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STUDENTS & RESISTANCE

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FIGHT THE CUTS

by **PAM JOHNSON**

IN THE lead up to the Ontario provincial elections on October 6, people are bracing for a possible Tory triple threat of Prime Minister Stephen Harper, Toronto Mayor Rob Ford and Ontario Conservative Leader Tim Hudak.

All are calling for austerity measures that would slash and burn public services and unionized jobs, while robotically repeating the corporate tax cut mantra as the panacea for what ails the economy. To distract from attacks on jobs and services and tax breaks for the wealthy, all have resorted to bigotry: Rob Ford boycotted Pride, Stephen Harper declared that “the major threat is still Islamicism,” and Tim Hudak lashed out at “foreign workers.”

Economists like Nouriel Roubini, who predicted the crisis of 2008, say austerity is the recipe for economic stagnation and possibly another recession. Even billionaire Warren Buffett has called for a stop to the tax-coddling of the wealthy.

Canada’s economy has slowed in the past few months, indicating clearly that this is not the moment to take money out of people’s hands by cut-

ting jobs and starving public services.

But these realities have not deterred Mayor Ford. The fact that no “gravy” was found in the city’s budget by Ford’s \$3 million consultants, KPMG, has not stopped Ford from touting their recommendations for cuts to everything from libraries, to day care, to arts funding, to the zoo. These statements sparked a groundswell of anger after Ford’s promise of no cuts to the public service and jobs during his election campaign.

The Ford brothers’ disingenuous and bullying tactics, from Rob’s refusal to attend Pride celebrations, to Doug’s call for scrapping the waterfront mixed-residential/recreation plan in favour of a developer scheme-up in the form of a megamall, hotel and sports complex, led City Councillor Kristen Wong-Tam to call the Ford brothers’ actions “decision making by fiat.”

In similar style, Tim Hudak, Progressive Conservative candidate for Ontario Premier, has stepped onto the campaign trail with a “wheel of tax” gimmick that paints premier McGuinty as a tax-and-spend Liberal. Parroting Harper’s conservatives, Hudak has only “tax relief” to offer on every issue from jobs to the environment.

His campaign has raised the spectre of the hated Harris government’s slash-and-burn policies of the 1990s.

But any notion that the Ontario Liberals are any different from the Tories is an illusion. McGuinty has called for the same belt-tightening as Ford, Hudak and Harper, promoting the same tax-cut remedy for the economy.

Under McGuinty, corporate tax rates in Ontario have dropped steadily, reducing revenue, while simultaneously introducing premiums (user fees) for health care and reducing and delisting services.

Ontario’s post-secondary students pay the highest fees in Canada, but the post-secondary budget is the lowest. Day care and mental health funding has been frozen. Ontario’s public service workers have been told they will get zero per cent wage increases—an effective cut.

In lock-step with Harper’s billion-dollar security regime at last summer’s G20 Summit, McGuinty secretly passed martial law-like regulations that resulted in over 1,000 illegal arrests. Ontario recently approved the expansion

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Farmers defend Wheat Board

by REG MCQUAID

AS HEAD of the right-wing National Citizen’s Coalition (1998-2002), Stephen Harper campaigned to destroy the Canadian Wheat Board (CWB). As Prime Minister, he is attempting to hand over Canada’s grain trade to multinational corporations that dominate global markets. But Prairie grain farmers are fighting back.

The CWB dates back to the 1930s, when governments enacted legislation for Prairie farmers to jointly market their grain. The legislation has been modified over time, most recently in 1998. In its current form, it provides single-desk selling of all wheat and barley for export. The CWB is now the world’s largest seller of wheat, annually capturing about \$500 million in market value. Not surprisingly, its success has long attracted multinational grain corporations.

Harper has announced plans to end the CWB’s single-desk selling authority, effective August 1, 2012. The government will repeal legislation requiring a farmer vote before making changes to the CWB’s single desk, and plans to eliminate the single desk despite farmers’ opposition. Because of trade deals such as NAFTA, it will be virtually impossible to reinstate the single desk later, once it is eliminated.

The CWB has launched a counter-attack, conducting a plebiscite among the 68,000 Prairie farmers who ship grain through the Board, with results due on September 9. The plebiscite shifts the terrain of struggle from Parliament to public opinion, raising the political cost of destroying the Wheat Board. To win this battle, the CWB needs the support of all those who oppose Harper’s neoliberal austerity agenda. The Saskatoon-based National Farmer’s Union is foremost in the battle to save the CWB, and seeks our solidarity.

For more information, visit <http://www.nfu.ca/cwb.html>

Islamophobia major threat

IN THE lead-up to the anniversary of 9/11, Stephen Harper whipped up Islamophobia to justify renewed attacks on civil liberties.

After 9/11, the Liberal government introduced a series of draconian “anti-terror” laws that infringed on the most basic civil liberties—including “preventive detention” and arrest without warrant.

Some of these laws were revoked a few years ago but Harper wants them back.

Just six weeks after an Islamophobic terrorist went on a killing spree in Oslo, Harper declared that “the major threat is still Islamicism...that threat exists all over the world.”

Muslims remain the West’s primary scapegoat, to justify wars abroad and attacks on civil liberties at home, and to distract from the economic crisis.



Québec solidaire MNA Amir Khadir

Democracy and sovereignty in Quebec

by BENOIT RENAUD

SINCE THE devastating defeat of the Bloc Québécois (BQ) on May 2, the sovereigntist movement in Quebec has been in turmoil and the Parti Québécois (PQ) has visibly lost its hegemonic position in the national struggle.

Before May 2, we could already see a multiplication of small groups campaigning for Quebec independence, mostly amongst younger people. But when three prominent PQ MNAs (members of Quebec’s National Assembly) resigned together in protest at the lack of

democracy within their own party, we knew some threshold had been crossed.

This summer, 77 people signed a manifesto denouncing the “sovereigntist governance” program adopted by the PQ as another form of autonomism and an excuse to give up the fight for independence.

They proposed to put the national struggle back into the hands of ordinary people through constituent assemblies—a proposal similar to a key element of Québec solidaire (QS).

On that basis, they brought together more than 400 people in a public meeting in Montreal, where most interventions were

bashing the leadership of the PQ. Their organization, le Nouveau mouvement pour le Québec (NMQ), is a political movement with no electoral ambitions, but a significant minority within that milieu is arguing for a new party for independence. Their leadership is instead arguing for a strategic pact between all the existing sovereigntist or independentist parties, including the PQ and QS.

Then on August 25, Bernard Drainville, probably the strongest figure left in the PQ caucus after the resignations, published a series of 10 proposals, following an email consultation of his constituents. In

these proposals, he argues for a series of democratic reforms, including proportional representation and popular initiative referendums. The proposal of initiating the process of a referendum on sovereignty through such popular initiative has long been debated within the PQ but ultimately rejected.

In all those initiatives, a common thread is visible: the issue of Quebec sovereignty and the future of the movement for national independence are inseparable from democratic reforms and popular involvement, which is what UFP and Québec solidaire have been arguing for years.

Environmental cuts hit First Nations hardest

by JOHN BELL

One in 10 public servants at the Ministry of the Environment have received notice that their jobs are gone.

A total of 770 workers are getting the axe.

The government says that only some 300 are facing outright layoff, with the rest accounted for by retirement and transferring personnel to other jobs.

But many of the Environment Canada workers are special-

ists—meteorologists, scientists, engineers and the like—and shuffling them into other jobs is not an option, according to the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada.

“The loss of these experts and of their knowledge will have a devastating impact on the research and analysis conducted at Environment Canada,” according to NDP environment critic, Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles).

“Some of the best engineers, biologists,

chemists and meteorologists could look elsewhere for positions where their work is valued. It makes absolutely no sense to lose such valuable expertise at a time when we are fighting climate change and dealing with more extreme weather events.”

The Tories insist that their commitment to the environment is strong, but the layoff announcement was soon followed by a ministry decision to eliminate 21 out of 23 water quality monitoring

sites in First Nations communities in the Northwest Territories.

Under fire during his northern tour, Harper promised to restore the environmental monitoring, but Dene National Chief Bill Erasmus was skeptical: “The Prime Minister and Cabinet are killing environmental monitoring in the name of fiscal restraint while they continue to subsidize oil companies and spend money on foreign lobbying on behalf of the tar sands.”

Income inequality growing in Canada

by T. RENE

IN JULY, the Conference Board of Canada released a report that showed a 33-year trend of increasing income inequality—a disparity which has been accelerating since 1993.

Between 1976 and 2009, the earnings gap between the lowest 20 per cent and the top 20 per cent of income earners nearly doubled, growing from \$92,300 to \$177,500.

A recent House of Commons report on poverty identifies children, lone-parent families

(particularly female lone-parent families), women, unattached individuals, seniors, Aboriginal people, people with disabilities, recent immigrants, visible minorities and low-wage workers as those most at risk of having low income.

Elderly poverty rates have been rising since the mid-1990s. Between 2006 and 2009, about 128,000 more seniors were reported as having low income, with women comprising 70 per cent of this amount. And the percentage of Canadians with low income increased from 10 per cent

in 1989 to 13.5 per cent in 2009.

From 1976 to 2009, the average Canadian income has increased 17 per cent, from \$51,100 to \$59,700, but the median income has increased only 5.5 per cent, from \$45,800 to \$48,300, over that time. The gap between average and median income has grown, signalling that income growth is being distributed unequally.

In 2010, the Credit Suisse Research Institute published a Global Wealth Report showing that the top 0.5 per cent of income

earners hold 35.6 per cent of the global wealth while the bottom 68.4 per cent hold less than 4.2 per cent of global wealth.

In 1998, the United Nations Development Program reported that the world’s 225 richest people had a combined wealth of \$1 trillion. This equals the combined annual income of the world’s 2.5 billion poorest people, roughly 40 per cent of the world’s population.

Income inequality continues to grow, in Canada and around the world.

Tory cuts threaten food safety

As part of their ongoing austerity agenda, the Tories plan to cut federal meat inspectors in BC, Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

Inspectors for the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) currently inspect meat plants in those provinces for E. coli, listeria, salmonella and other harmful bacteria. The cuts will dump inspection responsibilities on provincial governments that have no meat inspectors of their own, very little infrastructure to conduct proper inspections, and inferior safety standards.

In 2008, 22 people died following a listeria outbreak at a Maple Leaf Foods processing plant in Toronto. The Agriculture Union blamed an under-funded food safety system and too much government reliance on industry-generated safety reports.

The union has launched an online petition to pressure the government to reverse its decision: www.foodsafetyfirst.ca

HST defeat a blow to Liberals, business in BC

The people of BC voted 55 per cent in favour of eliminating the Harmonized Sales Tax (HST); 881,198 people voted to end the HST and 728,927 voted to keep it.

In the 2009 provincial election, the incumbent Liberals said that they had no intention of combining the provincial sales tax (PST) with the federal GST to create the HST. Within a few months of winning the election they announced that the HST would be “the single biggest thing we can do to improve BC’s economy.”

The new tax of 12 per cent would have applied to a much larger range of goods and services than the PST did. It also shifted \$2 billion of the tax burden from business to consumers. The referendum was called after a largely right-wing petition campaign under the Recall and Initiative Act that allows petitioners to propose a change in legislation.

In the referendum campaign, the NDP took a more visible role, and the issue of the shift of taxes from business onto the rest of us was much more prominent. The pro-HST side included the Coal Association, the Petroleum Producers, the Council of Forest Industries, the Mining Association, the New Car Dealers and the Motion Picture Production Industry Association of BC.

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Tell Harper: hands off Libya!

by **BRADLEY HUGHES**

AFTER SIX months of NATO bombing that undermined the Libyan Revolution, Canada and other NATO powers are considering extending the war past its September 27 deadline—and even sending troops—to maintain corporate control over Libya.

Canada alone dropped more than 550 bombs on Libya by the end of August, and joined NATO—the same countries that armed Gaddafi up until the start of the revolution—in eventually recognizing the replacement government, the National Transitional Council (NTC).

But the leadership of the NTC

includes the sort of pro-Western people like those installed in Afghanistan and Iraq. Mustafa Abdel Jalil, chairman of the NTC, is a former Justice Minister in Gaddafi’s government. Mahmoud Jibril, chairman of the NTC’s Executive Board, headed the National Council and the National Economic Development Board in Gaddafi’s government, where he was in charge of privatization. The new head of security for Tripoli, Albarrani Shkal, was the general responsible for Gaddafi’s assault on the city of Misrata. The NTC’s new representative in Canada, Abubaker Karmos, was part of Gaddafi’s old diplomatic team in Ottawa.

NATO countries also have tremendous influence over the new

regime via the billions of dollars of Libyan funds that they seized when the bombing started. Libya’s assets abroad are estimated to be worth around \$100 billion, including \$3.5 billion held in Canada. Already NTC representatives have announced that the new government will honour all oil contracts—like those from Canada’s Suncor—made with the Gaddafi dictatorship.

Because of the presence of so many former regime figures in the new government, some rebel militias have threatened to refuse to follow orders from the new government.

During the initial phases of Tunisia’s and Egypt’s revolutions order was kept by neighbourhood committees. But in Libya, NATO

is considering sending troops in order to ensure “stabilization”. At the end of August, Canada’s Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird talked about continuing Canada’s mission beyond the September 27 deadline, using the same excuse even after Gaddafi has been driven from power: “Canadian forces, as long as our NATO allies are on this UN-sanctioned mission, are there to ensure that we continue to protect civilians.”

Despite voting unanimously to support the war and then extend it once, the NDP has stated it will oppose further extensions. It’s up to the anti-war movement outside Parliament and the NDP inside Parliament to tell Harper: hands off Libya!

Tenth anniversary of the ‘war on terror’

by **PAUL STEVENSON**

DURING THE memorials of those killed in 9/11, our rulers will once again try to use the tragedy to stir up jingoistic sentiment.

No officials will consider the brutality of ten years of wars for which they are responsible.

In “response” to the 9/11 attacks, the US led a number of wars, ostensibly to “root out” enemies of the West, but with disastrous consequences. It began with Afghanistan, a war that drags on into its tenth year. Tens of thousands have been killed, millions have been displaced and the situation for ordinary Afghans remains brutal. Since the

invasion Afghanistan has consistently slipped further into poverty and violence. In Iraq, a war based to some extent on fictitious ties to the 9/11 attacks, more than one million have been killed, while the US props up a brutal dictatorship that continues to rule the country with an iron fist. In other nations such as Somalia, the spectre of terrorist attacks was used to destroy the first indigenous leadership, and the first political stability, the country had seen in decades. The consequences of that intervention are particularly acute now as tens of thousands starve in the broken country.

Domestically, the use of Islamophobia, to justify unpopular

wars, has now become an even more prominent feature of ruling ideas. While Islamophobia didn’t start ten years ago, there is no question that it has become increasingly virulent in recent years. Governments in the EU and North America bring up the bogey man of a creeping Islamic takeover to distract people from the blatant inequality at home and to gloss over domestic political crises.

All in all, the brutality and racism of Western countries have reached a new pitch in the last ten years. But it is crucial for us to put this all into a longer timeline. Just as Islamophobia didn’t start on 9/11, nor did US and allied attacks on

the Arab and Muslim world begin as a response to the attacks in New York and Washington. The logic of imperialism results in constant competition for resources and economic and political control of the world.

The centrality of the Muslim world and its huge oil resources have made it a target. Plans for the takeover and control of Iraq and Afghanistan existed for a decade before 9/11 in the US. In addition, US actions to gain more control over the area raised a deep hatred for the US which proved a fertile recruiting ground for the organization that launched the attacks on 9/11 in the first place.

Egyptian Revolution challenges austerity, Israel

by **JESSE MCLAREN**

THE EGYPTIAN Revolution that toppled dictator Hosni Mubarak is continuing to challenge the military regime he left in place: one of austerity and complicity with Israel.

The historic toppling of Mubarak was merely the first stage of the Egyptian Revolution. A report from the Egyptian NGO Awlad al-Ard reported that from January to June 2011 there were 956 sit-ins, strikes,

demonstrations, rallies and gatherings across Egypt. In July, a wave of political demonstrations and sit-ins erupted to demand justice for martyrs.

This was followed by a fresh wave of economic strikes through August, including civil registry workers, train drivers, engineering workers, steelworkers, millworkers, chemical factory workers and textile workers.

The Egyptian Revolution was partly inspired by Palestinian re-

sistance, and is continuing to challenge the regime over its ongoing complicity with Israel.

When Israel killed 15 Palestinians and five Egyptian security personnel in August, tens of thousands of Egyptians protested outside the Israeli Embassy—including a young man who climbed the 22-story building to replace the Israeli flag with Egypt’s.

According to Ali Abunimah from *Electronic Intifada*, this averted a repeat of the brutal 2009 war on

Gaza: “What is clear is that the ‘diplomatic’ constraints on Israel are not driven by world governments which remain largely silent and complicit in the face of ongoing Israeli crimes. Rather it is governments being forced to respond to people power – especially in Egypt, where tens of thousands of people rallied outside the Israeli embassy in Cairo.”

To follow workers struggle in Egypt, visit www.menasolidaritynetwork.com

US eyes intervention in Syria

by **MELISSA GRAHAM**

The Syrian state has killed more than 2,000 people over the past five months. As ongoing protests against the brutal regime of president Bashar al-Assad continue, Western imperialism threatens to try to hijack another part of the Arab Spring.

The violence in Syria is attracting international attention. Some believe that other countries should step in and offer support, but if recent history has taught us anything, the “support” offered by the US, Saudi Arabia and others should be flatly rejected.

Western powers—especially the US—would like to control and contain the movement in Syria for their own profit. They are desperate to hold onto what remaining power they have in the Arab world, and will do anything to maintain their grip.

A similar approach proved to be a disaster in Libya, where intervention is trying to channel the revolution into a regime acceptable to the West and its corporations. Intervention in Libya has given the West a chance to put themselves at the heart of the fight against the Arab Spring, while providing opportunities for foreign control in a state with the largest oil reserves in Africa—a model they want to apply to Syria.

The mainstream media keeps pushing the idea that these interventions are for the good of the people, but increasingly this is proving to be a farce. Already appeals have been made by US neoconservative think-tanks to implement energy sanctions on the oil and gas sectors to weaken the Assad regime, punishing an already impoverished population.

Palestinian youth decry statehood bid

by **JAMES CLARK**

Electronic Intifada recently posted a number of opinion pieces by Palestinian youth that decry the upcoming statehood bid by the Palestinian Authority (PA).

Their criticism is not based on the idea of a Palestinian state, but on the nature of the bid and the concessions it would make on behalf of Palestinians. Frustrated by years of symbolic United Nations resolutions that never get implemented, a growing number of Palestinians have no faith that the PA’s plan to declare statehood at the UN will amount to anything meaningful. Even more worrying, they fear that the PA will sell out the right of return of millions of Palestinians who live in the Diaspora.

The criticism also shows that support for the one-state solution is on the rise among Palestinians, since a two-state solution is impossible in the context of spreading Jewish-only settlements and the Bantustan-like nature of Palestinian territory.

The statehood bid has attracted criticism because it excluded most Palestinians in developing it, further evidence of the PA’s increasing isolation, especially among youth.

Quebec and the Constitution

STEPHEN HARPER and the Tories commonly encourage a divide between Quebec and the “Rest of Canada”. One tactic is to dismiss any revisiting of the tensions in federal politics; in the last election, this was framed in terms of “Constitution fatigue”. But what is really behind the arguments regarding Quebec and the Constitution?

A starting point is the history of deep discrimination faced by the French-speaking population of Canadian society, in Quebec and in English Canada.

The Canadian Constitution was enacted in 1982. The elected leaders of nine of the ten provinces of Canada consented to the process, supporting the new law of the land on behalf of their predominantly English-speaking constituents. But from that time to the present, no elected premier of Quebec, regardless of political affiliation, has been offered constitutional language acceptable to the citizens of the province with a French-speaking majority.

Federal state

This is not about some inherent “problem” with Quebec, or with the French-speaking Québécois. It is about a federal state that was founded on the conquest of what became French Canada, and about the denial of rights associated with conquest.

As debates about the Constitution continued in the 1990s, overt discrimination – a specific form of anti-French racism that had been standard in the history of English Canadian politics and practice – came to the fore. Let’s recall a few examples.

In 1994, Johanne Harvey moved to Owen Sound, Ontario from her native Montreal. She was met with “Frog go home” written in manure on her living room window. Her cats were shaved under their tails, and one was later found dead on her porch lying in a pool of blood. When her son put a Quebec flag in his window, it became the target of eggs thrown at the house.

This story is just one of many. In the summer of 1990, 25 families in the Ontario town of Sault St. Marie decided to pack up and leave and leave town. Their children were continually harassed at school and taunted on the streets, and their homes were threatened and vandalized.

The Sault was the first of some 70 Ontario municipalities to declare itself officially “English only”, as an expression of opposition to amending the Constitution to recognize Quebec as a “distinct society”.

In one town that became symbolic of the wave of English chauvinism, Brockville, Ontario, protesters in 1990 ceremoniously wiped their feet on the Quebec flag.

Reactionary

The most reactionary elements in the political spectrum found expression through the door of Quebec-bashing. Any effort to amend the Constitution to include recognition of Quebec’s unique history, language and culture was seized upon to advance opposition to the rights of all the oppressed.

In the fall of 1989, the Confederation of Regions Party (COR) called a conference in New Brunswick that drew over 5,000 participants. In Ottawa in the same year, COR joined forces with the Christian Heritage Party, the Equality Party, REAL Women, the Canadian Christian Anti-Communist Crusade, the Fraser Institute, the Alliance for the Preservation of English in Canada and the Reform Party.

This alliance attacked the rights of immigrants, women, lesbians and gays, trade unionists and those living on social assistance. What united them all was a profound commitment to ensure that Quebec would not be welcome under its own terms to sign on to the Constitution.

Anti-French bigotry is as old as Canada itself. Canada is a country founded on the oppression of two peoples, Canada’s native peoples and the ancestors of those who today are the Québécois.

The experience of conquest has at many times brought these two groups together. The struggle for survival of the Métis people is perhaps one of the greatest symbolic indications of this. The Métis rebellion led by Louis Riel, suppressed only by the hanging of its leader in 1885, was met with a mass protest of 50,000 in the streets of Montreal. They stood in solidarity with the rights of the Métis to self-determination in Manitoba.

Debates

The debates regarding the Constitution were expressed in terms that many could only find dull and boring and irrelevant. But constitutions are the official means to govern human and civil rights in advanced capitalist societies.

From this view, it is stunning that Quebec today remains the only province that has never officially signed on to the Constitution, though it is the second largest province part of Canada’s industrial heartland.

There is only one reason for this. Quebec’s provincial status is the remnant, in distorted form, of a national people – a conquered people, an oppressed people. This is why the Québécois have a sense of history and culture that remembers conquest and discrimination at the hands of the British monarchy, and of the English colonialism that established the federal state.

It is this minimal recognition of Quebec that has been in dispute.

Harper

The Reform Party moved from the margins to mainstream politics by riding this tide of anti-French, anti-Quebec politics. And the Reform Party is also the predecessor to Harper’s Tories.

Canada’s federal leaders have learned all too well that challenging the rights of the oppressed is the most effective way to divide and conquer. The challenge for our side is to advance the solidarity that can unite the vast majority, and unite to oppose all forms of oppression.

INTERNATIONAL



STUDENTS IN CHILE. (PHOTO: FRANCISCO OSARIO)

Student protests rock Chile

by **PETER HOGARTH**

STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS in Chile against privatized education and debt have entered their third month. Protests that began with pockets of students taking over their high schools and universities have steadily grown, uniting with working class anger to form a massive protest movement.

In the last week of August, the education protests grew to 600,000 as the Chilean Trade Union Congress (CUT), an organization of 80 labour groups, organized a 48-hour general strike in solidarity with the students’ demands.

At the heart of the student anger is a system of education in which all but the wealthiest few are forced into extremely limited and poor public education. Students are forced to take on incredible debt to finance post-secondary education in a country that has the highest income inequalities within the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

However, the motives and impact of the protests in Chile go far deeper than student debt. These demonstrations have captivated the students and workers of Chile because they are about class rage and resistance to a system that has bred so much inequality throughout Chile and the world. They are a challenge to the very logic of neoliberalism, imposed on the people of Chile so brutally nearly 40 years ago.

Neoliberalism

Following the bloody 1973 military coup that brought in the dictatorship of General Augusto Pinochet, Chile became a laboratory for the now famous Chicago School of Economics. There, the students of Milton Friedman tested out the neoliberal policies that have since been exported around the globe: privatized health care, privatized education, vicious attacks on organized labour, and a retreat from social service provision.

These policies have been maintained by Pinochet’s successors, including cur-

rent president of the right-wing coalition Sebastián Piñera. Less than half of high school students in Chile attend public schools, no new public universities have been built since the end of Pinochet’s reign, public money is funneled into for-profit schools, while public school teachers are underpaid and many of the schools damaged in the 2010 earthquake have yet to be repaired.

Demands

Students have issued a 12-point proposal of their demands and called for an elected Constituent Assembly to write a new democratic constitution. Students have insisted on rewriting the tax system and guaranteeing quality education for all by nationalizing the extremely profitable copper mines.

Student leaders have begun a series of meetings with Piñera; it will be crucial to continue to link up their struggle and demands with those of Chile’s working class who have the power to bring the Chilean state grinding to a halt.

London riots against poverty and oppression

by **G. FRANCIS HODGE**

THE MOST intense riots in Britain in decades began Saturday evening, August 7 in Tottenham, north London.

Police shot and killed 29 year-old Mark Duggan on Thursday, August 4 in Tottenham. They failed to notify Duggan’s family of what had happened. In fact Duggan’s parents learned of the death by watching the TV news.

Tottenham is one of the poorest communities in Britain, with the fourth highest level of child poverty in London and an official unemployment rate of 8.8 per cent, double the national average according to The Guardian newspaper. The community has had a difficult re-

lationship with police for years. Since 1998, 333 people have died in police custody in Britain and not a single police officer has been convicted of any wrongdoing in any of these deaths. Local people in Tottenham are keenly aware of this fact, as noted with surprise by journalists reporting on the riots.

Local people marched on Tottenham police headquarters on Saturday afternoon, August 7, demanding answers from the police and some sort of justice for Duggan’s family. According to witnesses at the police station, the riots began several hours after demonstrators commenced a peaceful sit-in, the ignition coming from the police beating of a 16-year-old female demonstrator.

The rioting quickly spread to other parts of London and to the rest of the country. By the time the rioting ceased four days later, communities from Bristol in the south to Manchester hundreds of kilometers to the north had been involved.

The Conservative-Liberal coalition government has cracked down hard. Over 1,400 people have appeared in court on riot-related offences so far, and over 1,200 are being held in jail awaiting trial in higher courts. Anderson Fernandes, 22, has been jailed 16 months for taking an ice cream, and two young people have been jailed four years for ‘inciting riots’ in Cheshire via posts on Facebook, even though no riots happened there.

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of nuclear power generation, but has failed to expand protection of northern forests and waterways, showing an equal disregard for environmental protection as the Tories. McGuinty has also reneged on promises to kill anti-worker legislation, like the 60-hour work week which was put in place by the previous Harris government.

It is worth remembering that the Harris government came to power after Bob Rae’s tenure as premier of Ontario in the early 90s. An NDPer then, he also called for belt-tightening and tore up the collective agreement of public sector employees. The infamous “Rae Days” opened the door for Harris’ attack on workers and the poor.

But the austerity agenda is beginning to meet resistance. After being elected less than one year ago, “Ford Nation” is being met by resistance at every front: on bike

lanes, libraries, garbage privatization and transit.

On April 9, more than 10,000 people protested Ford’s actions. Hundreds made deputations through the night on July 28 to the city’s executive committee against cuts. Library workers started a petition that has thousands of signatures, including Margaret Atwood’s.

This resistance will have the opportunity for its biggest expression on September 26, when city council is set to vote on budget recommendations. The Toronto and York Region Labour Council and community groups have called for a mass “Rally for Toronto” to bring together all groups resisting Ford cuts.

It is also a rallying cry against the bigoted and anti-worker, anti-union austerity agenda on offer from all levels of government. The energy of this event will be felt in the Ontario election on October 6.

Anger and frustration at the austerity measures helped propel the NDP to Official Opposition status federally for the first time in history.

The spectacle of Stephen Harper’s having to stand and applaud with the audience at Jack Layton’s funeral when Stephen Lewis called for a manifesto for social democracy speaks to the groundswell of sentiment against his policies.

The Ontario NDP needs to tap into this sentiment. But in order to achieve real, lasting change, this groundswell must also be turned into a mass movement that defends public services and good jobs, and opposes homophobic, Islamophobic and racist scapegoating. The starting point in Toronto is September 26 at City Hall. In Ottawa, protesters engaging in mass civil disobedience will oppose the tar sands the same day on Parliament Hill. The struggle must take place where it counts: in the streets.

Egyptians back Bahrain’s revolution

*Egypt’s revolution has inspired Egyptians like **Ayman Al-Maz** to support freedom struggles all across the region. **Yusur Al-Bahrani** talked to Al-Maz about Bahrain’s democracy movement and how Egyptians have shown solidarity.*

PEACEFUL PROTESTORS waved the flag of Bahrain, while violent thugs wielded wooden clubs and metal bars. This was the scene near Bahrain’s embassy in Cairo—just across the Nile from Tahrir Square—as solidarity activists assembled to show their support for Bahrain’s pro-democracy movement.

Ayman Al-Maz, an Egyptian activist, rushed into the crowd to announce the cancellation of the rally. “We were marching to the protest, but thugs from the Bahraini and Saudi Embassies in Cairo stopped us,” says Al-Maz. “The Egyptian security forces said they were concerned about our safety, and asked me to cancel the event.” Egyptians sometimes risk their life by supporting Bahrain’s freedom struggle, Al-Maz explains.

Repression

Because of his activism, Al-Maz has been named on what is called the “red list” in Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). “I have been sentenced to a total of 100 years in prison by these governments,” says Al-Maz. The charges against him include exporting the Egyptian Revolution to the Gulf countries and “humiliating” their regimes. Freedom is never granted, but Al-Maz believes it can be exported. His experience during Egypt’s revolution was like waking up from a decades-long nightmare: “I broke the chains of Mubarak.” He is determined to spread his new-found freedom to the rest of the Arab world, including Bahrain: “It is our responsibility to export freedom to people who have never lived it or experienced it, except in movies.” Al-Maz has dedicated his life to campaigning for democracy in Bahrain.

The Bahrain solidarity campaign in Egypt began with just three people, when Al-Maz and two friends created the Facebook group “A Million Messages to Support the Bahraini People.” The group then grew spontaneously. From Facebook, Al-Maz and his supporters moved to the streets. Meeting in city after city, and from one café to another, Al-Maz helped plan a solidarity rally for Bahrain in Tahrir Square on June 1.

Threats

There are numerous challenges. Al-Maz is under constant surveillance and faces repeated threats from pro-Saudi Wahhabi thugs. Not surprisingly, the solidarity march to Tahrir Square was not a simple task. Over 10,000 Egyptians eventually rallied in Tahrir to support the Bahraini people. They chanted slogans, condemning the brutal crackdown on peaceful protesters in Pearl Roundabout in Manama, Bahrain’s capital. They also set up a photo gallery that showed the cruelty of Bahraini forces and Saudi and Emirati troops occupying the country. Egyptian protesters were angry and astonished to discover the level of repression in Bahrain, which included the burning of the Quran and the destruction of mosques. They were surprised that Saudi Arabia, a country in which Islam had its beginnings, would send troops to commit these crimes.



Beyond Tahrir Square, there were demonstrations at the American, Bahraini and Saudi Embassies on several occasions. The protesters condemned human rights violations in Bahrain and demanded immediate reforms for the Bahraini people. Some, like Al-Maz, want to overthrow the Bahraini King, in the same way as Mubarak was overthrown.

Sectarianism

Al-Maz recalls an incident in Alexandria during which he tried to rally support for the Bahraini people outside a mosque. He was trying to win the worshippers’ hearts by calling on them to join him: “Today I want to condemn the burning of the Quran and the destruction of mosques. I am not talking about incidents happening in Europe or in Israel. I am talking about what’s happening in an Arab and Muslim country: Bahrain. The ones who burnt the Quran are not non-Muslims. They are the Saudi forces.”

Al-Maz was then stopped by a couple of Wahhabis, who defended the attacks. They said: “They are Shias. They have a different Quran.” Al-Maz replied in disappointment: “I am Sunni. The Quran was burnt by the Saudi forces.” He was then attacked and beaten.

The Bahrain solidarity campaign in Egypt faces ongoing threats and intimidation by Wahhabis. Wahhabism is an ultra-conservative branch of Islam that has deep roots in Saudi Arabia. Its influence is spreading in the Arab world, due to Saudi funding of mosques, events and social programs. Al-Maz explains that many who come to embrace and promote Wahhabism outside Saudi Arabia are initially paid to become followers. They sometimes attack people of other faiths and ideologies, but they are not nearly as dangerous

as perceived. Al-Maz argues that their oppressive behaviour will never win a majority of Egyptians, who continue to celebrate the overthrow of their own oppressive regime. After the revolution, Al-Maz insists, there is no appetite for oppression in Egypt, whether it is the remnants of Mubarak’s regime or extremist religious groups.

Al-Maz considers himself a religious Sunni Muslim, but this does not stop him from supporting the Shia majority in Bahrain—as some might expect. He is keen to emphasize that he is Sunni, believing that it adds “more credibility to Bahrain’s revolution.” The government of Bahrain, through its official media, attempts to portray pro-democracy protesters as an exclusively Shia movement that is trying to overthrow a Sunni government. Bahrain’s rulers are trying to characterize the protests as a sectarian battle, in order to deflect attention from the legitimate demands of the movement.

Solidarity

In reality, the movement is comprised of both Shia and Sunni protesters, even though Shias are the majority in Bahrain. Their main demand is to end the ongoing discrimination that has been practiced on them since the Al Khalifa ruling family came to power over 200 years ago.

“They [the Saudi and Bahraini governments] have been working on this for decades. They want to incite sectarianism between us, but they won’t be successful in post-Mubarak Egypt. Mubarak’s regime attempted to create sectarian divisions, too. Sunnis and Shias have lived together peacefully, but this solidarity threatens the interests of the regimes,” argues Al-Maz.

In addition to street protests, Al-Maz has launched a legal campaign in Egypt’s courts to back the movement in Bahrain. A team

of 20 volunteer lawyers recently filed a lawsuit against the King of Bahrain, the King of Saudi Arabia and the President of the UAE, holding them responsible for the violence committed against peaceful Bahraini protesters. The first hearing was scheduled for July 10, but has been postponed to November 13.

There will be no Bahraini witnesses as it is too dangerous for them to testify against their own government. Instead, the case is based on reports and documents published by foreign journalists and human rights organizations. Al-Maz suggests that even President Barak Obama’s May 19 speech—in which he mentions the destruction of Shia mosques in Bahrain—could add credibility to the case. Despite Obama’s words, the US government has tacitly approved the occupation of Bahrain by Saudi and UAE troops, refusing to condemn the violent intervention of its regional allies.

According to Al-Maz, Egypt’s courts have the right to visit Bahrain to investigate the “crime scenes” where troops attacked and killed peaceful protesters. Predictably, the Bahraini, Saudi and Emirati governments have not responded to the case.

The Bahrain solidarity campaign in Egypt is struggling to break the code of silence throughout the Arab world. Its aim is to expose the hypocrisy of countries that claim to support freedom and democracy, while backing Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. Activists like Al-Maz send a message to Bahrainis that they are not alone in their struggle for freedom, democracy and human rights.

Ayman Al-Maz is an Egyptian solidarity activist. Under Mubarak’s regime, Al-Maz was arrested 11 times and frequently expelled from university for his politics. In 2001, he was forced to leave Egypt. He returned during the Egyptian Revolution.

‘They want to incite sectarianism between us, but they won’t be successful’

STUDENTS & RESISTANCE



PHOTO: WILLIAM JOHN BECKETT

The austerity agenda has placed public education on the chopping block, but students around the world are fighting back. Peter Hogarth looks at some examples of student resistance and the potential for campus struggles to inspire broader fights.

Students are once again at the fore of the social movements, following massive student-led mobilizations all over the world in recent years.

Students at all levels—high school, college and university—in Greece, Quebec, Britain, Chile and elsewhere have demonstrated against austerity and, in many cases, have been a catalyst to greater resistance from wider sections of the public, especially among workers.

Students as a social force

For the past 60 years, the status and social composition of students have changed dramatically. After World War II, poor and working-class students finally won access to post-secondary education. The increased access came in response to capitalism's growing need for a skilled and specialized labour force.

As a result, the education system was transformed. For instance, in Britain in the 1960s, only around eight per cent of young people attended university. Fifty years later, around 40 per cent do. A majority of them will probably end up in white collar working-class jobs, as once privileged occupations like teaching become "proletarianized"—subject to the attacks on wages and working conditions that used to be confined to industrial labour.

Today students are very much part of the working class. Because some form of post-secondary education has become a minimum requirement for most jobs, the majority of students will come from working-class families, as they seek better lives than their parents

and meaningful employment. Most will need student loans, grants (where they still exist) and other forms of credit to pay for school.

Student loan debt in Canada is a whopping \$18 billion and growing. Students are more likely than ever to be working "McJobs" to pay their way through college, often slowing the progress of their studies. Job prospects for graduates tend to be temporary jobs without benefits or security. The consequences of neoliberalism have made these facts a reality for students around the world.

Students as the spark

When students have organized and mobilized, they have won concessions from governments, universities and other institutions. More importantly, their struggles have often been the catalyst for more generalized working-class resistance—the way a spark can ignite a wildfire.

The most famous example is May 1968 in France. As worldwide sentiment began to turn against the US war in Vietnam, students at the Nanterre campus of the University of Paris held a series of escalating protests that included teach-ins, occupations and clashes with riot police on campus. Student demands ranged from the right to visit members of the opposite sex in student residence, to a ban on police and fascists on campus, to an end to the Vietnam War.

Barricades

Every attempt to stop the protests—such as shutting down the campus and disciplinary hearings for student activists—only sparked

further protests. For several days, students, schoolchildren and young workers clashed with police on the Left Bank in Paris. On May 10, 50,000 confronted the riot police. Barricades were built out of parked cars, grills, railings and trees. Cobblestones were dug up from the streets—to be used as projectiles against advancing police. "Under the cobbles, the beach" was scrawled as graffiti on walls in the Latin Quarter.

The widespread use of police violence and the bravery of the French students shifted public opinion overwhelmingly to the side of the students. It also attracted the solidarity of the French working class. From the beginning, socialists and other revolutionaries knew that, for the movement to go beyond the campus, they would have to appeal to the workers of Paris. Student activists took to the factories, leafleting and asking for solidarity between workers and students.

General strike

Two days after the night of the barricades, ten million French workers went on strike against repression. This one-day strike escalated into an indefinite general strike, bringing the economy of France to a virtual standstill. While the movement would eventually be channeled into parliament and the existing system, the fact remains that one of the largest general strikes in history was sparked by the bold militancy of students opposing the war and fighting for better learning conditions.

Similar examples exist elsewhere. In many other cases, high school and university students were

like detonators that set off an explosive resistance—even when the surface of society appeared calm and stable.

Greece

In 2008, high school and university students exploded in anger at the police murder of 15-year-old Alexandros Grigoropoulos. Student walk-outs and demonstrations became a focus for all the discontent in Greek society. In response, workers struck in solidarity, while also making their own demands. Solidarity between students and workers was obvious as teachers walked off the job with their students, electrical workers covered closed-circuit security cameras, and a general strike erupted to protest the government's austerity budget plans.

Quebec

Quebec Liberal Premier Jean Charest campaigned in 2003 with a promise to freeze tuition fees. Once in power, Charest went back on his word, transforming \$103 million of grants into loans, nearly doubling the debt of Quebec's poorest students. In response, students from most CEGEPs and universities took to the streets in a campaign that saw a year of demonstrations, negotiations and protests. A coalition of student unions formed and organized a coordinated strike campaign.

In February 2005, over 30,000 students struck. By March 15, over 100,000 students were on strike. One demonstration in Montreal drew nearly 100,000 students. At the height of the strike, 230,000 students in Quebec (more than half of



the student population) had walked out of classes.

The movement ended with the restoration of funding for student grants. That Quebec has the lowest tuition fees in Canada can be credited to the united response of its students and allies in the face of these attacks.

Britain, Chile, Togo

Trade unions in Britain are currently organizing for a massive general strike against austerity, a movement that was no doubt inspired by the militant student demonstrations last winter, which included the occupation of Tory headquarters.

In Chile, students across the country are leading massive protests against their government's plans to pay for the economic crisis by privatizing public education. And in Togo, after more than eight weeks of suspended classes, sit-ins and violent clashes with security forces, students at the University of Lomé forced the government to the negotiation table. Students were protesting against a new semester system, a minimum pass mark and inadequate facilities.

All these examples demonstrate the vast potential of student resistance. But on their own, students don't have the same collective strength as workers—who can shut down whole sections of the economy when they go on strike, and whose labour is required for the production of profit. It is in this sense that workers represent a much greater potential threat to the capitalist system than students do.

It is also why, for student struggles to go beyond the campus and to begin challenging the system in its entirety, students need to enlist the support of the broader working class. In the lead-up to the September 26 mobilization against Ford's cuts in Toronto, there will be ample opportunity to build student-worker unity, and to infuse labour's fight against austerity with the spark of student resistance.

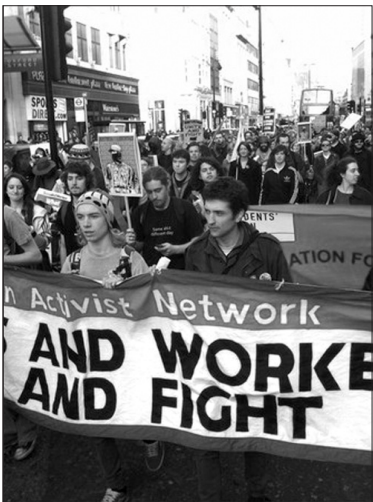
How should students organize to 'take it over'?

by MOHAMMAD ALI AUMEER

A STRONG student movement is not just important to our campuses but to our society as a whole. It has the power to unite with other layers of society to challenge the system for reforms and beyond, but this does not happen automatically.

In Canada, the student movement is led by the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS). In Ontario, the CFS's provincial component has launched the "Take it Over" campaign geared at increasing student participation in the upcoming provincial election on October 6. Amalia Savva, President of the Student Federation of Ottawa University, explains that since "the Government of Ontario is the main source of funding in post-secondary education... the 'Take it Over' campaign is a way for students to mobilize around student issues such as increases in tuition fees and a reduction of funding. Students should not only be supporting the campaign, but they should also be organizing all year round to target tuition fee increases and massive amounts of student debt."

It's the student mobilization itself, rather than the election that it is key to winning real change. Quebec has the lowest tuition fees in the country because of a strong student movement. Because of the role of CFS in uniting half a million students around progressive demands, it often comes under attack by right-wing forces trying to de-federate. Ironically, some on the left support such



attempts under the guise of being "radical," but this merely bolsters the right wing.

The best way of being radical is to both support progressive mass organizations like the CFS and to build socialist organizations that connect such reforms on campus with a revolutionary transformation of society as a whole. We need organizations that can provide year round organizing on a variety of campus issues—from promoting Safewalk and childcare spaces, to challenging violence against women and the anti-choice groups, to building campaigns to lower tuition fees—and to connect these to broader social forces.

Because students can help spark wider movements for social change—from France 1968 to Chile 2011—it's important to unite students with workers who, history has shown, have the power to transform and revolutionize society.

THE THREAT OF PRIVATIZATION

'Our campuses are not for sale!'

by SAMANTHA PONTING

ALONGSIDE THE rapid deterioration of public funding for post-secondary education, campuses across the country are witnessing new forms of privatization, as administrators salivate over the chance to make a quick buck.

Without hesitation, they market students as avid consumers to a wide variety of businesses, eager to profit from the student demographic in new and innovative ways. The ensuing transformation of campus (bathroom stalls and classroom walls become permanent sites of advertizing) is not just an aesthetic one.

Without adequate public funding for post-secondary education, our academic institutions seek bigger and better contracts from private companies in order to fund research. This has undoubtedly re-shaped the nature of research today, which is far less likely to serve the public good than corporate interests.

In Ottawa, we have experienced a booming defence-and-security industry form around our six university and college communities.

Currently, 200 defence and security companies reside in Ottawa, enjoying access to the region's best research facilities, found in the heart of our campuses. In a political climate where funding for education is being slashed, and funding for the military is rapidly expanding (departmental spending for the Department of National Defence now exceeds \$18 billion annually), our campuses become increasingly militarized, and students themselves lose autonomy in their research.

Corporate influence

Corporate influence in universities is perhaps most striking when we observe the composition of university governing bodies. Prominent business leaders, including many from the defence-and-security industry, occupy seats on these boards via appointment.

At York University, a number of directors of the York University Foundation, the fundraising body of the institution, have been criticized for their deep connections to Canada's pro-Israel lobbyists. This has occurred alongside the repression of anti-apartheid activism at York.

At Carleton University, workers and students, led by Students Against Israeli Apartheid, have demanded that Carleton divest, through its pension plan, from companies that violate international law in Gaza and the West Bank. Carleton's business-friendly Board of Governors has thus far ignored the campus-wide plea to demonstrate respect for human rights.

At Carleton, there are also numerous sites where private interests have penetrated the public university. Here, negotiations with the Australian-based company NAVITAS are underway. NAVITAS is a for-profit corporation that offers "pathway" programs to international students, so that they may seemingly increase their chances of attending the host university. The company uses the crest of the host institution, as well as their campus resources.

Exploitation

But these partnerships are exploitative. Following the program, many students are not accepted into their program of choice. At Simon Fraser University and the University of Manitoba, where NAVITAS has contracts, non-unionized labour is used. Effectively, a two-tiered education system is produced, creating disparities among students, in class sizes, for example.

Programs such as NAVITAS have ignited intellectual property battles between university administrations and



campus faculty, as seen both at the University of Manitoba and Carleton. These battles are crucial to the development of NAVITAS' course material. The language classes that NAVITAS offers are a great source of contention for language professors, who are witnessing a non-unionized labour segment emerge to perform the same duties as they do, potentially threatening the job security of these workers.

The commercialization of universities and colleges affects both workers and students. Campus-wide student-worker coalitions, such as Campus United at Carleton University, can help us keep public institutions public.

This means demanding more funding for education, so that we can stop skyrocketing tuition fees and protect quality jobs. Decreasing our reliance on the private sector is essential to breaking the ties between universities and the war industry.

Students and workers alike must take a stance against the private university, and make our voices heard, united in one movement.

Jack Nation

ON AUGUST 27 in Toronto, more than 10,000 people united to mourn the loss of NDP leader Jack Layton and to continue the fight for a better world. An unprecedented response covered City Hall in a rainbow of multilingual chalk messages—renewed after each downpour—and filled the streets with people.

Jack had a long history in the movements, from the pro-choice and gay rights movement, to the anti-war and labour movement, to supporting health care and the environment. Jack’s best moments were when he used his position and his party to amplify these movements: from building the mass rallies against the Iraq War in 2003, to leading the filibuster in support of postal workers—his last act in Parliament.

This is the best of social democracy, and why it matters to those who want a better world, even if we don’t think Parliament can deliver it. A historic gain for the NDP, which people identify with change and which gives the potential to magnify social movements, gives ordinary people the confidence they themselves can change the world.

This is why Jack’s passing did not produce demoralization but a determination—as both the volume and content of the chalk messages indicated: “from choice to peace to equality for all, we will continue”, “we’ll mourn today and continue the fight tomorrow”, and “you’ll live on through us”.

Looking at the top of society, one sees only right-wing austerity, from Stephen Harper in Ottawa, to Rob Ford in Toronto, and the threat of Tim Hudak’s taking the upcoming Ontario election. But the response to Jack’s death is like a flash of light that shows the bubbling resistance at the bottom of society—from the G20 protests and April 9 Ford protest before the election, to the electric reaction to Brigitte DePape’s interruption of Harper’s throne speech, to the huge number of Torontonians who spoke out against Ford’s cuts in July.

The corporate media spoke of a “Ford Nation” of people who would be clamouring for cuts, but it’s nowhere to be seen. Instead there’s a “Jack Nation” of thousands, determined to resist. We need to take this sentiment into every neighbourhood, workplace, school and street corner, to mobilize for the September 26 “Rally for Toronto to save city services and defend good jobs.” What better way to honour Jack than to unite all the movements he shaped, and that shaped him, into a mass rally for a better tomorrow?

ARAB SPRING

Libya: revolution hijacked?

AS PEOPLE celebrate the overthrow of Libyan dictator Muammar Gaddafi the West is continuing its attempts to stifle the Arab Spring.

At the start of the year, it looked like the entire Arab world was on the brink of revolution. Explosive uprisings toppled US-backed dictators in Tunisia in January and Egypt in February, and by March, there was a transitional council in Libya. Protests and uprisings spread across Africa and the Middle East, while workers in Wisconsin occupied their Capitol building. It was US imperialism’s worst nightmare.

The Egyptian Revolution was too strong to directly intervene in, but the Libyan revolution was being pushed back by Muammar Gaddafi. The West first worsened the situation by imposing an arms blockade that primarily hurt the resistance, and refusing to help fleeing refugees or war resisters from Gaddafi’s army. When sections of the Libyan resistance called for a “no-fly zone” to protect civilians, the West then used the opportunity to intervene militarily: claiming the mantle of liberation, burying the history of Western arms sales to Gaddafi and previous “humanitarian interventions” in Iraq and Afghanistan, and ignoring Western-backed massacres in Palestine and Bahrain.

This accompanied political intervention. NATO bombed Libya for four months before recognizing the National Transitional Council (NTC)—while it encouraged the popular uprising to be dominated by former regime elements, dependent on foreign powers, with guarantees that Gaddafi’s oil contracts with the West would remain intact. The head of the NTC is Mustafa Abdel Jalil, Gaddafi’s justice minister, and the military commander was Abdel Fattah Younis, Gaddafi’s interior minister.

But the regional revolution is far from over. Sections of the resistance killed Younis, and such differentiation within the rebels could resurface as the West seeks to entrench its control—from trying Gaddafi in the Hague instead of in Libya, to using the humanitarian crisis created by NATO bombs to argue for occupation.

The fall of Gaddafi could give confidence to the uprising in Syria, but NATO’s involvement could also bolster Bashar al-Assad’s false claim that the uprising in his own country is simply a pawn of the West. Meanwhile the ongoing Egyptian Revolution could alter the regional balance of forces.

The task of people in the West remains to stop our own governments from bombing in the name of liberation, and to follow the lead of the Arab Spring by connecting anti-imperialism with anti-austerity.

OPINION



Why climate activists should not support population control

Ian Angus edits the ecosocialist website climateandcapitalism.com. He is the co-author, with Simon Butler, of Too Many People? Population, Immigration, and the Environmental Crisis, which will be published in October by Haymarket Books.

Many sincere environmentalists, eager to find causes and solutions for climate change, focus on population. The problem, they say, is too many people using too many resources, causing too much economic growth. The solution they propose is much lower birth rates – many argue that unless humanity reduces its numbers quickly, no other political or technological change can possibly work.

The attraction of the “too many people” argument is easy to see. It is based on the obvious fact that both human numbers and greenhouse gas emissions have been growing at unprecedented rates in the past century. And it offers an obvious and humane solution – make birth control and abortion available to all women everywhere, and educate everyone about the need to have fewer babies.

As the American journalist H.L. Mencken wrote, “There is always an easy solution to every human problem – neat, plausible, and wrong.” The “too many people” explanation for climate change is a case in point. When we look past the big numbers (7 billion people on earth now; 9 billion by 2050!) it becomes clear that population growth is not driving the climate crisis, and that campaigning for population control will weaken the climate movement.

Correlation isn’t causation

At some point in every introductory statistics course, the instructor tells students about a European city where increases in the stork population were supposedly matched by increases in the number of new babies. The point is, that correlation isn’t causation—storks don’t bring babies, no matter what the numbers seem to imply.

Similarly, the fact that population and pollution both grew dramatically in the 20th century doesn’t prove that population growth caused the pollution.

In fact, when we look beyond global numbers, and examine population and emissions trends country by country, the apparent correlation disappears. Most of the nations with high population growth rates have low growth rates for CO2 emis-

sions, while nations with the lowest population growth rates have high growth rates for CO2 emissions.

Between 1980 and 2005, poor countries had 52.1 per cent of the world’s population growth but only 12.8 per cent of the emissions growth. Rich countries with just 7 per cent of the world’s population growth produced 29% of the growth in CO2 emissions.

Individuals do not drive emissions growth

The “too many people” argument ignores the social and economic drivers of emissions growth, blaming it on individual consumption. In reality, individuals have very little control over emissions growth: it has been calculated that if every single person in the United States faithfully adopted every single emissions-reduction measure recommended by Al Gore in his book *An Inconvenient Truth*, total U.S. emissions would fall only 21 per cent.

Even that greatly overstates the impact most people have, because such overall averages ignore class differences within populations. Globally, a few rich countries produce most of the emissions – and within each of those rich countries a minority has most of the wealth and consumes the most: in the US, for example, 20 per cent of the population accounts for 60 per cent of all consumer spending.

Populationism ignores corporate power

Does anyone imagine that reducing Canada’s population would have any effect on the Tar Sands, where – according to government estimates – emissions will triple by 2020? Of course not. Oil company behaviour is driven by the need for profits, not by population growth.

The fundamental cause of climate change is an economy that is totally dependent on fossil fuels, an economy in which short-term corporate profits always trump environmental sustainability. Unless we transform the economy and our society along sustainable lines, we have no hope of

securing an habitable planet, regardless of population levels.

Immigrants are not the enemy

Some environmentalists go beyond urging lower birth rates, arguing that rich countries should protect their environments by reducing or eliminating immigration. This argument has been eagerly taken up by racist and anti-immigration groups. The recently formed Canadian Centre for Immigration Policy Reform, for example, claims that, “our high immigration levels make it more difficult to achieve Canada’s environmental objectives and inhibit efforts to reduce the extraordinary size of our ecological footprint.”

“Immigration harms the environment” is just another way of saying “population growth harms the environment” – except that it targets a particularly vulnerable and powerless group of people, those who come from the very countries most harmed by climate change. Climate change ignores national borders, so the climate movement cannot limit itself to just one country. We need to forge strong links and collaboration with movements for climate justice in the global South, and to encourage migrants from those countries to become leaders of the fight here. That won’t be possible if we blame poor women in the South for environmental problems, and try to close Canada’s borders to them and their families.

Environmentalists who promote birth control and/or anti-immigration policies as solutions to environmental problems profoundly misunderstand the nature of the crisis. Adoption of their proposals would divert the movement from real solutions.

As renowned US ecologist Barry Commoner once said, populationist solutions to environmental destruction are “equivalent to attempting to save a leaking ship by lightening the load and forcing passengers overboard.” Instead we should ask, “if there isn’t something radically wrong with the ship.”

To order Ian’s new book, visit www.haymarketbooks.org

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REVIEWS



FILM

As the people rise, so do the apes

Rise of the Planet of the Apes

Directed by Rupert Wyatt
Reviewed by Jessica Squires

I have always wondered what the point was in Hollywood is making remakes, prequels, sequels and reboots, but I’m certainly not above going to see them (although the new Spiderman movie expected out next year seems to be pushing the etiquette envelope). I’m a sucker for a Hollywood blockbuster; I blame contradictory consciousness, but *Rise of the Planet of Apes* gave me another reason to watch.

This movie means something completely new and interesting in 2011 than its predecessors did in the 1960s. The original 1968 *Planet of the Apes* film was acclaimed as a ground-breaking work on a number of fronts. Produced in the era of the original *Star Trek* TV series, it was part of the shift in science fiction towards social commentary on issues ranging from racism to war. *Planet* was no exception.

Although the film replicates some of the worst Hollywood gender stereotypes, its apparent intention of exposing the oppression of racism to the American middle class also included commentary on war, the anti-war movement, and other political and cultural themes prevalent in the late sixties. The original film immediately fell prey to the Hollywood propensity for making sequels. Despite its fairly naked

FILM

Horrible Bosses are great for capitalism

Horrible Bosses

Directed by Seth Gordon
Reviewed by Melissa Graham

For working guys Nick (Jason Bateman), Kurt (Jason Sudeikis) and Dale (Charlie Day), life on the job has become an intolerable grind. Their horrible bosses (Kevin Spacey, Colin Farrell, Jennifer Aniston) make most jobs look like a walk in the park.

Thanks to the state of the capitalist system, quitting is not an option, so after a few-too-many drinks and some questionable advice from a hustling ex-con (Jamie Foxx), the three friends, decide to rid themselves of each others bosses, but of course it wouldn’t be a comedy if everything went according to plan.

Though this movie is very funny, its topic does little for the working class. By portraying these works as individuals instead of viewing them as part of a larger class, this movie suggests that workers are essentially powerless unless they’re willing to take extreme measures like murder. The best example of this is the boss-

attempt to capitalize on the success of the first film, *Beneath the Planet of the Apes* still managed to tackle an anti-nuclear-weapons theme–albeit in a heavy-handed way.

These themes were continued in the several sequels that followed–and the entire series lives on as a cult classic. Now, *Rise of the Planet of the Apes* has been released and promoted as a re-boot of the series. It would be easy to dismiss it as yet another example of Hollywood’s unimaginative avarice for a successful re-boot, but the imagery in this film is evocative of our times.

The civil rights-era debates about violence and non-violence were re-invented through the anti-globalization movement and the G20. The lead character ordering his fellow insurgents not to kill the humans out to kill them reminds us of the calls for non-violence from the leaders of today’s movements for democracy.

The trashing of cars and storefronts in their bid for freedom evoke the televised coverage of police riots. The parallels may not be exact, the symmetry slightly off kilter, but they are reminiscent of the Arab Spring, down to a bridge crossing that evokes memories of one of the most striking images of the Egyptian Revolution.

New themes

New themes for the franchise in the

21st century include the dangers of genetic science and genetic modification. The scientist seeks a cure for his father’s Alzheimer’s, but those good intentions are twisted by the capitalist who thinks only of profit. Like other recent sci fi films such as *Avatar*, the heroes here are not the humans, but the non-humans.

Most significantly, the evil, one-sided human is replaced with humans with the capacity to allow, encourage and foster real freedom; and there is no sign of the tendency in the original film to ascribe negative traits according to simian species. Instead, the most violent of the insurgents (Koba, who is likely to be a recurring character in–you guessed it–a sequel) was made that way through experimentation and torture at the hands of human beings.

Critics dismiss *Rise* as having distanced itself from the strong anti-racist themes of the original series it re-boots. Some argue that only PETA could be pleased by its storyline. But at its core, this film is about a group of individuals snatched from their habitat, imprisoned, oppressed and experimented upon, used for entertainment, and chronically underestimated; throwing off their chains and overcoming their oppressors; refusing to be subjugated; and eliminating their worst enemies, without sinking to their level. This is the story of the human experience under capitalism.

of the former boss and heir to the business.

Farrell is determined not only to run the business as cheaply and destructively as possible, but also wants Sudekis to fire employees with disabilities and pregnant women. This would be all right in a movie villain if the movie wasn’t using oppression to make a cheap joke.

Finally, there’s Day and Aniston. As a horrible boss, Aniston sexually harasses Day constantly, even during a high speed chase. Day’s friends often joke that his problem really isn’t a problem at all. In a way, it makes light of the sexual harassment faced by many women thanks to their male bosses, and misses the opportunity to make a really powerful character out of a female boss.

It’s important to mention that each of these bosses and workers are white, and the only racialized characters are those found in the bar. The bottom line is, if you can ignore the racism, sexism and capitalism long enough to enjoy the comedy, go for it. Otherwise, don’t waste your money.

LEFT JAB

John Bell

Death on Skidoos

MANY YEARS ago, in the smoky haze of my university dorm room, I regaled friends with the outline of my “great Canadian novel”. The finer points escape me now, mercifully, but they all flowed from the title: *Death on Skidoos*.

I even tried to pound out a rough draft or two, revealing even to myself my utter inadequacy as a novelist. But you have to admit, that is one kick-ass title. If I had finished it, even Toronto Mayor Rob Ford might have read it, changing history as we know it for the better.

Stephen Harper must have been rummaging through my dorm waste basket. Leave it to him to make *Death on Skidoos* a reality:

“The Department of National Defence plans to develop a new stealth snow-mobile for covert military operations in Canada’s Arctic, with \$550,000 set aside to build a prototype. Ottawa has posted a public tender for a hybrid-electric snowmobile that would allow Canadian Forces soldiers to swoop silently across the frozen landscape.

“The nature of these future clandestine assignments is unclear from the federal tendering document. But one thing is clear: silence is priority No. 1” (Canadian Press, Aug. 21).

I find the idea of a stealth snowmobile hilarious. Not everyone does; Whitney Lackenbauer, a “northern security expert,” says that the sneaky skidoo is “a signal the government is getting serious about Arctic sovereignty.”

Out of the other side of his mouth, this expert admits he has no idea what the serious snowmobile would be good for.

“I’d be interested in knowing what the military envisions as being the threats that it’s going to encounter with these. I’m at a loss to know what that is.”

A different expert, Rob Huebert, associate director of the Centre for Strategic and Military Studies at the University of Calgary, has the answer: “We’re starting to see individuals that you would probably want to be able to sneak up on. I think what you’re going to find is the more you look, the more you find.”

I have had the privilege of traveling to Nunavut, and from my experience, there are very few individuals to sneak up on, no matter how hard you look. So Mr. Huebert’s statement puzzled me. Then it struck me: he was channeling the Tory hysteria de jour–“human smuggling” of illegal aliens and “war criminals”–to justify militarizing the Arctic.

Stop for a second and imagine a boatload of Tamils tiptoeing across the tundra, trying to blend in on the streets (and there aren’t very many of them) of Iqaluit. Admittedly, the Arctic is warming due to climate change, but that warming is a relative thing. The far north will remain an unlikely destination for refugees.

If the spectre of a silent skidoo patrolling the shores of the Northwest Passage in search of “illegals” is ludicrous, the drive behind this silly announcement is anything but laughable. As the Canadian military scales back its involvement

in Afghanistan, Harper will use “defending our Arctic sovereignty” as his excuse to continue the militarization of Canadian society we have been witnessing in recent years.

This militarization involves spending massive amounts of our money on planes, ships and snowmobiles. Okay, so the announced budget for the stealth skidoo is only a half-million, a drop in the military budget. But you can add that drop to the \$490 billion in military spending planned over the next 15 years. That does not include the cost of the pointless, 10 year Afghan adventure. Tory figures put the price tag at \$11.3 billion, but non-partisan estimates say the real costs are double that, about \$20 billion.

Where will all this money come from, particularly at a time when Tories are slashing corporate taxes to historic lows?

You know the answer: it is written in the rising cost of your kid’s education, the cuts to your health services, the threats to the pension you’ve been paying into all your life, the degradation of your environment, the layoffs of public servants who inspect your food, even the plan to close the book on your libraries.

In order to get you to sit still for the outright theft of the accumulated social wealth of generations of working people, Harper and his ilk have to convince you that it is your sacred duty to bow down before our glorious warriors. Failure to do so is unpatriotic, even treasonous.

So every public event, every state function, every Tory pronouncement becomes an excuse to trot out the military. The swearing-in ceremonies for new Canadians must now be attended by the military. Canada Day festivities are dominated by Canadian Forces displays. Even Stephen Harper’s public reaction to Jack Layton’s death immediately segued into tasteless hyperbole about Canada’s military intervention in Libya.

Then there is Harper’s almost incomprehensible plan to rebrand the Canadian Forces as “Royal”. This is an attempt to turn back the clock to the days of my youth, when the Great White North really was white, and the trappings of a colonial past were everywhere to see. The real history of Canada and empire is a brutal and sordid one, but Harper and his crew of academic sycophants are rewriting it as well, airbrushing out the racism, violence and oppression that remain bubbling under the surface even today.

This is the PM who in 2009 declared to the world press, “We also have no history of colonialism.”

The creation of this myth of Canadian military glory past and present is urgent. You certainly can’t sell wars like Afghanistan on their own merits because, frankly, they don’t have any. And just who is threatening Arctic “sovereignty”? The Danes?

So all rise for the Royal Canadian Stealth Snowmobile Squad: testosterone fuelled yet sensitive! *Death on Skidoos* may come silently, but it sure is easy to spot them against the snowy tundra, painted the vivid colours of the Union Jack.

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 capital-ism 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 world-wide 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.



EQUITY AND OPPORTUNISM

Indigenous people in trade unions today

by **VALERIE LANNON**

Several issues ago, we briefly described part of the historical experience of indigenous people in trade unions, primarily around the turn of the 20th century, as Canada's working class began to grow significantly.

This article will attempt to increase our knowledge of the experience of indigenous people in trade unions today. Much more research is required to understand the full picture; however, it is hoped that the information below will stimulate further exploration.

For this article, I interviewed two unionists from BC, Alicia from the BC Government and Service Employees' Union, and Bonnie from a CUPE local (names are pseudonyms by request).

Alicia and Bonnie agreed that all working people are better off in a union than not. Bonnie noted, "otherwise you get taken advantage of, with things like longer than normal hours." They also believe that each of their unions has taken some steps to recognize the unique rights of indigenous people. This takes the form of resolutions or actions in solidarity with particular indigenous struggles or campaigns. It also takes the form of supporting internal committees where indigenous members can identify issues and make recommendations for change.

Problems

But there are problems with both of these types of support. In terms of solidarity with various indigenous campaigns, while Alicia and Bonnie welcome the solidarity, they question the level of commitment of union leaders. They feel there is opportunism involved, "to appear to be progressive when they don't really understand the issues or behave in a consistent way."

The sense of opportunism is also felt with internal actions. Alicia stated, "We are really cogs

in the union wheel. We had our own Aboriginal Council and we were beginning to draft language for the shop stewards manual. But once we were making progress, the union dissolved the Council, saying it was being incorporated into the Equity and Diversity Council, which is not as proactive as we were. I think if the union really had aboriginal issues as a major part of their agenda, the Aboriginal Council would not have been dissolved. Who better to discuss Aboriginal issues, whether they are in the workplace or on a global platform, than Aboriginal people?"

The BCGEU does not have language in its collective agreements that reflects indigenous concerns. Alicia prefers, however, "to see all equity seeking groups addressed in the agreement, not limited to Aboriginal people, because as an aboriginal person, I identify with the issues of other groups of people seeking equity. Yes, seeking equity in the year 2011! I expect there will be mutual support for each other's causes."

Bonnie stated that her CUPE local has an Aboriginal caucus, and the collective agreement allows time off for cultural events. But, here too, Bonnie feels like there is a certain amount of tokenism going on. "We had a photo of our group in our last union newsletter, but there was no description of what we do, or could do, so people have no idea why our group exists."

A common problem is what Alicia and Bonnie see as apathy among their Aboriginal counterparts. "They see the union as being outside of them and I say to them 'we are the union.' We need to address this."

Another concern with the union, however, is that there appears to be too many limits on who can attend various union conferences, on topics that would be of interest to Aboriginal members. "They're too insular, and won't let you attend unless they think you're going to

make a stink otherwise."

Advice

What advice do Alicia and Bonnie have for non-Aboriginal unionists and other workers who want to support their Aboriginal brothers and sisters?

First, recognize and support the fact that Aboriginal workers may do things differently. They noted, "First Nations people will seek each other out; and non-Aboriginal people need to understand this. We will go out of our way to create connections with one another, whether as fellow Aboriginal workers or with Aboriginal clients, including inviting them into our offices and sharing food."

It's also important to understand that Aboriginal workers (e.g. in a social sector job) are often performing "double duty". "We have to do our jobs and we have to educate everyone around us about the realities of being First Nations. We are seen as the 'go to' people. The expectations from our colleagues and our people are huge, way beyond the normal caseload or training we are given. So First Nations workers need to start saying 'no', and non-Aboriginal people need to support this."

They stated "Non-First Nations people will say things about First Nations if they don't think you're First Nations (if you don't 'look' First Nations), so First Nations people need to speak out in these situations."

Having said that, First Nations people are more than willing to support others' causes. As Alicia stated, "I want all oppressed groups to have their language and voices in collective agreements, to ensure better training. Shop stewards need to know all the issues of oppressed people, whether Aboriginal, gay rights or the rights of people with disabilities."

Alicia also noted that there are special lessons to be learned from those who have organized unions on reserve. That topic will be the focus of our next article.

international socialist events

TORONTO

2011: Year of revolts

Wed, Sep 14, 1pm
Sid Smith Hall, room 2119
100 St. George St.
Info: international.socialists@utoronto.ca

The politics of Stieg Larsson

Sun, Sep 25, 5:30pm
USW Hall, 25 Cecil St.
Fundraising dinner and talk
Suggested donation: \$7-20

Meet the York University International Socialists

Wed, Sep 21, 10am-6pm
York Campus Walk
info: yorkusocialists@gmail.com

Ford, Hudak/McGuinty, Harper: How do we stop the austerity steam-roller?

Tues, Sep 27, 7pm
Bahen Centre
40 St. George St.
Info: 416-972-6391
toronto.socialists@gmail.com

Can there be a revolution in Canada?

Wed, Sep 28, 1pm
Sid Smith Hall, room 2119
100 St. George St.
Info: international.socialists@utoronto.ca

Beirut 2011: Report back from the Summer University of Palestine

Sat, Oct 22, 4pm
Speaker: Abbie Bakan
\$10 or PWYC (includes veggie dinner)
Info: pape.danforth.branch@gmail.com

VANCOUVER

Langara College I.S. organizing meeting

Wed, Sep 14, 12:30-1:30pm, room A218
Info: vancouver.socialists@gmail.com

2011: Year of revolts

Wed, Sep 21, 12:30-1:30pm
Langara College, rm B144
Info: vancouver.socialists@gmail.com

peace & justice events

TORONTO

Mass meeting to stop Ford's cuts

Sat, Sep 10, 1-5pm
Dufferin Grove Park, 875 Dufferin St.

Rally to safeguard public health care

Tues, Sep 13, 12pm
Queen's Park
100 St. George St.
Info: ontariohealthcoalition.ca

Rally for Toronto! Save city services, defend good jobs

Mon, Sep 26, 5:30pm
Toronto City Hall
Info: www.labourcouncil.ca

OTTAWA

Say no to the Tar Sands

Mon, Sep 26
Parliament Hill
Info: www.ottawaaction.ca

VANCOUVER

NATO hands off Libya

Thurs, Sep 15, 7pm
W2 Woodwards, 111 West Hastings
Info: stopwar@resist.ca

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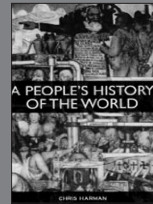
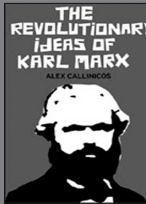
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McGILL STRIKE

by JOHN BELL

NON-ACADEMIC staff workers at one of Canada's richest universities have been forced to go on strike to get a fair contract.

The 1,700 workers are members of MUNACA, and include clerical staff, library technicians, secretaries, nurses and even the people who staff the morgue. They are the lowest paid university workers in Montreal and are only asking for parity with their colleagues at University of Montreal and UQAM.

It could take McGill staff 37 years of service to reach the top of their pay scale, compared to a maximum of 14 years at those other schools.

At present, McGill has the power to unilaterally alter pension plans, something other universities must enter into negotiations to do. The university recently cut health benefits and altered pension provisions without consultation.

McGill workers receive no premium if forced to work on weekends. University of Montreal and UQAM workers receive a 25 per cent bonus for Saturday work, and 50 per cent for Sunday. To top it off, McGill is asking workers to delay receiving any pay increase for six months.

Many of the jobs done by MUNACA members require skills and education—the kind of jobs many McGill students would be happy to get after graduation.

This is another reason why students should stand with workers against an administration that spends millions on swanky new conference rooms for itself while refusing to invest in the people who make McGill work.

STOP THE CUTS

by AYESHA ADHAMI

AS TORONTO gears up for the September 26 mass mobilization against Mayor Ford's proposed cuts to core services, many community agencies and even groups of individuals are taking the initiative to recruit fellow residents to the fight to protect those services.

Community consultations are being organized across the city by concerned citizens, including those in the Davenport Perth Stop the Cuts Committee (a sub-committee of the Toronto Stop the Cuts Network), based in Toronto's west-end, north of Parkdale.

The group began meeting in early August, with approximately 60 people attending the first meeting. General information about the cuts and a presentation was made on behalf of the Sistering, a shelter and community centre for women in Toronto. The group then broke down into small groups to explore avenues of outreach and campaign building. The group met again about three weeks later to expand on the work of the first meeting.

Organizers and participants of the committee will be representing their area and concerns at the September 10 mass meeting at Dufferin Grove Park, as well as the September 26 mass mobilization.

For more information, e-mail davenport.stopthecuts@gmail.com or visit www.torontostopthecuts.com

LABOUR DAY



PHOTO: JESSE McLAREN

ON TORONTO's Labour Day parade, many trade unionists marched with two important matters in mind.

Respect for the memory of Jack Layton was a key issue that touched most marchers; his face and last words were everywhere on buttons, t-shirts and posters.

The other key issue was the defence

of public sector services and jobs as the Labour Council and its allies plan for the "Rally for Respect" on September 26 at 5:30pm at City Hall (see page 10 for details).

This event will be part of the fightback against Mayor Ford's agenda of cutbacks and layoffs for Toronto.

OPSEU

College staff strike

OVER 8,000 support workers from all of Ontario's 24 community colleges officially went on strike on September 1.

The strike action, which is affecting approximately 500,000 students, was caused mostly by reluctance by the management team to engage in meaningful negotiations with the Ontario Public Service Employees' Union (OPSEU), the union representing the support workers.

While the media is portraying the striking workers as greedy, management is trying to impose wages that don't even keep pace with inflation.

Workers are not only defending their wages from concessions, but also fighting a larger fight against eroding benefits and rights for all Canadians.

Similar to the recent Canada Post/CUPW col-

lective bargaining negotiations, management wants to increase the number of non-unionized workers at colleges and double the probationary time period for new workers from six months to a full year, a time period during which no benefits are provided.

As one striking support worker in the Early Childhood Education department at George Brown College put it, "We're striking for the next generation which is for you guys, we're paving the way for you guys to get a job."

Unfortunately, the College Student Alliance (CSA)—which represents the majority of students affected by this labour dispute, and has a history of applauding government decisions to increase tuition fees—has refused to engage in any meaningful student-worker solidarity.

But the Student Association of George Brown College (SA)—one of only two college student associations in Ontario to hold membership in Canada's largest and most progressive student organization, the Canadian Federation of Students—is providing logistical support for striking workers as well as engaging in membership outreach to educate students about why it is important to support the workers on the picket line.

Cindy Brownlee, the SA's Director of Education and Equity, recognizes that "workers are striking for better jobs tomorrow."

It is with this type of solidarity among workers and students, and across various communities, that we can successfully resist the austerity programs of City Hall, Queen's Park and the House of Commons.

STICKING WITH THE UNION

Carolyn Egan

Ohio rises up against anti-union bill

I RECENTLY attended a United Steelworkers' convention in the United States. Delegates were present from all over the US and the predominant topic was the fight against the right.

The electoral successes of the Tea Party in recent elections sent a shot across the bow of unions in the US, and the fightback is going deep in states like Wisconsin.

Workers and students organized militant actions including the occupation of the Capitol building and massive demonstrations which garnered worldwide support.

They were able to bridge the gap between public sector and private sector unions as well as mobilize unorganized groups such as farmers to come together against the vicious attacks of right-wing industrialists and governments.

It sent a shockwave through the state and cut through the "politics of envy," which pitted unionized workers with benefits and pension plans against low-wage workers who often had neither. The real enemy was exposed in the campaign.

The United Steelworkers is the second largest union in Wisconsin. Its members faced huge layoffs and plant shutdowns. Steelworkers at industries such as Harley Davidson lost jobs that they had had for decades and found themselves in the unemployment lines. The Republicans played to the anxiety and hopelessness that so many working people were experiencing and won their votes by promising to lower taxes and cut back jobs and services.

Wisconsin, of course, was not the only state where this had happened.

'We Are Ohio'

Ohio is an industrial state that is part of the rust belt. It also suffered massive closures with significant job losses. A right-wing governor came to power and was able to pass anti-union legislation aimed primarily at the public sector. The trade union movement tried to negotiate with him and he would have none of it.

A group was formed

called "We Are Ohio" made up of unions, community, people of colour and faith organizations. It set out to repeal the bill and needed to collect up to 300,000 signatures to put the bill to referendum at the next election.

They collected over 1.3 million signatures, and through that process changed the political landscape in the state.

The polls showed that a strong majority now opposed the bill and the policies of the government that they had recently elected.

We Are Ohio went door to door speaking to hundreds of thousands of residents. They went to churches, mosques and temples, to union halls and college campuses. They engaged in hard slogging political work, listening to peoples' concerns and talking to them about how the right-wing agenda in their state was harmful to all of them. It was hugely successful and shows what a broad-based campaign can do in bringing about political change.

We are up against a similar situation here in Toronto where Rob Ford, a right-wing mayor, won a significant majority pledging to "cut the gravy." He has hired KPMG to make recommendations for potential cutbacks. He epitomizes the Harper austerity agenda and is the millionaire son of a former Tory MPP in the Mike Harris government.

Everything is on the table including childcare centres, long-term care facilities, libraries and, of course, massive cuts to public sector jobs.

Labour and community organizations have come together to fight back for their city and its jobs and services. Ten thousand came out to a rally on April 9 and another is planned for September 26 when City Council deliberates the KPMG recommendations.

The fightback is going deep into unions and communities in the same way as we have seen in the US. It is critical that there be a huge turnout and we need to continue this broad-based campaign against the neoliberal agenda.

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SocialistWorker

AS ECONOMY WORSENS...

CAPITALISM IS THE CRISIS

by PAM FRACHE

CANADA'S ECONOMY shrank by an annualized rate of 0.4 per cent in the second quarter of 2011, the first contraction in the two years Canada has been—at least on paper—out of the recession.

But if Canada's economy shrinks again in the third quarter of 2011, then Canada will be technically back in recession. This is far from the rosy picture upon which Prime Minister Stephen Harper campaigned in the lead-up to the May 2 federal election.

Economic data released in August show a contraction in the exports of both goods and energy, with Statistics Canada reporting that some \$19 billion worth of inventory remains unsold, sitting in storage. As one business analyst put it, "build up of inventory is an issue for the economy, as it makes businesses more reluctant to spend money, whether on staff or saleable goods."

Anyone following the global economy won't be surprised at this news. Canada's biggest export market is the United States, where approximately 75 per cent of Canadian goods are sold. Consumer confidence in the US has fallen to its lowest point since 2009. This lack of confidence is related to unemployment and job security—and on both fronts US news is bleak.

Figures released on August 31 show that planned lay-



PHOTO: ALEX E. PROIMOS

offs have soared by 47 per cent since the previous year. Government agencies are responsible for the greatest numbers of firings, but layoffs are also occurring in the financial and retail sectors. According to the *Financial Times*, "[I]n the two years since the recession in the US formally ended in June 2009 the recovery in jobs has been almost non-existent."

At the same time, growth in China is also beginning to slow. The Chinese central bank has increased interest rates five times since October 2010, in an effort to curb inflation and keep the costs of its exports low. In June, China's annual increase in exports fell from 29.9 per cent in April to a rate of 19.9 per cent in June. In May, China's manufacturing ac-

tivity fell to a ten-month low, in light of slowed demand in Europe.

The European Union is China's largest export market, where nearly 20 per cent of all Chinese exports are sold. With the Eurozone economy staggering and the sovereign debt crisis deepening, the value of the Euro is falling, making the cost of Chinese imports more expensive. In

addition, mass unemployment and austerity measures imposed throughout the EU have curbed consumer demand and undermined the market for Chinese exports.

These storm clouds over the global economy were reflected in the unprecedented volatility of the stock markets in August.

The sovereign debt crisis in the Eurozone has spread

from Greece, Ireland and Portugal to include Spain and Italy. Even France is now considered a country of concern. The European Central Bank is scrambling to orchestrate a new bailout package for Spain and Italy, but with every bailout package, there is less fiscal capacity for future bailouts. The larger the countries affected, the harder it becomes to keep them afloat. There is a real fear that these countries are simultaneously "too big to fail" and "too big to save."

As Kyle Bass, managing partner of Hayman Capital, explains, "When you understand the mechanisms of this European financial stability facility, today it has 440 billion euros in lending capacity. They have to raise 780 billion euros in debt to fund [bailouts for Spain and Italy]."

Any default in the Eurozone threatens to precipitate a banking crisis, the effects of which would reverberate through the global economy. But there's no guarantee that underwriting a bailout will do anything but prolong the current crisis.

As *The Guardian* newspaper explained, "The debt burden accumulated by the banks was, in effect, nationalised during the crisis. It was hoped this would prove temporary, but the persistence of weak growth means that a private debt crisis has now become a sovereign debt crisis. What's more, the markets sense that policymakers have run out of bullets to fire."

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Tar sands protests escalate

by MELISSA GRAHAM

OPPOSITION TO the tar sands and its pipelines has escalated to mass civil disobedience in Washington and Ottawa.

While more than 1,200 Americans were arrested in a rolling sit-in this August against the Keystone XL pipeline project, people across Quebec and Canada are mobilizing against the tar sands on September 26.

The proposed Keystone XL pipeline is designed to carry heavy crude oil from the Alberta tar sands to the US Gulf Coast, passing through the states of Montana, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas—affecting vulnerable water sources, farmland and

indigenous territory.

It's being justified as creating jobs in the oil and gas industry, but historically these industries have been one of the lowest employers, and unions have started joining the opposition.

The Amalgamated Transit Union and the Transport Workers' Union, representing more than 300,000 workers, called on the State Department to deny the permit. In a joint press release, they said: "We need jobs, but not ones based on increasing our reliance on Tar Sands oil."

From August 20 to September 3, 1,252 people were arrested, in front of the White House, including 244 arrests on the final day. Those arrested include top climate scientists,

landowners from Texas and Nebraska, former "Obama for America" staff, First Nations leaders from Canada, and notable individuals Bill McKibben, former White House official Gus Speth, NASA scientist Dr. James Hansen, actor Daryl Hannah, filmmaker Josh Fox and author Naomi Klein. A petition with 617,428 names opposing the pipeline was delivered to the White House.

While the US State Department takes 90 days to make a "national interest" determination on the project, organizers are pledging to escalate the demonstration, and will return to the White House in October for Phase Two.

Ottawa action
Meanwhile momentum

is building for a similar protest at Parliament Hill on September 26, organized by the Council of Canadians, Greenpeace Canada and the Indigenous Environmental Network.

As they state, "Tar sands mining and other extreme forms of energy extraction like Arctic drilling, shale fracking and nuclear power generation send us in the exact opposite direction that we, as a civilization, must go to ensure global survival..."

"On September 26, we are asking you to come to Ottawa to participate in one of the largest acts of civil disobedience on the climate issue that Canada has ever seen."

For more information, visit
www.ottawaction.ca