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The revolutionary history of International Women's Day



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The fight for child care & reproductive justice

La lutte continue...



Photo credit: printempsquebecois.com

THE ANTI-WAR movement, the Arab Spring, Occupy, the Quebec student strike, Idle No More. Each time these movements have appeared they have been described as isolated incidents, disconnected from other struggles that preceded and accompanied them; and each time these movements ebb they have been declared over, only to resurface. As the capitalist crisis deepens, intertwining these movements and linking them with the labour movement will be key to the struggle for a better world.

Last month was the 10th anniversary of the historic anti-war protests of February 15, 2003 when 30 million people around the world protested the looming war on Iraq—a movement that itself was shaped by the anti-globalization movement. While the protests didn't stop the war, they did stop Canada from officially participating—thanks to labour mobilizing 250,000 in Montreal—and the solidarity between the Western and Arab populations played a role in the development of the Arab Spring.

A decade of struggles—inspiration and solidarity with Palestine, the anti-war movement, campaigns for civil liberties, and growing strike waves—launched the Arab Spring, a revolution against austerity that electrified the world. Western media have dismissed it as a social media phenomenon or Islamist plot. Meanwhile Western governments have tried to hijack it—economically in Egypt, militarily in Libya—or to crush it through arms sales to Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Morocco. But two years on, the Arab Spring continues with protests and strikes—including another general strike in Tunisia last month—over the unmet social and economic demands of the revolution.

The Arab Spring helped inspire the Occupy movement, which sparked a widespread critique of capitalism, as millions identified as the 99% against the 1%. Occupy lacked the connection to campuses or workplaces that could sustain it. But it did help inspire a wildcat strike of Toronto airport workers, and as it dissipated along came the “Maple Spring” in Quebec—shaped by preceding local struggles

against war, tuition and austerity, combined with global struggles from Cairo to Wallstreet. Quebec students launched a strike against tuition fees, which broadened to include defense of civil liberties, alongside making links with labour and indigenous struggles from Alma to Barriere Lake. This in turn inspired solidarity protests across Canada.

As the leading Quebec student union ASSE wrote recently, “Last year the streets of Quebec vibrated to the rhythm of hundreds of thousands of marching feet, as our student strike against an increase in university tuition fees blossomed into the political awakening of a society. Today, malls and public squares and railways across Canada are vibrating to another rhythm, the drum beat of a surging and inspiring movement of Indigenous peoples, for cultural renewal, for land rights, for environmental protection, and for decolonization... If 2012 was the year of our Maple Spring, we are ready to greet the Native spring of 2013.”

In the span of a few weeks, the Idle No More movement erupted from coast to coast—combining

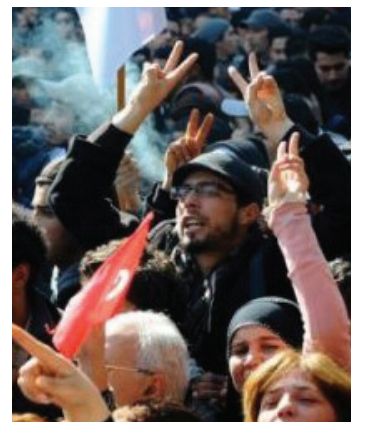
years of resistance to colonialism with the new radicalization from the Arab Spring, Occupy, and the Quebec student strike. The movement for indigenous sovereignty is helping radicalize the environmental movement—which has seen mass protests against pipelines west and south—and can deepen the anti-war movement by connecting the Canadian state's imperial intervention abroad in Mali (already unpopular due to the economic crisis and lessons from Iraq) with its ongoing colonial project at home. At the same time, Quebec students are mobilizing again—with 10,000 protesting the recent education summit in Montreal.

The Arab Spring shows how working class collective activity can combine political with economic resistance, raising the possibility of revolutionary transformation.

We need to build all the movements against the horrors of capitalism—economic crisis and climate crisis, wars and colonization—and connect them to working class resistance that can strike at the profits of the 1% and mobilize the 99% for a better world.

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Double bunking: Harper’s ‘solution’ to prison overcrowding

by JOHN BELL

A NEW directive from the Harper Tories clears the way for Canadian prisons to put two inmates in cells designed for one—a practice called double bunking—in order to increase inmate oppression, prison guard stress and corporate profits.

Previous directives on housing from the Commissioner of the Correctional Services of Canada read, “Single occupancy accommodation is the most desirable and correctionally appropriate method of housing offenders.” Although prisons are part of his portfolio and he postures as an anti-crime crusader, Public Safety Minister Vic Toews denied any knowledge of the change but insisted double bunking is “a completely normal practice.”

Harper’s “tough on crime” approach is only tough on those capitalism criminalizes—which in Canada’s prisons includes a disproportionate number of indigenous and racialized people, people with mental health issues and people living in poverty. The austerity agenda’s attacks on jobs and services promotes petty crime as people struggle to survive, and gives billions to prisons and police to incarcerate and scapegoat oppressed people—while the bosses steal our wages, the military breaks and enters Afghanistan, and the oil barons murder our environment.

Unions representing prison workers and guards strongly oppose double bunking and overcrowding, saying it creates dangerous conditions for guards and inmates. In Alberta, correctional officers represented by the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees rallied in Calgary in February to protest overcrowding that often takes the form of triple bunking. They say the conditions lead to increased violence, for which guards are blamed.

Catherine Latimer, head of the John Howard Society, warned that violence would not be contained within the prison. “Crowding in our prisons endangers both staff and inmates. Ultimately it endangers the public because it impedes the delivery of rehabilitation and reintegration support programs.” Double bunking shows that’s never what prisons under capitalism were designed to do, and plans to sink billions of dollars into new prisons won’t solve the problem.

Double bunking is about applying the austerity agenda to prisons, making them cheaper to run—at the expense of those who are incarcerated and work there—and potentially more profitable, if Harper follows through on his desire to privatize prisons.



Aamjiwnaang First Nation blockade. See page 8 for the full story

Bill C-425 strips dual citizenship to demand ‘loyalty’ to Harper’s Canada

by IAN BEECHING

SUPPOSEDLY REACTING to a terrorist attack in Bulgaria on July 18, 2012, allegedly involving a Canadian citizen and leaving six dead, Canadian Immigration Minister Jason Kenney is backing Bill C-425, which could strip dual citizens of their Canadian citizenship. Technically, the bill will target a minuscule number of dual citizens convicted of terrorism, but the legislation’s real intention is to demand “loyalty” to Harper’s Canada while ignoring state terrorism.

“Canadian citizenship is predicated on loyalty to this country and I cannot think of a more obvious act of renouncing one’s sense of loyalty than going and committing acts of terror,” Immigration Minister Jason Kenney is quoted as saying. As Kenney

admitted, “I think the value of this proposal is largely symbolic, educational...Our prospective amendments have not been triggered by any reflection on dual nationality but rather on the question of violent disloyalty to Canada.”

The hypocrisy is all too glaring considering the 1997 failed assassination attempt of Hamas’s political chief Khaled Meshaal in Jordan. Israeli intelligence agency Mossad used a Canadian passport to conceal the identity of their agents. Despite the similarities to the attack in Bulgaria, no action was taken by the Canadian government and Israel remains one of Canada’s closest allies.

“To strip someone of citizenship is a very serious sanction indeed and to the extent someone is culpable of acts of war there are more than enough tools in the existing arsenal of prosecutorial prospects to deal with

it,” Queen’s University law professor Sherry Aiken has stated. Stripping someone of their rights as a Canadian citizen is an egregious affront to civil liberties and could result in people being sent to countries where they may be tortured or worse.

The treatment of Maher Arar is a case in point. Mr. Arar, a Canadian and Syrian citizen and resident of Canada since 1987, was deported from the United States to Syria as a suspected member of Al Qaeda while returning to Canada from a family vacation in Tunis. In Syria, he was tortured and held in prison for a year. The Syrian government later stated Arar was “completely innocent” and a further commission of inquiry ordered by the Canadian government cleared him of all links to terrorism. Despite having to pay Mr. Arar \$10.5 million in reparations, the Conservative

government is set on a policy which would not only repeat the error, but might have resulted in Mr. Arar’s Canadian citizenship being stripped altogether—leaving him without recourse to the meagre diplomatic support he was eventually able to demand through the efforts of his wife, Monia Mazigh.

For Kenney, apparently, occupying Afghanistan (resulting in 14,728 civilian deaths since 2007 according to the UN), handing prisoners over to known torturers, dropping hundreds of bombs on Libya, and the brutal genocidal colonial foundation of Canada are all legitimate. Thus, his statements around Bill C-425 implicitly demand Canadians accept Canadian state acts of terror. Meanwhile, this latest attack on civil liberties seems designed to bolster the rest of Kenney’s anti-immigrant and anti-refugee arsenal.

BC’s ‘balanced budget’ built on shaking ground

by ANNA ROIK

IT APPEARS that the British Columbia Liberals led by Premier Christy Clark are hoping they can turn BC into the liquefied natural gas equivalent of Alberta and its tar sands.

After canceling autumn 2012’s sitting, the Liberals returned to the legislature and presented a “balanced” budget built on revenues from BC’s potential liquefied natural gas (LNG) industry.

The Liberals have estimated that the five new planned liquefied natural gas plants will garner revenues for the province of between \$130 billion and \$260 billion over the coming 30 years. Out of these revenues they are planning to establish—at least in name—a BC Prosperity Fund along the lines of Alberta’s Heritage Fund or Norway’s oil fund nest egg into which profits from the petroleum industry are deposited. Plans for BC’s Prosperity Fund include paying down government debt or eliminating the provincial sales tax. Money entering the fund would come partly from royalties collected on natural gas used for LNG, and corporate income taxes from the LNG industry.

Proponents claim that burning natural gas is a greener option than coal or oil because

its greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions are lower. But natural gas comes from the destructive and dangerous process of fracking, whose total GHGs rival those of coal and oil. There’s nothing “natural” about imposing—on First Nations land, without consultation—wells that inject massive amounts of water and chemicals underground to release gas, polluting the water and air. According to Arnold Clifton, Chief Councillor of the Gitga’at First Nation, “The prevailing winds bring pollutants from Kitimat down the Douglas Channel into our territory. We are concerned that our people will suffer if these plants are allowed to burn natural gas to power the liquefaction process... We are also concerned about climate change and how the BC government’s promise to reduce greenhouse gas emissions will be affected by these projects.”

Last December, the Liberals agreed to a moratorium on fracking in the Sacred Headwaters on Tahltan Nation traditional territories but have now revealed that fracking is central to their economic plan, which is polluting their environmental policies. The Clean Energy Act requires at least 93 per cent of BC’s electricity “from

clean or renewable resources and to build the infrastructure necessary to transmit that electricity” from “clean or renewable resources” like “biomass, biogas, geothermal, heat, hydro, solar, ocean, wind or any other prescribed resource.” Last June, the premier announced that the Liberals will change the legal status of natural gas in LNG industry development so that it is included under the Clean Energy Act. This will conveniently keep GHGs from fracking and LNG transport unaccounted for and technically not in conflict with either the Clean Energy Act or the government’s own programme for reducing GHGs.

A Sierra Club of BC press release criticized the provincial budget for what it excluded, noting that there is no mention of global warming or the environment. “The Christy Clark government has chosen to invest heavily in questionable assumptions about the Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) industry, which rely on imaginary revenues and ignore the dramatic increase in BC’s greenhouse gas emissions that would result,” said Sarah Cox, Acting Executive Director of Sierra Club BC. “At the same time, the government is cutting funding for the Climate

Action Secretariat, which is responsible for meeting BC’s legislated greenhouse gas emission reduction targets.”

In the budget are spending cuts to the departments regulating the oil, gas and mining industries. The government has also frozen the budget of the Environmental Assessment Office while promising further mining and gas exploration throughout the province. It seems clear the direction in which the BC Liberals plan to steer energy development.

Where the 2013 budget should have contained the creation of climate-related and green jobs, it instead contained jobs created in an industry which has the potential to pollute air and groundwater, use vast amounts of hydroelectricity, as well as cause earthquakes (a link found by BC’s own Oil and Gas Commission). There is growing solidarity against fracking: a petition launched by the 800 member Fort Nelson First Nation to defend their water from fracking has garnered 28,000 signatures. The upcoming provincial election provides an opportunity to challenge the government’s fracking economic plan, as part of a broader fight for sustainable alternatives to the present fossil-fuel system.

ASSÉ to boycott PQ Summit

by EVAN JOHNSTON

THE ASSOCIATION pour une solidarité syndicale étudiante (ASSÉ) announced mid-February that it would boycott the Parti québécois (PQ) government’s summit on post-secondary education. ASSÉ, the most militant student union in Quebec which now represents over 70,000 students, instead promised to organize a general strike.

On the day of the summit, over 10,000 students marched in Montreal and over 40,000 were on strike across Quebec. The momentum continued with an evening demo on March 5, with over 5,000 marching, independently organized by Montreal students. The demonstrations provoke memories of last year’s magnificent strike, but this time students are organizing against Pauline Marois and not Jean Charest.

Holding a summit on the future of post-secondary education was one of the major promises made to students by the PQ during the course of the 2012 Quebec election campaign. However, just as many critics expected, the range of options to be discussed at the summit was severely restricted.

Both Marois and her Minister of Higher Education, Pierre Duchesne, have rejected any proposal for discussing free tuition, which has been one of ASSÉ’s central demands. Former CLASSE spokesperson Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois has described the summit as “a mere public relations operation aimed at pasting a veneer of political legitimacy on a decision already taken—to index tuition fees and continue with the quiet privatization of the universities.”

The electoral defeat of Liberal Premier Jean Charest—whose government introduced the 75 per cent tuition fee hike that ignited the student strike, and the “emergency law” Bill 78 that attempted to contain it—was a huge win for the student movement in Quebec. At the same time, the election had the effect of temporarily demobilizing many in the movement, as the confusion over how to connect the politics of the streets with the ballot box led many to take a step back as the elections unfolded.

Many mainstream commentators have delighted in repeatedly announcing the “end” of student agitation. But the recent debate over the nature of the summit and the student mobilizations is a clear sign that there is much still to come in the fight for free post-secondary education.

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Struggle for change in Morocco

by HANAN JIBRIL

SINCE FEBRUARY 20, 2011, people across Morocco have participated in protests demanding social, economic, and political reforms and an end to high illiteracy and growing unemployment rates as well as corruption. On February 20 of this year a group of activists held a series of rallies against the lack of reforms.

The Western-backed regime has arrested and even tortured activists and journalists affiliated with the protests—including the longstanding harrassment and ten month jail sentence given to journalist Mohamed

Attaoui for “working as a local official despite being suspended.” He was not only placed in solitary confinement until his jail sentence but also was not allowed to see his wife until after his sentencing.

In March 2012 the regime arrested rap singer Mouad Belghouat, a member of the February 20 movement, and sentenced him to a year in jail for offending the police in one of his songs which denounced police corruption. He went on hunger strike twice and is still held in prison. The police arrested Youssef Orbella and five others at a protest in Casablanca in July 2012 and subjected them to violence, beatings, insults and torture—finally releasing them in

January 2013 after forcing Youssef to sign a letter claiming he had hit a police officer.

Meanwhile, the situation in Western Sahara in Morocco has worsened and the government continues to abuse the rights of the Sahrawi people. The Western Sahara used to be a colony of Spain. When the dictator Franco died, Morocco invaded the Sahara, occupying two-thirds of the land rich with minerals and phosphates. A number of Sahwaris left their land to go to Algeria and are presently residing in refugee camps, while others remain in Western Sahara facing discrimination. The demands of Sahrawi people include self-determination and an

end to this discrimination.

In April 2013, 1400 US Marines and Moroccan soldiers are to land in Port Alagdir to conduct a live-fire rehearsal to prepare for African Lion 2013, an exercise conducted annually in April by the US and Moroccan armed forces to share tactics and procedures. Being a Western ally, the monarchy in Morocco has the privilege to escape mainstream media attention when demonstrators demand reforms and when the government cracks down on pro-democracy activists. Showing solidarity with people in Morocco means supporting them in their struggle against Western imperialism and the oppressive and corrupt regimes it supports.

Tunisia’s permanent revolution

by CANDACE GHENT

ON FEBRUARY 8 Tunisia’s most powerful trade union, The General Union of Tunisian Workers, coordinated a strike to coincide with the funeral for Chokri Belaid, the assassinated head of the Democratic Patriots Party.

Two years ago a similar general strike drove Western-backed dictator Ben Ali from the country, but the social and economic demands of the revolution have still not been met. The government narrowly avoided a general strike a few months ago, but the response to the assassination of Belaid made this general strike unstoppable.

More than a thousand protesters took to the streets to demonstrate outside the Interior Ministry office against Belaid’s death. The protesters built barricades on Habib Bourguiba Avenue, the very same spot where Tunisia led the beginning of the Arab Spring, two years ago.

Although the ruling Ennahda party is denying any involvement, Chokri Belaid’s family and supporters believe it to be responsible for his death. Belaid was a secular opponent of the party, a strong union activist, and was a leading member of the Popular Front—an umbrella organization of 12 opposition parties (including his own Democratic

Patriots)—which became legal after the Tunisian revolution.

The outcry against Chokri’s death has found its loudest voice among unions and workers, resulting in the largest general strike Tunisia has seen since 1978. The rift between the government and workers will continue to grow, and as former Prime Minister Hamdi Jebali said, killing Belaid was “a political assassination and the assassination of the Tunisian revolution.” Jebali resigned from his position as Prime Minister mainly because his plans for a cabinet of technocrats to prepare for elections collapsed due to opposition from his own party, Ennahda.

Although it has been two years

since the beginning of the revolution, the workers and their allies have not forgotten why they took to the streets to begin with. A friend of Chokri Belaid, university professor Mohamman Souissi points out that the person(s) responsible for Belaid’s death targeted him for his ideas and his criticism of the ruling party’s influence in the government. “Belaid is someone who made people think and that’s what Tunisians need. Now the country is waking up,” said Souissi. In a time of much conflict for the Tunisian people, solidarity among leftist groups and workers is essential to achieve the demands of Tunisia’s permanent revolution.

Bahrain’s ‘strike of dignity’ faces down repression

by YUSUR AL BAHRANI

THOUSANDS OF men, women and children marked the second anniversary of the revolution in Bahrain by taking to the streets on February 14.

Peaceful supporters of the revolution challenged the oppressive Al Khalifa regime with a general strike and civil disobedience in cities and villages beginning at 5am.

Workers refused to work and decided instead to participate in the protests. Students missed school to join in too. 14-year-old Hussain Al Jaziri was among them.

Government security forces swarmed the village of Daih where Al Jaziri and his classmates were protesting. They opened fire using internationally prohibited shotguns.

According to the Al Wefaq opposition group, the government forces deliberately killed Al Jaziri shooting him in the upper part of his body three times.

One eyewitness said, “Suddenly, one of the mercenaries faced the martyr and shot him several times. His friends struggled to save his life, but they couldn’t.” Al Jaziri was pronounced dead at the Salmaniya

medical centre.

Demonstrators in other areas have also been attacked. One protester, from Sanabis, said, “It’s dark. There are security checkpoints everywhere. Teargas canisters are being shot into people’s homes. Children can’t breathe.”

Another eyewitness, from Draz, said, “Immediately after the call to prayer, we heard the sounds of shooting. The security forces don’t want us to leave our homes for prayers. They fear another peaceful protest.”

Despite the death of a teenager and many arrests, revolu-

tionaries in Bahrain have won a victory over the regime—workers are on strike, shops are closed, students are not in school, and no financial transactions can be made.

Our “strike of dignity” has paralyzed the regime and coincides with the King of Bahrain’s call for dialogue with the opposition.

With broken promises of reforms and systematic oppression, the government can’t hide behind this “dialogue” anymore.

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Drones: US/Saudi war of terror

by AHMED ELBASSIOUNY

AMERICAN SOURCES have leaked information on the existence of a secret US drone base in Saudi Arabia that carries out unmanned drone attacks all around the region. The base has been functional for over two years.

The US administration explained that the base is there for “anti-terrorism” missions: to chase and attack Al-Qaeda members in Yemen. But the Saudi Interior Minister refused to comment on this, raising questions about whether keeping Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) terrorist activity in Saudi Arabia under control is the reason or the excuse for drones. The truth is that the drone base is more for protecting Saudi oil fields and the ruling family from any possible attacks. This is probably why no reasonable explanation was heard from the Saudi side.

Ever since the news about the existence of such a base was leaked, journalists have been scouring Google maps and other satellite services, looking for the base. Noah Shachtman, editor of *Wired* magazine’s online blog, managed to get photos of what might be the US base. It was found hidden in the Saudi deserts, near the Yemeni border. The US has been hiding this from the public for two years, through what the *Washington Post* described as an “informal arrangement among several news organizations” that had been “at the request of the administration.”

Drones are emerging as a central part of Obama’s foreign policy, and he nominated drone program architect John Brennan to head the CIA. Brennan claims drones are a humane form of warfare based on surgical strikes that limit civilian casualties and spare US soldiers. But the increasing reliance on drones is an attempt to compensate for US imperialism which is militarily and economically overstretched, with rivals in China and Europe and resistance movements threatening its control over the Arab world. Meanwhile the concern for US casualties is based on limiting anger within the military, as veterans come home to a vicious austerity agenda and Iraq Veterans Against the War condemns occupations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

But drones are not a softer form of imperialism, and protesters at Brennan’s senate confirmation hearing held signs reading, “Drones fly, children die.” A drone strike in Yemen in December 2009 killed 55, including 14 women and 21 children. It’s estimated drones have killed 3,000 people in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Yemen—without even declaring war against the last two. Drones have not only been used to launch illegal and covert attacks on sovereign nations, they have also been used to justify killing the administration’s own citizens—encouraging other countries to restrict civil liberties. Canadian Immigration Minister Jason Kenney recently cited drones as justification for his draconian bill to strip dual citizens of their Canadian citizenship, saying, “In the case of the United States, instead of going through legal niceties of citizenship revocation they seem to be using drones to bomb American citizens who are terrorists.”

The CIA has been defending the legality of the leaked base, which has been part of counter-revolutionary measures in Yemen, and which has killed many civilians. While paying lip service to democracy, the US has used the Saudi regime as a counter-revolutionary force against the Arab Spring in several countries in the region. Solidarity with revolutionary movements in Saudi Arabia means standing against Western intervention, drone programs and counter-revolutionary elements in the region.

Confronting violence against women

THE AUSTERITY agenda is sharpening women’s oppression, but a new generation is rising to challenge it—from Toronto to Dublin to Delhi.

In January 2011, a Toronto police officer said “women should avoid dressing like sluts” in order to avoid sexual assault. In response, women organized a Slutwalk, which spread around the world, stating, “We are tired of being oppressed by slut-shaming; of being judged by our sexuality and feeling unsafe as a result. Being in charge of our sexual lives should not mean that we are opening ourselves to an expectation of violence, regardless if we participate in sex for pleasure or work. No one should equate enjoying sex with attracting sexual assault.” While there were debates about an anti-sexist campaign using the term “slut,” the massive outburst around the world showed the desire to fight rampant sexism.

Last October, sexist bullying in BC drove grade 10 student Amanda Todd to suicide, which she explained in a Youtube video. On October 19, there were vigils across Canada and around the world to remember Todd and other victims of bullying. In the same month there were a series of sexual assaults of women in the west end of Toronto, sparking neighbourhood vigils.

The same month in Ireland, Savita Halappanavar went to a hospital with a miscarriage and died a week later after being repeatedly denied an abortion—in keeping with Ireland’s draconian law. Her death sparked mass protests across the country, including 15,000 marching on the Irish Parliament in Dublin. Like Canada, Ireland criminalized abortion in the 1860s, as part of capitalism’s control over women’s bodies in order to enforce the nuclear family. Whereas a mass movement smashed the law in Canada in the 1980s, Ireland only minimally tweaked the law in 1992. Savita’s death 20 years later shows the need to reverse all abortion laws and other barriers in order to achieve the slogan at her vigils: never again.

In December, the brutal rape and death of a young woman on a bus in India sparked mass protests. As Kavita Krishnan, secretary of the All India Progressive Women’s Association, wrote, “Sexual violence is often used as a way of imposing discipline on women. But ‘protection’ from sexual violence most commonly takes the form of restrictions imposed on women—curfews, dress codes, restrictions on mobility. The outrage over the events in Delhi is welcome. The struggle for justice should also include those raped by the police or raped because of their caste or religion. The Delhi police and chief minister, beleaguered by the popular outrage, are taking the familiar route of projecting an ‘external enemy’—the migrant worker. And others are trying to channel the anger against sexual violence into class hatred for the migrant poor. It is all too easy to forget that rapists in more than 90 per cent of cases are fathers, brothers, uncles or neighbours. They are people the victim has known, trusted, and been expected to respect and obey.”

The hundreds of missing and murdered aboriginal women shows that violence against indigenous women is also a strategy of the Canadian state. But in December the Idle No More movement began, led by indigenous women and uniting indigenous and non-indigenous people in a movement for indigenous sovereignty and justice.

The fight for women’s liberation

That these manifestations of violence against women—slut-shaming, sexist bullying, denial of reproductive choice, rape, and state violence against indigenous women—are abhorrent and that we need to build a fightback against this kind of violence goes without saying. The responses to this violence by both women and men in many countries—Ireland, India, Canada—have been inspiring and hopeful. The reality of violence against women and the continuing oppression of women and girls—that expresses itself in terms of income differentials, job opportunities or lack thereof, body image, freedom to dress as one likes and to express oneself, the right to reproductive freedom, to choose to have or not to have children and the economic conditions that allow these to be real choices—is part and parcel of the system we live under, where even reforms are constantly under threat.

The backlash against feminism (the men’s rights movement, which is an attempt to trivialize and roll back real gains that women have made) must be opposed wherever it rears its ugly head. It has nothing to do with rights, but is about consolidating and deepening the inequality between men and women. It also has nothing to offer the vast majority of men in society.

There is a proud Marxist tradition on the question of the fight for women’s liberation that sees the struggle for socialism and the struggle for women’s liberation as one struggle—which has been a feature of revolutions from Russia in 1917 to Egypt in 2011. There can be no socialism without women’s liberation and there can be no women’s liberation without socialism.

Why is this? Because the continuing oppression of women is essential to the survival of capitalism. Especially now, in times of economic crisis, it’s more important than ever for the 1% to push all the tasks of caring for the next generation and the older generation onto the private family—and especially onto women within those families. So, whether or not we live in nuclear families, our choices as women (and men) are limited by the narrative of the nuclear family and by the real material limits placed on us by the system. Not only must we pay for the economic crisis, but the whole ideology of sexism—which, to paraphrase Marx, is trumpeted by all forms of media and the education system—perpetuates women’s oppression and the division of the sexes, and weakens our collective fightback, both in the workplace and in the movements against exploitation and oppression.

But there are signs of a new generation of women (and men) radicalizing around many issues, including that of gender oppression. February 14 saw One Billion Rising, an event begun by *Vagina Monologues* author Eve Ensler—which in the context of different fightbacks has spread around the world. In Canada, this coincided with the two decade-long campaign for justice for missing and murdered aboriginal women—which recently has been given added prominence by Idle No More.

INTERNATIONAL



‘Scrap the MAP’ boycott against standardized testing

by CYNTHIA ZAKHEM

RESISTANCE TO standardized testing is growing in Seattle school boards, inspiring teachers and students beyond the state of Washington.

The Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) testing is given to students in public schools to measure their academic improvement and to allow authorities to shadow a teacher’s progress throughout the year. Teachers are pointing out that the test is redundant and costly and will not improve education for students in Washington. Teachers at Garfield High School, as well as students and parents who support their decision, are responding to the imposition of the tests by launching a boycott.

The children are being denied valuable school time during this testing process, as well as funding that could be allotted to other resources. With a fee of \$500,000 a year for licensing and testing costs, schools would benefit from putting this money elsewhere into schools such as new books and technology. Teachers are also highly against this testing because it is being used as a method to monitor their actions. Parents across America, as well as members of the National Education Association and American Federation of Teachers are supporting the boycott

and are voicing their discontent for this “standardized” testing.

Another issue that is of genuine concern to the board’s teachers is the idea of only testing public schools. If this test was to monitor the progress of students and their education then private schools should also be tested. Instead, private schools do not teach on a “testing” basis and are not forced to put students through such academic regulations. The discourse and divide between lower income schooling compared to higher income schooling students is already large, and only increasing. With the divide between the two systems of education, lower income students who attend public schools are at an even greater disadvantage. This test adds stress to their education and takes away classroom time and material resources, putting them at an even greater disadvantage.

The privatization that is widely affecting public schools within America is to be taken seriously. Teachers, students and parents are all at a great risk because of the closures happening throughout public schools. Consider the case of Chicago, where the city is looking to close down half of its public schools. These closures will disproportionately affect racially marginalized students in one of the US’s most segregated cities. Organizing against these school clos-

ures in 2008 built the Caucus of Rank and File Educators (CORE), who were central to the successful Chicago teachers’ strike last year.

The over-emphasis on standardized testing is part of the privatization agenda of the US charter school industry and its bevy of subcontractors vying for contracts to help “transform” (privatize) public schools. Administering standardized tests is a way to monitor teacher performance and decreased test results can mean privatized institutes are able to gain access and property from public school closings. Publicly-funded schools, with their high-rates of unionization are being actively attacked, while privatized charter schools are growing, based heavily on charter-funding giants like Bill Gates and the Waltons. This is disastrous for public education and the students and parents who depend on current school boards.

The boycott against standardized testing that is inspiring teachers and students well beyond Seattle to join in the campaign is an important step in defending public education and the jobs and services they provide. The demonstrations of solidarity in other cities and the move by teachers in Minneapolis to take up the boycott are great signs of a resurgence of fighting teacher unionism, building on the impressive mobilization by Chicago teachers last year.

Mali and Canadian mining in Africa

by PAUL STEVENSON

THE NATO war in Mali is expanding and Harper is doing all he can to help steal the riches of that land for Canadian mining corporations.

The UK has just agreed to send 40 troops and another \$5 million to support the French-led operation and Harper is due to renew his contribution to the takeover on March 14. Other African nations have also begun to mobilize troops.

Once again we see an open-ended intervention that may drag on and become the African version of NATO’s quagmire in Afghanistan. The West has no intention of leaving the continent to its own people; there is too much money to be made.

While the intervention in Mali has fallen off the front pages of Canadian newspapers, the business sections have been abuzz with stories of Canadian mines in more or less trouble because of potential unrest. According to Robert Besseling, deputy head of Africa forecasting at the political risk firm Exclusive Analysis, certain areas of the continent are becoming harder to mine in because of what he

terms “resource nationalists”—or people who are opposed to the pillaging of their land.

And Canadian corporations—like Barrick Gold, the largest gold-mining company in the world—have a lot of pillaging to do. Canadian mining investment in Africa has reached \$31 billion, up from only \$5 billion in 2005. That is a rapid acceleration that is also resulting in more blow-back.

In 2011, people in Tanzania attacked a Barrick gold mine, protesting the destruction of both their land and their livelihood. It is estimated that 400,000 African miners have lost their jobs due to the large multinationals moving in. The response was swift: police and security forces killed seven people to keep them away from the mines.

Like the De Beers diamond mine that loots millions while nearby indigenous people in Attawapiskat are denied basic housing, mining in Africa steals riches while leaving people in poverty. Tanzania is one of the poorest countries on earth, despite having roughly \$40 billion in gold reserves. It is also, by no coincidence, one of the countries that

Canada has targeted for a new Canadian military base—part of Harper’s plan to spend \$490 billion on the military over 20 years.

When one begins to dig into the recent history of Canadian mining in Africa the picture get even worse. In January, Human Rights Watch released a report which showed that Canadian corporation Nevsun Resources in Eritrea was using child slave labour to construct its mines. These are children that have been rounded up by the Eritrean security forces and are used for lots of projects that help the multinationals. In a disgusting display of greed, the scandalous report was followed up by news that another Canadian corporation, Sunridge Gold Corp, is itching to get in on such a lucrative venture. Slave labour means even more profit.

As the Harper government gets set to renew the Canadian Forces deployment to Mali, we all need to spread the word about Canada’s real record in Africa and mobilize to stop it—connecting the fight against imperialism abroad with the Idle No More movement against colonialism at home, and demanding peace and prosperity not war and austerity.

International Women's Day and the Communist Women's International (1921-1926)

John Riddell *looks at the Communist Women's International and its part in the revolutionary history of International Women's Day.*

IN JULY 1921, the Second International Conference of Communist Women, meeting in Moscow, decided to re-launch International Women's Day as a worldwide celebration of women's struggles. The conference, organized within the structures of the Communist International or Comintern, fixed the date of the yearly celebration as March 8, in honour of the Petrograd women whose courageous demonstration on that day in 1917 had launched the Russian revolution.

The women's conference had been called by their journal, whose name was "Communist Women's International." This movement is now almost forgotten. Its Women's Day initiative illustrates both its origins and to its significance in the history of women's liberation.

The Communist Women's International, like the March 8 celebration, had twin roots in both the pre-1914 socialist women's movement and the Russian revolution. International Women's Day had been first proclaimed in Copenhagen in 1910 by a socialist women's conference of 100 delegates from 17 countries, led by Clara Zetkin. Disrupted by the Socialist International's collapse in 1914, the event survived as a day of anti-war protest, and then was revived by the impetus of the Russian revolution. The Russian workers' and peasants' victory in that upsurge resulted in a decisive breakthrough for women's emancipation, going far beyond what had then been achieved elsewhere.

International Women's Day became a major campaign of Communist forces internationally. With the rise of feminism in the 1960s, it was adopted by the women's liberation movement as a whole. It thus symbolizes the impact of a generation of women, brought together by their support of the Russian revolution, in the history of women's emancipation.

Structure and function

What was the Communist Women's International? The name was not used all that frequently, although the journal, which bore that name, said that this term represented both the publication's reason for being and its program.

It was founded by a world gathering of Communist women in 1921, which elected a leadership, the International Women's Secretariat. The secretariat reported to the Executive of the Communist International, or Comintern. It also initiated the formation of women's commissions in national parties, which coordinated work by bodies of women on a branch level, and called periodic international conferences of Communist women.

That, at least, was the blueprint. Transforming this vision into reality was a difficult process. Women at that time were only beginning to emerge into citizenship and political activity. In the pre-1914 Socialist International, according to Clara Zetkin, the few women activists were "treated as a form of domestic help." Marxism was



forthright in advocating women's equality, but practice fell short of theory.

Even in the Comintern, Zetkin wrote in 1921, "leaders all too often underrate the importance" of the Communist women's movement, because "they see it as only 'women's business.'" Yet on the whole, despite what Zetkin termed "open or covert opposition," party structures for work among women were in fact established in those years in almost all European countries where Communists could work legally. Much credit for this achievement is due to the women heading up this work. They were the most able and resilient international leadership team produced by the Comintern.

Since these are today mostly forgotten figures, let us recall some names: alongside Zetkin, the most respected non-Russian Communist leader, worked Hertha Sturm and Bertha Braunthal of Germany, Marthe Bigot and Lucie Colliard of France, Henriette Roland-Holst of the Netherlands, Dora Montefiore of Britain, Hanna Malm and Aino Kuusinen of Finland, Edda Tenenboom of Poland, Varsenika Kasparova and Klavdija Nikolaeva of Russia, among others. Almost all were to become opponents or victims of Stalinism.

Their journal, "Communist Women's International," was a formidable educational tool, which published 1,300 pages over its five years of existence. No advice on child care here; no recipes. Each issue contained several articles on the women's movements and women's rights activity, both within and without the Communist International, as well as analysis of working-class politics as a whole. These were supplemented by reports on women's conditions in Soviet Russia and on the activity

of Communist women in different countries.

The work of the Women's International centered around two main world campaigns: to build International Women's Day and to support International Workers' Aid for Soviet Russia, whose work included aid to Soviet women and children. In the winter and spring of 1922-23, the women's secretariat in Berlin also led campaigns on inflation, the war danger, and education, against anti-abortion laws, and against fascism, working directly with women's commissions of Comintern parties.

Movement or sub-committee?

The women's International was founded during the greatest revolutionary upsurge the world has ever seen. "Capitalism is experiencing its global crisis," Zetkin wrote in 1921. This is no passing phase, she added, but a "global catastrophe, that will bring capitalism to an end." But although the "objective conditions are present," she stated, "the development of consciousness among the proletarians, the productive masses, has fallen behind." The urgent task, therefore, was for the Communist movement to win the masses—and specifically, the masses of women.

"Win the masses!" Zetkin was formulating here the general line adopted a few months later, after a fractious debate, by the Comintern world congress. Clearly, this was not a time to focus on a process of reforms. The Women's International aimed to win women, rapidly, to the Communist movement, for an approaching and decisive confrontation. The women leaders saw that this could not be done without special commissions set up for the task.

It was not enough to build broad

action coalitions to influence the masses, although this was necessary. The goal was to bring women into the party and train them as cadres and leaders. In most parties, this was a new idea. It involved confronting chauvinist pressures excluding women from the revolutionary movement. It meant integrating into the party the large Communist women's auxiliaries that had grown up in some countries.

In 1925, when the women's International was under attack by bureaucratic forces in the Comintern, Zetkin restated these concepts in the form of an account of her discussions with Lenin five years earlier. She quotes Lenin stating agreement with her well-known view: "We must by all means set up a powerful international women's movement on a clear-cut theoretical basis." Later in their discussion, Lenin added, "We want no separate organizations of Communist women! She who is a Communist belongs as a member to the Party," with "the same rights and duties." But the party needs special organs "with the specific purpose of rousing the broad masses of women."

Large numbers of women were recruited. The proportion of women among party members ranged from a high of 20 per cent in Czechoslovakia and Norway down to about 2 per cent in France and Italy. In Germany and Russia, it rose gradually in the 1920s to 17 per cent and 14 per cent respectively. Moreover, the absolute numbers were high: more than 100,000 women were members of the Communist International.

This text is an adaptation of a fuller text, prepared for presentation to the Historical Materialism conference in New York, January 18, 2010. Next month's issue of Socialist Worker will continue the history of the Communist Women's Movement.

The Russian

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The fight for childcare and reproductive choice

Attacks on reproductive rights keep coming, while child care remains primarily the responsibility of women. Socialist Worker looks at the struggles for choice and child care and the revolutionary struggle for women’s liberation.



by **JESSE MCLAREN**

FOR MOST of human history people lived in equality, with no rigid division between male and female, or between production and reproduction. Women were central to gathering food upon which survival depended, there was equal say over community decisions, and child-raising was a collective task. Before the nuclear family there was a free spectrum of sexualities and before a class-based, and later capitalist, labour market there was no racism or ableism.

When the transformation of agriculture eventually provided a surplus, a small class emerged to control it. Later, the family model we have come to describe as “nuclear” emerged to pass on private property. This model implied a rigid and unequal division between the sexes: women were separated from production, confined to reproduction, and made subordinate to men who controlled production and the state.

One of the first writers to examine the history of this model was the German Marxist, Friedrich Engels. As Engels described in his work, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, the emergence of class society marked “the world historic defeat of the female sex. The man took command in the home; the woman was degraded and reduced to servitude; she became the slave of his lust and a mere instrument for the production of children.”

When capitalism emerged it continued women’s oppression, tied to the nuclear family that demanded

unpaid women’s labour rearing the next generation of workers. In the 1800s, laws and policies emerged against any alternative expression of sexuality or over any self-determination in reproduction—including the criminalization of homosexuality and abortion, and the sterilization of indigenous women and women with disabilities.

The 1917 Russian Revolution marked a high point in resistance to capitalism and oppression, winning abortion and divorce on demand, communal crèches, legalization of homosexuality and self-determination for oppressed nations. Socialists a generation ago applied these lessons to the fight for choice, through a working class mobilization that defeated the abortion law and built solidarity with indigenous sovereignty, gay rights and disability movements.

But the battle is far from over. Today the ideology of the nuclear family justifies a continued 30 per cent wage gap between women and men in Canada (with the difference going to the boss), while women are still expected to provide unpaid labour at home. Globally, the austerity agenda is sharpening women’s oppression through its denial of childcare, attacks on choice, cuts to jobs and services that women provide and use, ongoing violence against women, and a “men’s rights” backlash against women and progressive movements. But women are also leading new resistance movements—in Cairo, Chicago, and Canada. Here, we examine two issues central to women’s liberation: the fight for reproductive freedom and the fight for childcare.

Criminalization of choice

by **LAURA KAMINKER**

WLADYSLAW LIZON, Member of Parliament for Mississauga Cooksville East, is back in the news. The Conservative MP has teamed up with two of his fellow backbenchers in an attack on Canadian women’s reproductive rights.

The last time Lizon surfaced, he had “alerted” Citizenship and Immigration Minister Jason Kenney that a Mississauga woman had worn a niqab during a citizenship ceremony. Thanks to Lizon and Kenney, face veils are now banned from those ceremonies. This man is anti-choice in more ways than one.

More recently, Lizon, Maurice Vellacott (Saskatoon—Wanuskewin), and Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright) demanded that the RCMP investigate all later-term abortions performed in Canada over the last decade. According to these MPs, the doctors who performed these procedures should be charged with homicide.

Late-term abortions

Let’s be clear on exactly what’s happening here. Later-term abortion is the perfect wedge issue for the anti-choice minority to drive into the pro-choice majority, in order to begin reducing Canadian women’s access to abortion. Many people who are moderately pro-

choice regard abortion as acceptable only in the first trimester of pregnancy. After that, the woman is showing. A fetal heartbeat might be present. The procedure itself is more complicated and presents a greater risk to the woman.

Second and even third trimester abortions aren’t pretty. But they are necessary. Women who choose to terminate later-term pregnancies are usually in desperate circumstances. They are carrying nonviable fetuses—the fetus is dead, or would die immediately after birth. Or the fetus may be healthy, but the continued pregnancy puts the woman’s own life in grave danger.

Anti-choice agenda

This latest Conservative attack on women’s reproductive rights must be seen in context of all the others. With Motion 312, MP Stephen Woodworth called for a Parliamentary committee to examine fetal personhood. With Motion 408, MP Mark Warawa seeks to ban sex-selective abortions, disingenuously couching his anti-choice bill in the language of women’s rights. A few years back, MP Ken Epps tabled the “Unborn Victims of Crime Act”: he claimed he was protecting victims of domestic violence, but we caught him revealing the truth. Now these MPs want the RCMP to charge doctors with homicide.

Through all this, Prime Minister Stephen Harper repeats that his

Free universal child care now!

by **KAYE STEWART**

IT’S NOT hard to find examples of policy in which the Harper government has acted against the best interests of women, but some do stand out as most significant. Canada’s lack of affordable child care is a shameless attack on women’s equality and a barrier to eradicating child poverty.

In 2005, when Stephen Harper took office, we were on the precipice of a historic step forward towards equality: a national child care system. Decades of advocacy, momentum, and the voices of thousands of parents speaking out had finally started to be heard at the federal level. There were signed agreements with each province to develop a national child care system. The fight wasn’t over, but this meant real funds flowing to provinces to expand their programs—more spaces, more affordable parent fees, and fair wages for the hard-working staff in the field. Three hours after being sworn in, Harper’s first act as prime minister was to cancel the national child care program.

Canada: last on child care

Decades of work and a program that would have benefited thousands of Canadian children were thrown out and replaced with a \$100/month taxable benefit. In the seven years since, Canada has spent roughly \$15 billion on this “benefit.” It has not created a single child care space, has not helped improve quality in a single program, and does not help families afford the care they need.

Canada is ranked last among OECD nations for investments in the early years and has been shamed by the UN who note that a nation as wealthy as ours should be able to do better by our children. Canada has signed the UN Declaration on the Rights of the Child, yet public policy goes against it and the Government continues to blatantly dismiss the recommendations of the UN committee.

The UN also recommends an investment of one per cent of the GDP in early childhood education. The OECD puts Canada’s investment in early childhood education at just 0.3 per cent. The result: only about 20 per cent of kids in Canada have access to a licensed child care space (in either a home or centre setting). Licensing assures public oversight into the quality of programming and learning environment. It also ensures supports and professional development opportunities for staff.

While only one in five children are in a licensed space,



we know the majority of parents are working. Over the course of the 20th century the number of mothers in the paid workforce has increased dramatically. 75 per cent of women with a child between the ages of three and five are in the paid workforce, as are the majority of women with a younger child. Social policy has not caught up to these cultural shifts. Child care is essential for parents to work and/or pursue further education.

Downloading responsibility, blaming women

So where are the other 80 per cent of our kids? Essentially, Harper’s current public policy

is that we don’t know and we don’t care. Some families have the option of care from a relative and a small proportion of mothers still choose to stay home. But, in the absence of a universal public system, the vast majority of children are in unregulated child care situations.

It is important to note that there are high quality unregulated programs with dedicated providers, mainly women, who care greatly about the education they provide. Many are trained and pursue professional development opportunities. But, in the absence of a public system, there is no way to separate the exceptional programs from the horrify-

ing. In many jurisdictions there are financial disincentives for home care providers to become licensed. In most cases, parents do not know whether or not their child’s care is licensed or the training of their provider.

What’s worse, when tragedy strikes in an unlicensed program, politicians are quick to blame parent choice as advocates call for a review of the system. Where is the choice in a system that excludes 80 per cent of families?

The expensive hand of the market

Worse still, in the absence of a public system, child care remains a market based sec-

often a poverty sentence. And we wonder why Canada continues to have a 28 per cent gender pay gap and our child poverty rate is persistent?

It’s time to stop thinking of child care as a fringe program and realize how important it is to our children’s development and our economy—now dependent on women’s labour.

It can be different

While the federal government maintains its dismal record on child care, some provinces have taken action to make change. In 1997 Quebec began building a universal child care program. Initially reducing fees to \$5/day (now \$7). Quebec has also created spots. Early childhood educators and child care workers are also on average the highest paid in Canada and there is a provincial pension program. In the first ten years, Quebec saw their child poverty rate drop by 50% per cent and 70,000 mothers enter the paid workforce.

Across the country, despite the decimation of funding for organizations, the child care movement remains committed. A new generation of advocates—parents and Early Childhood Educators—is rising and unwilling to accept the status quo. Advocacy groups point to Quebec and Manitoba in lobbying their provincial governments to take action on the child care crisis.

In BC, there is currently a campaign for \$10/day child care. Through grassroots organizing and outreach to the community, advocates from the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC and the Early Childhood Educators of BC have received thousands of endorsements for the plan. Endorsements come from municipalities, school boards, trade unions, parents, and even boards of trade. The public support is overwhelming. They have gained such broad attention that both parties have released platforms on child care and early childhood education—falling far short of the plan proposed by advocates. While the NDP has more strongly supported investment, so far their position is not to endorse the plan. There’s no doubt that child care will be a central issue in the provincial election in BC this spring.

As we move towards the federal election in 2015, it is critical that a national child care program continue to be a focus for activists. For the Liberals, child care was one of the most popular policies they ever had, even if they failed to implement it despite being in power for a dozen years. Meanwhile, universal affordable child care has been central to NDP policy for decades, and cannot be allowed to disappear now.

NDP

No to pipelines, west or east

SPEAKING TO the business community across the country, NDP leader Thomas Mulcair has been building a contradictory case to oppose tar sands pipelines going west, but support them going east.

Mulcair said he is “adamantly opposed” to the Northern Gateway pipeline, and that “it is madness to think of bringing those supertankers into that pristine coast. It is a non-starter. It is the most abject misunderstanding of the importance of protecting the environment I’ve ever seen in Canada.” But at the same time, he supports Enbridge’s proposed Line 9 taking tar sands east.

Last September, in a speech to the elite Canadian Club of Toronto called “Building a balanced, 21st century economy,” Mulcair said pumping tar sands east was a “pro-business, common sense solution.” Recently, speaking at the Calgary Chamber of Commerce to representatives from oil giants Enbridge and Suncor, Mulcair delivered his strong words against western pipelines and tankers, but supported sending tar sands east in order to secure “a diversity of markets.” Accusing Harper of “sheer incompetence,” Mulcair promised that “the NDP will be a partner for the development of our energy resources when we form government in 2015” and that “we will work with you so that the rules are clear and that the public has confidence in what we’re trying to do together.”

This is part of the NDP leadership’s contradictory perspective to oppose the export of raw bitumen but support domestic refining. As NDP energy critic Peter Julian said last year, in an interview with the National Post, “we are missing a real opportunity in oil sands development.” Responding to a proposal by media mogul David Black to build a tar sands refinery in BC, Julian stated “we are happy that more people are looking at valued-added production in the country. We need to maximise the potential of our resources, and the fact that Mr. Black put forward that proposal shows more Canadians are coming to the NDP position.” As Julian argued, “We will be exporting thousands of jobs by sending bitumen that will be processed in the U.S.... It does not make a lot of sense that we are importing in Eastern Canada and as a result have risky supplies, often from the Middle East, and at the same time exporting raw bitumen.”

Whether tar sands are pumped west or east, and whether they are refined at home or abroad, makes no difference to the Athabasca Fort Chipewyan First Nation—which bears the brunt of tar sands pollution, and which has led the fight against it—or to global carbon emissions nearing a catastrophic tipping point. A tar sands spill from Line 9—threatening the water supply of the most densely-populated area of Canada—would be no less devastating than a spill off the west coast. As Art Sterritt from the Coastal First Nations said in response to Black’s proposal, “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.”

But while Mulcair refused to meet with Attawapiskat Chief Theresa Spence and called on her to end her hunger strike, he has been busy meeting with corporate executives across the country to convince them he would correct Harper’s “incompetence” through a “balanced” approach to tar sands and pipelines. His strong words against Northern Gateway speaks to the massive and growing opposition on the west coast, and we need to replicate this opposition to Line 9—uniting indigenous groups, labour unions, environmentalists and the NDP—so that Mulcair can give voice to the only common-sense solution to looming climate chaos: oppose all pipelines and shut down the tar sands.

First Nations

Solidarity with Aamjiwnaang and Ron Plain

THE AAMJIWNAANG First Nation (near Samia, 300km south-east of Toronto) has been subjected to the worst of the capitalist and colonial economy, but is also at the heart of resistance.

The 850 members of the community live in one of the most toxic environments in North America, surrounded by was is known as Chemical Valley. According to Aamjiwnaang member Ron Plain, “The lands these communities operate upon were stolen from my community and turned into a toxic wasteland without our consent or consultation. Shell’s plant is located directly on my father’s hunting ground and today instead of feeding my family these lands kill my community. Shell’s plant to expand bitumen refining in an area already devastated by pollution is effectively a death sentence for our culture, lands and people.”

As part of Idle No More and in solidarity with Attawapiskat Chief Theresa Spence, who was on hunger strike, the Aamjiwnaang First Nation and Mohawks of Tyendiniga launched rail blockades in December and January. The courts responded with injunctions, and APTN National News has revealed that the judge who imposed the injunctions used to work for CN Rail.

The Aamjiwnaang blockade lasted 13 days and even though protesters complied with the injunction and took it down. CN Rail launched court action against Ron Plain, the blockade’s spokesperson.

Last year a Via Rail train crashed in Burlington, killing three workers and injuring 45 passengers. According to Scott Holmes, a former CN engineer, this could have been avoided had CN invested in upgrading part of the track, but he says he was told CN had no money for the upgrade. While CN apparently doesn’t have the resources to guarantee worker and passenger safety, they have all the resources they need to launch legal action against Ron Plain.

This is yet another attack on indigenous sovereignty, an attack on the Idle No More movement which has inspired people from coast to coast, and an attack on an activist who has exposed and challenged the oil companies. Next month Ron Plain will be speaking in Toronto as part of local organizing against Line 9.

To support his legal defense, go to <http://bit.ly/ZtW4W5>

OPINION



Decomposition of the Parti Québécois

A former member of Québec solidaire’s coordinating committee (2008-2012) and candidate in the riding of Chapleau in the 2008 and 2012 elections, Benoit Renaud argues the Parti Québécois soon could be on life support.

LAST SEPTEMBER, the Parti Québécois (PQ), after nine years of a despised Liberal regime under Jean Charest and several months of massive unrest by students and their allies, managed to win a narrow minority government with 54 seats against the Liberals’ 50 and just 32 per cent of the popular vote. This lack of enthusiasm for the party that embodied the aspirations for an independent Québec for a generation is nothing new. But this new phase in the long agony of the PQ could be its last.

With a long term perspective, one can argue that this slow decline of the PQ is the result of its own fundamental policies. First, it neutralized the radical and anti-imperialist elements of the movement for independence by ignoring the already-existing party, Ralliement pour l’indépendance nationale (RIN), when the PQ formed in 1968, and then fighting against its own internal left wing until it became insignificant. In doing so, it gradually removed from the arguments in favour of independence any notion of national oppression/liberation and any potential for solidarity with other anticolonial struggles. Then, from the early 1980’s onward, it rallied wholeheartedly to the neoliberal consensus, depriving the movement for sovereignty of its working class content, and reducing the possibilities of alliances with workers in the rest of Canada and around the world.

What was left of the movement for national liberation after the PQ was done getting rid of its working class and anti-imperialist foundations? Nothing more than the project of an administrative reform transferring powers from Ottawa to Québec city, with new administrators continuing more or less the same pro-business status quo policies. That was already clear in the project submitted to the people in the 1995 referendum.

But after their depressing third place in the 2007 election, behind the Liberals and the right wing populist Action démocratique du Québec (ADQ), the PQ leadership moderated even that modest ambition and adopted the doctrine of “sovereigntist governance,” basically a euphemism for “PQ government,” and removed the idea of a third referendum as soon as possible from the party’s program, calling it “référendisme.”

At that point, the main parties of the

movement for Québec sovereignty—the PQ and the Bloc Québécois (BQ), the federal-level sovereigntist political party—were left with only their identification with the cause, an abstract notion of belonging to the same camp, having gone through the same struggles in the past, but no credible strategy for achieving the stated goal and no steam to move forward. This “souverainisme identitaire”—the idea of being sovereigntist without acting on it—was very visible during the federal election of 2011, when the Bloc, after starting the campaign with their usual empty rhetoric about “defending the interests of Québec” (as if everyone in Québec had the same interests...), went into panic mode when the polls showed the beginning of the orange wave—essentially yelling at people that if they were for sovereignty, then they had to vote Bloc, the only federal party which was for it too.

Then the collapse of the Bloc brought with it a major crisis in the PQ caucus, causing several prominent MNAs to resign, including Jean-Martin Aussant. Aussant went on to create a new party, Option nationale (ON), bringing together those who were willing to fight for independence now, in each election, even if that meant giving up the immediate possibility of taking power. ON’s approach is based on a utopian notion of achieving independence by simply winning an election within the current system. But apart from this break with the PQ’s approach to the national question, the ON program is a cut and paste of the least radical ideas of Québec solidaire and some of the better ones from the PQ, resulting in a form of social-liberalism.

ON is, at the same time, completely in line with PQ propaganda in attacking QS for “not really being sovereigntist,” and blaming it in part for the NDP landslide of 2011, when about a third of the sovereigntist base voted for Jack Layton’s party. One could qualify ON as a radicalized form of the PQ, or what we could call “hyperpéquisme”.

With the ON split from the PQ and many former PQ activists rallying to Québec solidaire, the perceived issue of the “division within the sovereigntist camp” became an obsession for many Québec nationalists. Non partisan initiatives of various kinds have sprung up over the past few years, including the Nouveau mouvement pour le Québec (NMQ). Just before the election

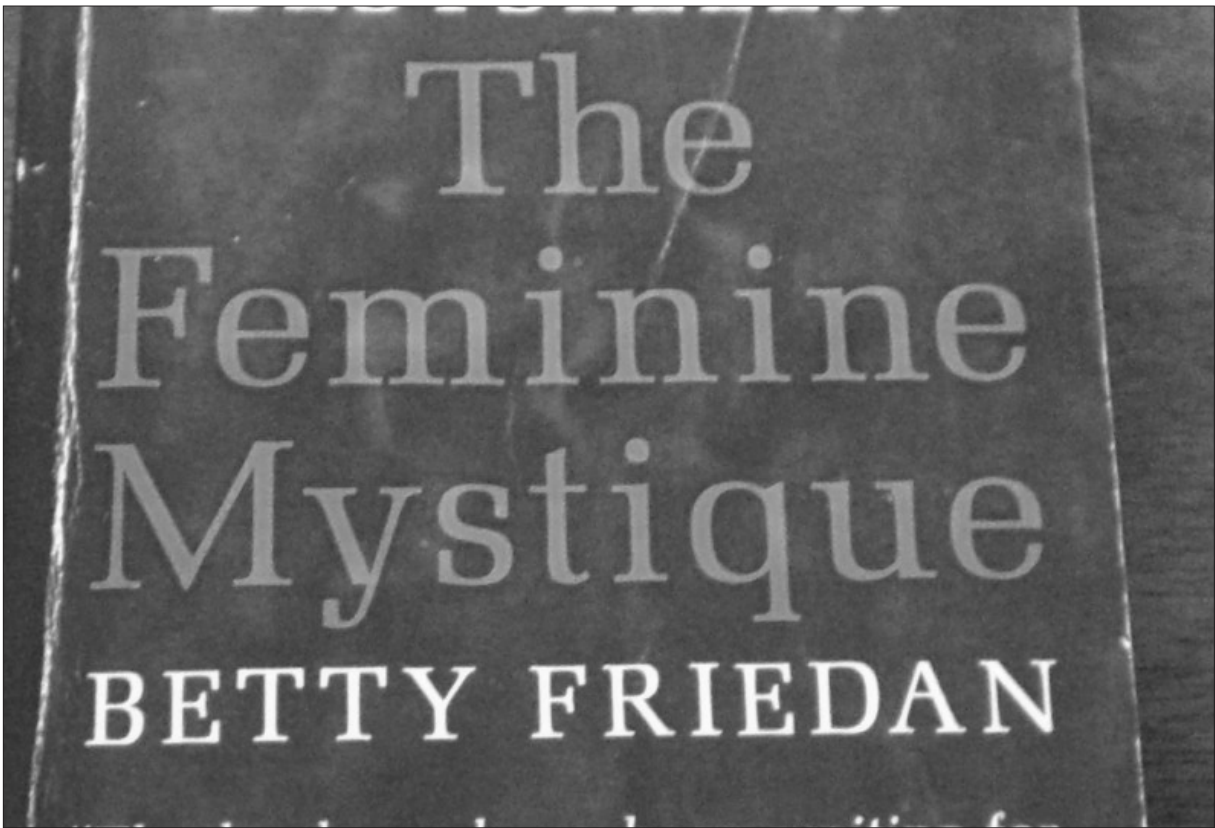
campaign of 2012, at the height of the repression against the student movement, one such initiative (le Front uni) called on the PQ, QS and ON to make an electoral pact in order to defeat the Liberals and the new right wing party, Coalition avenir Québec (CAQ), successor of ADQ. Now, NMQ and the Conseil de la souveraineté (CSQ) coalition (which has existed for at least a decade) are organizing a forum in May with the explicit goal of building such a pact for the next election (probably in 2014).

All such initiatives have inevitably failed, and will continue to do so, because the PQ leadership is holding on to the duct tape keeping its own fragile edifice together: the idea that it is, on its own, the umbrella organization where all sovereigntists should be. The notion of recreating that vast coalition outside the PQ, what we could call “métapéquisme”, is oddly similar to the rhetoric of the PQ itself. The problem is that if the PQ were to accept such a broad electoral alliance (or if it implemented proportional representation), it would have no argument to keep all its best activists, who are generally working class and anti-imperialist, even today.

So what can Québec solidaire do, faced with a decrepit PQ generating all kinds of new organizations to its left and to its right as it decomposes? First, it has to reclaim and renew the anti-imperialist and socialist roots of the modern movement for independence, prioritizing solidarity with First Nations and other forms of international solidarity, organizing its presence in the labour movement, putting forward strong demands to improve working conditions, etc. Second, it needs to be clear that it does not share the same goal as the PQ and that the division between the two parties is not simply a question of strategy (as it is for ON). What Québec solidaire wants is a true process of collective self-determination, including the potential for breaking from the neoliberal and ecocidal consensus. This will not come from an alliance dominated by ruling class lackeys like the current PQ leadership. Third, it needs to openly and boldly state its claim for the leadership of a renewed national movement. And when the next election comes, it should answer the campaign for “strategic voting” with the clever words of the poet Richard Desjardins: “If they don’t want to divide the vote, they should vote for us!”

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REVIEWS



BOOK

50 years since *The Feminine Mystique*: a memoir of feminism in the 1960s

The Feminine Mystique
Written by Betty Friedan
Reviewed by Suzanne Weiss

FIFTY YEARS ago, on February 13, 1963, the publication of Betty Friedan’s book *The Feminine Mystique* sparked a new awakening in the thinking of women across North America.

Betty Friedan denounced the repression women suffered in the aftermath of World War 2 when they were forced out of wartime jobs and convinced to accept the role of keepers of the home. Profiteers of the market launched an unrelenting but subtle propaganda campaign to venerate women as wife and mother. This role, Friedan said, was the “feminine mystique.”

This domestic existence became, Friedan wrote, “a religion, a pattern by which all women must now live or deny their femininity.” In submitting to this concept of womanhood, women gave up their self-respect, recognition of their talents and abilities, and—most importantly—their identities. Fundamentally, Friedan said, this was a scam to sell more consumers’ goods to women, who were to be the major purchasers for home and family.

The middle-class women living in their complacent homes, Friedan explained, found it impossible to adjust to them because of their narrow sphere of existence. They were very unhappy and dissatisfied but they were unable

to identify their dilemma—which Friedan called “The problem with no name.”

I was 22 years old when Friedan’s book came out. I quickly bought a copy and read it with excitement. True, Friedan did not challenge laws against women’s reproductive rights, and focus was on educated, middle-class women—not my milieu at all. But what she wrote rang a bell.

I recalled my father, in the late 1950s, berating me about my role as a woman in society. “For females to be anything other than nurturer, wife and mother is unnatural,” he would roar. The conflict went on for years and caused me a lot of grief. Friedan’s book told me that my teen-age problem was not personal; it reflected pressure on women right across the society.

New rise of feminism

My family had suffered from the McCarthy witch-hunt against “reds” in the 1950s and the Cold War. I saw a parallel here. McCarthyism took aim against freedom of speech and association; the feminine mystique bore down on women’s freedom to be themselves. Working women thought they could have a better life as a full-time housekeepers and mothers. But now Friedan’s book was promoting a new rise of feminism.

I belonged then to a socialist party that had always been for women’s rights but didn’t put this into practice.

This changed at the rise of the feminist movement which demanded that the party put its words into deeds. The party began to learn from feminism and to change before my eyes.

We understood feminism as support for women’s liberation and opposition to male chauvinism—what is now called “sexism.” I was a feminist—a socialist feminist.

A new layer of young women rose out of the campaigns for civil liberties and against the bomb. Our battle cry for women’s equal rights, for birth control and control of our own body, for sexual choice, child care, equal opportunity in education and on the job market, reverberated across society.

Today, Betty Friedan’s *Feminine Mystique* is remembered as the book that helped launch the “second wave of feminism” in the 1960s. Led initially by privileged, educated women, this movement expanded to embrace women students and workers—a mass movement that effectively gave the feminine mystique a good kick and opened up a world of new opportunities for women.

Although today we have not gone backward to the feminine mystique, we have lost much ground on the rights we won then. We continue to struggle for the right to control our own bodies, against violence to women, for equal recognition of women as human beings, and for a socialist world that will bring liberation to all.

LEFT JAB
John Bell

Stephen Harper’s moral crusade

STEPHEN HARPER has created the Office of Religious Freedom within the Department of Foreign Affairs. “Around the world, violations of religious freedom are widespread and they are increasing,” according to a statement from the Prime Minister’s Office. And high time too. I can think of one country in need of the Office’s immediate attention.

This is a country where a religious minority is regularly singled out for legislative and verbal attacks from the government—that naturally send a signal to the general population that it is okay to attack said religious minority with physical violence directed either at people or places of worship. This is a country that attempted to extinguish the spiritual beliefs of the indigenous population, where generations of young aboriginal people were subjected to at least cruel isolation from their families and cultures, and at worst brutal torture and murder, all at the hands of the prevailing religious establishment.

Religious freedom is impossible without freedom from religion. The country I have in mind is in danger of having religious fundamentalism restrict women’s rights and freedoms. It sees freedom of scientific inquiry curtailed. And it is a country run by a party with religious zealots in its topmost echelons. No doubt you’ve figured out the punch line. Canada’s own record of religious tolerance and freedom is spotty at best. And that of the Harper Tories is downright piss poor. Let’s review.

Afghanistan

Harper is intent on militarizing Canadian society, and to do that he needs to build up a bogeyman. Red scare is difficult when one of your major trading partners is China. Luckily for Harper there’s always Islam. Harper is on record as saying that the major threat facing Canadians “is still Islamicism.” This is justification for Canada’s continuing support for the invasion of Afghanistan that has wasted billions of dollars, not to mention the lives of thousands of Afghans and 158 Canadians.

So many bogus rationales for this endless war have been put forward, but the most odious is that Canada is fighting for the rights of Afghan women. Two Afghan-Canadian women are currently suing Sun TV for defamation: when they dared to voice their opposition to a pointless war and occupation, Laila Rashidie and Suraia Sahar were subjected to insult and abuse on the news network. Anyone who doesn’t think fighting Sun TV equals fighting Harper’s agenda needs to rethink the relationship between their head and their anus. Laila and Suraia need your help to fund their fight. Check out their fund-raising website for details. They will be receiving no help from the Office of Religious Freedom.

Secret Trial 5

Then there are the five Muslim-Canadians jailed without charge or trial for almost a decade. Granted, the deed was done on the Paul Martin Liberal watch, but Harper has been only too happy to reaffirm the post-9/11 assault on the rights and freedoms of all Canadians epitomized by the Security Certificates used to jail Hassan Almrei, Adil Charkaoui, Mohamed Harkat, Mahmoud Jaballah and Mohammad Mahjoub.

All five men wanted nothing more than the legal rights supposedly held by all Canadians: to be tried in open court and to face their accusers. These rights have been denied them, while their lives have been made hell based on “evidence” derived from torture or the word of profit-seeking opportunists.

A film is being made to publicize the plight of these men (two of whom have had their certificates quashed), and to expose the hypocrisy of Harper’s regime. The Secret Trial 5 and the filmmakers need your help: the film is being “crowd sourced”, funded by small donations from Canadians who value the rule of law and human rights. For more information and to donate, visit the film’s website. They will be receiving no help from the Office of Religious Freedom.

Don’t even get me started on the vilification of Muslim women who dare to wear visible symbols of their faith in this country. The Harper government has blazed new trails to bully and abuse these women—a percentage of the population so small it doesn’t exist statistically—all in aid of stoking anti-Islamic reaction in the population.

Zionism and Christian fundamentalism

The Tory government is demonstrably fickle when it comes to religious freedom and its political offshoots: while “Islamicism” can do no right, Zionism can do no wrong in Harper’s eyes.

It was only a few years ago that Kairos, a progressive ecumenical group was defunded by the Canadian International Development Agency, literally with a wave of Minister Bev Oda’s pen. Kairos had the nerve to oppose the environmental and cultural carnage wrought by the Tar Sands on Northern Alberta and its native peoples. It also advocated for human rights for Palestinians. That isn’t Harper’s kind of religion, folks.

Yet we are told that CIDA funding to Canadian religious (read fundamentalist Christian) “charities” has increased by 42 per cent under Harper’s regime. Emblematic is the more than half a million dollars given to Crossroads Christian Communications with the aim of digging wells in Uganda. Uganda has criminalized same-sex relationships and has been attempting to institute the death penalty for being gay, and Crossroads is an evangelical organization that defines being gay as “perversion” or “sin.”

Thanks to public outcry, the grant to Crossroads is “under review.” It may represent the kind of religion that Stephen Harper advocates, but its views are repugnant to a majority of Canadians. Nonetheless, Christian extremists say the episode is evidence of how their religious values are under attack. Those voices were noticeably absent when Kairos was dumped.

Stephen Harper’s moral crusade is part cynical ploy to win votes from new Canadian’s concerned about abuse of religious minorities in their homelands. Worse, it will be used to build up Islamaphobia, while advancing a right-wing Christian evangelical mission.

English writer G.K. Chesterton observed: “The old hypocrite was a man whose aims were really worldly and practical, while he pretended that they were religious. The new hypocrite is one whose aims are really religious, while he pretends that they are worldly and practical.” Stephen Harper is both.

BOOK

Memoir of an anti-apartheid activist

The Unlikely Secret Agent
Written by Ronnie Kasrils
Reviewed by Libby Fung

THE STRUGGLE against Apartheid in South Africa is remembered fondly by socialists. One of the greatest freedom struggles of the last century, we can take inspiration from the incredible mobilization of thousands of the country’s black working class in general strikes and riots that made the system ungovernable. The incredible movements inside South Africa inspired people across the world to work in solidarity campaigns to boycott and isolate the apartheid regime.

Amidst this incredible history of resistance, there are a million individual stories that will remain forever a mystery. Lucky for us, Ronnie Kasrils (an anti-apartheid activist and member of the South African Communist Party, who worked in the South African government after apartheid was officially

ended in 1994) has recorded one of them in this touching memoir of his deceased wife.

Set in South Africa in the midst of apartheid, The Unlikely Secret Agent tells the true story of Eleanor Kasrils, a Scottish-South African anti-apartheid activist and one of the first women involved in the Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), the armed wing of the African National Congress (ANC).

Eleanor was arrested in 1963 by the Security Branch, who wanted her to lead them to her lover, Ronnie, who was suspected of being involved with a series of sabotage in Durban, as well as other MK members. Unbeknownst to the Security Branch, Eleanor herself was an active member of MK, working with Ronnie on many of those acts of sabotage, and heavily involved in the underground hiding of other members.

Ronnie tells the story of Eleanor much like the way a grandparent would tell the story to their grandchildren. The majority of the book deals with Eleanor’s arrest, her mistreatment at the hands

of the lieutenant who arrested her, her incarceration and (spoiler alert) eventual escape. The section regarding her interrogation and incarceration are particularly moving, describing his threats, including insinuations of harm coming to her family, or the oft-repeated “I’ll break you or hang you!”

In protest of her mistreatment, Eleanor goes on a 6-day hunger strike, which results in her transfer into a mental facility. Ronnie also includes small personal details that speak to their deep relationship, such as signing her letters with Xs and Qs, Qs representing a hug with a hand pressed into the small of the back.

The story is told with much emotion, but little context of the greater struggle against apartheid. If you’re looking for more context and information about the ANC and the struggle as a whole, I would suggest looking elsewhere. However, this book is a fine example of an extraordinary woman who underwent severe hardship in the struggle for her beliefs, and the sacrifices that come along with the struggle.

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.



Hugo Rafael Chávez Frías (July 28, 1954 – March 5, 2013)

Hugo Chavez, undefeated

by **DERRICK O'KEEFE**

HUGO CHAVEZ has died—undefeated.

Yes, undefeated. Chavez, no matter how many times the corporate media and the cheerleaders of the status quo call him a dictator, was elected repeatedly with overwhelming majorities.

No matter how many times this slur is moronically or mendaciously repeated, people know the truth. No less than Jimmy Carter certified Venezuela's elections as amongst the most fair and transparent his organization has ever observed. And the voter turnouts that elected Chavez were usually far, far higher than those in the U.S.

The voices that cheer and mock the death of Hugo Chavez are in fact mocking democracy and the people of Venezuela, who elected him and who have re-elected him time and time again -- most recently by a decisive majority in October, 2012.

But today we need not dwell on the disgusting carnival of necrophilia with which the right-wing has followed Chavez's illness and which will reach a crescendo in the coming days with the news of his untimely demise. This macabre celebration is only the flip side of impotence; they whoop and holler at Chavez's death from cancer only because they failed to defeat him in life, and could not take down his government by democratic (or other) means.

Besides, behind this grave-dancing is not just the hatred of one man who became emblematic of a continental shift to the left and away from U.S. interests and power; it also reveals the shallow indifference to human life and to democracy built into the whole system. As a friend pointed

out, within minutes of announcing the news of his death, CNN was discussing the implications it might have on the markets and on the value of U.S. corporate interests in the region.

Today, I would rather celebrate the majority of Venezuelans -- especially the poor and the marginalized. It is, after all, the people who made Chavez, and not the other way around. And it is the humble people of Venezuela who saw to it that Chavez was allowed to complete this many years as president, after all.

Chavez came very close to dying much earlier -- of unnatural causes. It was People Power that kept him alive and that kept his democratically elected government in power. I'm referring of course to the April 2002 coup d'état cynically aided and abetted by Venezuela's rabidly right-wing media and which was issued with an immediate stamp of approval by the Bush administration.

It's important to remember that the traditional elite of Venezuela -- the oilgarchs of this South American petrostate who ruled for decades under the 'Washington Consensus,' and who quashed resistance to neoliberalism in blood like during the 1989 caracazo -- and their allies abroad in the U.S. government and in the corporate boardrooms of the world never intended for Hugo Chavez to live beyond those days in April 2002.

If the people had not mobilized to restore Chavez to power 11 years ago, Latin America would be a much worse place today. The “pink tide” would likely have been largely stemmed before it had a chance to spread; transformations that have begun in Bolivia and Ecuador might never have gotten out of the gates.

Who knows, the FTAA, a proposed hemispheric corporate trade deal, might have been implemented rather than soundly defeated. After all, back in 2001, when tens of thousands marched in Quebec City against the early stages of the FTAA, President Chavez was almost alone as a head of government inside the talks opposing the deal.

Whatever the shortcomings and all the very real contradictions of Chavez's government, the poor of Venezuela and of all Latin America are better off today in real and tangible ways because the people kept it in power.

So let the corporate media say “good riddance!” to Chavez in their cynical way. Ignore them, and watch (or rewatch) the inspiring story of the People Power that defeated the 2002 coup, as told in the powerful Irish documentary The Revolution Will Not Be Televised. The title is a tip of the hat to Gil Scott-Heron, and it's a reference to the key role that right-wing, private, big media played in orchestrating and manipulating events and their portrayal during the failed attempt at regime change. (Another important source of information about Venezuela is the website Venezuelanalysis.com)

The rich and powerful of the world did not hate Chavez because he was a dictator. Deep down the sentiment among them know he wasn't.

They hated him because he was symbolic of a threat to the dictatorship of Capital, a figurehead of a continent alive with social movements and millions of people conscious of their political power.

Republished from rabble.ca

international socialist events

TORONTO

Capitalism: how does it work, is there an alternative?

Speakers: Gurnishan Singh & James Clark
Tue, Mar 19, 2:30pm
University of Toronto
Mississauga Student Centre

Crime, Racism and the Harper Agenda

Harper's “tough on crime” agenda is spending billions on prisons that disproportionately incarcerate racialized groups and criminalize dissent, as part of a broader austerity agenda.
Tue, Mar 26, 7pm
OISE, 252 Bloor St. W.

Marxism 2013: Revolution In Our Time

Weekend-long conference of ideas to change the world
May 31 - June 2
Ryerson University
55 Gould St.
www.marxism2013.com
#riot2013

Info:
www.socialist.ca@gmail.com

YORK UNIVERSITY

Socialism, Feminism and the Fight Against Sexism

Speaker: Michelle Robidoux
Mon, Mar 11, 3:30pm
Glendon College, Lunik
Co-op, 2275 Bayview Ave.

Climate Chaos: how is capitalism killing the planet?

Speaker: Amrit Koonar
Wed, Mar 13, 2:30pm
York Student Centre
Chancellors Room (next to The Underground)

Socialism, Feminism and the Fight Against Sexism

Speaker: Carolyn Egan
Wed, Mar 20, 2:30pm
York Student Centre
Chancellors Room (next to The Underground)

Marxism & Islam, part II

Wed, Mar 27, 2:30pm
York Student Centre
room 313

Info:
yorkusocialists@gmail.com

VANCOUVER

Why is Capitalism Killing the Planet?

Thu, Mar 14, 7pm
Douglas College, room 3302, 700 Royal Ave.
New Westminster

Ideas to Change the World

A one-day conference of radical politics
Sat, Mar 23, 11:30am
Langara College, room A310
100 W. 49th Ave.
Vancouver

Info: vancouver.socialists@gmail.com

peace & justice events

TORONTO

Israeli Apartheid Week

March 1 - 10
apartheidweek.org

International Women's Day

Saturday, March 9
Rally: 11am at OISE (252 Bloor St. W.), March: 1pm at OISE, Fair: 1:30pm at Ryerson (55 Gould St.)
www.iwdtoronto.org

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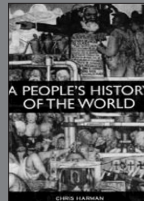
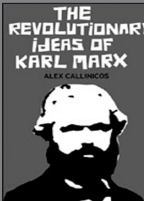
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WORKERS' RIGHTS

by PAM JOHNSON

ON MARCH 2 in Toronto, over 700 hundred trade union activists from both private and public sector unions met to plan a sharp and focused challenge to the Harper/Hudak attack on trade union rights.

Organized by the Toronto and York Region Labour Council, the event is the kick-off of a campaign to build labour momentum before legislation that is similar to so-called right-to-work laws in the US is proposed here.

What the Tories are proposing is to scrap the Rand formula, a law that says every worker who benefits from union bargaining must be part of the union and pay dues.

Harper has officially dismissed the idea of introducing legislation attacking union rights but a backbencher Conservative MP, Pierre Poilievre, will introduce a private member's bill on the issue. This is the same backdoor approach the Tories use to attack abortion rights. They know they cannot raise these issues directly.

The move is near the top of the agenda for the Ontario Conservatives and championed by Tim Hudak, who has loudly attacked unions.

Poilievre and Hudak use the same false language that has been used in the US, calling their plan "workers freedom" legislation and talking about a "flexible" workforce. This is code for squashing workers' ability to have a say in their wages, conditions and benefits and it would hand all this power to the employer.

Although it would not end trade unionism, gutting the Rand formula would mean that workers could be "free-riders" in a workplace where the union has bargained wages, benefits and working conditions. The union would still be bound to protect these workers even though they don't pay union dues, an obviously unfair situation.

The resources of the union to bargain, to represent workers on grievances and advocate for workers rights on health and safety and equality issues would also be undermined.

The Labour Council campaign kick-off proposed sharp and clear messages to counter the false and misleading information. It was a strong call-to-arms for a broad, massive mobilization.

The main message was that every trade unionist should immediately begin to organize in her workplace and local to build the campaign to stop this attack. It was also a call to the labour leadership to support this effort by providing resources—especially booked-off campaigners—to increase the capacity of the labour movement to make this campaign successful.

Lunchtime information meetings, special local meetings to discuss the issue, information pickets at large workplaces and engaging community partners were some of the ideas put forward.

The next campaign meeting will be Thursday, April 4 at 7:30pm. To find out more about the campaign, please visit labourcouncil.ca

STRIKE ON THE ISLAND: INTERVIEW WITH PORTER AIRLINES WORKER



SOCIALIST WORKER continues its coverage of the Porter Airlines strike with another interview with one of the striking workers.

What has picketing been like? How has the company responded?

Picketing has been up and down. Sometimes you feel effective, highly effective, a nuisance, or impotent. The need to be/feel effective forces you to be more creative and doing so can be quite satisfying. Being on the line is not where we want to be but we definitely try to make the most of it.

The company has responded by hiding behind the port authority. They definitely do not want to engage with us as it will bring down their brand. In newspapers, though, they lie to delegitimize our position. For instance they've said we make up to \$48K and have gotten our health and safety issues removed from articles that have been posted on the web. These are outright lies.

Has there been any movement from Porter as far as coming back to bargaining?

I heard that Porter will come back to the bargaining table anytime, but there is no new offer. They just want us to take their insult of an offer.

How are Porter able to keep flying planes? Where are they fuelling up? What must that be costing them?

At first it seemed to me that they were fueling only a little less at YTZ than they did before we struck but it is my understanding that they are not getting as many deliveries as they did before. This would suggest that they are tankering in enough fuel from other airports that they can return without fueling at YTZ (Toronto Island Airport). My guess would be that this is being done out of YUL (Pierre Elliot Trudeau Airport), YOW (Ottawa Airport) and possibly in Boston, Newark and Chicago. This would cost them a lot because fuel is the number one expense of an airline and planes burn extra fuel for extra weight.

What kind of safety issues have you heard about while you all have been on strike?

Well the scab workers sure got all there training done very fast. I mean what took me almost 3 months to get, they got in a week. Also no one really knew what they were doing. You got a bunch of scabs fueling planes when they're not even sure how to do it.

I've heard of fuel spills, runway/taxiway incursions (vehicles not acting according to directions given by ground control when on runways or taxiways) which could result in collisions with planes at high speeds, and replacement workers busting their heads falling or hitting planes. One had to go to hospital.

HEART YOUR PARTS

by JESSICA SQUIRES

THIS YEAR'S Canadian Federation for Sexual Health campaign, "Heart Your Parts," managed to pull off a surprising feat: navigating the mainstreamed expectations of mainly heterosexual, penetration-based sex, and the minefield of shame-and-blame based sex education narratives, it developed a campaign that was surprisingly inclusive without alienating or putting readers off with jargon. Simply put, it managed an immensely inclusive campaign that did not erase differences between people and their diversely sexual lives.

How have people been showing you all support?

People have been showing their support by coming down to the line and picketing with us. People also show their support by donating money, food for our BBQ and just by canceling their flights they had booked with Porter.

Many other Porter workers in different departments are supportive because they know how bad things are for them in their own departments. They know what Porter is afraid of: that things will be better for them when we succeed. We've even had a cash donation from at least one of them.

Other unions have given us all the support in the world by coming out and picketing with us or helping to organize and participate in actions. Labour is under attack and the airline industry is particularly in a race to the bottom with costs. We can only succeed by working together.

Community members are also incredibly supportive to as well as other people working for other companies on the island.

Cabbies, who we frustrate the most with our picketing support us as well. They understand the need for unions and they're also upset with Porter and the Toronto Port Authority because they wouldn't let them use the washrooms in the ferry terminal.

There was a solidarity demonstration the other day when alot of supporters showed their solidarity and created a picket line on Airport. How did that make you all feel?

Well I think this might have been the first time we got to Porter because we weren't letting any cars onto the ferry. We also had a big crowd and showed passengers there is a strike going on. If we had this much support everyday I don't think the strike would last.

It is very humbling to know that people who you didn't know a few weeks ago are willing to take massive risks to support you. It is a learning experience for those of us who haven't been part of protests before. Many of the guys had a hard time understanding why anyone would do what some of our supporters have (like showing up at 4:30AM for a picket). I just said to them, though, that just because you don't know anyone who would do it does not mean that there aren't people who would.

The powers that be want us all to feel alone in our struggle for fairness. They have overwhelming financial resources and only try to make sure that they get more. We are learning that we are not alone and that the struggles and success of the past are not history to be forgotten and taken for granted but lessons for our own success and the success of others.

For more information follow the latest news, join the facebook group, follow on twitter @OccupyFbo and @PorterStrike, and send a message to Porter.

Some may wonder what can be so difficult about sexual health? The first thing many people think about is, use a condom and you're good. And, if you throw in dental dams, doesn't that about cover everything? In this view, the sex ed. spiel is basically, "Use a condom or a barrier method of some kind and you won't get sick or pregnant. Oh, and get consent first." Simple, right?

The problem is that this dumbed-down, faux-universalized version of sex ed. manages in one short phrase to completely miss the three main points of today's sex-positive healthcare: not all sex involves penetration; physical risks are not just about sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancy, and there can also be emotional and mental health-related risks; and finally, for many—even most—people, additional socioeconomic factors exist that raise their level of risk and for which they are not to blame.

A basic parallel which can illustrate the issues with the mainstream approach just described is this: in the realm of body weight, the old-school health education narrative was, if you eat right and exercise you won't get fat. There were issues with not recognizing that health has socioeconomic indicators, that not everyone has access to eating right, etc.; but if you get fat, it's your fault, because you should have eaten right and exercised. Part of the result is that not only are individuals to blame, but they should be ashamed of being

STICKING WITH THE UNION

Carolyn Egan

Labour and International Women's Day

MARCH 8, International Women's Day, has always had a very close relationship with the labour movement. The day was first declared in 1910 at a socialist women's conference in Copenhagen to commemorate the struggles of immigrant women garment workers who had marched in the streets of New York City in 1908. These women came from many countries around the world and joined with their American sisters in a fight for dignity and respect.

The song "Bread and Roses," which is often said to be the anthem of the women's movement, came out of the textile strikes in Lawrence and Lowell, Massachusetts in 1912. "The rising of the women will be the rising of us all." Women speaking twenty-two different languages joined together and fought back against the robber barons in incredibly difficult circumstances and became an inspiration for all working people. They won gains against all odds and showed the collective power of workers.

As time went on women struggled for equality within their unions. Many of the gains that women have made have been through collective bargaining and strikes. Paid parental leave was achieved by the Canadian Union of Postal Workers who walked the line in 1981, and went on to be incorporated into unemployment insurance. Equal pay for work of equal value was first won through strike action. Anti-harassment protection was gained through collective bargaining as was same-sex spousal benefits.

Trade union support for women's demands such as childcare and reproductive choices was instrumental in winning gains. One of the first abortion clinics in Quebec was housed in a union office. The campaign to overturn the federal abortion law was taken up by almost every union in the country.

Today women need unions in the same way we did in 1908. Governments at all levels are trying to take away these hard won gains. We have seen the Harper Conservatives legislate Air Canada workers, rail workers and postal workers back to work, taking away their right to strike. The Liberal government in Ontario has imposed collective agreements on teachers. The Ontario Conservatives are threatening to bring "right to work" laws into our province, bringing back the open shop and allowing "free riders" to opt-out of paying union dues in order to undermine our unions.

Women beat back the employers in years past and we can do it again, fighting side by side with our brothers. We have to build deep roots in our workplaces through rank-and-file activity, reactivate our fellow workers and help develop the confidence in the majority that we can win this crucial fight for union rights.

Join International Women's Day on March 9. In Toronto: rally 11am at OISE (252 Bloor St. West), march 1pm to Ryerson (55 Gould St.). Fires are burning, we are rising!

Join the International Socialists

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fat. This way of talking about health bolsters the fatphobic aspect of capitalist culture.

By the same token, the mainstream approach to sexual health explicitly blames and shames people for having unprotected sex and for getting sick and, implicitly, for not engaging in penetration sex. Further, it leaves out factors such as how capitalism makes people—especially trans people, women and aboriginal people—internalize the idea that their bodies do not belong to them, leaving them to wonder how they can make decisions about their bodies. Other socioeconomic, class-based and oppression-based factors affecting health also hold true for sexual health. And sexual health is not just about certain body parts, but also about the whole person living a fulfilled life.

These ideas are evolving, and the ones I describe here are slowly becoming part of more mainstream discourses. Because it is still evolving, there was some unevenness to the Heart Your Parts campaign material. The How-to section in particular shows the influence of pressures not to change too much, too fast. The video contest illustrates this well: the videos ranged from a basic how to use a condom/sex dam, to a cute video with a much more holistic approach to the question. But the overall tone of the campaign walked the line admirably, and the guest blogs are particularly well worth reading. The campaign will take place again next year.

SocialistWorker

Shut the pipelines down

THERE IS a mass movement—uniting indigenous groups, environmentalists and the labour movement—against tar sands pipelines heading west and south, and campaigning is beginning against pipelines heading east.

Last October 22, five thousand people held a sit-in in front of the Victoria legislature against the Northern Gateway and Kinder Morgan pipelines taking Alberta tar sands to tankers on the West coast. The protest was led by Coastal First Nations and had support from environmentalists and the labour movement, including Dave Coles—president of CEP, the union representing tar sands workers.

As a Canadian Autoworker organizer said, “The ongoing risks that these tar sands pipelines and tankers pose aren’t worth any price. Tens of thousands of unionized and other jobs depend on healthy river and ocean ecosystems. We will be standing in solidarity with thousands of working people in BC and our First Nations sisters and brothers.”

Then on February 17, as many as 50,000 protesters converged in Washington to demand an end to the Keystone XL pipeline taking tar sands south. The pipeline route, despite tinkering, crosses some of the most environmentally sensitive areas of the US plains, and must go through First Nation reserves.

In January, hundreds of indigenous people joined ranchers and environmentalists at the state capital in Lincoln, Nebraska to say the pipeline will not go through. Many of them made the trek to Washington, D.C. for February 17. It was the largest single climate change protest in US history, proving that even Obama’s supporters have grown tired of him dragging his heels on global warm-



ing. Dozens were arrested, including the executive director and the president of the Sierra Club. Significantly, it was the first time in the Sierra Club’s 120-year history that it officially took part in civil disobedience.

The Tar Sands are Fracked

The political pressure on Obama to kill the Keystone XL plan is growing, and that is excellent. But the purported

abundance of cheap natural gas and shale oil, extracted through fracking, could be the final nail in the Keystone’s coffin. Extracting gas and oil by injecting a high-pressure mixture of water and chemicals into shale bedrock is a bonanza for oil and gas companies, but a disaster for people living in the area. Water tables are contaminated, farmland is destroyed and bedrock is destabilized resulting in earthquakes.

Opposition to fracking is growing around the world. At the same time as pipeline protesters gathered in Washington, a New York State anti-fracking campaign forced the governor to delay, if not end, plans to begin gas drilling.

Exploiting tar sands and shale beds are desperate, last-ditch attempts to wring profits out of fossil fuels. Extraction is expensive, dangerous to indigenous communities

and workers, and extremely destructive to the planet. Mobilizing to stop pipelines and fracking go hand in hand. The time to transition to clean, renewable energy is here, and to delay any further is criminal.

No Line 9

With mass pressure opposing tar sands pipelines west and south, there is increasing focus on Line 9, which threatens to take 300,000 bar-

rels per day of tar sands from Montreal to Sarnia. Line 9 was built in 1975 to transport conventional oil, and will not be able to withstand the hot and acidic tar sands bitumen. Like Enbridge’s Line 6 that burst in Michigan in 2010, spilling over a million gallons of oil into the Kalamazoo River, a devastating spill would only be a matter of time.

Line 9 cuts through First Nations territories that have not been consulted, like Aamijwnaang. Line 9 also cuts through Toronto, where it avoids wealthy areas like Rosedale or Bay Street and instead crosses through poor and racialized areas like Jane-Finch. But nobody will be able to avoid a catastrophic spill. Line 9 passes through the most densely-populated area in Canada, and through critical watersheds including the St. Clair River, the Thames River, and the Grand River.

Enbridge’s Line 9 project violates indigenous sovereignty, carries oil that comes from the destructive tar sands, and goes towards increasing carbon emissions that threaten our entire planet’s ecosystem. Last year a broad-based campaign—uniting indigenous groups, farmers and environmentalists—succeeded after sustained mobilizing to stop the proposed mega-quarry. We need a similar campaign against Line 9, and it has already begun.

On November 17 hundreds attended a conference in Toronto opposing the Tar Sands, and now west and east end groups are emerging to build local opposition to line 9. This has the potential of uniting indigenous communities defending their land, unions pushing for green jobs, and environmentalists—and to demand the NDP speak out against the Tar Sands and pipelines and call for good green jobs for all.

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Idle No More: First Nations women lead the way

by **JOHN BELL**

A NATION is not conquered until the hearts of its women are on the ground: Cheyenne proverb.

The burgeoning Idle No More movement has shown that First Nations are far from conquered. Women are prominent activists and speakers for the movement. The very name Idle No More grew from discussions among four Saskatchewan women, calling for grass-roots opposition to the Tory omnibus budget bill that contains so many attacks on environmental protection.

One of the four, Nina Wilson, from the Nakota and Plains Cree First Nation explained their goal: “We are trying to help people get their voices back so that we can make more change and we are able to have more of a First Nations voice... not just a First Nations, but an Indigenous voice, and not just an Indigenous voice but a

grassroots voice, because it affects us all.”

With her hunger strike in direct challenge to Harper’s arrogant approach to the environment, and assimilationist views on First Nations, Chief Theresa Spence became for a time the most visible Idle No More activist. In spite of often sexist verbal attacks, the Attawapiskat First Nation leader remained adamant in her call for direct nation-to-nation dialogue with Harper and Governor General David Johnson.

Back in her home community, her leadership inspired a community blockade of the Victor diamond mine, owned by De Beers. Protests focused on the billions in profits extracted from the land, while communities continue to face hardship and lack of adequate housing.

Idle No More has brought new names-Pam Palmater, Janice Makokis and others—to prominence in First Nations discussions that have too long been

dominated by men. The Indian Act explicitly tried to extinguish the traditional leadership role of women in Indigenous culture, as part of its drive to impose colonial rule.

This speaks to the resilience of First Nations culture, struggling to perpetuate itself in the face of deliberate oppression.

Bonita Lawrence, in Gender, Race, and the Regulation of Native Identity in Canada and the United States states: “Understanding how colonial governments have regulated Native identity is essential for Native people, in attempting to step away from the colonizing frameworks that have enmeshed our lives, and as we struggle to revive the identities and ways of living that preceded colonization.”

First Nations women face sexist violence as well as racism. According to 2004 data, Aboriginal women make up the majority of violence victims and are 3.5 times more likely to

experience incidents of violence compared to non-Aboriginal women.

In December a First Nations woman in Thunder Bay was kidnapped and raped. Her two white assailants told her it was in retaliation for Idle No More, and that they planned to attack again. A cultural support worker told the CBC: “The woman was told that native people do not deserve their treaty rights as she was being beaten and strangled and raped.”

In response to this sort of violence, Sisters in Spirit was formed in 2004 to create awareness. In 2010, Stephen Harper’s Tories cut the funding for the project.

Idle No More reveals the two realities faced by Indigenous women: the powerful leadership role they play, and the colonialism-bred violence they face inside their communities and out. The more Idle No More succeeds, the better for women.