviet set out to democratize Vladivostok industry. Workers' committees ramped up production of railway rolling stock and retooled the city's Military Port to build and refurbish civilian ships and machines. Working-class housing was built closer

to industry in order to increase workers' leisure time, and the Soviet opened a people's university, three theatres, and two daily newspapers."

Foreign intervention overthrew the democratic Soviet, and Canadian troops occupied the local cultural theatre. Inter-imperial rivalry, the brutality of the White armies, and the resistance led by the Bolsheviks—including strikes along the Trans-Siberian railway—eventually drove out the invading armies, but the revolution was isolated and capitalism re-emerged.

In Canada the Siberian expedition backfired, with labour councils across the country demanding "Hands off Russia" and endorsing the Russian Revolution. It was in this context that the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919 erupted. But the same powers that sent troops against the Russian Revolution also suppressed their own people. Isitt shows how Canadian working-class and socialist organizations and their newspapers were banned—as were texts from Lenin and any public meeting conducted in Russian—and the Winnipeg General Strike was violently repressed.

This book makes clear the importance of the Russian Revolution, the possibility of global social transformation, and the role of socialists: to build international, working-class resistance against capitalism and war.

How to save the planet, and ourselves

The Ecological Rift: Capitalism's War on the Earth

Written by John Bellamy Foster, Brett Clark and Richard York
Reviewed by Bradley Hughes

THIS BOOK is an all-encompassing review of how to understand the relationship between humans, nature and capitalism, and what to do about it.

The authors start with a review of the dire straits we are in. In at least seven key areas of our relationship with the planet, we have passed or are approaching "planetary boundaries," the point at which our disruption of natural cycles becomes so great that "irreversible environmental degradation" is a likely result.

After more than 400 pages, they conclude that only an ecological revolution can possibly save us. We need a revolutionary change in our relations to one another and the planet. Currently all our interactions are mediated by capitalism, a "system of unsustainable development."

Between the start and the finish, they exhaustively cover all the ways in which human and environmental degradation is built into the DNA of capitalism. Along the way there is a discussion of the relationship between science and the society it is embedded in, the limits of capitalist agriculture, the limits of reforms, a defence of dialectical materialism, the history of ecology, a short course on economics, and, it seems, some mention of everyone who has ever written on the environment, ecology or capitalism.

The ecological rift of the title refers to an updated and expanded version of Marx's idea of a metabolic rift. Marx observed that we are a part of the world, and through eating and breathing, the world is a part of us. This metabolic interaction with nature means that nature is the part of our bodies outside of ourselves.

Under capitalism, this metabolism is disrupted. In Marx's time this was most evident in capitalist agriculture. Food and fiber (clothes, rope, etc) take up nutrients from the soil. Then after being shipped to cities (sometimes

around the world) those nutrients are wasted in sewage and landfill where they become pollution. At the same time as the soil is depleted of nutrients, artificial fertilizers need to be produced and shipped over long distances to replenish the soil. Capitalist agriculture exists on an overdraft, using non-replenishable resources to make up for those it wastes.

This separation produces a metabolic rift. With the expansion of capitalism to cover the whole planet, we see more and more of these rifts.

Fossil fuels are created from dead plants over millions of years. The energy they contain came originally from the sun. Since capitalism is depleting these resources much faster than they could be replaced, we are living on an energy overdraft.

There is a clear parallel between these resource overdrafts, and the global economic crash that was triggered after years and years of debt financing of everything from houses, to cars, to factories.

If you want to save the planet, this book is a must-read!

LEFT JOB

John Bell

Be a socialist

WHEN I was a boy, my everyday walk to elementary school in suburban London, Ontario took me past a towering grey air raid siren. This was no obsolete Cold War relic. I dimly recall occasional drills during which we were instructed—yes—to "duck and cover."

I was born into what was billed as a "middle class" family, in what is still considered a thoroughly "middle class" city, smack in the middle of the 1950s. My father was a high school teacher and my mother, a registered nurse, stayed at home to raise four annoying children. Imagine a family of six living on one income today...

I remember my parents' excitement returning from a summer holiday, looking forward to seeing the new sensation in downtown London: the nation's first indoor shopping mall.

I'm not just an old fart waxing nostalgic here. I actually have a point: if ever there should have been a poster-child for capitalism triumphant it should have been me.

Communism was the enemy and the "Cuban Missile Crisis" reminded us that the enemy was at the gate. As for capitalism, I had won the cosmic jackpot, an Anglo male born into the richest place at the richest time in human history.

So how the hell did I slowly but surely become a socialist?

Maybe it was because, although I decided in my early teens I was an atheist, I really did love that golden rule business about treating your neighbour like you would want to be treated.

Maybe it was because I learned to read and somehow developed a nose for hypocrisy at an early age. I can't remember the time I didn't read a daily newspaper. The fact that what I read on one page sometimes contradicted what I read on the next only made the exercise more rewarding.

Grade four

I clearly remember the day I asked my grade four teacher why, if the USSR was our mortal enemy, it was also the number one market for Canadian grain exports? Even then I knew her flustered attempt to answer was bullshit. I learned not to simply take the word of so-called experts, but to try to figure it out for myself.

I also remember a dream from around the same time: a cowboy in a saloon (then as now I loved westerns) calmly explained to me that not everybody who wore a black hat was a bad guy, and not everybody in a white hat could be trusted. I still think this is a profound life lesson.

Maybe my journey toward Marxism was started by witnessing the fight for civil rights in the US, and seeing the unabashed and ugly racism at the heart of our white-hat-wearing society.

Maybe it was the day my best pal Stu came to school with the news that Alice Cooper had been playing golf with Richard Nixon. "I guess it's true," he said in a hushed voice, "things really aren't what they seem."

Maybe it was just Richard Nixon single-handedly demol-

ishing the myth of western "democracy." It was Vietnam. It was Paris 1968. It was the Kent State massacre.

Partly it was seeing my nuclear family crumble under the weight of unmet expectations, financial pressures, and alcoholism and abuse rooted in unaddressed post-traumatic shock from wartime experiences. In capitalism, if you get in trouble, you are on your own, sink or swim. My poor father sank, and any illusions I might still have had sank with him.

'...the boss' time'

And finally it was reading Karl Marx. It wasn't like I was instantly transformed by my first brush with Marx's brilliance.

In fact it was months later, working a summer job in a factory, that Marx's descriptions of exploitation and oppression kept coming back to mind. One day after a lengthy visit to the washroom during lunch break, I was set straight by a veteran: "Never shit on your own time. Always shit on the boss's time." That, in a nutshell, is Marx's description of the struggle between wage labour and capital.

In 1980 Polish shipyard workers rose against their so-called socialist government to demand the right to free, democratic trade unions. Within weeks millions more workers had flocked to the Solidarnosc banner and challenged the ruling order from Warsaw to Moscow and beyond.

As someone who self-identified as a socialist and a trade unionist there was no hesitation: I supported the workers' cause like any real socialist should have. But the only Canadian socialist organization that showed unconditional support for Solidarnosc was the International Socialists.

Using the tools of Marxism against the Stalinist tradition that laid bogus claim to Marx, the International Socialists insisted that what existed in Poland, the USSR and elsewhere was a variant of capitalism: state capitalism. The slogan of our newspaper was "Neither Washington nor Moscow". Over 30 years later I am proud to say I was right to join a group that got the crucial question of the day right.

I write all this not to pat myself—or the IS—on the back. It is as a challenge to you readers. I made the decision to become a socialist when the cracks in the capitalist edifice were barely showing. Today we see not cracks but chasms. All capitalism offers is war and austerity.

I challenge you to read Marx—the *Communist Manifesto*, *The Civil War in France*, the first volume of *Capital*—and let it sink in for a while as you observe the world around you. Don't be satisfied with how others, including me, interpret Marx. Go to the source and evaluate it for yourself.

And finally, if you agree with socialist ideas I challenge you to put them into action the only way possible, by joining together with other socialists to debate, strategize and act to build the better world we know is possible.

Meanwhile, always shit on the boss's time.

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.



Iran and the Axis of Hypocrisy

by PAUL KELLOGG

ISRAELI PRIME Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has a new coalition of national unity, and elections in the country have been pushed back by months. Suddenly the danger of an armed strike against Iran, by Israel, has become more acute.

It is now ten years since then-US President George W. Bush announced to the world that the US was up against an "Axis of Evil," comprised of Iraq, North Korea and Iran. But the real enemy is an Axis of Hypocrisy.

Don't forget Iraq

In Iraq the evidence for its "evil" status proved to be entirely false—there simply never were any Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs) in the country. Yet the US attacked anyway, using sanctions and then war to devastate the country. The *Lancet* estimated that 650,000 had died by 2006, only the first three years into the war. By 2007, the United Nations High Commission on Refugees estimated that 4.2 million Iraqis had been driven from their homes by the war, half right out of the country.

North Korea, by contrast, openly admits having WMDs. The issue in Iraq was not the presence of WMDs (which it didn't have), but the presence of oil (which it has in huge quantities). North Korea has WMDs, but no oil whatsoever. So Iraq gets a war, but North Korea does not.

The US has attempted to sew up control of Iraqi oil. But this has not gone entirely according to plan. In the wake of the collapse of the former Iraqi state, and years of destructive warfare, the most influential country in the region in the wake of the US pull-out has become Iran (which, like Iraq, is one of the world's great sources of inexpensive, easy-to-access oil). An attack on Iran by either Israel or the US would be part of the "chess game" of pushing back Iranian influence in this oil-rich region.

As in the case of Iraq, we are not told that Iran will be bombed for oil profits. Rather, Israel and the US, if they bomb Iran, will do so os-

tensibly to stop it from becoming a nuclear power. Since 2002, the CIA has been flooding the Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) with "evidence" of Iran's attempt to build an atomic bomb, just like the mythical claims about Iraq. But according to one senior diplomat at the IAEA, quoted anonymously in the *Los Angeles Times*, "since 2002, pretty much all the intelligence that's come to us has proved to be wrong."

The real WMDs: sanctions, the US and Israel

There are WMDs in the Middle East. The US has used vast quantities of depleted uranium and hundreds of thousands of cluster bombs in its two wars against Iraq, and sanctions that killed half a million children. Its main ally, Israel, as early as 2002, had between 75 and 200 nuclear weapons in its clandestine WMD program, and is a far bigger threat for the region—with a history of bombing Lebanon, attacking humanitarian activists in international waters, and the daily oppression and periodic attacks on Palestinians.

Most people support the removal of WMDs from the Middle East, including the people of the region itself. But to accomplish that would mean a withdrawal of all US military forces, and an international campaign against Israeli militarism, including against Israel's secret stockpiles of nuclear bombs and missiles.

A military strike against Iran, should it come, would provoke devastation for the people of the region, and would also be very risky for both the US and Israel. Israel used to be able to count Egypt and Turkey as allies. But the Arab Spring broke its ties with the Egyptian state, and the barbaric assault on the Mavi Marmara soured relations with Turkey. Israel is now as isolated as it has ever been in the region. And Iran is a regional power in its own right, not without resources and influence.

But the fact that there are risks does not mean an attack will not come. Twice before, Israel has launched strikes against nuclear reactors

under construction in the region—June 7, 1981 against one southeast of Baghdad in Iraq, and September 6, 2007 against one in Syria.

One unnamed Israeli figure "with close ties to the leadership" told a Reuters' reporter: "I think they have made a decision to attack. It is going to happen. The window of opportunity is before the US presidential election in November. This way they will bounce the Americans into supporting them." Such a strike would be an irresponsible and extremely dangerous action, posing the very real possibility of a wider, and very bloody, war. It is in all our interests to oppose Israeli and US military threats against Iran—including sanctions, which undermine democracy movements in Iran and are used as a prelude to war.

Message to Harper: no sanctions, no war

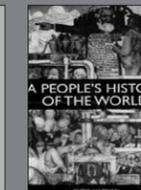
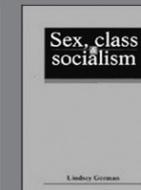
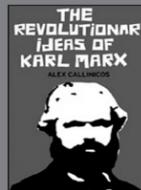
That means stopping our own government from supporting sanctions and war. Harper is one of the staunchest allies of US imperialism—and by extension Israel. From his desire to join the Iraq War and campaign against US Iraq War resisters, his defence of Israel's massacres in Lebanon as a "measured response," his cutting of funding to Gaza and campaign against Palestine solidarity, his welcoming of Netanyahu during the massacre of the Mavi Marmara and support for Egyptian dictator Hosni Mubarak, his demonization of "Islamicism" and claims that Iran is a "grave threat to peace and security"—it's clear Harper would like to support any strike against Iran.

In 2002 the anti-war movement won the NDP to a principled position against war on Iraq, split the ruling Liberals and stopped Canada from joining the Iraq War. We now need to win the NDP to oppose both war and sanctions on Iran (NDP leader Thomas Mulcair does not support war but does support sanctions), and through Parliament and the streets stop Harper from providing any military or political support for sanctions and war on Iran.

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OISE, 252 Bloor St W
Speaker: Katie Leonard
Info: torontosocialists@gmail.com

Bolsheviks and workers' control

Fri, June 8, 6:30pm
OISE, 252 Bloor St W
For readings and info: marxism@socialist.ca

'I am a revolutionary' Being a socialist work-shops

Saturday, June 16, 12:30pm
Bahen Centre, 40 St George
Info: torontosocialists@gmail.com

France 1968

Tues, June 19, 6pm
OISE, 252 Bloor St W
Speaker: Amelia Murphy-Beaudoin
Info: torontosocialists@gmail.com

Chile 1972-73

Tues, July 10, 6pm
OISE, 252 Bloor St W
Speaker: Tobi René Wilczek
Info: torontosocialists@gmail.com

Portugal 1974-75

Tues, July 24, 6pm
OISE, 252 Bloor St W
Speaker: TBA
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Iran 1979

Tues, August 7, 6pm
OISE, 252 Bloor St W
Speaker: Yusur Al Bahraini
Info: torontosocialists@gmail.com

Poland 1980-81

Tues, August 21, 6pm
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Speaker: Melissa Graham
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BC TEACHERS STAND STRONG

by D'ARCY BRIGGS

ON MAY 17, British Columbia Teachers' Federation president Susan Lambert wrote an open letter inviting all BC principals and vice-principals to join in solidarity with BC teachers fighting for better classroom and student support systems.

The BC Principals' and Vice-Principals' Association has not always shown support for teachers. In 2002 Bill 27 and 28 were imposed which stripped many contracts and removal of class size limits. The BCPVP showed no support then nor at any time in the last decade, and is now stating that with continuing job action "school culture has been significantly eroded this year by the continuing dispute."

In addition, teachers have escalated their job action to exclude all extra-curricular activities, such as sport and theatre programs. The union has also gone to court to ensure the Liberal-imposed mediator, Dr. Charles Jago, who will be working under the government's net-zero mandate, be replaced by a mediator with labour and mediation experience. Jago was involved in drafting sections of Bill 22, though BC Education Minister George Abbott maintains that Jago simply helped with "wordsmithing."

Teachers remain hopeful in their struggle. Popular opinion has remained on the side of the teachers while support for the Liberals has continued to plummet.

FREEDOM TRAIN VS THE TAR SANDS

by JESSE MCLAREN

ON MAY 9, the Yinka Dene Alliance of indigenous groups completed a cross-country Freedom Train by leading hundreds through the streets of Toronto to confront Enbridge over its proposed Northern Gateway pipeline. There was solidarity from high-school students, faith groups, environmentalists, Occupy movement participants and socialists.

The Tar Sands are a capitalist disaster that threaten the earth, water, forest and air and are responsible for epidemics of disease in nearby indigenous communities. But indigenous groups have been leading an escalating campaign against the Tar Sands and pipelines—from the Fraser Declaration, to a hunger strike, to demonstrations.

Petition

The Yinka Dene Alliance has launched a petition that has already garnered more than 13,000 signatures, and organized a Freedom Train across the country—with stops in Jasper, Edmonton, Saskatoon, Winnipeg and Toronto where Enbridge is having its annual AGM. Hundreds took to the streets of Toronto and rallied outside Enbridge's AGM with one message: no pipelines, no Tar Sands!



NATO SUMMIT PROTEST IN TORONTO

by DARREN EDGAR

COINCIDING WITH other solidarity protests around the world, peace activists in Toronto came out to rally and protest against the NATO summit currently taking place in Chicago.

Gathering across from the US Consulate on May 19, over 100 people—plus many passersby who stopped to listen—heard speeches denouncing NATO's militarism; still others chanted slogans, distributed literature and waved placards.

There were also many Palestinian flags present, representing the concern many people have that the most powerful NATO member—the US—will win its arguments for Israel's future involvement in NATO, if not in this summit. With the US continuing to massively fund and support Israel—both militarily and otherwise—and with the Canadian government marching in lock-step and wholeheartedly supporting the illegal occupation of Palestine, this display of solidarity and the demands for liberation of the Palestinian people are critical to any anti-war or peace demonstration.

Organized by the

Canadian Peace Alliance, Afghans For Peace (AFP), the Canadian Arab Federation and the Toronto Coalition to Stop the War, speeches were given by members of AFP, Palestine House, the Coalition Against Israeli Apartheid and the War Resisters Support Campaign, denouncing Canada's involvement in NATO—and even NATO's continued existence—when all it offers is war and unimaginable suffering, from Afghanistan to Iraq to Libya and possibly soon to Syria and Iran.

Beside the death and destruction abroad, a US war resister spoke movingly about the toll war takes on the soldiers who are sent overseas to fight, from the physical and psychological trauma—much of which goes improperly diagnosed or treated—to the shockingly high percentage of veterans who are unemployed, homeless or victims of suicide. When the costs of war are so high—for the civilian victims as well as the soldiers—clearly the only reasonable response is to demand an end to all wars and to promote peace instead.

But this isn't NATO's *raison d'être*; these days, it's

often the military vehicle used by an imperialist cabal of Western nations to pillage other nations accused of spreading "terrorism."

At this summit it is expected that the strategic partnership between the US and Afghanistan will be renewed, which will see foreign troops remain in Afghanistan until 2024. For his part, Stephen Harper and his Conservative government have already indicated that they may keep Canadian Special Forces soldiers in the country. This summit will also be an opportunity for NATO to cynically rebrand itself as a military organization that keeps international peace through force—instead of the relic of the Cold War it is.

To counter these attempts the speeches, slogans, chants, placards and signs at this protest all rallied around common themes: an immediate end to the war in Afghanistan; the return home and proper care of all troops; no new interventions or wars in Syria, Iran or anywhere else; the end to the occupation of Palestine; and, an end to the human, resource and monetary waste that military alliances like NATO create.



QuAIA WILL MARCH IN TORONTO'S PRIDE PARADE

by AMELIA MURPHY-BEAUDON

QUEERS AGAINST Israeli Apartheid has announced its plans to participate in Toronto's Pride parade this year.

Last year the city of Toronto tried to use QuAIA as a scapegoat for cutting Pride funding, so QuAIA voluntarily skipped the parade. Instead QuAIA dropped a banner over the Wellesley subway station reading "Support Palestinian Queers, Boycott Israeli Tourism." QuAIA also organized events to ex-

pose to the queer community Israel's "pinkwashing" of apartheid policies—promoting itself as a progressive, gay-friendly tourism destination to distract from its human rights abuses.

Toronto's city council will be voting in June on providing a grant of \$123,807 to Pride Toronto. Budget Chief Mike Del Grande has shared with the media that QuAIA's decision to march this year may put the funding in jeopardy. It was also announced that the council plans to review its anti-discrimination policy.

But council has no basis to cut Pride funding. The city managers report last year stated that the term "Israeli apartheid" is not hate speech, and QuAIA is not in contravention of any law or the anti-discrimination policy. QuAIA is a legitimate group that supports Palestinian queers who have no rights under Israel's apartheid policies.

This year's theme for Pride is "Celebrate and Demonstrate." Pride has always been a political event, and the queer community is getting back to those roots.

STICKING WITH THE UNION

Carolyn Egan

Building unity between workers in Quebec and English Canada

THERE IS no doubt that the ongoing student strike in Quebec is the high point of struggle in the pan-Canadian state. The overwhelming rejection of the tentative settlement shows the resolve of young people who have been fighting not just for themselves but for all those coming after them. They have a sense of their role in history and are hoping to spark broader protest against the austerity agenda in the province.

With Quebec on the political map, it is particularly important for those of us in English Canada to understand the principle of Quebec's right to self-determination. This is something that we must support along with that of the First Nations.

Over the last decades most trade unions and progressive organizations in Canada have taken official policies supporting the right to self-determination. It is important that these policies be discussed again today by union members to give the rank-and-file an opportunity to fully understand the situation facing their sisters and brothers in Quebec.

The Toronto and York Region Labour Council has done exactly that. After the death of Jack Layton the council made the decision to honour his memory by developing closer relations with Quebec workers. The president and a rank-and-file delegate traveled to the province and took part in meetings organized by the Montreal Labour Council (FTQ). They were very well received by the membership.

More recently the president of the Montreal Labour Council along with two others came to Toronto and attended the 10th annual Aboriginal and Workers of Colour Conference which was dealing with equity in the age of austerity. They addressed the council on the national question as well as the Quebec student strike and the Rio Tinto lock-out.

It was an excellent

meeting with most members wearing the small red square in solidarity with the student strike. At the same meeting a representative from the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees spoke of the fight against austerity in Wisconsin and other US states. He and other workers who were involved in the occupation of the legislative building in Madison were visiting Toronto for the premier of *We Are Wisconsin* which depicts the struggle there.

The Quebec delegation viewed the movie and was very inspired. We are hoping to get it subtitled in French for a launch in Montreal. The coming together of the two labour councils was a very important step. A resolution was passed supporting the student strike and a background paper outlining why workers must support the right of the Quebec people to determine their own destiny was distributed.

A delegate from the building trades raised from the floor that Toronto and Montreal labour councils should twin and have an ongoing relationship. This was enthusiastically accepted and a joint declaration is being developed. There will be another trip to Montreal by Toronto delegates to make the relationship concrete. We have a lot to learn from each other.

The ongoing lock-out of 800 Steelworkers at Rio Tinto in Alma, Quebec is another opportunity to put solidarity into action. Members of the Steelworkers in Toronto have twice taken a bus to the lockout, driving 13 hours and bringing support from English Canada. There are benefits being planned at the end of June in Toronto, Hamilton and Sudbury to broaden the struggle. This type of worker-to-worker support for fights against the austerity agenda whether in the public or private sector are the best way to build the unity of the working classes in Quebec and English Canada.

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SOLIDARITY WITH QUEBEC STUDENTS

AGAINST ANTI-PROTEST LAW

by JESSICA SQUIRES

THE QUEBEC government has announced a “special law” to crack down on student protests—a law so draconian it is almost difficult to believe. But students and workers in Quebec are standing strong, including hundreds of thousands on May 22 to mark the 100th day of the strike.

In the month since *Socialist Worker* last reported on the magnificent student strike in Quebec, a lot has happened. There have been failed negotiations; a Minister of Education resigned, and a new one was appointed; and now, the Quebec government’s Bill 78 will bring about sweeping repressive measures against all forms of protest—not just student demonstrations.

In one fell swoop, Quebec Premier Jean Charest has evoked all the worst episodes of Quebec’s repressive past: the anti-communist padlock laws of the 1930s, the Duplessis regime, the War Measures Act of 1970, and the crackdown that ended the 1972 General Strike.

It is important to understand this development in the context of Quebec’s national liberation struggle. In order to reverse the achievements of Quebec’s quiet revolution of the 1960s, Charest has crassly appealed to right-wing populism, bringing about a return to the authoritarianism of the 1950s, with the help of other right-wing politicians, the police and the corporate media.

Context

To understand how we got here, we need to look back over the last fourteen weeks, and even before.

The strike against tuition fee increases was launched



in mid-February in a Quebec in which the ruling Liberals were flagging in the polls. Despite this, speculation was rampant that there would be an election. It looked as if Premier Jean Charest was pinning his election hopes on right-wing support for a massive natural resource extraction deal called “Plan nord,” which would gut the north and its communities. Charest had barely survived several years of corruption scandals.

But his main opposition, the Parti Québécois (PQ), had also experienced a crisis. It may then have seemed to Charest that his best bet

against the PQ was to find solid ground for his own Liberals before they could regain their strength, and before a new right-wing party on the scene, the Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ), could fully find its feet.

Polls coinciding with the strike’s launch in mid-February gave two-thirds support for Charest’s plan to increase tuition fees 75 per cent over five years (it is now 82 per cent over seven years). The Liberals began to squeeze out CAQ and creep upwards in the polls.

Charest refused for nine weeks to sit down to talk with

the students. Amidst escalating police repression, which resulted in two lost eyes and a coma, it seemed clear to many that he was counting on populist anti-strike sentiment to give him a boost for the election, which some thought he would call for the spring.

Momentum

But Charest miscalculated. The movement continued to gain momentum. There were daily demonstrations across Quebec. Police repression was rampant. Some protesters began to break windows. Anti-strike students applied for injunctions from the

courts, which were defied successfully by strikers.

Charest began to look like he was incapable of managing what was becoming a social crisis. The students called government bluff after government bluff. Repeated attempts to divide the movement or weaken it with half-measures to reform student assistance failed.

Finally, astonishingly, a desperate Charest asked public sector unions to help broker a deal. And finally, after eleven weeks, the government sat down to negotiate.

But the deal on the table was fatally flawed, because

the government refused to talk about tuition fees—the main reason for the strike. The government had finally agreed to meet with students, but then manoeuvred them into signing a deal they did not agree to.

The student associations believed they had a deal they could work with that incorporated a kind of moratorium on the increases, but the government denied that was their intention. The deal was massively rejected, defeated in general assembly after general assembly. The strike continued, and it looked as if no further negotiations were possible. Then, on May 14, Line Beauchamp, the Minister of Education resigned, saying she did not feel she was part of a solution. That same day the new Minister was appointed, Michelle Courchesne. She immediately asked for a meeting with the students.

When they met, Courchesne told the students that no law was being contemplated to try to force students back to class. She was either lying or wrong. On May 16 the government announced it was introducing a “special law”—of a type referred to in French as a loi matraque, or bludgeon law.

Back-to-classes legislation

Upon adoption of Bill 78 on Friday, May 18, 2012, Quebec is now, in terms of democratic rights, in its worst situation since the War Measures Act of 1970. The Charest government is seeking to ban student strikes altogether—a tactic used by the Quebec student movement on a regular basis, and tacitly accepted, by administrators and government, since 1968.

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‘We are all Greek’ Solidarity against austerity

by PANOS GARGANAS

THE MASS vote to reject austerity has sparked Greece’s biggest political crisis for years. It saw big losses for the pro-bailout parties and a huge rise in votes for the anti-austerity left—especially radical left party Syriza.

The pro-bailout parties had been trying to form a government. But the deadline for these attempts has now expired and the country is heading for repeat elections.

The reason for the stalemate is that the old political establishment does not accept that the left has a mandate to break austerity

treaties. These treaties were imposed on Greece by the “troika”—the International Monetary Fund, the European Union (EU) and the European Central Bank. The EU is the main black-mailer. It threatens to cut off funds and push Greece out of the eurozone if the left wins a repeat election.

Officials of the outgoing government of Lucas Papademos have even claimed that Greece will run out of funds before the new election can take place. The menace of a default is used to try to push the left and the working class into submission.

But if a pro-austerity government were formed

despite the election results, there would be an immediate response in the streets. Antarsya (to which the SEK, the International Socialists’ sister organization in Greece, belongs) is certainly pushing in that direction. Apart from workers’ courage and determination, we will also need a clear radical response from the left.

People’s Default

We can counter the threat of a troika-organized default by pushing for a people’s default. Stopping all the interest payments to the bankers would save almost 40 per cent of the whole Greek budget. That is

enough money to restore all the cuts in wages, pensions and social services. It could make real all the pledges that workers have voted for—and do more as well.

Across Europe

We will not be alone if it comes to that. Already many people across Europe express their solidarity by saying “we are all Greek.” The election result in France and the demonstrations in Spain show the same anti-austerity mood across the continent. A red hot summer is ahead of us—and workers’ solidarity is what we need.

Panos Garganas is a socialist based in Athens.