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AND THE TORIES' WARS: ABROAD AND AT HOME



THE HARPER government supports the looming war on Iran, while attacking women's rights and destroying the environment at home.

War on Iran

Prime Minister Stephen Harper has called Iran "the world's most serious threat to international peace and security" and claimed that the major threat for Canada is "Islamicism." Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird recently announced complete severing of diplomatic relations with Iran, while Immigration Minister Jason Kenney claimed Canada is a haven for persecuted Iranians.

The US has long wanted to attack Iran but the military quagmires in Afghanistan and Iraq as well as the economic crisis have stretched its capacities and made a direct attack difficult. However, the economic crisis is sharpening inter-imperial rivalries and the Arab Spring has threatened Western control of the region. The US threatens to use its proxy power, Israel—the region's most serious threat to peace and security—to attack Iran and reassert its role in the region. The Canadian

state, a supporter and beneficiary of US imperialism, is keen to support the war ideologically, if not militarily.

In 2003 the anti-war movement stopped Canada from officially participating in the Iraq War so we need to mobilize again to stop Canada from joining the new war. October 6 is a day of action against war on Iran, and as we challenge the war abroad we also need to fight Harper's war at home—against people and the planet.

War on choice

Immigration Minister Jason Kenney banned Muslim women from citizenship ceremonies if they wear a veil, claiming Islam is the major threat to women's rights across Canada. But by joining nine other cabinet ministers—including Status of Women Minister Rona Ambrose—and a majority of Tories in supporting anti-choice motion 312, Kenney has made it clear the major threat to women is the anti-choice movement and its Tory supporters.

Harper was not confident to directly support anti-choice motion

312 but as the motion's instigator, Stephen Woodworth, said after the motion's defeat, "I want Canadians to remember that no great issue is ever determined by a single vote in the House of Commons. It remains for the Canadian people to rise up even more strongly." Motion 312 was not designed to win in Parliament but rather to encourage the anti-choice movement to mobilize.

Anti-choice forces are not resting after the defeat of Motion 312 and neither should we. October 20 will be a pan-Canadian day of action for choice, which will be critical to showing the pro-choice majority across the country and building the resistance to Harper's war on choice.

War on the planet

Wars abroad are fought for oil, and with oil. The largest consumer of oil is the military, and war threatens the planet both directly through bombs and indirectly through climate change. While Harper blames Iran, he ignores the tar sands and climate change—which is truly one of the most serious threats to international

security.

After years of sustained campaigns, indigenous communities have put the issue of tar sands on the national agenda and now there's a broad-based opposition on the West coast—which is threatened with oil spills. On October 22 there will be a mass Defend Our Coast sit-in at the provincial legislature against tar sands tankers and pipelines—including First Nations, environmentalists, students and workers—to oppose tar sands and demand a green future.

"Tens of thousands of unionized and other jobs depend on healthy river and ocean ecosystems," said Susan Spratt, Canadian Auto Worker Area Director for BC and Alberta. "On October 22 we will be standing in solidarity with thousands of working people in BC and our First Nations sisters and brothers."

We need to oppose all these wars while uniting the resistance—demanding an end to militarism and the oil economy that supports it, and building movements for a future of reproductive justice and a peaceful, healthy planet.

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West coast salmon stocks dwindle

by D'ARCY BRIGGS

AS THE proposed Enbridge pipeline project threatens much of the west coast's beautiful natural landscapes and habitats, the salmon are experiencing rapid drops in their populations from profit-driven global warming and over-harvesting.

An article published in the January 2001 edition of *Science* found that 40-95 per cent of wild sockeye salmon that use the Fraser River to reach their spawning ground are dying, despite the reduction of their direct harvesting. A common genomic profile was found during the study and was used to make accurate predictions towards the salmon's survivability.

Scientists believe this genomic stress has been put on the salmon because of rising water temperatures (both in rivers and ocean) and that "salmon have died in greatest numbers in 'hotspots' along the river system, possibly as a result of poor oxygen availability and disease." Global warming is putting stress on Pacific salmon faster than they can adapt to it.

The International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) recently completed research on the five types of wild salmon found in the Pacific (Chinook, Chum, Coho, Sockeye, and Pink) and found that global climate change has moved many of their spawning and travel patterns—which opens them up to new or increased predation, lower and different access to food, or they become a new food competitor for another fish stock.

The problem is not isolated to the Pacific Coast. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization published a report with grim numbers for global fish stocks. We have reached "peak fish." Over 52 per cent of the world's ocean is fully exploited (which they define as "the fishery is operating at or close to an optimal yield level, with no expected room for further expansion").

Moreover, 17 per cent is overexploited and 7 per cent is depleted, with only one per cent being replenished from depletion. This means that only 23 per cent of the ocean could withstand more stress placed upon it, a rate much lower than fish are harvested.

Pacific salmon are some of the most exploited fish in this picture. Chinook and Coho Salmon are both ranging from fully exploited to overexploited by over 28,000 a year.

We live on a finite planet, but capitalism's oil-addicted and endless drive to profit accumulation is depleting the world of its resources. There are sustainable ways to harvest fish from the sea, but only if we prioritize human and environmental need. We must look critically about who decides what we eat, and look to alternatives to the profit-driven over-exploitation of the plants and animals with whom we share the planet.



Kenney pinkwashes war on Iran

by JESSE MCLAREN

IMMIGRATION MINISTER Jason Kenney is helping Harper's war drive, and distracting from his own policies, by suddenly claiming the Tories are friends of queers and refugees.

A week after ending diplomatic relations with Iran, Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird made a speech congratulating Jason Kenney for "working to make Canada a safe haven for Iran's persecuted gay community." Kenney followed this with an email to thousands of Canadians, stating, "We are proud of the emphasis our Conservative Government has placed on gay and lesbian refugee protection, which is without precedent in Canada's immigration history... In particular, we have taken the lead in helping gay refugees who have fled often violent persecution in Iran."

This is not the first time Kenney used Islamophobia to distract from Tory bigotry and other policies. On December 12, the day the Tories officially withdrew from the Kyoto protocol on climate change, Kenney created a distraction by banning women wearing the niqab from

citizenship ceremonies, claiming that his government "want[s] women to be full and equal members of Canadian society." This as the Tories were putting forward anti-choice Motion 312, which Kenney (a long-time anti-choice activist) supported.

Now Kenney is using hostility to Iran as a cover for Tory policies against queers and refugees, and using support for queer refugees to bolster Harper's drive to war—a war that would kill queer Iranians and many others.

The Tories have a long history of homophobia—including cutting funding to Pride Toronto, removing references to gay rights and same-sex marriage from the Citizenship manual for newcomers (public outrage forced Kenney to restore the information), and opposing Bill C-279 that would put gender identify and expression into the human rights code (Kenney voted against the bill).

The Tories also have a long history of attacking refugees—from demonizing Tamils during the last election campaign, imposing Bill C-31 that attacks refugees, cutting refugee health care and deporting war resisters. Bill C-31's list of supposedly "safe" countries has been specific-

ally criticized for ignoring homophobia and transphobia, as Sharalyn Jordan of the Rainbow Refugee Committee explained: "Ukraine has an elected parliament, an independent judiciary, and civil society organizations. Based on Bill C-31, it could be designated [safe], and yet its parliament is considering a law banning speech or writing that promotes homosexuality, and neo-Nazis are attacking LGBTQ people in the streets of Kiev." All these anti-refugee policies provoked widespread opposition, so the Tories are looking for a distraction by whipping up war on Iran.

But Kenney's hypocrisy is not going unchallenged. An open letter in response to his email explains that "Your most recent campaign is a poor attempt at 'pinkwashing' the Conservative government's obvious desire to encourage war with Iran... We will also continue to stand in solidarity with ALL Iranian people by opposing your government's rush to invade and declare war on Iran."

Queers for Social Justice will join the October 6 day of action against war on Iran, showing that the best way to support queer refugees is by stopping Harper and Kenney's war abroad and at home.

BC public transit cutbacks threaten climate

by ANNA ROIK

THERE WAS little to cheer about after BC's TransLink unveiled its draft 2013 Base Plan for the Lower Mainland on September 17.

Due to shrinking revenues, TransLink says it cannot expand transit in the rapidly growing region. Instead it will maintain some levels of service, and scale back others in what it calls "efficiencies."

Ironically, much of TransLink's fund-

ing depends on car use. Two major sources of funding for transit are from fuel taxes and bridge toll revenue, with the third source being passenger fares.

As for cost-saving measures, TransLink itself acknowledges that these will negatively affect riders. With increasing numbers of people turning to transit, this will mean that buses and trains will become even more crowded than they are now.

Unfortunately, despite increased demand for transit, decreased service and increased crowding tend to force people back to driving their cars.

At a time when arctic ice melt is at its greatest and climate change is a reality that cannot be ignored, we need to demand and fight for ways to reduce car dependency by giving growing urban populations (like the Lower Mainland) transit options that meet their needs.

Parti Québécois: same old opportunism

by JESSICA SQUIRES

OUT OF the gate, Pauline Marois' minority Parti Québécois (PQ) government seems set on tacking left.

They announced the reversal of the tuition fee increases that sparked months of student strikes and demonstrations that brought down the Liberal government of Jean Charest and they repealed the reactionary bludgeon law, Bill 78.

These two acts, huge victories for the student movement, were followed by announcements that the PQ wants to keep in place the student assistance measures first offered by Charest as an alternative to eliminating the fee hike—another victory for students and their supporters. Finally, they announced they will close the only nuclear power facility in Quebec and take a stand against shale gas exploration (fracking).

Then the PQ announced it wants to roll back tax cuts for the rich in order to eliminate the Health Care premium.

There is no question that these announcements are direct results of mass mobilization by students, environmentalists, and the social movements of Quebec.

There is already a backlash from the right-wing CAQ and the Liberal oppos-

ition to the tax reforms and the nuclear plant closure. That's somewhat ironic given CAQ also promised to eliminate the health fee. CAQ is also cynically trying to position itself as the pro-worker voice on that closure—while neglecting to mention their own campaign promise, which would have cut far more jobs elsewhere in the energy sector.

But there is also a more cynical reason behind the announcements.

The PQ Finance Minister is on record as supporting tax cuts for corporations. And Pauline Marois tried to unfreeze tuition fees years ago when she was Education Minister (the student strike of 1996 stopped her). The PQ is a neo-liberal party. The only substantial difference between them and the Liberals is their stand on the national question.

So how can we explain the seeming anomaly?

The answer lies in the fact that, despite nine years of Liberal corruption and an unprecedented, no-holds-barred campaign for strategic voting, the PQ could only get 4 more seats than the Liberals in the last election. Their days are numbered if they can't turn this around.

First, the PQ is watching demographics. They know their base is aging and they suffered a series of internal crises

last year. Their best hope of remaining viable in the long term is to appeal to younger voters, many of whom were involved in the strike and who have progressive ideas on a range of other issues, including the environment.

Second, they are shoring up their own base by announcing measures designed to appease their progressive members.

Third, they are trying to recoup losses to their left, both in terms of actual votes and in terms of political space, to Québec solidaire and Option nationale. By tacking left now and testing the limits of a minority, they can point to it later and appeal for those voters to help them win a majority.

But those 400,000 or so votes will not deliver that majority alone. At budget time, it's a safe bet we can expect them to reveal their true colours by appealing to the base of the Liberals and CAQ—corporations and the rich.

The PQ needs to find a way to be all things to all people—an impossible task—if they are to win a majority government in the next election. And that election will come sooner than later. Most expect it in 18 to 24 months.

We should already be preparing for the next struggles against the Quebec government, with its new political stripes, and also for the next election.

NDP justifies Enbridge pipeline

by VALERIE LANNON

DOES THE NDP's support for oil refineries as a means of job creation play into the proposal by BC media mogul David Black?

Black wants a \$13 billion refinery to be built in Kitimat, the western terminus of Enbridge's proposed pipeline, carrying bitumen from Alberta's tar sands. Refined oil would be shipped elsewhere. Black has no financial backing because buyers prefer to refine oil closer to its use locations, but he appears to have the support of the federal NDP.

According to NDP energy critic Peter Julian, "we are happy that more people are looking at valued-added production in the country. We need to maximize the potential of our resources, and the fact that Mr. Black put forward that proposal shows more Canadians are coming to the NDP position." Julian claims "we are missing a real opportunity in oil sands development," but local refining of tar sands crude is no alternative to offshore development.

No matter what happens to the bitumen extracted from the tar sands, the extraction process itself destroys the earth, poisons the local environment and spreads cancer amongst nearby indigenous communities. Whether the resulting tar sands are refined in BC or elsewhere, the resulting carbon emissions are pushing us closer to climate catastrophe. Meanwhile, the billion dollar subsidies for inefficient job creators in the tar sands are diverting much needed resources from efficient green jobs that create more employment while sparing the environment.

That's why BC's First Nations are having none of it. According to Art Sterritt, of the Coastal First Nations group, "The oil you're going to be sending out there and the quantity of ships and the air quality you're going to be affecting in this geographic area are going to have the same results as sending crude oil offshore. I suggest that if you really want to do business in the north, you should really be out there talking to First Nations before you start making announcements." Respecting First Nations has never been Black's strong suit. He used his media muscle in the 1990s to oppose the Nisga'a treaty, instructing his newspapers not to carry editorials supporting the treaty and instead publishing a series of essays opposing the treaty.

"Job creation," and calls for local refining of tar sands, is a provocative red herring—which ignores indigenous sovereignty, ignores the inefficient job creation in the oil sector, and minimizes the threat of climate catastrophe.

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Egypt: labour 'reforms' target strikes

by JAMES CLARK

STRIKES AND labour protests have spread across all sectors of the Egyptian economy in recent weeks, sparking fears among Egypt's business class and the Muslim Brotherhood government. In response, they are trying to push a labour "reform" that would restrict the number of unions in any workplace and would impose a one-year ban on strikes.

Frustrated by the slow pace of change since the fall of Mubarak, workers are increasingly venting their anger at work, and not just in the street. According to the Egyptian Center for Economic and Social Rights, which tracks the country's social movements, at least 300 protests took place in the first half of

September—the highest number this year. About a third were general demonstrations, but the rest were strikes or labour protests, and included factory workers, government employees, teachers, university professors, hospital workers (doctors, nurses and technicians), transit workers, street vendors, tour guides, fishers, airline employees and airport workers, police officers, and even a few imams. Professional-class workers also struck, including lawyers and pharmacists.

As the number of strikes has increased, so too has the confidence of workers to form and defend independent unions—in contrast to the official, pro-Mubarak Egyptian Trade Union Federation (ETUF), which has acted as an arm of the state since the days of Nasser. Now

that the Brotherhood is in power, it is seeking ways to contain the spreading strikes, and has turned to ETUF to play the same role it did under Mubarak: enforce labour "peace" on Egyptian workers. According to reports in the Egyptian media, ETUF is not opposed to a ban on strikes because it believes that it could win "concessions" from the government. But the government has refused to implement the key demands of the movement, which are increasingly economic in nature.

These developments were a major topic of discussion at a recent conference of the Egyptian National Competitiveness Council, a pro-neoliberal lobby group. Ahmed Hassan al-Borai, a corporate lawyer and former Mubarak cabinet minister, warned that strikes could spark an-

other revolution—the same warnings he gave Mubarak when Egyptian textile workers struck in 2006: "Back then, I said that social unrest quelled by using force against striking workers might escalate one day to create a major fire that is impossible to put out."

The 2006 strike of roughly 27,000 mainly women workers at the Misr Spinning and Weaving Company in El-Mahalla El-Kurba sparked a year-long strike wave that helped topple Mubarak in February 2011. More recently, Egyptian workers passed another milestone when strikes shut down seven chemical factories controlled by the military—the first time that workers have directly confronted the Egyptian Army's economic power.

'Statesman' Harper pushes racism, war and militarism

by KIMBERLY WINTER

STEPHEN HARPER has replaced George Bush on the world stage: whipping up Islamophobia, escalating militarism, and supporting war—with Iran replacing Iraq as the new "evil" possessing mythical nuclear weapons.

As the *National Post* reported: "The United States, European allies and even Israel generally agree on three things about Iran's nuclear program: Tehran does not have a bomb, has not decided to build one, and is probably years away from having a deliverable nuclear warhead. Those conclusions [were] drawn from extensive interviews with current and former U.S. and European officials with access to intelligence on Iran."

Yet Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, at the UN on September 28, mimicked Colin

Powell in the white up of hatred towards Iraq by using amateurish visual aids to invent a threat justifying war. But the threat of war is real.

War ships carrying hundreds of aircraft are amassed in the Strait of Hormuz. War games—"training exercises"—have been taking place for months, and there is concern an attack on Iran could occur as early as November, after the US election. Harper's support for the new war drive is part of a broader agenda of militarism.

Recently, Minister of Foreign Affairs John Baird announced the end of Canada's diplomatic ties with Iran, closed the Canadian embassy in Tehran and expelled Iranian diplomats in Ottawa.

For such uncompromising support for Israel, Harper skipped the UN and collected a "World Statesman of the Year" award from the Zionist

"Appeal of Conscience Foundation." Immigration Minister Jason Kenney was awarded an honorary doctorate from the University of Haifa.

This is part of Harper's militarism. Under the Canada First Defence Strategy (CFDS), he will spend \$490 billion on the military over the next 15 years. Much is being poured into military hardware, training and glorifying past wars, such as the War of 1812. The front page of the CFDS website states: "this strengthened military will translate into enhanced security for Canadians at home as well as a stronger voice for Canada on the world stage."

But little is dedicated to assist veterans returning home from Afghanistan with debilitating post-traumatic stress disorder and physical injuries, and the Harper government has criminalized US Iraq War resisters.

Immigration Minister Jason

Kenney has prejudiced their refugee applications with Operational Bulletin 202 (labeling them "criminally inadmissible"), and ignored Parliamentary motions and public support by issuing a deportation order for war resister Kim Rivera. On September 20, Kim presented herself voluntarily at the US border and was immediately arrested; when announced in Parliament, the Conservative caucus erupted in applause.

We will never have security as long as our government feeds us hatred and drives us to war. We need to work to disarm, end subsidies to the nuclear and fossil fuel industries, and create good green jobs. We need to organize tirelessly now—as we did in 2002 and 2003—to galvanize public opinion against another war based on misinformation and grounded in racism.

Thousands march against Western-backed regime in Bahrain

by YUSUR AL BAHRANI

Tens of thousands marched in the first major protest in months in Bahrain. Pro-democracy protesters chanted anti-regime slogans and demanded the release of all political prisoners.

The protest on August 31 was significant. Bahrainis from different religious and political backgrounds proved that the power of people is stronger than the systematic oppression of the Al-Khalifa regime and its allies. Opposition groups and parties were present during the massive protest as well as ordinary people, including children.

Since the start of the revolution

in Bahrain in February 2011, the regime has been inciting sectarianism but it has never been successful. Shias and Sunnis united together in the same protest proving the failure of the government in portraying the revolution as a sectarian one. The different opposition groups, including Waad (representing the Bahraini left), Wefaq and other parties, marched together united.

One of the photos shows Shiekh Ali Salman, a Shia cleric and leader of Wefaq, marching with and holding the hand of the well-known Sunni activist Mohamed Alboflasa.

The demands of protesters varied from reforms to the fall of the regime, but all of them were united.

Demonstrators demanded the immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners, including the President of Bahrain Centre for Human Rights, Nabeel Rajab, and human rights activist, Zainab Al-Khawajah.

Protesters also demanded the release of all children detained for political reasons. According to recent reports, there are more than 70 children, aged 12-17 years, in Bahraini prisons. In addition, protesters demanded an end to the ongoing repression, attacks and arbitrary arrests.

On consecutive Fridays, Bahraini activists also marched to Manama. However, the regime responded

with brutal attacks and arbitrary arrests. Systematic oppression, arbitrary arrests, and attacks on peaceful protesters continue despite the UN Human Rights Council meeting in Geneva and Bahraini government's promise to implement reforms. The Bahraini Foreign Minister denied having any political prisoners in Bahrain.

The revolution in Bahrain has received the least global attention compared to its neighboring revolts in the Arab region. Bahrain is home to the US Fifth Fleet. US and other imperialist governments continue to supply the Bahraini and Saudi governments with arms used to attack protesters.

Harper paves way for war on Iran

by NIAZ SALIMI

IT WAS a matter of shock and disbelief for many Canadians to listen to Foreign Minister John Baird, on September 7 in Moscow, announcing full termination of diplomatic relations with Iran, complete with the closure of both embassies. The speed of such an unprecedented decision caused serious concerns at home and abroad.

While many seasoned diplomats and Middle East experts were scratching their heads and trying to make sense of this unpredicted and drastic action by the Harper government, it won immediate support of the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu who praised Harper's leadership and congratulated him for "sending a clear message to Iran."

While this message clearly exposes the beneficiaries of this decision, many—including the past two Canadian Ambassadors to Iran—warned against the impact of it. John Mundy, who was expelled from Iran in 2007, expressed his concern to the CBC about the possibility of a military attack; Michel de Salaberry, in an interview with the Iranian-Canadian Community Council, stressed that the suspension of diplomatic relations and the expulsion of Iranian diplomats from Canada was not a wise decision and eliminates Canada's ability of effective engagement.

Predictably, this decision caused a huge debate within the Iranian-Canadian community and some expressed their support, mostly for the closure of the Iranian embassy in Ottawa. However, while a number of Iranian-Canadians are not willing or allowed to visit their home country, the majority of the over 300,000 members of this community have reasons to be concerned and oppose this decision.

Baird advised Canadians to avoid travelling to Iran due to safety issues, but this will harm tens of thousands of Iranian-Canadians with immediate family in Iran.

Over the past two weeks the Harper government and especially Baird got very creative and started providing new reasons for their actions. In a meeting on September 18 with a small group of handpicked members of the Iranian-Canadian community, Harper claimed that the main reason for severing diplomatic relationship with Iran was the regime's gross human rights violations.

Harper assured the group that from now on the Canadian government will pay more attention to the issue of human rights in Iran and will increase their efforts in support of Iranian people. But how can you have any relevance to the situation after you shut down all the gates of negotiation, leaving only a military solution?

It's clear that Harper's concern is not the people of Iran but a war against them, and the best way to help people in Iran is to stop the war. October 6 is a pan-Canadian day of action against the war on Iran.

For more information, please visit www.acp-cpa.ca

The Comintern and the ‘Black question’

The Communist International (Comintern) Fourth Congress, meeting in 1922, prefigured many discussions regarding international solidarity and activism that will be familiar to socialists today. One such discussion focused on anti-racist politics, in particular regarding African-American experiences in the United States.

In John Riddell’s recent translation of the Fourth Congress proceedings, *Toward the United Front*, the events surrounding the discussion of “the Black question” are presented, with helpful annotations for the contemporary reader.

The presentation by Otto Huiswoud (also known as Billings)—a delegate to the Comintern from the US—is particularly compelling. His comments were reflective of his lifelong commitment to socialism and black liberation. John Riddell’s biographical notes help to set the scene.

Generations

Huiswoud’s activism spanned the generations from the Comintern to the civil rights era. Born in Suriname in 1893, Huiswoud moved to New York in 1910. In 1919, he became one of the founding members of the American Communist Party. Before his death in 1961, he would serve the movement as editor of the US publication *Negro Worker*, help to lead the American Negro Labor Congress, and meet to discuss politics of the day with those such as VI Lenin, Aimé Césaire, Franz Fanon and Richard Wright.

At the time of the Fourth Congress, Huiswoud was encouraged by the potential of the Comintern to address issues of racism in connection with colonialism and imperialism. He reminded delegates of the historic break with the reformist Second International, recalling earlier statements that the “Second International is an International of white workers and the Communist International is an International of the workers of the world.”

But the bulk of Huiswoud’s comments were cautious, aware of the lack of knowledge among the majority of Comintern delegates. He emphasized that “[t]he Black question is another part of the racial and colonial question, and it has until now not received any special attention.”

And he appealed to delegates to take seriously the Comintern’s formal commitment to carrying on socialist organizing among black workers internationally, “not merely as a New Year’s resolution but as work to be carried out in reality and in action.”

Race and class

Huiswoud’s report to the Fourth Congress stressed the necessity of avoiding economic reductionism in considering anti-racist organizing.

The relationship between race and class, a question that continues to animate Marxist theorizing today, demanded an understanding of history, and of divisions as well as unifying factors in the working class.

“As is generally known, the question of race, based as it is on prejudice arising from the class prejudices of specific groups in society, still plays an important role. It is true that in the United States, for example, the competition between Black and white workers is the main source of racial hatred. But we must not forget that the Blacks still bear the mark of bondage stemming from the time of slavery. For this reason we find that the particular antagonism of white workers against Black workers takes a special form.”

Huiswoud stressed the role of consciousness, emphasizing what he termed “the psychological aspects of the question.”

He condemned the legacy of overt racism in some of the leading US trade unions, which established as “a condition of membership that each white brother will recruit other white workers.” This had the effect of ensuring that “Blacks will always remain outside the union, simply because they are Black.” The consequences were dire, as black workers could be hired by anti-union employers to cross picket lines of white workers. As Huiswoud implored: “We can advance all the fine theoretical formulations that we have at hand, but yet in the daily struggle there are some harsh and stubborn facts.”

US South

One of the most significant parts of Huiswoud’s report addressed the conditions of the US South.

“The Blacks sense the approach of a crisis that will break out between whites and Blacks in the South. The seeds have been sown in the South and they must sprout up there in some form. It is likely that the crisis will take the form of race baiting on a vast scale.”

Huiswoud strived to paint a picture of the concrete realities of early twentieth century racism to his Comintern comrades, explaining that the South is “almost a separate country,” and compared it to Dante’s inferno. He continued: “The [racial] division is kept very sharp, and Blacks are robbed of their right to vote.... This is where you find lynching and racial uprisings. You see that in the South, the lynching of a Black is the occasion for enjoyment, as it is elsewhere to go to the cinema. When you grasp that the white population of the South is so imbued by this notion of white domination of the Blacks, you will also understand that we must take up this question.”

Otto Huiswoud anticipated both the racist violence and the revolts of black workers in years to follow, not least the civil rights movement decades later. He is just one of many nearly forgotten socialists, whose contributions are brought to life in *Toward the United Front*.



South African miners win as strikes spread

by JOHN BELL

AFTER MORE than a month on wildcat strike, platinum miners have won a 22 per cent raise plus a \$245(US) bonus to cover lost wages—said to be the largest wage increase in South African history.

The cost was high. Last month police massacred 34 strikers and injured another 78. Right up to the eve of the settlement miners stood up against brutal police repression as their mass meetings and marches were met with rubber bullets and armoured cars, and their homes were ransacked by armed company guards.

The strike began against British mining corporation Lonmin but spread to other platinum mining companies, and to the gold mining sector. As we go to press, *Forbes* magazine reports that up to 39 per cent of South Africa’s gold

mining sector remains idled, and strikes have spread to 20,000 road freight workers demanding a 12 per cent wage increase.

As the South African Transport and Allied Workers Union said, “We intend to ignite further sympathy and solidarity strikes from our members in sectors such as maritime and freight rail in an effort to ensure that no goods and parcels move till the road freight workers’ demands are fully met.”

The corporate world is rattled. “The end of the Lonmin strike is something we should all cheer, but how the dispute has been settled may provide a template for workers to use elsewhere. That’s the contagion threat,” a columnist for *Business Day* wrote.

That “contagion” couldn’t come at a better time, as international corporate powers are scrambling to gobble up Africa’s resource extraction sector.

The South African miners were not just taking on their own bosses. Their struggle reveals a huge rift between workers and the ANC government led by president Jacob Zuma.

As well, they are breaking from the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), which is too closely associated with the governing ANC. NUM leaders have tried to end the strikes all along, driving more and more angry miners to turn to independent organization that really represents their interests.

In a recent *Socialist Worker* (UK), Ken Olende writes: “Some 15,000 gold miners are still on unofficial strike at KDC West mine. The NUM sent officials to try to convince them to return to work.

“As they approached a workers’ mass meeting, union officials were met with cries of ‘Voetsek! Fokofi!’ (Go! Fuck off!)”

Victorious Chicago teachers’ strike

by LEE SUSTAR

IT’S TIME to take stock of the significance of the Chicago teachers’ strike that beat back corporate education reform—not just for teachers and other public-sector workers, but the wider labour movement.

But before considering its impact on future fights, let’s take another moment to savour a labour victory in one of the most important union struggles in many years.

There was the unforgettable Day One, when tens of thousands of red-shirted members of the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) and supporters swarmed downtown, shutting down traffic around the Board of Education headquarters and City Hall in what a local radio news reporter aptly called “an older and more polite version of Occupy Chicago.”

In truth, it wasn’t all that polite either, if you happened to read the handmade placards and hear the chants directed at Mayor Rahm Emanuel, who began targeting Chicago teachers months before he took office.

Then Day Two—another day, another mass march. After picket duty at schools in every neighborhood of the city in the morning, teachers again swept downtown, this time turning state-ly Buckingham Fountain on the lake-front into the site of an open-air union rally that conjured the spirit of famous Chicago labour battles of the past.

The following day came the three big demonstrations at high schools on the South and West Sides, in neighborhoods populated predominately by African Americans and Latinos. The hot late-summer sun didn’t deter teachers or neighbourhood residents who cheered them on.

And the excitement wasn’t limited to the big protests. Anyone who walked the picket lines at neighborhood schools experienced not just the impressive solidarity among teachers, but the groundswell of support for the CTU among parents and the wider community. Those wearing a red T-shirt from the CTU or the Chicago Teachers Solidarity Campaign were routinely stopped and thanked on the street, while getting friendly honks and waves from passing cars.

The more support grew for the teachers, the more Rahm Emanuel unraveled.

The man known for his take-no-prisoners approach to politics did his best to whip up a parent backlash with hour-long press conferences during the opening days of the strike. It didn’t work. Sweaty and compulsively gulping from a plastic water bottle, Emanuel’s insulting comments seemed only to inspire more public support for the CTU.

By the time the mayor sought a court injunction to end the strike as the walk-out entered its second week, a judge put a finger to the political winds and decided not to act until CTU delegates could meet and discuss the deal.

The details of the agreement have been reported fully elsewhere. But it bears repeating that business publications like the *Wall Street Journal* are clear about who won this battle: The CTU, not Emanuel.

As White House chief of staff for Barack Obama, Emanuel helped accelerate school reform through the Obama administration’s Race to the Top program. From the moment he opened his campaign to become mayor, Emanuel made it clear that he intended to run Chicago schools on the corporate model—and Chicago teachers would have to submit or else.

But the CTU refused to roll over for Rahm. The union began organizing for a confrontation long before negotiations began, much less picket signs were printed.

When Emanuel and his handpicked school board targeted 17 schools for closure or “turnaround” earlier this year, the CTU joined parents and community activists in a grassroots mobilization to save the schools. This helped solidify connections with groups that could provide critical support during the walkout. Meanwhile, the union leadership—members of a rank-and-file opposition caucus who defeated old guard officials in 2010—campaigns systematically to involve members throughout the system.

All this paid off in a contract that held the line against Emanuel’s aggressive demands. While the CTU had to take a painful concession in reduced compensation for laid-off teachers, the mayor failed to make a breakthrough on the issues that were most important to him, such as imposition of merit pay, heavier use of student test scores to evaluate teachers and fast-track terminations of teachers with low ratings.

Emanuel also had to agree that half of new teachers hired anywhere in the system would have to come from a pool of laid-off CTU members—something he’d adamantly and repeatedly opposed. Then there’s the fine print of the contract that gives the CTU new leverage in key areas, including an anti-bullying provision to help members stand up to abusive principals.

Those are not only big wins for the CTU, but for teachers everywhere who are opposed to their unions’ retreats on critical questions.

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Capitalism creates climate chaos

Contrary to popular misconceptions, Marx and Engels had plenty to say about ecology, and some contemporary Marxists have continued in this tradition. **Bradley Hughes** looks at how these ideas lay the blame for environmental degradation and climate change where it belongs—at the feet of the capitalist system.

Over the last 10,000 years our planet has had a very nearly idyllic climate with few extreme weather events. Capitalism's drive to profit is undermining the planet and the climate on which we as a species depend, but a better world is possible.

In an article in the August 6 edition of *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, climate scientist James Hansen looked at world-wide weather data from 1951 to 1980 and compared it to more recent data. He concluded that between 1951 and 1980 in any given summer, extremely hot summers would occur over about 0.1 per cent of the world's land area. Now we live in a climate where extreme summers occur over around 10 per cent of the world's land. Due to climate change 75 per cent of our summers will be hotter than the old average.

We are seeing extreme weather events all around us—from the drought that covered over half the US this year, the increased strength of typhoons and hurricanes, the larger and more frequent forest fires, floods and snow storms. These changes—which threaten the planet and all life that depends on it—are an inevitable result of an economy based on competition for profit.

Treadmill of production

Capitalism is based on the treadmill of production. Think of a treadmill at your local gym only with the controls speeding up the belt. You need to run faster and faster just to stay in one place. If you slow down, or just stay at the same speed, you will be swept away. This is a metaphor for how capitalism operates.

Capitalism is made up of businesses competing for profit. Large businesses, that provide most of our products and services, must try to take a larger market share every year, if only just to keep making profit from their current investment. Therefore they need to sell more and make more profit every year. This means trying to sell more than their competitors, but it also means trying to increase the total market, and even creating new needs.

In the process, capitalism treats nature only as a source of raw materials and a place to discard wastes. As Marx wrote, "For the first time, nature becomes purely an object for humankind, purely a matter of utility, it ceases to be recognized as a power for itself, and the theoretical discovery of its autonomous laws is merely a ruse so as to subject it under human needs, whether as an object of consumption or as a means of production."

This is not due to people's desire for goods—in fact, people's inability to consume all that capitalism produces contributes to periodic economic crises—but because each business must make more next year than it did this year, just to stay afloat.

Competition leads to improvements in manufacturing that make it possible for fewer and fewer people to make more and more stuff. This could be cause for rejoicing—we could make the workday shorter, make work easier, and



have more time for social activities and leisure. Instead this increased mechanization leads only to increases in production—like the 73 million new cars produced each year.

If any capitalist, or any nation, restricts their profits in order to consider waste, or pollution or the health of their workers, they are at a disadvantage, and will lose profits to those that don't. This is why no political party in Canada has suggested shutting down the tar sands, or put forward a plan to deal with green house gases that will reduce Canada's emissions to the level that might allow us to avert a catastrophe.

Metabolic rift

Marx argued that humans are not separate from nature, we are a part of it. We breath in and eat, and breath out and excrete. Our bodies are entwined in this way with the world around us. Through our metabolism we are connected to the external world, so much so that Marx referred to nature as our external body.

But capitalism severs this metabolic relationship, creating a metabolic rift. Capitalism drove, and continues to drive, people off the land and into cities to work as labourers in the production of commodities. As a consequence, capitalist agriculture depletes the soil to fuel the cities, the waste pollutes the water instead of returning to the soil, and the soil fertility is only maintained by artificial fertilizers that contribute to pollution while prolonging the rift.

This happens not because it's the most rational way, or most humane way to farm, but because it is the best way to make profit for the 1%—which undermines nature and humanity. As Marx wrote,

"Capitalist production...disturbs the metabolic interaction between humans and the earth, i.e. prevents the return to the soil of its constitu-

ent elements consumed in the form of food and clothing; it therefore violates the conditions necessary to lasting fertility of the soil...All progress in capitalist agriculture is a progress in the art, not only of robbing the worker, but of robbing the soil; all progress in increasing the fertility of the soil for a given time is a progress towards ruining the more long-lasting sources of that fertility. Capitalist production, therefore, develops technology...only by sapping the original sources of all wealth—the soil and the worker."

Carbon rift

John Bellamy Foster has written extensively on Marx's theory of the metabolic rift, and has extended it to explain how modern capitalism produces a carbon rift.

In order to extract the most labour and hence profit from workers, capitalism relies on the factory system, initially powered by wind and water. The treadmill of production requires a constant search for more reliable, portable and cheaper sources of power. This led to the invention of steam power in the early 1800s, fueled first by wood and then by coal. Now it also includes the other fossil fuels, natural gas, gasoline, and oil—including tar sands.

This means that we have abandoned the currently available forms of natural energy, wind and water and now also solar and geothermal. In lieu of those, we are harvesting the sun's energy that was absorbed in plants over millions of years and eventually converted into fossil fuels. Each year we use up thousands of years of stored solar energy that will never be replenished. As we burn these fuels, they release air pollution, and green house gases—mainly carbon dioxide. This carbon dioxide is much more than can be absorbed in forests, the ocean and other carbon sinks, and so the

greenhouse effect gets greater and greater and the planet is getting warmer.

We have plentiful amounts of wind, solar and geothermal energy, and we have the technology to capture them, but capitalism gets in between our needs and our abilities and produces this carbon rift.

Ecological revolution

The real climate crisis is the continued existence of an archaic economic system that can't meet our needs, and is ruining our climate. But a better, ecological world is possible—not through consumerism or reformist parties that tinker with the market, but through radically changing our relationship with nature by radically democratizing the economy. The weakness of capitalism's war on nature is that it requires the labour of working people who would be much better off restoring their collective metabolic relationship with nature than continuing to be exploited by an ecocidal system.

As Engels wrote in *The Dialectics of Nature*, "We by no means rule over nature like a conqueror over a foreign people, like someone standing outside nature—but that we, with flesh, blood, and brain, belong to nature, and exist in its midst, and that all our mastery of it consists in the fact that we have the advantage over all other beings of being able to know and correctly apply its laws...We are more and more getting to know, and hence to control, even the more remote natural consequences at least of our more ordinary productive activities. The more this happens, the more will humans not only feel, but also know, their unity with nature...To carry out this control requires something more than mere knowledge. It requires a complete revolution in our hitherto existing mode of production, and with it of our whole contemporary social order."

These changes, which threaten the planet and all life that depends on it, are an inevitable result of an economy based on competition for profit.

How we won abortion rights

While the Harper government claims to not be reopening the abortion debate there have been increasing attacks on the right to choose; therefore, a renewed defense of these hard-won rights is required. **Carolyn Egan** recounts the fight for reproductive justice.



A major victory was won when the Supreme Court of Canada overturned the federal abortion law in January of 1988. The campaign was situated in the broader context of reproductive freedom. Abortion rights were seen as one of a number of demands that the women's movement was struggling for in the fight for reproductive rights for all.

Before the law was struck down, there was access to abortion, but it was a very privileged access. In 1969, legislation had been passed which allowed abortions to be performed if they took place in an approved or accredited hospital with the consent of a therapeutic abortion committee. There was uneven interpretation of the law across the country and many hospitals did not establish committees. The law was unjust and denied women the right to make decisions over their reproductive health.

OCAC

The Ontario Coalition for Abortion Clinics (OCAC) was formed in 1982. The group thought long and hard about how best to change an increasingly desperate situation for so many women. We looked at the circumstances in the

province of Quebec where CLSCs (community health centres) and the Centre de santé des femmes (women's health centre) were providing abortions to women in their own communities. A lesson was learned from our sisters in Quebec and we modelled our campaign after theirs. The strategy was the combination of a doctor willing to challenge the law and a broad and representative movement willing to fight for the necessary changes.

OCAC has always been a grassroots, activist organization. The immediate objectives were to overturn the federal law and to legalize freestanding clinics providing medically insured abortions. We were fully aware of the limits of the notion of "choice." Full access to free abortion, as significant an advance as that would be, does not guarantee that all women have choices over their lives or over having or raising children. The definition of "choice" was broadened in our organizing.

Pro-choice

OCAC stated that for all women to have real choices in our society they require safe and effective birth control services in their own languages and their own communities, decent

jobs, paid parental leave, childcare, the right to live freely and openly regardless of their sexuality, employment equity, an end to forced or coerced sterilization, and, of course, full access to free abortion. All were required if women were to have reproductive freedom.

OCAC tried to ensure that the demand for abortion access was never seen in isolation, but as one of a number of interdependent struggles. We tried to make this concrete by challenging the coerced sterilization that Aboriginal women, women with disabilities and Black women were facing. We held joint forums on the issues with women speaking about the injustices that they were experiencing. Healthcare workers told us that therapeutic abortion committees sometimes refused abortions unless a woman agreed to be sterilized. We fought for childcare as a woman's right and campaigned against extra billing by doctors.

OCAC worked with Dr. Henry Morgentaler and in 1983 he opened a clinic challenging the federal criminal code. The clinic became a symbol of women's resistance to an unjust law. A long campaign against two levels of government and an organized anti-choice movement began.

Arrests

It did not take long before the police raided the facility, seized the medical equipment, and arrested Drs. Morgentaler, Scott and Smoling. This was not unexpected and OCAC had been building broad support. We knew we were going to be in a long, drawn-out campaign. We had to change the balance of power in the country, and while the issue had to be in the courts because of the arrests, the critical task was mobilizing the strong support that we knew existed for women's reproductive rights.

OCAC took a mass action approach. We did not leave the campaign to the lawyers or to the lobbying of politicians. We believed that tens of thousands of women and men would come into the streets across the country to fight for women's reproductive freedom. Groups took up the cause in every province and the Canadian Abortion Rights Action League (CARAL) fought side by side with us.

In linking struggles, OCAC was able to build a wide campaign through demonstrations, marches and rallies—in which thousands participated. Through our organizing, we were able to broaden the participation of trade unionists, students, AIDS activists, people of colour

and immigrant women's organizations in the campaign. We understood that, without the active participation and the support of thousands, no change would occur. The goal was to build a visible, mass movement that fought together for women's reproductive freedom.

Collective victory

When the Supreme Court finally overturned the existing abortion law, it was through the strength of a broad and representative movement. It was a collective victory in which tens of thousands played an active role. The fact that OCAC understood that the state was not neutral—and was not acting in the interests of women—was critical to the success of our campaign. We believed that only a mass movement could change the balance of forces in the interest of all women.

There was a spontaneous demonstration of thousands of supporters outside the Morgentaler Clinic when the decision of the Supreme Court was announced. Women and men were dancing in the street! Similar rallies erupted across the country. Freestanding clinics were legalized in Ontario, fully covered by the healthcare system, and clinics began to open in other parts of the country as well.

It did not take long before the Conservative government in Ottawa began the process of introducing new legislation recriminalizing abortion. Because of the strong roots that had been developed, a major campaign against a new law was launched. There was wide support from groups such as the National Organization of Immigrant and Visible Minority Women, the Canadian Labour Congress, the National Council of Jewish Women, the Federation des Femmes du Quebec, the United Church of Canada, the Canadian Medical Association, AIDS Action Now!, and a large range of provincial and local organizations across the country. There were national days of action and large numbers came out into the streets. Tragically, during this period, a young woman in Toronto died of a self-induced abortion because she believed a legal procedure was not available.

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

Clinic defence

OCAC organized defence of the clinics, rejecting the argument that it should be left to the police to protect the facilities. We would link arms, chanting, "Racist, sexist, anti-gay: born-again bigots, go away" and "Campaign Life: your name's a lie. You don't care if women die!" These chants reflected the politics of the campaign. The broad support created the political pressure to defeat the legislation in the Senate in 1991, after it narrowly passed in the House of Commons.

There are now over 30 freestanding clinics providing funded abortions across the country. Access is much wider than when the campaign began in the early 1980s and sexual health services are more widely available, but the fight for reproductive justice is far from over. Prince Edward Island is still forcing women to go to the mainland to access abortions, and New Brunswick refuses to fund clinic procedures. Hospital amalgamations and healthcare cuts are reducing reproductive services in many areas. Women are still being harassed as they enter clinics.

The Conservative government initially refused to fund International Planned Parenthood and now gives money on the condition that it be allocated only in countries where abortion is illegal. There is no national childcare program, equal pay for work of equal value is still a dream for many, employment equity has not been implemented, systemic discrimination still exists and many of the other services necessary for women to have real choices in their lives are not in place. Private members' bills are regularly being introduced in the House of Commons to create barriers for women. To date, all have been defeated.

Tactics

Support for reproductive justice is still very strong across the country. While the overall strategic situation has changed and will always change, the lessons of the campaign that was waged still remain relevant. The principles and tactics that were used created a broad-based movement for reproductive rights, which overturned the federal abortion law and created a network of clinics making abortion much more accessible for women who were previously denied.

This article is excerpted from "Reproductive Rights and the Campaign to Overturn the Federal Abortion Law", which will be published in a forthcoming anthology edited by Shannon Stettner.



The Tory anti-choice record

by **AYESHA ADHAMI**

DESPITE Prime Minister Stephen Harper's repeated assertions that he will not re-open the abortion debate, the record of his government in power shows a stealthy and determined effort to do just that.

Here is just a brief summary of the Tory attack on choice in recent years.

2008: Bill C-484 is introduced in Parliament, proposing to criminalize the murder of a pregnant woman by charging the accused with two counts of murder, thus defining the fetus as a "person." The bill is defeated.

2009: Saskatchewan Tory MP Brad Trost initiates a Parliamentary petition to de-fund the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), arguing against its promotion of abortion as an international human right. IPPF Canada's applications for funding renewal go unanswered for the remainder of the year.

2010: An ambitious year for Harper's anti-choice lobby:

In June, then-Minister for International Cooperation Bev Oda announces Canada's G8 Child and Maternal Health Initiative will not include funding for abortion services, thus expanding the government's anti-choice agenda to women on a global scale.

Later that year, Conservative Winnipeg MP Rod Bruinooge proposes Bill C-510, "Roxanne's Law," in response to a young woman's murder by her boyfriend for refusing to have an abortion. Rather than focusing on protecting women against domestic violence, Bill C-510 proposes penalizing anyone who "coerces" a woman into ending her pregnancy against her will. The bill is

defeated in Parliament. However, PPF Canada's 2010 application for funding remains ignored.

2011: Bev Oda announces PPF Canada's funding renewed, but only for work in countries where abortion is illegal, thus de-funding the agency's abortion services.

2012: The most blatant attack on pro-choice rights yet comes in April when Kitchener-Waterloo Conservative MP Stephen Woodworth launches private member's Motion 312, challenging the Criminal Code's definition of when life begins. The effort rallies the vociferous support of—among others—Harper's lead henchman, Immigration Minister Jason Kenney, who touts a long and loud history of attacking pro-choice rights. The PM also opens the floodgates, handing Conservatives a free vote so they may "vote with their conscience." The motion was defeated 203-91, with several Liberals voting in favour.

Pro-choice activists across the country have challenged these attacks since they began, for the most part holding them at bay. This is largely due to the support of the majority of Canadians who continue to see abortion as an issue of personal choice rather than legislation.

However, it is clear that, as long as the Conservatives remain in power, pro-choice rights will have to be repeatedly defended. This message continues to spread widely by email, letter-writing and phone campaigns, as well as attendance at pro-choice rallies across the country.

Next stop: October 20, all out for a pan-Canadian day of action to demand "Reproductive Justice! Equal Access Now!"

For updates, visit the Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada: www.arcc-cdac.ca

Jason Kenney: anti-choice henchman

One of the leading opponents to a woman's right to choose in Harper's cabinet is Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Jason Kenney.

Long before he entered Parliament, Kenney had campaigned widely to restrict choice. As a student at the University of San Francisco in 1990, Kenney objected to the right of pro-choice students to distribute information about abortion on campus. When the administration refused to ban them, Kenney launched a petition to the Archbishop of San Francisco to revoke the university's right to describe itself as "Catholic."

His petition even equated support for choice and gay rights with racism: "Organizations whose objectives are antithetical to the gospel, including racist, pro-abortion, and homosexual groups, could soon be using facilities and resources that have been consecrated to the promotion of justice and human dignity."

One of the closest MPs to Harper, Kenney backed Stephen Woodworth's private member's bill to "study" the point at which a fetus becomes a person—the most recent attempt by the Tories to recriminalize abortion. The support of such a high-profile minister for Woodworth's motion undermines Harper's claim this his government will not re-open the abortion debate in Canada.



From opposition to equivocation

WHEN Jack Layton ran for NDP leader in 2003, a central plank in his campaign was opposition to the looming war in Iraq. During every media interview, Layton spoke out against the war, and promoted the historic February 15 protests that helped keep Canada out of Iraq. NDP leader Thomas Mulcair recently backed Harper's decision to cut ties with Iran, a move that could quickly lead to war.

Mulcair is a well-known supporter of Israel, but after becoming NDP leader he seemed to temper his position, saying his priority was to “work hard for peace” and that Iran is “a very shaky regime, but the best way to make people coalesce and support a regime is to attack it.”

Despite these words, Mulcair supports sanctions, which are almost always the first step to war, as the Iraq War shows. Now he is equivocating on the second step: ending diplomatic relations. After foreign affairs critic Paul Dewar called Harper's move “bad diplomacy,” Mulcair backtracked, stating: “It's also becoming increasingly clear that there were serious concerns, we don't have the same information but it would appear that there might be some very solid information that would have led the government to that decision, so until we have that information it's hard to comment further.”

This shift in the NDP's position is not just the result of a different leader; it reflects the party's rightward drift that continues to separate it from the movements that gave it strength.

In 2002, the NDP's original position on Iraq was to oppose war—unless the UN supported it. But the growing anti-war mobilization of late 2002 and early 2003 pushed the party to adopt the movement's central demand: “With or without the UN, don't attack Iraq!” With only a handful of seats in Parliament at the time, the NDP nevertheless provided a megaphone for the mass demonstrations underway from coast to coast. The effect was to split the Liberals down the middle and to force the Chrétien government to stay out of the war. In the next election, a million more people voted for the NDP. The same kind of pressure from the anti-war movement won the NDP to its “troops out now” position on Afghanistan in 2006.

Despite the support the NDP has attracted from movements in the street, on the campus, or in the workplace, the party has vacillated between supporting them and subordinating them to its parliamentary politics. During negotiations to form a coalition government with the Liberals in 2008, the NDP was willing to abandon its opposition to the war in Afghanistan and corporate tax cuts. Ironically, the “orange wave” that catapulted the NDP into the Official Opposition, and which was based on the perception that an NDP government would bring the troops home and tax the rich, has only increased this vacillation.

For example, while the NDP led an impressive filibuster in Parliament to back locked-out postal workers, it then unanimously supported the NATO-led war on Libya. As the 2015 election approaches, the logic of electoralism will increasingly prevail over the needs of the movements. This helps explain Mulcair's equivocation on Iran, essentially backing the government's latest move.

... Sadly, although the NDP is much larger than it was in 2003, it is playing a significantly smaller role on the anti-war front. But this can change. October 6 will be a day of action against war on Iran, which can be a launching pad for re-building the anti-war movement and winning the NDP to a principled anti-war position. Harper has a long history of backing Israeli wars—from Lebanon in 2006 to Gaza in 2009—and has not ruled out support for an Israeli-led strike against Iran. We need an Opposition that will oppose any attempt to escalate the conflict with Iran. For that to happen, we need to build a strong movement outside Parliament.

Islamophobia

‘Violent’ response to Islamophobic film

WHILE SOME mainstream commentators admit the film “Innocence of Muslims” is Islamophobic the dominant response has been to claim that Muslims have reacted irrationally and violently, driven by religion. This ignores the context of the protests, the different political currents, and the fresh waves of strikes in the Arab world.

First, anger against blatant and provocative racism is legitimate, and is connected to the broader socio-economic policies that the West has imposed on the Arab world—dictatorships and occupations spreading death and destruction and enforcing neo-liberal policies, keeping millions in poverty. This is the real violence in the region. Coming more than 18 months after the start of the Arab Spring, the protests show the unfulfilled demands of the revolutions, which have yet to end Western military and political control of the region.

Second, individual attacks against symbols of America have been a political strategy to undermine the revolutions. As the Egyptian Revolutionary Socialists argued, “the violence of a small group against embassies and US bases in Libya, Egypt and Yemen cannot be a substitute for the mass struggle from below for independence and national liberation. At the same time as they ignite anger against America, the leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafists insist on the maintenance of diplomatic, economic and military relations with the USA.” But protests in Egypt that began at the US embassy moved on to target the local military regime.

Most significantly, and completely ignored by the Western media, is that Egypt has seen another mass strike wave. The multi-faith working-class is the foundation of the revolution, threatening Western imperialism and the Islamist attempt to contain the resistance. Building working-class resistance across religious lines remains the key to ending the imperial violence in the region.



Quebec students stop tuition hike and topple government

by **DEBORAH MURRAY**

THE HISTORIC Quebec student strike won all its demands and more.

They built a mass student movement against the tuition hike, and broadened it with links to the labour movement and the environmental movement. When Premier Charest attacked them with Bill 78, students broadened their protest to include all those who wanted to defend civil liberties.

Through the process, the Quebec student strike channelled people's growing anger with government corruption, declining social services, and the demonization of student protesters and the criminalization of dissent.

The Quebec Spring not only stopped the tuition hike and reversed Bill 78, it also toppled the government and ran Charest out of his own seat.

PQ's shallow support

Voters did not overwhelmingly vote for the separatist Parti Québécois (PQ) either. The PQ won a minority with 54 seats in the 125-seat assembly, just ahead of the Liberals and their 51 seats. The PQ failed to win a majority government because they want a referendum on independence, tighter language legislation, stronger laws of citizenship and a ban on the hijab in public service jobs.

Pre-election, PQ leader Pauline Marois wore the red square of the student movement, denounced Charest's mishandling of the student strike and demanded a freeze on tuition to win the youth vote. During the election campaign, Marois took off her red square and recruited one of the student strike leaders, Léo Bureau-Blouin, who got elected in a Laval riding.

One of Premier Marois' first tasks was to quash Charest's tuition increase and draconian Bill 78. Even so, militant students were critical of the PQ's plan to index tuition to the cost of living.

Even if disappointed that the Liberals won official opposition, voters had felt uneasy with the Coalition for the Future of Quebec (CAQ), a right-wing mix of Canadian federalists and Quebec separatists that formed a year ago. CAQ came in third with 19 seats. The Liberals have no power and the PQ must court the CAQ to pass anything through the assembly if they survive a non-confidence vote and another election is not called.

Québec solidaire

While the other parties in the media overshadowed the left-wing Québec solidaire (QS), their presence on the political scene grew significantly.

QS fought for a place in the RDI televised debate for Françoise David (one of the national co-spokespeople for QS), who emerged the debate's winner. She will join QS's other national co-spokesperson, Amir Khadir, in the national assembly. Khadir, elected for a second time, won an easy victory in Montreal's Mercier riding, over 7,000 votes ahead of the PQ candidate while CAQ came in third and the Liberals trailed in fourth place. Françoise David (15,096 votes), after three elections, took Montreal's Gouin riding from the PQ (10,723 votes) which had held the riding for 12 years. QS showed impressive promise in three other Montreal ridings (Laurier-Dorion, Hochelaga-Maisonneuve and St. Marie/St. Jacques) and has grown deep roots in many ridings across Quebec.

QS officially supported the student strikes from the very beginning, taking up student demands for free, accessible post-secondary education, joining citizens' pot-clanging marches (les casaroles) and proudly wearing the red square.

It's interesting to note that progressive Anglophones voted for QS in greater numbers despite the party's programme for an independent Quebec.

QS's internationalist approach to independence, sensitive to the needs of other language and cultural groups and a proposed democratic constituent assembly process, seems to be opening up Anglophones to a new view on the national question.

Tragically, during Pauline Marois' victory speech the night of the election, an English-speaking man shot three people, one fatally, at the PQ gathering. Anglophones and Francophones united at a vigil held the next night outside the venue where a sound technician was killed. This amazing response spoke volumes about the solidarity the two language groups achieved throughout the student strike and election. To prevent the media from playing up tensions between the French and English, this solidarity must continue to be built in the student and broader social movements as well as in QS.

Upcoming struggles

The battle against tuition increases radicalized a generation. The “printemps Québécois” (Quebec Spring), led by militant, democratic student strikes, was infused with the language of the Occupy movement. In their turn, Quebec students inspired a mass social movement bringing in demands for change, for the environment, against shale gas drilling, against Plan Nord (Charest's plan to draw in multi-nationals to mine the North), to protect original lands, to vote out the Liberals and for Charest to resign.

Students and locked out Rio Tinto Alcan workers visibly supported each other's struggles on the ground. Despite supporting students financially, the major unions infrequently mobilized actions with students. The working class were key to change in Quebec in the 1970s, and the unions will have to mobilize rank-and-file members in upcoming struggles if the momentum of the Quebec Spring is to continue.

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REVIEWS



ARTS

Countering oppression with arts

Abilities Arts Festival 2012
Reviewed by Melissa Graham

THE ANNUAL Abilities Arts Festival began September 20 in Toronto. The intent of the festival is to bring the vision of artists with disabilities to the attention of the wider community—giving people with disabilities opportunities to showcase their talents in dance, photography, theatre, comedy, music, film, painting, and other types of performance.

The central theme of this year's festival is storytelling, as a reminder that telling tales lies at the heart of all

creativity.

The festival features a visual art exhibit, film screenings, workshops, a walk featuring different stories and experiences told throughout the city, and an exhibit at Nuit Blanche about the Queen Street streetcar and its inaccessibility.

The film screenings are not what you would expect. A lot of times when you go to an event relating to the disability community, you would expect to see films on issues facing people with disabilities. Instead the Abilities Arts Festival takes issues you would normally see at a film festival, like war, love, sexuality and family and sees them through the eyes of the film-

maker with a disability. Rather than showcasing people with disabilities as a separate group of people with separate problems, the festival showcases the beautiful work of people with disabilities and welcomes people to see the issues that affect all of our lives through these artists' eyes.

Events like this do a great job at countering ableism by making its message easy to relate to, as well as providing an audience for some very talented artists with disabilities. Best of all, most events are free so you can counter capitalism at the same time.

For more information check out <http://abilitiesartsfestival.org/>

BOOK

Biography of the people's historian

Howard Zinn: A Life on the Left
Written by Martin Duberman
Reviewed by Abby Fung

HOWARD ZINN—historian, activist, and author of A People's History of the United States—gets a bit of his own treatment in this biography by Martin Duberman.

Born in 1922 in Brooklyn to a working-class, immigrant family, Zinn grew up with a sense of class consciousness, seeing his parents work so hard and have so little to show for it. A voracious reader, Zinn came across the works of Karl Marx while recuperating in a body cast after a part-time job as a caddy injured his hip.

Zinn started his life of activism at the age of 17, leafleting local laundry workers to encourage them to join a union. His transition from liberal to radical came later that year, when some friends convinced Zinn to join them in a demonstration in Times Square. Mounted police broke up the nonviolent protest, and knocked Zinn unconscious. The incident changed Zinn's outlook drastically, convincing him that there was something inherently wrong with the system, the government was not on the side of the people, and the "freedom of speech" touted by the American Dream was, in reality, not so free.

At the age of 18, Zinn became a shipyard worker and later enlisted in the air force, flying bomber missions during World War II. These ex-

periences helped shape his vision on war, producing one of the overarching questions in Zinn's life—whether there was such a thing as a "just" or "justified" war. When is violence justified?

After the war, Zinn went to college under the GI bill and earned a PhD in history from Columbia. He then went to teach at Spelman College Atlanta, Georgia, one of the most prominent and respected schools at the time for black women. This was at the time of the Brown v. Board of Education ruling, which had deemed segregation to be unconstitutional, though little change had yet been made. Zinn brought his activism to the classroom, organizing his students to begin a campaign to abolish segregation in the Atlanta library system, in which they were ultimately successful. He also played roles in several sit-in demonstrations, either participating in the demonstration itself or acting as a liaison to the press. Zinn served as a senior advisor to the Student Nonviolence Coordinating Committee (SNCC), organizing Freedom Schools and helping out in the voter registration at the height of tensions.

When the Vietnam War began, Zinn found his focus shifting from the civil rights movement towards the protests against the war, though he saw the two as mutually supporting issues. Zinn was one of two men who went to Hanoi to facilitate the release of three captured American pilots in the midst of the Tet Offensive. He was

one of five American professors who were flown to Paris to participate in peace talks between North Vietnam and the US.

For what Zinn is most well-known for, there is surprisingly little written about his time writing A People's History of the United States—a presentation of American history from the eyes of the common people. Duberman makes note of how, while the initial press run of the book was released to mixed reviews, mentions in popular culture—in the movie Good Will Hunting, in an episode of The Simpsons and an episode of The Sopranos—catapulted sales of the books to unheard of levels, selling over 2 million copies.

As a biography, Duberman takes a fairly thorough look into Zinn's life, despite the fact that Zinn attempted to obscure his personal history by destroying nearly everything in his personal archives. In his writings, and even in this own autobiography (You Can't Be Neutral on a Moving Train), Zinn often neglected the personal aspects of life. Duberman has the unenviable task of attempting to fill in those holes, and to balance the two halves of Zinn's life.

Duberman attempts to provide a context to the times that Zinn lived through, though that sometimes meant extended historical tangents. This book gives a good insight into Howard Zinn, giving context to the author of a seminal work that has since inspired millions of people.

LEFT JOB

John Bell

Harper Tories (re)make history

OUR GLORIOUS Harper Tories are busy making history. And when they aren't making it, they are rewriting it.

Let us begin with the top Tory himself. Harper's chest was puffed out as he proudly accepted the "Statesman of the Year" award in New York.

In a glowing tribute, former recipient of the award and convicted war criminal Henry Kissinger told the gala audience: "Prime Minister Harper has played a very important role by developing his own views, having the courage to affirm them, even when they are not shared by all the consensuses that exist, and being proved correct by events."

If the prerequisite for winning "Statesman of the Year" is giving the stiff middle finger to pretty much everybody ("all the consensuses that exist" does take in a lot of territory), then Harper deserves it. However, a bit of investigation reveals an even more important quality: unswerving support for Israel.

Harper wasn't shy about it: "It is important to state that whatever Israel's shortcomings, neither its existence nor its policies are responsible for the pathologies present in that part of the world."

There's that rewriting history thing. Opposition to Zionism is a "pathology." And if Israel's state policies are exempted from its shortcomings, what does that leave? Crappy pop music? Poor interior decorating? Just forget the fact that it is illegally occupying Palestinian territory, engaging in ethnic cleansing and recreating the crimes of apartheid. Move along, nothing to see here.

So let's move on to Mr. Harper's Tory acolytes.

Minister of Censorship and Deportation

Harper's far-right hand man, Jason Kenney has been busy making history. In the space of a few days he: ignored the pleas of tens of thousands of Canadians and deported war resister Kim Rivera; sent a mass spam email to members of the LGBT community attempting to pinkwash the most anti-gay government in Canada's recent history; put himself at the head of a sizeable contingent of Tories who would deny women the right to control their own bodies; and invited a pair of white supremacists to an immigration policy hearing.

For the sake of brevity, let's focus on Kenney the champion of gay rights. As an MP, first for the Reform Party and then for Harper's Tories, he has consistently opposed every extension of LGBT rights, such as same-sex marriage. He supports gutting Human Rights tribunals where complaints about homophobia are heard. He opposes treating gay bashing as a hate crime.

Small wonder the LGBT community reacted in horror and disgust to his attempt to enlist them in his drive to war.

Speaking of rewriting history, recall that Immigration Minister Kenney ordered the removal of all references to gay rights from his revamped Citizenship Handbook; then lied about ordering the erasure; then was forced to backtrack by popular anger.

Racism and war

Making history simply by being the most repugnant individ-

ual sitting in Canada's parliament is Calgary West MP Rob Anders.

Rob was the only MP to vote against bestowing honorary citizenship on Nelson Mandela, denouncing him as "a communist and a terrorist," and waxing nostalgic about the good old days of South African apartheid.

Before ascending to parliament, Rob used to hire out south of the border to the Republican Party as a professional heckler. In 1997 the Tulsa World newspaper described him as someone who "personifies the bad taste, deception, right-wing extremism and mean spirit that have poisoned the whole election process this year."

Anders loudly supports war-making. But when it comes to supporting veterans, well, not so much. As an appointee to the Veterans Affairs Committee, Anders arrived at a meeting dealing with homelessness among vets and promptly fell asleep. When several veterans complained, Rob denounced them as "communists" and "NDP hacks." Turns out they were local Conservative riding association members. He no longer sits on that committee.

Perhaps Rob's stint as a right-wing zealot in the US left him with a confused sense of history. How else can we explain his recent constituency newsletter celebrating the bicentennial of the War of 1812. This, according to Rob, is the war that gave us the "principles of freedom, liberty and volunteer military service" that have "guided us through the last 10 years of warfare against Islamic terrorism." As usual, Rob refuses to hide his racism.

Comparing a virtual civil war between 19th century neighbours with modern imperialism's "war on terror" is simply delusional. Equally appalling is Anders' attempt to graft National Rifle Association talking points onto Canadian history. Anders writes: "The War of 1812 ... gave strength to the Canadian militia movement and to the notion of a citizens (sic) duty to bear arms for the defence of the nation."

In fact the War of 1812 proved the exact opposite. The vast majority of Upper Canada's non-native population were either recent immigrants from the US—and so judged untrustworthy by colonial British authorities—or members of pacifist religious groups like the Quakers, who refused to take up arms.

General Isaac Brock sneered at militias and demanded the imposition of martial law to terrorize them into obedience. British soldiers had to lock down all boats along the lakes to prevent them from deserting. "Had not this been done, one half of the people would have left the province, the fear of war was so great," wrote one British administrator.

To their great credit most ordinary people on both sides of a very porous border wanted nothing to do with a war they deemed senseless. That is the real history of the War of 1812, and explains why four years of war resulted only in confusion and stalemate.

The Tories constantly convert real events past and present into crude, distorted propaganda points. Anders would denounce me as a communist for saying so. Hey, even Rob Anders can't be wrong all the 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.



The real story of the Iran-Iraq War, 1980-1988

by PAUL KELLOGG

A TERRIBLE war convulsed Iran and Iraq from September 22, 1980 until August 20, 1988. In that war, around a million people were killed and two million were made refugees.

The fighting seemed to many observers to be a replay of the first world war, with Iran sending its young soldiers to their death in "human wave attacks," and Iraq responding by using chemical weapons including mustard and phosgene gas.

When the war was over nothing had changed. Both countries returned to the borders from which the war began. Between them, they had spent \$350 billion on this senseless slaughter. According to Ruth Leger Sivard, a brilliant anti-war activist in the United States, that amounted to more than all the countries of the Third World spent on public health in a decade.

Revolution and counter-revolution

The war happened just one year after the 1979 revolution which overthrew the hated US-backed Shah of Iran. That revolution was a genuine popular uprising, an uprising which included a massive radical student left, and workers, especially in the oil industry, taking over control of production from their managers.

But this revolution was hijacked by one section, represented by Ayatollah Khomeini, which proceeded to install a regime of extreme social conservatism, and extreme repression. Thousands of union activists and revolutionaries were sent into exile, into prison, facing torture and often death, in a counter-revolution from which Iran has only slowly started to recover.

The Iran revolution infuriated the United States, but not because of the torture and executions. After all, their former ally, the deposed Shah of Iran, was infamous for the role of his dreaded secret police, the Savak. According to Time magazine, in 1979, Savak's 60,000 agents had "tortured and murdered thousands of the Shah's opponents."

What infuriated the United States was the fact that the new regime was

openly opposed to US domination in the region, while the Shah had been the biggest ally of the US.

In its commitment to restore its influence in the region, the United States played an extraordinarily deceitful, dangerous and reactionary game throughout the next decade.

Iran had its own reasons for confronting Iraq. An external enemy was useful in distracting the population at home from the increasingly reactionary politics of the Khomeini regime. And Iraq had its own reasons for attacking Iran in 1980—the two countries had been rivals for years, with a series of border disputes leading to periodic acts of violence.

But it was always going to be risky for the very small country of Iraq—population at the time of just 15 million—to challenge the much bigger Iran with more than 40 million people. Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein was calculating that in the chaos resulting from the revolution, Iran would not be in a position to resist a lightning invasion, and that he could expand Iraqi access to key shipping routes in the Gulf. Some think he was egged on by the United States. This has yet to be proven. But, it was significant, according to one highly placed observer, that there was "no explicit red light" from the US directed towards the Iraqi ambitions. Once the war began, the US did everything in its power to see that it was long and destructive.

US intervention

Officially, the US was a mortal enemy of the Iranian regime, which had, after all, presided over the hostage-taking of 60 US citizens, held captive until 1981. But behind the scenes, the US was working to see if it could pull Iran back into its sphere of influence.

According to an official US inquiry called the Tower Commission, the United States in 1983 provided information to the Iranian regime, leading to the mass arrests and executions of thousands of left-wingers in the country.

But the principle investigation of the Tower Commission was not that horrendous crime, but the 1985-1986 scandal of the United States—officially neutral in the war—secretly shipping massive quantities of arms to Iran, and using the money gained

to fund the right-wing "contras" in Nicaragua. The resulting "Iran-Contra" scandal almost led to the collapse of the presidency of Ronald Reagan. The arms gained by the Iranians were one factor in their 1986 surprise offensive which severely damaged the Iraqi military.

The Iran-Contra scandal shocked the Arab states in the region which were client states of the United States. To demonstrate to these mostly right-wing and reactionary states that the US was still their best friend, Reagan flipped from secret support to Iran to massive support for Iraq. The US navy deployed the biggest armada since the Vietnam War, and with its support, the Iraqi army began to turn the tide of war.

The very rapid US military buildup had tragic consequences, including the shooting down, by the US, of a civilian Iranian airliner, the Vincennes, killing all 290 people on board.

Great Power politics

What a sordid history. Its 1985-1986 covert arming of Iran prolonged the war in Iran's favour. The 1987-1988 naval buildup was a key factor in Iraq returning to the offensive. By 1988, both Iraq and Iran were exhausted, there was an anti-war movement building in Iran, and a ceasefire was finally declared.

We need to know this history. The Iraqi state, propped up by the United States in the final stages of the war, would become a target of the US twice in the coming decades, leading to hundreds of thousands of deaths. And it is really instructive that Iran, today part of the "axis of evil" and subject to constant threats of attack from Israel and the US, was re-armed in the 1980s by none other than the United States.

If there is any doubt about the duplicity of Great Power politics, one final note is worth mentioning. Assisting the US in its secret arming of Iran during the Iraq-Iran war, was none other than the state of Israel.

The Iran-Iraq war of 1980-1988 exposed the bankruptcy of the two regimes which locked horns—the Iraq of Saddam Hussein and the Iran of Ayatollah Khomeini. It also exposed the reactionary role of the United States and its allies in the Middle East.

international socialist events

TORONTO

Europe's Imperfect Union: the Crisis and the New Left

Fri, Oct 12, 6pm
Asteria Souvlaki Place, 661
Danforth (east of Pape)
Info: torontosocialists@gmail.com

How Did We Win Abortion Rights?

Speaker: Carolyn Egan, long-time pro-choice activist
Tue, Oct 23, 7pm
OISE, 252 Bloor St W, room 8220
Info: torontosocialists@gmail.com

YORK UNIVERSITY

Is Marxism Still Relevant?

Wed, Oct 17, 2:30pm
Student Centre, room 307

How We Won Abortion Rights

Wed, Oct 24, 2:30pm
Student Centre, room 307

Anarchism and Marxism: What's the Difference?

Wed, Oct 31, 2:30pm
Student Centre, room 307

Weekly meetings
Thursdays, 2pm
Student Centre 441
yorksocialists@gmail.com

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

How Did We Win Abortion Rights?

Speaker: Carolyn Egan, long-time pro-choice activist
Tue, Oct 23, 7pm
OISE, 252 Bloor St W, room 8220
Info: torontosocialists@gmail.com

OTTAWA/GATINEAU

Weekly meetings

Mondays, University of Ottawa
Info: ottawa.socialists@gmail.com

VANCOUVER

Socialist Book Club

Sat, Oct 13, 2pm
Roots Cafe, 6502 Main St (at 49th Ave)

Capitalism vs. Our Climate: Why We Can't Have Both

Thu, Oct 18, 6:30pm
Langara College, 100 W. 49th Ave, room A218

Weekly meetings

Wednesdays, 2:30pm
Info: vancouver.socialists@gmail.com

HALIFAX

Info: halifax.socialists@gmail.com

peace & justice events

Don't Attack Iran!

International day of action, events in various cities
Sat, Oct 6
Info: www.acp-cpa.ca

Reproductive Justice: Equal Access Now!

Pan-Canadian day of action, events in various cities
Sat, Oct 20
Info: www.arco-cdac.ca

TORONTO

Disability Pride March

Sat, Oct 13, 1pm
Info: torontodisabilitypride.wordpress.com

You can find the I.S. in:

Toronto, Ottawa, Gatineau, Vancouver, Victoria, Montreal, London, St. Catharines, Mississauga, Scarborough, Halifax, Belleville & Kingston

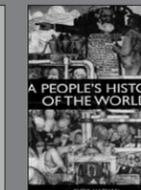
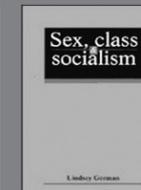
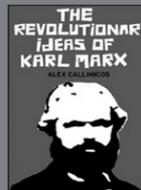
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RESISTANCE PRESS BOOK ROOM



GAZA FREEDOM FLOTILLA

by AMELIA MURPHY-BEAUDOIN

IN 2008, a group of 44 people sailed two dilapidated boats to Gaza to break Israel's illegal siege, and were the first international boats to dock in Gaza's port since 1967. Now, a riveting account of that first voyage of the Free Gaza Movement has been published.

Freedom Sailors is a powerful record of the expedition—from the conception of the idea, through two years of organizing internationally, to the voyage itself. The book's 24 authors document this struggle through their first-hand experiences.

Co-editor Greta Berlin launched the book in Canada at an event that also marked the International Day of Action for Gaza Fishers and Farmers, as called by the Union of Agricultural Work Committees in Palestine.

Berlin is a co-founder of the Free Gaza Movement and she's touring Canada now. At the Toronto book launch on September 28, with passion and humour she shared pieces of the compelling story—how 44 determined people on two ramshackle boats chipped away at Israel's illegal blockade of Gaza.

She described the ups and downs in the two years it took to build the project and how a diverse group of passengers, crew, and journalists aged 22 to 81, with love and conviction gave themselves to the project of bringing a message of solidarity and hope to Gaza, and succeeded.

Tens of thousands of Palestinians waited on the shores to greet them. They completed the voyage four more times before the Israeli navy rammed their boat in international waters.

That first successful voyage allowed people to see possibility. It began with an idea and it inspired a vibrant international movement. The Gaza Freedom Flotillas have forced the media to tell the world about the brutal Israeli blockade of Gaza, one that keeps more than 1.5 million people in an open-air prison.

All proceeds from Freedom Sailors will go to the Gaza Community Mental Health Programme and Gaza's Ark, a new international project that will attempt to break the siege of Gaza, this time from the inside—with a boat being constructed by Palestinians in Gaza. In the spring of 2013 a crew of internationals and Palestinians will sail it out to challenge the blockade that prevents Palestinians from sailing from their shores to fish or export. The boat will carry Palestinian products to fulfill international trade deals.

Today, the Finnish-flagged tall ship Estelle, is sailing as part of the third Freedom Flotilla seeking to break the siege, but further coordinated international action in solidarity with the Palestinians is required.

To follow the Estelle, and learn more about Gaza's Ark, visit www.gazaark.org
To purchase Freedom Sailors, visit www.freedomssailors.com

OMAR KHADR, WAR AND ISLAMOPHOBIA

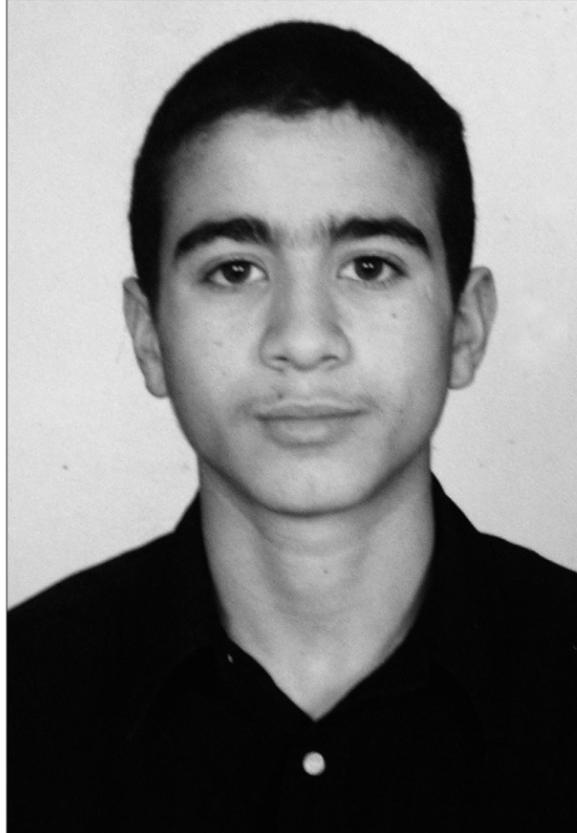
by KIMBERLY WINTER

MOST OF humanity understands that children, and child soldiers, are victims of war—but not all agree.

The evening of September 11, 2012 saw a handful of Jewish Defence League (JDL) members—and a slew of their rent-a-thug biker buddies—holding a “candlelight vigil” for the dead of September 11, 2001. Held across the street from the home of Omar Khadr's sister in Toronto's Scarborough Junction, it was more like a lynch-mob.

The JDL and the bikers—those who run guns and drugs, and call rape “surprise sex”—spewed hate-filled rhetoric and held placards opposing terrorism, effectively terrorizing the new-comers to Canada who live in the same apartment building along with Omar's family. If it wasn't so serious, it would be fodder for a Bizarro comic.

Across the street, in front of the building, about 100 peace activists from Jewish, Hindu, Muslim, Christian and other faiths gathered together. They honoured the dead of September 11, stating they would not stand silently by and let the JDL use the terrible events of that day to confuse peaceful vigils with racism and war. They stated they would not tolerate Islamophobia, called for an end to Guantanamo and called for Omar's return to Canada. Born and raised here until the age of 10, he is a Canadian citizen.



Omar is not responsible for 9/11. He is accused of being a terrorist. Dragged into a war not of his making at 13 years old, he was present in the area of a skirmish in Afghanistan on July 27, 2002. A grenade was thrown; Sergeant Christopher Speer suffered wounds from it and died two weeks later. There is no evidence or proof that Omar threw any grenade; he was shot—in the back—three times; taken to Bagram, and treated as guilty from minute one. Three months later he was taken to Guantanamo,

did not meet with a lawyer for three years, had no judicial process, and had no trial until 2010. He was tortured repeatedly for eight years. In October 2010 he pled guilty.

In the course of history, countless numbers of people have pled guilty because they're coerced, up against insurmountable odds, or to end the torture they suffer at the hands of their captors.

Omar is finally back in Canada but still in prison, while the real crime of war continues. It's time to free Omar and end the war.

ST. JOHN'S AIRPORT WORKERS STRIKE

by TIM KENNEDY

AROUND 90 workers at St. John's International Airport have been on strike since September 11 to demand fair wages and stop concessions.

The workers—organized under the Union of Canadian Transport Employees (UCTE) Local 90916, part of the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC)—voted unanimously to strike after three years of negotiations with management fell through. The same workers at Halifax International are making 28-52 per cent more in wages, so St. John's workers are fighting for a wage increase of 58 per cent over 4 years—with 31 per cent in

the first, something they had tabled in June, to place them on par with the workers employed at airports of similar stature.

As UCTE National President Christine Collins explained, “St. John's International Airport Authority (SJIAA) is in a very healthy position financially and is expanding to be similar to the size of Halifax Airport. And yet, our members have not received a wage increase since 2008. This is simply not fair.”

As if stymieing wages wasn't enough for management, they are refusing to accept the workers' demand of “no concessions.” This demand was a move by the workers to prevent attacks

on pensions and benefits, which management undoubtedly plan to make. One example of such an attack is the plan to eliminate the “no lay-off” policy for new employees. Management has claimed that the actions of the workers constitute “reckless behavior,” and that their demands are “not realistic.”

The strike continues, and has received solidarity from the Nurse's Union and the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour. We must continue to support the struggle for fair wages and benefits across Newfoundland and Labrador, which is an example to all workers.

For updates, visit www.ucte.com & psacatlantic.ca

BCGEU STRIKE

by VALERIE LANNON

SEPTEMBER 5 saw 25,000 members of the British Columbia Government Employees Union striking in 153 communities, at more than 700 work sites. The union's last strike was more than 20 years ago.

As with other public sector unions, the BCGEU has seen real wages decrease. After three rotating strikes earlier in the year, the union decided to stage this one-day action. The day also saw strikes by the Professional Employees Association and the Canadian Office & Professional Employees Union, whose members work alongside GEU members.

In Victoria, BCGEU strikers were joined by members of the newly formed

Victoria Labour Council's Solidarity Action group. There were banners from the BC Teachers Federation, CUPW, Health Employees Union, and BC Ferries workers. The solidarity group visited half a dozen picket sites. Strikers were thrilled, with one BCGEU member saying “we'll do the same for you.”

Since then, several public sector unions have taken strike votes or will be doing so shortly—affecting over 250,000 workers.

On September 22 the Solidarity Action group held an action planning workshop in Victoria. Almost 30 labour activists—mainly from the Greater Victoria Teachers Association, BCGEU and the Hospital Employees Union—participated.

The impetus for the workshop came from discussions

among Labour Council delegates about the need for more rank-and-file organizing. As a result, much of the workshop focused on cross-picketing, including historical and recent examples, plus basic “do”s and “don't”s.

There was an emphasis on the need to educate members about the importance of solidarity, and about overcoming the fear of draconian government imposed fines. As one participant stated, “We have to say we will strike until all fines are dropped.”

This kind of rank-and-file initiative is exactly what is needed to mobilize those who are tired of the slow or inadequate responses of many union leaders to the massive attacks by employers.

STICKING WITH THE UNION

Carolyn Egan

Workers inspire

CHICAGO TEACHERS have shown that public sector workers can take a stand against concessions and the austerity agenda and win.

In the heightened political climate of the US presidential elections, with the mayor of Chicago being the former assistant to President Barack Obama, the teachers were able to garner broad community support. Parents and students understood what was at stake in the contract negotiations between the city and the union, and threw their support to the teachers.

The key to success in any public sector battle is to make it clear to those who are using those public services that you are fighting for them. This is the way to counter the “gravy train” mantra that so many politicians are mouthing today in an attempt to undermine support for public services and those who provide them. The library workers in Toronto used the same approach with public readings and other events during their two-and-a-half-week strike and built strong solidarity in the lead up to job action. Toronto has one of the heaviest used library systems in North America, and users—including notable authors such as Margaret Atwood—were vocal in their support. This was significant in turning the tide and helped the library workers to beat back most of the concessions being sought.

Despite low union density and “right to work” laws, workers in the US are fighting back in ways that are inspirational to us all. The Wisconsin uprising against the state's attack on collective bargaining rights put working class struggle back on the agenda in a way that had not been seen in decades in that country. This was followed by the Occupy movement, which engaged with trade unions from New York City to Oakland, California. The language of the 99% had resonance with working people and the poor around the globe, with over 1600 occupy sites being established.

In Canada, public sector workers in British Columbia recently staged a one-day general strike against attacks by the provincial government. This was an important step in the fight against the austerity agenda in Canada. The magnificent student strike in Quebec over tuition hikes in post-secondary education brought down Jean Charest's Liberal government. It sparked solidarity actions across the country with people in the streets banging pots and pans in support. A busload of Toronto Steelworkers drove to Montreal in the summer to join one of the protests and the rank-and-file members who made the six-hour journey were greeted with a joyous response from the demonstrators.

The Liberal government in Ontario has recently enacted legislation taking away the collective bargaining rights of teachers in this province. There was a huge demonstration in the summer, called by the Elementary School Teachers Federation, which brought out thousands. The ETFO members are withdrawing extra-curricular services and students have walked out of schools, showing their support for the teachers, and pointing the finger of blame at the Ontario government. A recent by-election in a traditionally Conservative riding was won by the New Democratic Party, and one of the main issues voters were responding to was the attack on teachers.

The labour movement has to connect with the communities under attack and fight back as the teachers did in Chicago. Working people and the poor understand better everyday which side they are on in the battles shaping up. The 1% is becoming more and more frantic to save its wealth and privilege—the mask is being torn off. This is the time to step up the struggle.

We saw the long lockout of Steelworkers in Alma, Quebec by Rio Tinto. After over six months on the line they were able to push back the worst of the attacks and go back to work with their heads held high. That helped Rio Tinto workers in Kitimat, BC—who were sending \$60,000 a month from their own wages to the Alma workers during the lockout—to win a good contract for themselves. Recently a Rio Tinto mine on the north shore of the St. Lawrence, also organized by the Steelworkers, won an excellent contract with significant gains. Rio Tinto is the third largest multinational in the world but it was defeated by strong rank-and-file action, solidarity and an international campaign. This also built strong ties between Francophone and Anglophone workers, which are critical to any long-term victory.

The working class has the power to fight back and win. The attacks are hard and we have had a lot of losses and setbacks but if we have a strong movement of the rank-and-file willing to push back we can make gains that will hopefully inspire others. Today we have no other choice. Let's hope the teachers in Ontario can lead the way in this province.

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Socialist Worker

If we fight, we can beat austerity

FIVE YEARS into the economic crisis, the 1% continue to impose austerity measures to make ordinary people pay. While not resisting will guarantee more austerity, we are starting to see a number of significant victories based on rank-and-file organizing.

Quebec: 'together, let's stop the hike'

Quebec students showed that we can stop austerity measures if we build resistance from below. Threatened with a 75 per cent tuition hike, students mobilized all those opposed to the tuition hike within a broader argument against austerity. The CLASSE student union did not suddenly call a strike from on high, but built it patiently from below—starting with mass petitions, demonstrations and protests. Through the process of organizing—department by department, campus by campus—the movement built rank-and-file confidence and experience necessary to organize and enforce a strike.

For six months students went on strike—resisting media vilification, police violence and government attempts to divide them at the negotiating table. The student movement built alliances with the environmental movement and labour movement. CLASSE moved their congress to Alma during the day of action to support locked-out workers, and called for the student strike to broaden into a social strike.

When the government responded with a draconian law banning gatherings of 50 people or more, the student movement appealed to all those affected, whether students or not, to defend civil liberties. Casserole demonstrations erupted—effectively breaking the law with the largest act of civil disobedience in Canadian history—and solidarity demonstrations spread across Canada and around the world.

In a final attempt to break the movement Premier Charest called an election, with the result being his government was toppled and he lost his own seat. The mass pressure from below pushed the new PQ government (which has a history of



tuition hikes and called for complying with Bill 78) to abolish both the tuition hike and the law meant to enforce it.

Chicago: rank-and-file organizing

Similarly, Chicago teachers showed how the labour movement can fight austerity through rank-and-file organizing and community outreach.

Threatened with the corporatization of education—merit pay, heavy reliance on test scores, and easy firings—the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) organized a strike in difficult circumstances. They took on powerful Democratic mayor Rahm Emanuel in the midst of the US presidential elections, with no support from Democrats, and resisted austerity measures that their national affiliate, the American Federation of

Teachers, had not fought.

Earlier in the year, the Caucus of Rank-and-File Educators (CORE) organized against school closures alongside parents and students. Though the fight to stop closures was unsuccessful, the experience of rank-and-file organizing cemented relationships with the broader community and won over teachers, allowing CORE to run a slate against the previous union leadership and win.

The vision of fighting for quality public education, including conditions for teachers and students, was clearly articulated in the CTU document *The Schools Chicago's Students Deserve* and supported by the 90 per cent strike vote.

The strike was organized school by school, alongside visible mass rallies uniting with parents and stu-

dents, and driven from below. The leadership remained bound by the "House of Delegates" drawn from each school, so when the bargaining team recommended the deal these delegates voted to continue the strike until they had a chance to consult all the members about the details.

As the CTU wrote in a statement to supporters following the strike: "What has been accomplished in Chicago in the last few weeks has reverberated nationally. It powerfully demonstrated an alternative to business unionism and the whole corporate education agenda. There are new solidarities, forged on picket lines, among teachers and between teachers and students, parents, and community members. Through this strike, teachers have emerged as activists and organizers, and there is a deeper consciousness about the

system we are confronting... We are so much stronger due to the strength and unity of the CTU and the outpouring of public support."

CAW: concessions without a fight

By contrast, the recent autoworkers' contract shows what happens when we don't resist austerity. Following the pattern seen elsewhere, the employers demanded massive concessions despite returns to profitability. Ford, GM and Chrysler all demanded similar concessions to those that the UAW accepted in the US, which drastically lowered wages for new hires.

The CAW leadership heavily pushed the four-year deal, claiming it will save jobs and create new ones. But 20 years of concessions have not saved jobs despite promises from the big three. The only guarantee is that wages will be frozen for current employees, and tiered for new hires—starting at 60 per cent wages (lower than the non-union Toyota plant in Cambridge) and taking a decade to reach the full rate, a permanent setback in wages.

The problem with the agreement isn't just that it contains deep concessions, which it does. The real problem is that the union leadership accepted the concessions with next to no fight. By settling with Ford, GM and Chrysler without a fight, employers everywhere will be emboldened and other workers will be demoralized.

When unions fight—even in difficult situations like against US Steel and Vale Inco—they send a message to employers that workers will fight them every step of the way. As a result, these unions have built even stronger rank-and-file networks and are equipped with lessons learned to apply for the next round. And when Rio Tinto workers were locked out last year, rank-and-file organizing beat back major employer concessions.

The lesson for CAW and CEP members of a future merged union is clear: it's not the size of the union that's decisive, it's rank-and-file organization. And that work needs to start now.

Solidarity against McGuinty's attacks on teachers

by PAM JOHNSON

CHANTING "Kill the Bill," hundreds of high school students have walked out of classes across Ontario to protest Premier Dalton McGuinty's Bill 115.

The bill, passed on September 11 by McGuinty's Liberals, with the support of the Tories, is a massive attack on public school teachers' collective bargaining rights, all in the name of austerity.

Even before teachers had a chance to bargain, McGuinty imposed a contract taking away half their sick days, forcing them to accept three unpaid days and a wage freeze, and taking away the right to strike.

As one legal expert said, "this proposed legislation is an unprecedented attack on the civil liberties and constitutional rights and freedoms of educational workers."

What is most disconcert-

ing about this legislation is that it hands decision-making power over any issue to the Minister of Education. Teachers will be stripped of any say in their own workplaces if it does not line up with what the government wants.

Teachers have responded by withdrawing their volunteer labour from extra-curricular activities and by picketing MPP offices, while students have responded with walkouts in solidarity across the province.

Kayla Smith, a grade 12 student at Bramalea Secondary School in Brampton, organized a rally at Queen's Park. Students joined parents, teachers and contingents from the Canadian Federation of Students, CUPE and PSAC. Kayla emphasized the students' opposition to the bill: "I have a message for Mr.

McGuinty: repeal Bill 115. It bans the right to strike, it freezes the wages of teachers and cuts their benefits. There was no negotiation, there was no collective bargaining. Teachers feel disrespected and that is what we want to say today: you have to respect the teachers, negotiate and not just impose demands on them."

The draconian nature and scope of this bill exposes McGuinty's main goal: busting the unions of public sector workers. Taking away basic rights doesn't save money but is designed to intimidate and harass workers. We are seeing this anti-worker, union-bashing agenda at all levels of government—from coast to coast and around the world.

But we have also seen how students and teachers can resist austerity.

Students and workers oc-

cupied the state capitol building in Wisconsin against anti-union legislation, building a movement that ultimately repealed the law.

Quebec students built a broad-based movement against tuition hikes and in defense of civil liberties that successfully rolled back the tuition hike and repealed Bill 78 [see pg. 8].

Chicago teachers built a strong rank-and-file movement that united with students and parents, and pushed back the Democratic Mayor's attacks on unions [see pg. 4].

Wisconsin, Quebec and Chicago represent three hugely successful campaigns against austerity—including unjust laws—that can serve as examples and inspiration for Ontario teachers.

For more information, visit campaignforpubliceducation.ca

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