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WOMEN RISE UP



Women's history

Page 2

Chantal Sundaram recalls the Francophone teachers and parents who defended education in 1916

Reproductive justice

Page 3

Alex Thomson exposes governments who tell women to avoid pregnancy during the Zika virus epidemic, yet refuse to provide abortions

Women and revolution

Page 4

Faline Bobier draws lessons from history for women's liberation

Dublin 1916

Page 6-7

Jesse McLaren celebrates the centenary of the Irish rising and the role of women

Climate action

Page 8

Eric Lescarbeau debunks the Alberta "climate plan," and Michelle Robidoux calls for climate jobs

Anti-racist arts

Page 9

Valerie Lannon reviews a ballet about reconciliation, and Peter Hogarth supports performances of Black liberation at the Super Bowl and Grammys

Uber-capitalist

Page 9

John Bell takes on the arguments behind Uber's price fixing and attacks on workers

Quebec against austerity

Page 12

Chantal Sundaram and Pam Johnson examine developments in Quebec, along with an interview with activist Nora Loreto



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Facts & figures

100
Number of Megatons set as Alberta’s “emissions cap,” which actually allows a 50 per cent increase in emis-sions above the current level of 70 Megatons

10.4 billion
Dollars invested that could create a higher speed public rail, which could create 131,619 person job years, while initially reducing GHG emissions between 1 and 5.2 MT

18.8 billion
Dollars invested in renew-able energy that could create 235,247 new person job years, while reducing this country’s overall GHG emissions between 43.7 and 76.2 million tons (MT)

21.6 billion
Dollars invested that could expand public transit, creating another 273,993 new person job years which, in turn, would contribute to a further reduction in GHGs between 13.8 and 24.2 MT

24.2 billion
Dollars invested in energy efficiency that could create 359,141 new person job years which, at the same time, would reduce the country’s overall GHG emissions between 26.1 and 101.4 MT

In their own words

“Alberta has argu-ably paid a steep price for the percep-tion that our econ-omy, resources and investment climate are not compat-ible with action on climate change.”
-Alberta government acknowledging impact of climate justice movement, and vowing to change perception rather than action on climate change

“The role of the federal government is to put in place a process whereby TransCanada or any other company could demonstrate the project is in the public’s interest.”
--Justin Trudeau explaining his role in facilitating tar sands expansion



Liberal sleight of hand

by THOMAS MCKECHNIE

The Liberal Party of Canada is adept at sleight of hand. Two recent announcements from Canada’s govern-ment cut that into clear relief.

The first was an an-nouncement that Justin Trudeau would be the first sitting Prime Minister to march in Toronto’s Pride Parade. The second was the choice to stand united with the Conservative Party in their denouncement of the United Church of Canada and the Quakers support for the Boycott, Divestment and Sanction (BDS) movement against Israeli apartheid.

The first is a noble gesture, it’s important for the government of a country to support marginalized people. The second is an egregious affront to the

Palestinian people and those who support them. The release of the two actions is a political strategy aimed at doing something that costs little political capital in order to do something that would certainly cost a lot more. This is made even more problematic by the fact that Trudeau will be marching with LGBT Syrian refugees—who faced extra hurdles when attempting to come to Canada due to the Liberals’ policy requiring extra screening for un-married male refugees.

Bill C-51
There is similar sleight of hand when it comes to Bill C-51. There was mass mobilization against it in numerous cities and a public outcry that included experts in national security, civil

liberties and former Prime Ministers. The Liberal Party voted in favour of this bill and promised to “reform” it, but this is just another example of sleight of hand. Removing the “problem-atic” aspects of Bill C-51 would require scrapping the Bill entirely. Bill C-51 is based on increasing the repressive powers of the state—from spying to detention. It’s based on broadening the definition of “terrorism” to criminalize land defenders and whip up Islamophobia, in order to promote pipelines and war. The Liberals support these policies and therefore support Bill C-51, but are trying different tactics. Harper refused to admit any criticism of the Bill, sparking huge mobiliza-tions. The Liberals and are

trying to use committees and hearings to absorb criticism of the Bill without scrapping it—with a vague timeline that extends Bill C-51 in its current form, normalizing it so that it can withstand public pressure.

We must remain active in our communities as the hearings on Bill C-51 continue—demanding it be scrapped, supporting communities most affected by the Bill and connecting the Bill to the domestic and foreign policies it promotes. We must continue raising awareness of the bill and it’s dangers and we must ensure that people see beyond Prime Minister Trudeau’s personal appeal into the threat his government represents.

The history of Franco-Ontario’s “Hatpin Girls”

by CHANTAL SUNDARAM

On February 22, Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne issued a formal apology to the Franco-Ontarian community for a rule that virtu-ally banned the use of French in elementary schools early last century: “Regulation 17 showed a disregard for Franco-Ontarian identity and equality, and on behalf of the govern-ment of Ontario I offer an apology.”

It has recalled an inspiring story of resistance led by Franco-Ontarian women, teachers and mothers.

Regulation 17
Regulation 17 was passed by a Conservative govern-ment in 1912 to assimilate the francophone population of Ontario. It severely restricted the use of French by teachers in both Catholic and public schools across Ontario right up until 1927, despite the fact that Ontario is home to about 612,000 Francophones, the largest French-speaking popula-tion in Canada outside of Quebec. Many of this generation, especially in northern Ontario, were denied the right to learn to write or speak their own language.

Regulation 17 was implemented amidst a rise of British sentiment in the Ontario government in the lead-up to WWI, and was enforced by threats to school funding and to teachers’

certifications if schools or individual teachers con-tinued to allow French to be spoken. It forced many Francophone teachers to resort to hiding French textbooks when school inspectors would visit the classroom.

“Ecoles de la résistance”
There were some schools that openly defied the gov-ernment, calling themselves “écoles de la résistance.” There were large protests against the regulation, especially in the Ottawa area, leading to the founding of Francophone newspapers and organizations, many of which are still in place today.

At the heart of resistance was Guigues elementary school in Ottawa in 1915-1916, when two women who taught there made history.

In 1915, two sisters, Diane Desloges and Béatrice Desloges, both teachers at the Guigues elementary school, refused to implement the provisions of Regulation 17. They were both banned from entering the Guigues elementary school property. With the support of some parents and members of the community, they opened classes in a “free school” located in a church basement and later in a commercial building.

Provincial authorities withheld their salaries and revoked their teaching

certificates but they refused to back down. Students left the Guigues elementary school en masse and the teachers hired to replace the Desloges sisters were soon alone in an empty building.

It wasn’t long after that parents launched a popular movement of civil disobedi-ence. A group of mothers stormed the Guigues school in what came to be known as the “Battle of the Hatpins.”

Battle and occupation
On January 4, 1916 a group of mothers armed with scis-sors and hatpins occupied the Guigues elementary school and began guarding the school’s entrance. The Desloges sisters defied an injunction ordering them to immediately leave the school grounds or face arrest and imprisonment. They were protected by the moth-ers, who became known as the “school guardians,” and together this alliance of teachers and mothers staged a long day-and-night siege of this most famous “école de la résistance.”
At the end of January 1916, French students in Ottawa took part in a series of protests and sent a delegation to City Hall to demand that the salar-ies owed to their teachers be paid. As the protests continued, the “guardians of the school” maintained their vigil in the schools on strike

until June. In order to thwart any attempt by the prov-vincial authorities to expel the teaching staff, groups of women, again mostly mothers, remained on guard in front of the school armed with their hatpins.

Finally, with the begin-ning of the school year in the fall of 1916, the schools were reopened and the teachers were paid their salaries in arrears. The crisis came to an end in 1921 and bilingual schools in the province were officially rec-ognized in 1927. It is truly one of the best examples of a grassroots strategy for resistance in local Ontario history.

And it was led by women. The two central heroines were not forgotten by the Francophone community of Ottawa, who in 1997 named a high school in a French-speaking suburb of Ottawa “Béatrice-Desloges.” But equally worthy of remem-brance are the “hatpin girls” who defended them, the mothers and “guardians.”

A hundred years later, Kathleen Wynne dismissed the idea of compensation or reparation. To make the apology concrete there will have to be a fight for massive reinvestment in education funding for all, and to sustain the Francophone presence in Ontario. For that, we can take a page from the history of the Desloges sisters and the hatpin girls.

Support US war resisters

by BRIAN CHAMP

When mass demon-strations across Canada against the invasion of Iraq in 2003 kept Canada from participat-ing in the illegal conflict, space was opened up for US soldiers who also refused to fight in Iraq to seek refuge in the tradition of Vietnam era war resisters.

US soldiers did refuse to fight and they came to Canada in their hundreds, and were supported by the masses of people who had opposed the invasion. For a while it seemed as if a provision could be made to let them stay.

Then Stephen Harper and his cronies were elected, and the Canadian government waged a concerted campaign to have their refugee claims denied and have them deported. They interfered in the refugee hearing process, appealed court decisions that were favourable to war resisters and deported a number of them back to the US, where they faced jail time and subsequent employment discrimination.

From Harper to Trudeau
Then the government of Justin Trudeau was elected. Although the Liberals had not promised anything in the election campaign directly on this issue, when he was questioned at a town hall, Trudeau promised to review war resisters cases with compassion. The war resisters still in Canada, and their supporters, felt that there was hope for a positive outcome in these cases.

It has now been four months since the election and the Liberals have still not done anything on this issue. They continue to pursue litigation against war resisters that was launched by the Conservative govern-ment. We have to keep the pressure up to make sure that they are not allowed to backslide and that war resist-ers are finally welcomed as people of conscience who refused to participate in an illegal and immoral war.

Supporters of the cam-paign can find out how they can get involved by visiting the War Resisters Support Campaign website at www.resisters.ca



Socialist Worker

e-mail: reports@socialist.ca
web: www.socialist.ca
lphone: 416.972.6391

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Troop trainers = combat troops

The decision by the Trudeau liberals to remove Canadian CF-18s from the bombing campaigns in Iraq and Syria is welcome news but, as is often the case with the Liberals, this is more smoke and mirrors than any sort of real change. They followed the announcement that the planes would be brought home by announcing a tripling of troops on the ground.

These troops are supposed to be in the field as trainers for the Iraqi military. As we have seen over the last few years however, troops who are there to train are also frequently in combat. Numerous times over the past two years, Canadian troops have been in firefights on the front lines. One Canadian soldier,

Andrew Dorion was killed by “friendly fire” while working with Kurdish fighters. The investigation into his death was declared classified so we have little information about what really happened.

Canadian soldiers were also involved in a major firefight in December of last year. According to Maj.-Gen. Charles Lamarre, it was the largest fight that Canadians had been involved in to date in Iraq. Training missions are combat missions. Period.

It is also the case that training missions have, as yet been terribly unsuccessful. Since the formation of the new Iraqi army by the US occupation forces, the West has spent more than \$25 billion to train Iraqi troops. That’s more than \$2 billion a year for the last 11 years. It

still isn’t working and it is unlikely that this new Canadian commitment will turn the tide.

The reasons why the training of Iraqi troops has not worked for the West are varied. There remains deep anger at the US and its allies for the illegal invasion in 2003 that killed as many as a million people. There is deep distrust of the current Iraqi government and the associated militias and there is of course, the myriad of forces that are operating in the area supported by regional powers which has created a volatile situation with supposed allies working at cross purposes. Adding more trainers doesn’t deal with these political realities. It just means that more people within that chaos will have guns and the expertise to use them.

If the Liberal government were actually concerned about peace and human rights they would cancel the \$15 billion arms sale to Saudi Arabia and stop military shipments to the Egyptian and Bahraini dictatorships as well.

The chaos we see is a product of US-led Western military intervention. For more than a decade we have been told that just a little more bombing or training would solve the problems the West created. It hasn’t worked and won’t in the future as long as the powers operating in the region are doing so for their own interests.

Every foreign military mission is just adding fuel to the fire. It’s time for Canada to accept that reality and to bring our troops home.

The return to Liberal imperialism

The Canadian media are enamored with the new Defence Minister Harjit Sajjan. He has been variously described as a “badass” and the “best single Canadian intelligence asset” in Afghanistan. He is also lauded because he is responsible for the “kill or capture” of 1,500 Taliban fighters.

All this may seem like the profile of a great warrior if it weren’t for the fact that the Afghanistan mission is seen as a tragedy of massive proportions by any analyst who objectively looks at the results. The Taliban is still entrenched in most of the country, tens of thousands are dead and injured and the country is in worse shape than it was before the invasion in 2001. Opium production reaches new heights each year and the destabilization of the war continues

to effect bordering states such as Pakistan which has paid a high price for officially siding with the US in the war.

It is also the case that the many so-called Taliban that were captured were in fact innocent Afghans swept up in a corrupt process. This was outlined in the testimony of former Canadian diplomat Richard Colvin who stated that Canada had, “detained, and handed over for severe torture, a lot of innocent people”. NATO forces wanted to detain as many people as possible to justify the ongoing occupation of that country. They needed to show people that the western military force was actually doing something.

The issue of the torture of Afghans was such an embarrassment for the Harper conservatives that they prorogued Parliament in 2009 to stop the release of documents related to the

detainees.

As it turns out, that issue may be back on the agenda. New reports of abuse surfaced just as the Liberals won the federal election. Sajjan, as a senior intelligence office in Afghanistan would no doubt have known about the methods being employed by the Afghan state.

That may be why he has been critical of the war. Not the moral question of whether it is right to kill thousands of people in retaliation for an attack none of them had anything to do with. Not because the war remains one of imperial aggression against largely defenceless states, but because it may not have been effective policy.

The Liberals have announced that they will conduct a review of defence policy and Sajjan will be asked to lead. He has said that in the “war on terror” mistakes were made which resulted in corruption and the

creation of the “son of Al-Qaeda” – presumably a reference to ISIS.

If the history of the Liberal party is anything to go by, this review will result in a few moments of hand wringing for the mistakes of the past followed by a renewed commitment to war under the banner of humanitarian missions.

We need to remember that this is the same party that sent thousand of troops to Afghanistan, sought any means they could to join the war in Iraq and sent Canadian special forces to help with the ouster of Haitian president Bertrand Aristide.

Critical or not, Sajjan is working for a party that has always aligned itself with the warmongers and the profiteers who will make a killing off of this war and the next. It will be important to keep that in mind as they try to rehabilitate foreign interventions in our name.

Imperialism, the TPP and the South China Sea

The US and China have been in a row over the militarization of the South China Sea for years. In fact, most of the imperial powers have at some point been implicated in territorial disputes in the area. .

Likewise, the US has consistently kept a huge naval force nearby. They routinely do joint military exercises in the area to make sure that China doesn’t forget who the global superpower is.

In the last weeks, however, the rhetoric and the potential for conflict has ramped up. There were numerous (and sometimes quite dubious) reports that Beijing was deploying missiles, radar and planes to the disputed Spratly and Paracel islands. Many of these island chains have numerous claimants.

The US cloaks the issue in one of freedom of maritime movement that they see as threatened by Chinese military buildups. The right wing pundits accused Barack Obama of being asleep at the wheel and called China a criminal state for trying to extend its influence in these islands because they are so far from its own coast. It seems the only military buildup in the region that is allowed is an America one. American exceptionalism at it’s best

What is really behind this issue is that the global imperial pecking order is in flux. Many in the US political and military establishment were deeply concerned that while they were bogged down in the Middle East for the last 15 years, the growth of China as regional player and rival was allowed to develop unopposed.

And they were right. The growth of the Chinese economy had resulted in more regional trade that meant the US was not as important to the economic growth of East Asia. A key example is South Korea where the share of trade with the US went from 20.9 percent in 2000 to 10.12 percent in 2010 and with China it went from 9.39 percent in 2000 to 21.13 percent in 2010. The same is true of the other five ASEAN countries (Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines.

The Trans Pacific Partnership is supposed to regain some of that ground. As is typical of these free trade agreements, the TPP is a corporate driven plan that will see multinationals given more and more authority to exploit people and the environment without challenge. In

this case however, there is one other gift to US business – China isn’t part of the agreement but many of the other East Asian nations are.

And the US is quite clear on the reasons why the TPP is so important. As Mr. Obama said during a statement on the agreement, “We can’t let countries like China write the rules of the global economy; we should write those rules.”

Many of the relationships between the countries in the region are, of course more complex and contradictory. Local states are both dependent on China and worried about its growing influence. The US is playing these states to maintain its hegemony and, as their relative economic clout declines, they will no doubt be even more aggressive in asserting their interests.

Zika virus and abortion rights

by ALEX THOMSON

The recent outbreak of the Zika virus in South America has brought to light conflicting policies around reproductive health, where governments are advising women against pregnancy while withholding support for reproductive health services such as contraception and abortion.

The Zika virus was first detected in Brazil in 2015, and is now present in 26 countries in the continent. Three million cases are expected in 2016. While the mosquito-borne virus usually results in relatively mild symptoms such as conjunctivitis, joint pain and fever, it has been associated with Guillain-Barré Syndrome and, in pregnancy, with an increase in fetus microcephaly (reduced brain size and limited development).

Although it has not been proven, the link between the Zika virus and microcephaly is sufficiently strong that the WHO declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) and wrote, “As these clusters (of microcephaly) have occurred in areas newly infected with Zika virus, and in keeping with good public health practice and the absence of another explanation for these clusters, the Committee highlights the importance of aggressive measures to reduce infection with Zika virus, particularly among pregnant women and women of childbearing age”.

In light of the potential risks, government officials in South American nations have warned women against getting pregnant. In El Salvador, the government has recommended that women avoid getting pregnant for at least two years, while in Columbia, women have been advised to delay pregnancy for six to eight months. The Jamaican government made a similar pronouncement in spite of the absence of any recorded incidences of the virus there. In Panama, members of Indigenous communities have been singled out for the advisory.

In many South American countries access to contraceptives is limited, especially in poorer and rural communities. In El Salvador, abortion is illegal under any circumstances. In Brazil, the government has indicated a refusal to allow abortions in pregnant women with Zika.

Women on Web

“It is the poorest women who are suffering from this crisis,” explained Dr. Rebecca Gomperts. “It is not women in the upper class neighborhoods, who can protect themselves from mosquito bites.” Dr. Gomperts runs the organization Women on Web, which mails medical abortion pills to women who contact them on the web. “Our worry is that these women will turn to unsafe abortion methods, while we can help them with a safe, medical abortion.”

But those who contact them are just the tip of the iceberg: “We know that a lot of these women don’t have access to the Internet. So the women that we read, are only a few of the ones really affected by this crisis.”

IWD

As we rally and march in Toronto for this year’s International Women’s Day (IWD) it is instructive to look back at past struggles for women’s rights to see from where we have come and how far we still have to go.

International Women’s Day, March 8, was established by socialists to celebrate the struggles of working class women. It was also the beginning of the Russian Revolution of 1917, which gave the world a brief glimpse of what true liberation could mean for women and men.

Russian revolution

Here is Alexandra Kollontai, one of the leaders of the Bolshevik Party, writing in 1920 about the importance of this day: “Women’s Day or Working Women’s Day is a day of international solidarity, and a day for reviewing the strength and organization of proletarian women. But this is not a special day for women alone. The 8th of March is a historic and memorable day for the workers and peasants, for all the Russian workers and for the workers of the whole world. In 1917, on this day, the great February revolution broke out. It was the working women of Petersburg who began this revolution; it was they who first decided to raise the banner of opposition to the Tsar and his associates. And so, working women’s day is a double celebration for us.”

When Kollontai was writing in 1920 it still seemed possible to move forward towards the new socialist society that promised working class and peasant women an equal place in the creation of the new society. Kollontai understood the importance of specific measures to address the questions of women’s oppression, rooted in the institution of the family.

This is why the role of the Zhenotdel (or Women’s Department) set up by Kollontai and Inessa Armand, another Bolshevik leader, in 1919 played a critical role. It was devoted to improving women’s lives throughout Russia, fighting illiteracy and educating women about the new marriage, education and workplace laws put in place by the Bolsheviks. The Zhenotdel played a critical role in persuading the party to legalize abortion in 1920, decades before the West.

This was because questions of oppression were not “incidental” or side issues to the question of building socialism. The Bolsheviks saw the fight against women’s oppression, against anti-Semitism, against the oppression of national minorities as integral to the fight for socialism.

The gains that were made for women, national minorities, lesbians and gays and for the whole of the Russian working class in the short period following the seizure of power by Russian workers and peasants in 1917 were rolled back under the dual forces of material impoverishment (due in part to the invasion of 14 capitalist countries siding with the reactionary forces of the old Tsarist class) and the consolidation of a new ruling class under Stalin.

Class society

Kollontai remains important because a century later women still face many of the barriers that the Bolsheviks fought to tear down in very difficult conditions. If we look around us today we can see how much women still have to win. Women still earn 2/3 of men’s salaries, still face discrimination in the workplace, still have precarious access to abortion and safe birth control. As has been made abundantly clear in the recent trial of former CBC radio host and media personality, Jian Ghomeshi, women still face prejudice, ridicule and an unequal justice system when they come forward to charge those who abuse them.

Kollontai understood that it was not a question of all women being on one side and all men on the other, because of the class nature of society: “The women’s world is divided, just as is the world of men, into two camps; the interests and aspirations of one group of women bring it close to the bourgeois class, while the other group has close connections with the proletariat, and its claims for liberation encompass a full solution to the woman question. Thus although both camps follow the general slogan of the “liberation of women”, their aims and interests are different. Each of the groups unconsciously takes its starting point from the interests of its own class, which gives a specific class colouring to the targets and tasks it sets itself.”

Former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher was a woman, but she was also a ruthless class warrior who is hated to this very day—not because of her gender—but because of her attacks on British workers, both men and women. Similary Hilary Clinton is the choice of corporate America and won’t advance the rights of women, as was obvious even from her own endorsers. Madeline Albright, former US Secretary of State, chided women who support Bernie Sanders, saying “There’s a special place in hell for women who don’t help each other.” This threat from the same woman, when questioned about whether the death of half a million Iraqi girls and boys due to US-imposed sanctions on Iraq was worth it, replied “We think it’s worth it.”

Audre Lorde, Black lesbian feminist poet and theorist, was critical of a feminism in the 1980s which spoke too often only to the concerns of white, middle class women. She was one of the first in the women’s movement to talk about the intersection of race, class, gender and sexual orientation. She couldn’t conceive of a liberation which wouldn’t include her Black sons and brothers, who were also obviously under the thumb of white capitalism.

It’s in that spirit that we should organize this International Women’s Day. It’s a day to celebrate the struggle for women’s rights but also the fight for genuine liberation for all of us.

INTERNATIONAL



Feel the Bern!

by ANTHONY MALCOLM

On Saturday, February 20, Hillary Clinton beat Bernie Sanders in the Nevada Democratic Caucus by a margin of five percentage points. As of this writing, she leads in South Carolina by a margin of twenty five percentage points, and will likely win most of the Southern states on Super Tuesday, which could put her at over a thousand pledged delegates.

With gigantic corporate donations, pledges from the democratic party’s unaccountable super delegates, and support of the entire mainstream media, Hillary Clinton has a lock on the democratic nomination and winning odds on the White House.

But this is only half the story. There is a movement developing around Sanders. A long time independent, self-described democratic socialist has won New Hampshire in a landslide and come in a virtual tie in Iowa. Only long shot gamblers would put him in the Oval Office come March 2017, but he’s done something maybe more important. He’s helped create a mass audience for socialist politics.

Since declaring his candidacy, Bernie has received over four million individual donations. He’s received endorsements from unions across the country, as well as from progressive congressional candidates like Zephyr Teachout (New York Congress), John Fetterman (Pennsylvania Senate), and Lucy Flores (Nevada Congress). He’s received (qualified) support of Kshama Sawant and the Socialist Alternative. He’s running for party nomination alongside Black Lives Matter organizer DeRay Mckesson, who is running to be the Democratic nominee for the mayor of Baltimore.

Sanders vs Clinton

Sanders has changed the tone of the debate in the establishment. When Clinton began seeking the nomination, she touted herself as a dealmaker and an effective moderate. Since the Bernie campaign began eating away at her base, she had to change tactics. The Clinton campaign has now begun emphasizing that they will raise the minimum wage. They’ve highlighted her significant work with women’s rights in the United States. He’s made her campaign and platform significantly more progressive.

And that’s not enough. Establishment newspapers like the New York Times have begun to couch and qualify their endorsements of Hillary Clinton. A recent editorial has called on Clinton to match Mr. Sanders pledge to raise the national minimum wage to \$15 per hour. The newspaper says that her promise of \$12 per hour is not substantial enough to combat growing inequality, nor does it raise the working class above the poverty line in many states. Major economists have endorsed Sanders’ single payer health care plan as not only more humane, but also more cost effective. Gerald Friedman, professor of economics at University of Massachusetts Amherst, say that under Mr. Sanders tax and business plans, American poverty rates would drop to a record low of 6 per cent, median income would increase by \$22,000 per household, and the nation would quit running deficits by the end of Sanders’ second term.

Sanders also represents a different kind of internationalist American politician. Liberal pundits like Bill Maher have loudly congratulated Sanders for voting against interventionist action

in Iraq, a move that even America’s Berlusconi Donald Trump says was a bad idea (despite having supported it multiple times as a matter of public record). Despite his occasional support for military foreign policy, he’s condemned the Kissinger influenced tactics of Hillary Clinton and has emphasized diplomacy over unilateral military action.

What next?

His momentum has called into question the notion of a non-democratically chosen superdelegate. Despite winning one state, tying one, and losing one by five points, Clinton has 502 delegates to Sanders’ 70. With Clinton already having troubles with trustworthiness and transparency, her reliance on the establishment to secure the nomination is thrusting the problems of the democratic party into the spotlight.

All those successes aside, Bernie has accomplished one incredible feat. He’s made the American public shed the muck of the ages with their McCarthy-esque fear of socialism, and embrace the word Socialism and the inequality message of Occupy. He’s assembled thousands of working class people across all fifty states, calling loudly for a \$15 an hour minimum wage, universal health-care, free college education. Thousands shouting for less military action, accountable banks, and equal rights for all. For unions, for Black Lives Matter, for women’s rights.

Regardless who wins the nomination this group must continue beyond his campaign. It is a group of thousands loudly declaring themselves as socialists, as progressives, and realizing that united they are strong.

Irish election: gains for the left

The establishment took a kicking in Ireland’s general election.

The vote reflected continuing resistance to austerity, and in particular the powerful campaign against water charges. The left of Labour Anti Austerity Alliance/People Before Profit (AAA/PBP) group and Sinn Fein made significant gains.

The socialist AAA/PBP has won five seats so far, with good chances in two others that are still being counted. This is a great achievement.

People Before Profit’s newly elected TD (MP) for Dublin Mid-West, Gino Kenny said, “We’ll use the Dail (parliament) to mobilise as many people as possible. When there are strikes or upheavals, we’ll be there. We’ll use the parliament to voice the concerns of people who are fighting. The main thing is to be shoulder to shoulder with anyone

who’s striking against the system.”

Richard Boyd Barrett, a member of the Irish SWP and People Before Profit, was re-elected. He increased his vote significantly to be the first elected in the Dun Laoghaire constituency.

Richard said, “We played a really critical role in building what is probably one of the biggest mass movements in the history of the state around water charges. That has boosted our fortunes enormously. Although we have relatively small forces in the Dail we set the agenda for the left on a whole range of issues.

“People are still very angry at the unfair impact of austerity. It has generated an enormous housing crisis, a huge shambles in the health service and low pay. The more the government talked about recovery the more people were saying, where’s our recovery?

“The water charges movement was always about much more than water. It was a culmination of fury and anger against six years of austerity and the betrayal of the Labour Party finally finding a focus. “There’s a fantastically high level of political engagement in the working class. I don’t think that’s going away any time soon and I think it will put enormous pressure on any government that comes in. Our task is to continue to agitate and push that movement forward.”

Voters have followed the path taken by the Spanish and Portuguese electorates in rejecting a government that implemented an European Union (EU)/ International Monetary Fund bankers’ bailout.

This is shared from Socialist Worker (UK)

El Salvador: the economic roots of violence

Writing from El Salvador, Craig Frayne explains how imperialism, neoliberalism and “tough on crime” policies have fuelled violence

In 2012, on the 20th Anniversary of the Peace Accords that ended the Salvadoran Civil War, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon referred to El Salvador as “an example for the world” for overcoming differences through peace. When he returned last year, the hopeful tone was absent when Ki-moon bluntly stated, “We’re very worried at the levels of insecurity and violence across Central America and El Salvador.”

Less excusable distortions about post-conflict El Salvador have been made. In 2004, Dick Cheney referred to “75,000 people dead” at the hands of a guerilla insurgency and a population “denied their right to vote.”: “Today El Salvador is a [whole] of a lot better because we held free elections... And [that concept] will apply in Afghanistan. And it will apply as well in Iraq.”

Commentators were quick to note what Cheney omitted: 75,000 people were murdered by US-backed government and paramilitary forces, not the guerilla insurgency; and the elections Cheney refers to were recognized as a farce held in the shadows of murdered candidates and manipulation.

In 2004, faced once again by a guerilla insurgency in a foreign context they knew little about, the US applied the “Salvador option” in Iraq. Cheney and others who spearheaded “dirty wars” in Central America throughout the 1980s, applied similar tactics of torture, secret detention, and murder to their operations in Iraq. The the consequences are apparent today. In both regions, the impacts have been unforeseen and tragic. Violence has morphed into new monstrosities, entangling both its victims and perpetrators.

Exporting Violence

With an average of one murder per hour, El Salvador has been called the most violent country in the world outside an active conflict-zone. This is blamed on youth gangs which are said to have over 70,000 members. These gangs are the primary source of income for about 10 per cent of the population and average age of initiation is 12-16, with some taking part at the age of 7-8.

Mainstream media covering gang violence often reads as entertainment, featuring images of tattooed young men caged up like animals, omitting any analysis or critique. Attributing social problems to gangs serves as a distraction from the larger crimes inflicted by agents of imperialism and transnational capitalism.

It deflects attention from structural problems of uneven development, inequality, and exclusion. Rather than stigmatizing and villainizing adolescents, we can consider how externally imposed war, poverty, and migration helped create today’s violence.

Current violence in El Salvador can be placed in the context of the Civil War (1980-1992). On the surface, the conflict was between the military-led government and a coalition of leftist revolutionary guerrilla groups under Farabundo



Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN). But like much of the region at the time, what began as a movement of national liberation against longstanding poverty and repression, became a Cold War proxy. As the former US ambassador to El Salvador Robert White stated, “US policy toward Latin America can be summed up in three words: fear of revolution.”

Throughout the Salvadoran conflict, US aid to government and paramilitary forces was an estimated \$6 billion for weapons, armoured vehicles, military training, and intelligence. Vietnam War tactics of “scorched earth” and “draining the sea” were applied to eliminate the insurgency by eradicating its support base in the countryside. This meant the primary target was the civilian population, through displacement, torture, and killing. While the terror affected all sides, according to a UN Truth Commission report 95 per cent of human rights abuses were perpetrated by government/military forces.

As violence and repression in El Salvador escalated, so did migration. Over a million people—25 per cent of the country’s population—fled during the war and often ended up in US inner cities such as Los Angeles. The Salvadoran population in the US increased from 94,000 in 1980 to 465,000 in 1990. After fleeing repression of their home country, many Salvadorans found themselves marginalized as immigrants. To gain protection, identity and livelihood, young people joined gangs.

These gangs began as self-defence groups to protect themselves from rival gangs divided by national-ethnic origins. The two notorious Salvadoran gangs, Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13) and Barrio 18, originated in Los Angeles not

El Salvador. The turning point was in 1996 when, under the pretext of getting tough on “illegal immigration,” the US began deporting those who had committed minor criminal offenses or simply violated immigration law. Tens of thousands were sent back to El Salvador by the plane-load. Many found themselves in a country without infrastructure, jobs, or social support systems. Weapons, however, were abundant.

Neoliberal Exclusion

Beginning in the 80s and 90s, the Salvadoran financial elite implemented the most extensive neoliberal reforms of any Latin American country.

Today’s violence in El Salvador no doubt has material roots in inequality and exclusion. Migration did not stop with the end of the conflict, but increased with poverty and crime. Demobilised combatants and youth deported from the US faced widespread unemployment and poverty. Indeed, in the vacuum left by neoliberalism, many embraced the only opportunities available to them by becoming “entrepreneurs” through extortion, drug trafficking, and other criminal activities.

Attributing the gang problem solely to poverty, however, may be a simplification. One could question why Nicaragua—a country that has worse poverty rates and also went through a civil war—has been spared from the violence that plagues El Salvador and other Northern Triangle countries. To answer this, we can consider how elite narratives and repressive policies have fuelled the violence.

Fearmongering and Repression

Just as exclusionary economic

structures remained in place after the war, so did repressive legal institutions. Given the abuses of state power before and during the war, peace negotiations included provisions for the creation of a new civilian police force and criminal code. However, the US-endorsed right wing ARENA party that ruled El Salvador through the 90s and early 2000s implemented a regressive “law and order” agenda. Mano Dura (“heavy hand”) policies included militarized police operations in violation of peace accords. Mass arrests were made under legislation (later ruled unconstitutional) that permitted immediate imprisonment of suspected gang members based solely on physical appearance and association. There was also a ballooning of private security firms, which by 2001 employed more officers than the National Civil Police (PNC). These zero-tolerance, neoliberal crime policies coincided with the dramatic rise of violence.

Political elites and oligopolisite media have used Mano Dura policies to gain popularity and power. Discourses are framed in terms of the neoliberal view of all problems as the individual’s responsibility with little regard for societal or economic factors. This has a dual effect of (i) gaining cross-partisan public support based on fear, and (ii) deflecting attention from systemic political-economic issues. With no evidence, gangs have even been associated with international terrorist networks including Al Qaeda.

In a society with a long history of authoritarianism and repression, this discourse compounds the problem by reinforcing divisions and fear.

1916 - 2016

CENTENARY OF THE IRISH RISING

In 1916 women and men in Dublin declared a new Republic based on national liberation and gender equality. Jesse McLaren looks at the role of women in the rising, and the politics of the socialist James Connolly

Dublin 1916: the Irish rising and the role of women

"The Irish Republic is entitled to, and hereby claims, the allegiance of every Irishman and Irishwoman. The Republic guarantees religious and civil liberty, equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens, and declares its resolve to pursue the happiness and prosperity of the whole nation and of all its parts, cherishing all the children of the nation equally, and oblivious of the differences carefully fostered by an alien government, which have divided a minority from the majority in the past."

The Proclamation of the Irish Republic, declaring the Irish Rising of 1916, puts equality between men and men at the heart of national liberation, a reflection of the role women played in the lead up and during the rising.

Land, labour and women's rights

Britain ruled Ireland like the rest of its colonies—through violence, poverty, famine and sectarian divisions—and like the rest of its colonies there were national liberation movements. The Irish rising of 1916 lasted less than a week, involved only a couple thousand people and was brutally repressed. But it proved to be the spark for independence, and it fused three growing movements: national liberation, women's rights and worker's rights.

For years nationalist organizations had campaigned for Irish independence from British rule, including organizations like the Irish Republican Brotherhood and the Land League. Women were excluded from many nationalist organizations, so they formed their own, from the Ladies' Land League of 1881 to the Inghinidhe na hÉireann (Daughters of Erin) of 1900. It emerged from a protest of Queen Victoria's visit, and went on to found the first women's newspaper in Ireland "advocating militancy, Irish separatism and feminism." Inghinidhe merged with Cumann na mBan (Irishwomen's council), founded in 1914 as a women's auxiliary to the all-male Irish Volunteers (later the Irish Republican Army, IRA). Through the process women also raised their own demands for the vote, including two dozens suffrage organizations by 1910.

Women were also part of working class struggles. In 1911 hundreds of men and thousands of women at the Jacob's biscuit factory in Dublin went on strike for higher wages and won. Through the process, the Irish Women Workers' Union (IWWU) was formed, which helped build solidarity during the Great Lockout of 1913 when employers tried to smash unions. To defend the strike the workers organized the Irish Citizen Army (ICA), which included men and women training and fighting side by side in the lead up to the rising.

As Irish socialist Mary Smith explains, "The ICA was the only organization that drew together the strands of revolutionary nationalism, anti-imperialism, women's emancipation and militant trades unionism and united them in struggle... The tragedy of the ICA is that although it punched way above its weight, it was too small to effectively build resistance to the reactionary forces that came to dominate in the aftermath of the rebellion."



The rising and the role of women

On Easter 1916 the "Army of the Irish Republic"—combining the ICA, Irish Volunteers and Cumann na mBan—took over key sections of the city and declared an Irish Republic, calling for equality for all citizens and freedom from British rule. Women were a minority in the rising, but played important roles.

Molly O'Reilly, who had worked in the kitchens during the 1913 lockout, helped smuggle weapons in the lead up to the 1916 rising, and was the one to hoist the Republican flag on Easter Sunday 1916. Constance Markiewicz wrote the training manual for the ICA and drew the maps for the rising, while Nora Connolly helped deliver messages throughout the country, as well as internationally. Dr. Kathleen Lynn was the chief medical officer, and her partner Madeleine ffrench-Mullen was promoted to sergeant for her role in the fighting.

The inclusion of equal rights on the proclamation did not automatically make it so—and the leader of one garrison refused to include women, and was one of the first to go down to defeat. But women also asserted their rights through the rising, like Margaret Skinnider who was told she couldn't take part in an armed attack: "My answer to that argument was that we had the same right to risk our lives as the men; that in the constitution of the Irish Republic, women were on an equality with men. For the first time in history, indeed, a constitution had been written that incorporated the principle of equal suffrage."

Because there were only a couple thousand participants in the rising, and a lack of coordination, it was defeated. British forces imprisoned thousands, and executed many of the leaders including James Connolly. Constance Markiewicz was also sentenced to death but her sentence was commuted. As she wrote, "We failed, but not until we had seen regimen after regimen run form our few guns. Our effort will inspire the people who come after us, and will give them hope and courage. If we failed to win, so did the English. They slaughtered and imprisoned, only to arouse the nation to a passion of love and loyalty, loyalty to Ireland and hatred of foreign rule. Once they see clearly that the English rule us still, only with a new personnel of traitors and new uniforms, they will finish the work begun by the men and women of Easter Week."



Aftermath: revolution and counter-revolution

This renewed revolutionary wave exploded in 1918, in the wake of the Russian Revolution. There was mass opposition to conscription, which Cumann na mBan helped organize. There was an electoral challenge with a landslide victory for Sinn Féin (including Markiewicz and others elected while in prison), which refused to attend British Parliament and instead set up their own (the Dáil) in Ireland. There was also solidarity with the Russian Revolution, from mass rallies to the refusal to load ships carrying weapons for the counter-revolution.

In 1920 a strike wave briefly saw the emergence of workers councils in Ireland, as the Manchester Guardian described: "It is particularly interesting to note the rise of the Workers Councils in the country towns. The direction of affairs passed during the strike to these councils, which were formed not on a local but class basis. In most cases the police abdicated and the maintenance of order was taken over by the Workers Councils."

Like the defeat of so many national liberation movements, the British responded with brutal violence, partitioned the country and supported conservative elites who severed national independence from social struggles. Women gained the vote in 1922, but with support from the Church the new "Free State" banned Cumann na mBan, opened up a jail for revolutionary women, outlawed divorce and restricted reproductive choice.

A century later, the same struggles are re-emerging in Ireland—from mass protests against austerity and water privatization, to support for equal marriage and abortion rights.

Join the conference Ideas for Real Change: Marxism 2016, on April 22-23 in Toronto, including the opening panel The Easter Rising: Dublin 1916, featuring labour activists Sid Ryan and Carolyn Egan



James Connolly and the role of socialists

James Connolly was born in 1868 and was a key figure in early 20th century Irish politics. He was a leader of the Irish Transport and General Workers Union, a founder of the Irish Citizens Army, and a leader during the rising of 1916—for which he was executed.

James Connolly and other Irish socialists worked to fuse together national liberation, women's liberation and workers' struggles. His writings, a hundred years later, still carry lessons for struggles today.

National liberation and socialism

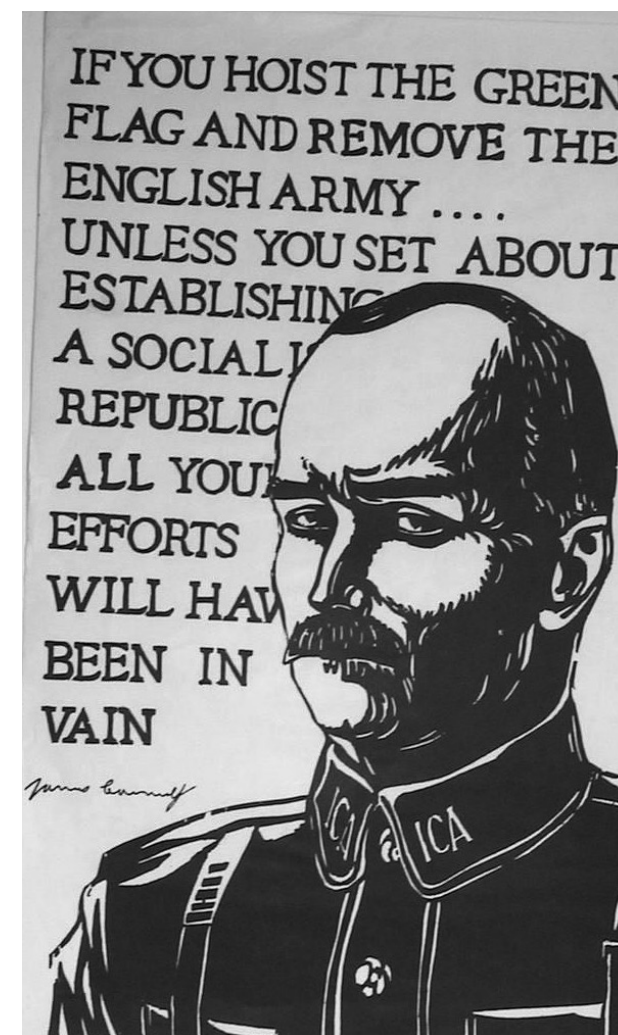
As Connolly wrote in 1897 in the article *Socialism and Nationalism*, the role of national liberation struggles should not just be independence but also broader social and economic change:

"The Republic I would wish our fellow-countrymen to set before them as their ideal should be of such a character that the mere mention of its name would at all times serve as a beacon-light to the oppressed of every land, at all times holding forth promise of freedom and plenteousness as the reward of their efforts on its behalf.

"To the tenant farmer, ground between landlordism on the one hand and American competition on the other, as between the upper and the nether millstone; to the wage-workers in the towns, suffering from the exactions of the slave-driving capitalist to the agricultural labourer, toiling away his life for a wage barely sufficient to keep body and soul together; in fact to every one of the toiling millions upon whose misery the outwardly-splendid fabric of our modern civilisation is reared, the Irish Republic might be made a word to conjure with – a rallying point for the disaffected, a haven for the oppressed, a point of departure for the Socialist, enthusiastic in the cause of human freedom.

"This linking together of our national aspirations with the hopes of the men and women who have raised the standard of revolt against that system of capitalism and landlordism, of which the British Empire is the most aggressive type and resolute defender, should not, in any sense, import an element of discord into the ranks of earnest nationalists, and would serve to place us in touch with fresh reservoirs of moral and physical strength sufficient to lift the cause of Ireland to a more commanding position."

As he warned, "If you remove the English army tomorrow and hoist the green flag over Dublin Castle, unless you set about the organisation of the Socialist Republic your efforts would be in vain. England would still rule you. She would rule you through her capitalists, through her landlords, through her financiers, through the whole array of commercial and individualist institutions she has planted in this country and watered with the tears of our mothers and the blood of our martyrs."



Women's liberation and socialism

As the founders of the Irish Women's Franchise League described, James Connolly was also "the soundest and most thoroughgoing feminist among all the Irish labour men." In his chapter on women's rights in his 1915 book *The Reconquest of Ireland*, he condemned women's oppression, from exploitation at work to unpaid labour at home:

"The worker is the slave of capitalist society, the female worker is the slave of that slave... Wherever there is a great demand for female labour, as in Belfast, we find that the woman tends to become the chief support of the house. Driven out to work at the earliest possible age, she remains

fettered to her wage-earning—a slave for life. Marriage does not mean for her a rest from outside labour, it usually means that, to the outside labour, she has added the duty of a double domestic toil. Throughout her life she remains a wage-earner; completing each day's work, she becomes the slave of the domestic needs of her family; and when at night she drops wearied upon her bed, it is with the knowledge that at the earliest morn she must find her way again into the service of the capitalist, and at the end of that coming day's service for him hasten homeward again for another round of domestic drudgery. So her whole life runs—a dreary pilgrimage from one drudgery to another; the coming of children but serving as milestones in her journey to signalise fresh increases to her burdens...

"Of what use to such sufferers can be the re-establishment of any form of Irish State if it does not embody the emancipation of womanhood. As we have shown, the whole spirit and practice of modern Ireland, as it expresses itself through its pastors and masters, bear socially and politically, hardly upon women. That spirit and that practice had their origins in the establishment in this country of a social and political order based upon the private ownership of property, as against the older order based upon the common ownership of a related community."

Connolly spoke at meetings in support of women's suffrage, and through his union the Irish Transport and General Workers Union (ITGWU), provided support for suffragists against right-wing attacks. He also supported women workers, whose militancy he identified as key to the class struggle:

"The development in Ireland of what is known as the women's movement has synchronised with the appearance of women upon the industrial field... In Ireland the women's cause is felt by all Labour men and women as their cause; the Labour cause has no more earnest and whole-hearted supporters than the militant women..."

"None so fitted to break the chains as they who wear them, none so well equipped to decide what is a fetter. In its march towards freedom, the working class of Ireland must cheer on the efforts of those women who, feeling on their souls and bodies the fetters of the ages, have arisen to strike them off, and cheer all the louder if in its hatred of thralldom and passion for freedom the women's army forges ahead of the militant army of Labour. But whosoever carries the outworks of the citadel of oppression, the working class alone can raze it to the ground."

Alberta’s ‘climate plan’

By Eric Lescarbeau

Prime Minister Trudeau will begin consultations on a National Climate Framework at the First Minister’s Meeting in Vancouver. At the heart of the First Ministers’ climate framework will be the Alberta Climate Leadership Plan, a plan which is being sold as a significant step in the right direction but which at the end of the day will lead to dramatic increases in global greenhouse gas emissions.

Released on the eve of the Paris climate talks, the plan has been the object of considerable praise both in Canada and internationally at the Paris climate talks. On its surface the plan represents an important moral victory for the climate justice movement. After years of mass mobilization and campaigns that have blocked pipelines, slowed tar sands expansion and cemented the image of dirty oil in the global media, big oil and government have finally been forced to acknowledge the reality of climate change and the need to do something about it. The climate change denialism of the Harper years is officially dead. This is a terrain on which the climate justice movement can continue to gather momentum towards a 100% fossil fuel free future.

However, the plan also contains a glaring contradiction. It asks us to believe that it is possible to massively expand tar sands production—projected to double by 2030—while simultaneously reducing “tar sands emissions.” This seemingly impossible task is achieved not through technology as the plan and its boosters seem to suggest but rather through a clever bit of deception. “Tar sands emissions” literally means emissions released in the tar sands. It only counts emissions at the point of production in the extraction and upgrading of bitumen. These “upstream” emissions count for just 10 per cent of the total. It doesn’t count emissions at the point of consumption when it is refined and then ultimately burned as fuel. These “downstream” emissions count for 90 per cent of the total. In other words, the aim is to reduce emissions that happen within Canada’s borders while massively increasing our export of emissions to the rest of the world. In effect this represents the ultimate act of what corporations refer to as “externalizing costs.”

In announcing that climate tests would be included in pipeline reviews during the Kinder Morgan NEB hearings last month, Prime Minister Trudeau smoothly claimed that it would “include” upstream emissions. In practice this actually means excluding downstream emissions from consideration. Apparently, Trudeau and the plan’s authors seem to forget that climate change is a global phenomenon. Exporting emissions and attempting to make it someone else’s problem is an absurd act of self-delusion and arrogantly implies that we are not responsible for the impact our oil exports have on the rest of the world.

Emission cap, carbon pricing, stopping coal

It may seem counterintuitive to think that an emissions cap, carbon pricing and phasing out coal would lead to even more tar sands production and greater emissions, but this is exactly what they do. One of the key objectives is to improve access to global markets. By greenwashing the tar sands industry the plan aims to lose the “dirty oil” label and overcome the resistance built by the climate justice movement to pipelines domestically and the stigma attached to buying it overseas.

The core of the plan is the so-called “hard” cap on emissions. The cap is set at 100 Megatons, which, along with an exemption for upgraders, would allow for a 50 per cent increase in emissions above the current level of 70 Megatons.

The plan also introduces a \$30 per ton carbon price. Like the cap on emissions this is also intended to encourage technological innovation to reduce emissions per barrel and improve the emissions efficiency of tar sands operations. Roughly half of the revenues from the carbon levy will be returned to the oil and gas industry as a subsidy, what the plan vaguely refers to as an “output allocation credit,” constituting the largest single expenditure of the revenues. This combination of carbon pricing with an output subsidy that literally rewards companies for every barrel of oil produced is designed not to restrict production but to encourage new technologies and economies of scale that will improve efficiency and lower overall production and operating costs to help the industry ride out low prices over the long term.

What no one has talked about is the fact that consolidation and technological upgrades will also mean even fewer jobs per barrel produced—leaving many of the 40,000 laid off tar sands workers and their families with little hope of a job to go back to.

Another part of the plan which has received much praise is the commitment to phase out burning coal for electricity by 2030. The real winner in the phase out of coal is actually the Oil and Gas companies because it will largely be replaced by the phase in of natural gas, extracted using hydraulic fracturing, much of it from BC. This is indeed a cleaner burning fuel for the end user, but the overall emissions associated with fracked gas extraction, transmission, transportation and end use are in fact just as bad as coal.

Ultimately, the Alberta Climate Plan demonstrates that the competitive forces driving capitalism are the cause rather than the solution to the climate crisis. This is why the Alberta NDP’s commitment to working with the oil industry has prevented it from taking real action to address climate change. It will be up to the climate justice movement of Indigenous, environmental and labour groups to keep fighting against Big Oil for a truly just transition to a fossil free future.

ANALYSIS



Climate jobs now

by MICHELLE ROBIDOUX AND JESSE MCLAREN

Coming out of the COP21 negotiations in Paris, Prime Minister Trudeau has promised billions in investment and infrastructure, but will it be for greenwashing or for climate jobs?

Greenwashing

Trudeau agreed to the climate target of keeping global warming below 1.5 degrees, but how will this be achieved? BC Premier Christy Clark is trying to channel infrastructure spending into a \$3 billion plan for a freeway bridge and is greenwashing it as a climate plan—claiming it would “reduce our impact on the environment because there will be less idling.”

Meanwhile Alberta Premier Rachel Notley’s so-called climate plan is centered on preserving tar sands production. Now that collapsing oil prices have sunk Alberta’s economy, the provincial and federal government are running to the rescue of the tar sands rather than using the opportunity to rapidly shift to a sustainable green economy. As Greenpeace Canada climate and energy campaigner Mike Hudema said, “We support Prime Minister Trudeau’s and Premier Notley’s pledges to act on climate and to live up to Canada’s global climate commitments but building more pipelines will make those goals impossible. We simply can’t add tens of millions of tonnes of additional greenhouse gases to the atmosphere for decades and call it climate leadership.”

At the same time, Bombardier is laying off thousands more workers and demanding a huge bailout to finish a series of aircrafts, rather than focusing on trains. Quebec Premier Phillip Couillard has promised \$1 billion and asked the federal government to match these funds.

Investing in highways, pipelines and aircrafts will only worsen the climate crisis—disproportionately affecting Indigenous communities and refugees—and offer no long-term strategy for workers in high carbon industries. As tar sands worker Ken Smith said at the Paris climate talks, “We hope we’re seeing the end of fossil fuels for the good of everybody. But how are we going to provide for our families?” Smith, a heavy equipment mechanic and president of Unifor local 707A, said that if tar sands production has to wind down, workers should not be left behind in the process. He pointed to the failed jobs transition program for fisheries workers in the Maritimes as an example of how workers have been abandoned in the past.

One million climate jobs

That’s why climate job campaigns are so important, to link the fights against

austerity and climate change. In Britain workers occupied a windmill factory against closure in 2009, sparking a campaign for a million climate jobs. In 2011 the million climate jobs campaign was launched in South Africa, to transition away from mining while reducing unemployment and carbon emissions. In New York the campaign to ban fracking has developed demands for alternate jobs in retrofitting buildings.

Now the campaign for a million climate jobs has come to Canada. In a release last month, the Climate Action Network—which includes the Canadian Labour Congress—stated that a key goal of Canada’s Environment Ministers should be “creating at least one million jobs to deliver deep (green house gas emission) reductions from investments such as renewable energy, energy efficiency in buildings and in delivering public transit, and higher speed rail.”

The proposal for one million climate jobs gained high profile support in Paris when the Canadian Labour Congress, the Green Economy Network (GEN) and the Climate Action Network hosted a forum outlining the urgent need to build an alternative to the current carbon-based economy, and to address the need for a just transition for workers displaced by the need to keep hydrocarbons in the ground.

The proposal focuses public investment on four strategic priorities:

“1) clean renewable energy: by investing \$18.8 billion in public renewable energy (eg solar, wind, geothermal power) over five years, Canada could create 235,247 new person job years, while reducing this country’s overall GHG emissions between 43.7 and 76.2 million tons (MT)

2) energy efficiency/green buildings: by investing \$24.2 billion to increase the energy efficiency of Canada’s building stock (ie, residential, commercial, public) over a five-year period, we could generate another 359,141 new person job years which, at the same time, would reduce the country’s overall GHG emissions between 26.1 and 101.4 MT;

3) public transit: by investing a further \$21.6 billion to improve and expand public transit for moving people within our cities and towns, we would create another 273,993 new person job years which, in turn, would contribute to a further reduction in GHGs between 13.8 and 24.2 MT

4) higher speed rail transport: by investing \$10.4 billion to begin stimulating the construction of higher speed public rail to move people and freight between cities within urban

corridors (eg Windsor to Quebec City; Edmonton to Calgary; Vancouver to Seattle), we could generate another 131,619 person job years, while initially reducing GHG emissions between 1 and 5.2 MT”

Together, these investments of \$74.9 billion would create 1,000,000 jobs and reduce Canada’s overall GHG emissions by more than 25 per cent. This could also be transforming workplaces, like the unions in the UK that have developed “environmental representatives” to promote recycling, waste reduction and environmentally friendly workplaces.

Climate action

There is an opening right now, on the heels of the Paris negotiations, to hold the Liberals to their commitments on climate change by pressing hard for the infrastructure required to move away from reliance on hydrocarbons. Rather than rescuing the tar sands or investing in greenwashing, the Liberals should be investing in renewable energy and energy efficiency. Rather than handing Bombardier a billion dollars to make more gas-guzzling planes, the Liberals should demand they produce the public transit and high speed rail service we actually need. To seize that opening requires a serious effort—especially from the labour movement, which has the resources that can make a difference of scale in this fight.

This campaign is a fight for jobs, a fight for the climate. But it is also a fight for justice—for Indigenous and racialized communities that bear the brunt of polluting and environmentally destructive industries. Pushing for one million climate jobs could turn what is a terrifying prospect of climate change into a transformative fight for a sustainable future.

As Melina Laboucan-Massimo of the Lubicon Cree First Nation explains, “This solar installation in Little Buffalo was done mostly by community members, who have never installed a solar project before. Now they can use these new skills to install more solar around Alberta. However, these types of renewable energy project shouldn’t rest on the shoulders of communities to implement alone, they should be supported by governments around the world that have instead given immense subsidies that have supported the aging fossil fuel industry for decades. Countries like Canada need to accelerate the transition from destructive, climate polluting energy sources like the tar sands towards the green, just energy economy so many of our communities so desperately want, and need, to see.”

REVIEWS



Ballet recognizes Truth and Reconciliation

BALLET

*Ballet: Going Home Star
Produced by Royal Winnipeg Ballet
Reviewed by Valerie Lannon*

One can't help but admire the dedication, athletic beauty and technical skill of classical ballet and modern dancers. But to look for dance performances that contain any kind of real meaning will take you a long time. Classical ballet seems to have improbable sappy romance as its focus, and most modern dance takes abstraction to literally mind-numbing levels.

So it was hugely satisfying to attend a recent performance in Toronto of the Royal Winnipeg Ballet (RWB) entitled “Going Home Star – Truth and Reconciliation.” The dance is based on a story by the renowned Indigenous author Joseph Boyden about First Nations people building on their traditional strength to recover from the ravages of residential schools.

You knew you were in for something culturally different the minute you walked into the Sony Centre and saw a sign in one corner of the building with the text “Elders Corner.” The dance was introduced by the Northern Cree Singers from Manitoba. The musical score was phenomenal and featured award-winning Inuk throat-singer Tanya Tagaq. Cree activist and former MP Tina Keeper, an Honourary Witness at the Truth and

Reconciliation Commission hearings, is the associate producer.

Justice Murray Sinclair, Chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, states in the program notes, “Works of art such as this are so instrumental to breathing life into difficult and complex subjects. I commend the Royal Winnipeg Ballet’s courageous and beautiful interpretation of the Commission’s Work.”

The story begins with a First Nations woman, Annie, who lives in a big city, running a hair salon and, while enjoying an active social life, begins to feel alienated from the whole scene. During a subway commute, she meets Gordon, a homeless First Nations man taken into residential school and now surviving on the streets, and acting as the traditional “trickster” in the story. Through visions, they witness the abuse of two children in a residential school, Niska and Charlie, at the hands of clergymen running the school. Annie and Gordon easily mock the incompetence of Turtle Island’s early European explorers, people who depended for their lives on the generosity and knowledge of First Nations, but who came to exploit their indigenous hosts. Eventually, Gordon follows Annie’s lead and decides to burn the residential school “reliquary” (a small replica of a school).

The core message is that reconciliation begins with the truth, one hidden from most Canadians by successive

governments and church bodies to deny the numerous attempts to eliminate or assimilate Indigenous peoples.

The dance has not been without controversy, however, since there are no Indigenous dancers in the performance. In fact there are no First Nations dancers in the RWB. Quoted in the Globe & Mail, Keeper states “The RWB was totally committed to this project in the true sense of reconciliation. We knew from the beginning that we didn’t want to do fusion. We wanted to make a ballet...The question was: How do we find a way to tell a native story while sticking strictly to the ballet form? It was a really fulsome experience.”

The lack of Indigenous dancers is largely a result of the lack of access to and affordability of training, not to mention cultural differences. Dance companies have some bursaries and other supports but participation by Indigenous peoples remains an issue. There are notable exceptions: Maria Tallchief was the first major American prima ballerina and George Balanchine’s first muse—a dancer who was also member of the Osage Nation.

That important question aside, the dance is really worth seeing. The RWB is on tour with upcoming performances throughout western Canada in March and April. See rwb.org.

LEFT JAB

John Bell

Uber-capitalist

If Bill Gates and Ayn Rand had a baby they would have named it Uber. I think Uber is the most ruthless form of capitalist exploitation on offer today.

I don’t want to hear how convenient, modern or hip it is. I don’t care if you had a bad experience in a cab once. I don’t care if you think this makes me the equivalent of Grandpa Simpson shaking his fist at a cloud.

If you tap the Uber app you are supporting the agenda that wants to see the deregulation and privatization of every aspect of our economy. It is an agenda that will use any dirty tricks to crush competition and drive wages and working conditions as low as they can go.

In spite of any criticisms I may have of the taxi industry, I fully support cab drivers everywhere in their fight to defend their livelihoods. I support regulation of transportation as a public service.

Uber makes my blood boil, not just because the corporate shits that own it are raking in billions for doing nothing, but because so many people who should know better just shrug off their complicity.

The people who run Uber are assholes. That isn’t just my opinion; that was just one twitter response when Uber in Sydney, Australia, used to pretext of a hostage taking in a downtown cafe to raise its rates to a minimum of \$100 to take people out of the city core.

Uber tried to justify jacking up the rates: “We are all concerned with events in [Sydney]. Fares have increased to encourage more drivers to come online & pick up passengers in the area.” As writer and Uber-critic Richard Eskrow wrote: “Lesson #1 about Uber is, therefore, that in its view there is no heroism, only self-interest. This is Ayn Rand’s brutal, irrational and primitive philosophy in its purest form: altruism is evil, and self-interest is the only true heroism.”

Uber price fixing wasn’t unique to Sydney. During Hurricane Sandy in New York, the ride service at least doubled its prices, prompting a huge backlash.

Recently, when Toronto’s subway system suffered a major shutdown, Uber responded by increasing fares to five times the normal rate.

Travis Kalanick, Uber’s founder is a vociferous Ayn Rand fanboy, and apostle for “pure” capitalism.

Uber has virtually no overhead, so it is able to use its billions of dollars of revenue to fight any municipality or agency that attempts to regulate it—you know, oppressive measures like making drivers pass a rudimentary background check, have proper insurance, obey laws regarding fair treatment for people with disabilities.

If a community does not give in, Uber goes bare knuckle. As Paul Carr writes: “Kalanick is a proud adherent to the Cult of Disruption: the faddish Silicon Valley concept which essentially boils down to ‘let us do whatever we want, otherwise we’ll bully you on the Internet until you do.’ To proponents of Disruption, the free market is king, and regulation is always the enemy.” Right out of the

Atlas Shrugged playbook.

What the hell is Uber, really. It is not (its lawyers argue) a transportation company. Nor is it a tech firm: the technology it uses was actually developed by the US government. In Toronto, when the City council sought an injunction to force Uber drivers to be subject to the same regulations and rules as taxis, Uber’s lawyers argued that it was simply an information network that put riders in touch with drivers, all for a small fee.

So, they argue, any attempt to force them to regulate is a violation of their Charter rights to “free expression.”

In the US, Uber faces multiple lawsuits brought by customers with disabilities, when drivers refused rides in violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Uber is fighting all out to make itself exempt from such regulations because, again, it is not a transportation service.

It isn’t an employer either, according to its army of lawyers (I can neither confirm nor deny that Uber’s law firm of choice is Wolfram and Hart). Drivers are not employees, they are “partners.” So it is interesting that Uber recently slashed the rates its New York “partners” can charge. That move prompted drivers to organize a mass protest and one-day strike.

In Seattle, the city council has enacted a bylaw allowing Uber drivers to organize for collective bargaining. Drivers there have formed an association with the Teamsters union, to improve conditions for both Uber drivers and traditional taxi operators. True to form, Uber is fighting back in the courts.

More and more of the opposition is being led by Uber’s own drivers. They find themselves stuck between the militant opposition of taxi drivers and the exploitation and arbitrary behaviour of their don’t-call-us-employers. A phrase from Marx’s Communist Manifesto comes to mind: What the bourgeoisie, therefore produces above all, is its own grave-diggers.

Sharing economy

What affronts me most about Uber and other web-based corporations that follow the same model, is their hypocritical appropriation of the word “sharing”. Uber does not arrange “ride sharing”, it brokers a commercial arrangement.

These Ayn Randist parasites maintain a view of human nature which is the antithesis of sharing, one based entirely on greed and self-interest. I believe that humanity evolves and develops through cooperation and sharing of ideas and efforts. Capitalism short circuits that nature and perverts our social collaboration. That’s called alienation.

Our hope lies in the fact that people know that the status quo is wrong, it feels wrong, it makes them behave in ways they know are wrong. Workers organize to fight back, from the textile workers literally chained to their looms at the dawn of the industrial revolution to the Uber drivers figuratively chained to their cars today. Within that struggle is the seed, the promise of a real sharing economy for the future.

Beyoncé/Kendrick: Radical in non-Radical places

MUSIC

By Peter Hogarth

Black Lives Matter took centre stage at two of the biggest entertainment events in the world this past month. Beyoncé and Kendrick Lamar brought the politics of Black liberation to the Super Bowl halftime show and the Grammy Awards respectively.

Beyoncé performed her new song “Formation” in an outfit inspired by Michael Jackson’s Super Bowl performance and surrounded by an army of female back-up dancers in Black Panthers outfits and natural hairdos, ending with one dancer holding a sign reading “Justice for Mario Woods,” a Black man killed by San Francisco police.

Kendrick Lamar came out marching in formation as part of a chain gang with many other Black men dressed as inmates, surrounded by jail cells, to perform his song “The Blacker the Berry,” before going into a performance of two other songs, finished with the striking image of a silhouette of Africa with “Compton” printed over it.

Beyoncé’s “Formation” has lyrics

like “I like my baby heir with baby hair and afros, I like my negro nose with Jackson Five nostrils” and the video features police and graffiti that reads “stop shooting us” and scenes that recall the neglect that met New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina.

Kendrick Lamar’s “the Blacker the Berry” features lyrics referencing riots against police violence in Watts, Maryland, Louisville and beyond, lines that ponder the hypocrisy of a country in which he can be rich and famous but Black people can be killed so often and so callously.

Both performances were met with celebration from all over the world. Beyoncé was hailed for dominating the show from the minute she stepped on to the field, propelling Black America onto the centre stage in the biggest sporting event in North America, injecting a hint of radical politics into an event typically festooned in nationalistic and militaristic colours.

However, only Beyoncé faced a significant public backlash. She was very publicly criticized for “inserting race into her performance,” a Tennessee sheriff blamed her for a rise in violence and Police federations and supporters around

the country called for boycotts and protests. While Kendrick Lamar, as a rapper from Compton, seemed to be expected to give a very “controversial,” “shocking” and “Black” performance, Beyoncé, a much bigger star popular across many genres, broke out of middle American respectability and civility with an explicitly politicized performance of a song with lyrics that proudly assert her Blackness, dancers that formed a (Malcolm) X in the uniforms of a revolutionary black socialist group from the 1960s. This transgression was brilliantly exemplified in the Saturday Night Live skit “The Day Beyoncé turned Black” which features a nation of white people thrown into despair because their beloved pop icon has strongly affirmed that Black Lives Matter.

Despite the backlash, Beyoncé’s 39-date tour is headed toward a sold-out run and one of the hottest tours of 2016. Since the performance, Beyoncé has launched a fund to help children affected by Flint’s water crisis. The power of both performances reflects both the oppression of Black people in America and the strength of the growing resistance to police brutality and systemic racism.

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 threatens our sustenance through unsafe and unsustainable farming, and kills the earth itself with pollution and unsustainable extraction of oil, minerals, animals, trees, and water. Capitalism leads to imperialism and war. Saving ourselves and the planet depends on finding an alternative.

A system that is killing the planet

Capitalist profits depend on extracting the world's blood and bone. The devastating impact of capital's assault on the planet affect the world's most vulnerable populations and threaten the long-term meaningful existence of humanity. Capitalism cannot regulate the catastrophic effects of climate change. We stand for climate justice, including the concept of "just transition" for affected workers.

Socialism and workers' power

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

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

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 environmental racism. We oppose discrimination on the basis of religion, ability and age.

Canada, Quebec, Indigenous 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 Indigenous peoples and the people of Quebec.

We support the struggles for self-determination of Quebec and Indigenous peoples up to and including the right to independence. In particular, we recognize Indigenous peoples' original and primary right to decide their fate and that of their lands, heritage, and traditions. Socialists in Quebec, and in all oppressed nations, work to give the struggle against national oppression an internationalist and working class content.

Internationalism

The struggle for socialism is part of a worldwide struggle. We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries. We oppose everything that 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.

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 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.

Reform and revolution

Every day, there are battles between exploiter and exploited, 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 the NDP and many trade union leaders say. Nor can the system regulate itself to prevent environmental destruction and climate injustice. It has to be overthrown. That will require the mass action of workers themselves.

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.



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movement events



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Toronto, Saturday March 5
iwdtoronto.ca

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and Fairness
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15andfairness.org



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World Social Forum
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fsm2016.org

International Socialist events

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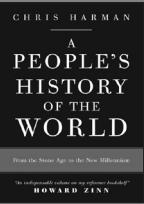
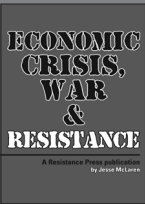
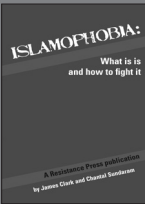
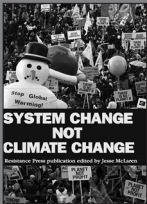


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TUITION

As part of its budget, Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne has claimed to “provide free college and university tuition to eligible students from low-income families.”

Alex Hunsberger debunks the government’s claims:

1) A key point is that according to the government’s own figures, there is very little new money in the post-secondary funding envelope. The government summarizes this in a little chart hidden on page 275. Average annual increases of 1.1% in public PSE (post-secondary education) funding from 2014 - 2018 - less than the rate of inflation, and way less than the tuition escalator of 3% for domestic students. This means university operating budgets will continue their long-term shift in composition away from public funding and towards tuition fees.

2) Therefore, the moves announced today essentially shuffle money around within the existing funding envelope, adding money here and removing it there.

3) These changes should have some progressive effects in helping certain students from the lowest income families, and this is a good thing. However, the increased funding must come - as the changes are more or less revenue neutral - from reduced net funding levels to students deemed better off.

4) Until the details are known, how the changes affect a whole range of cases is unknown. For instance, a mature student who works while attending graduate school part time may or may not gain increased grant funding, while losing tuition and education tax credits. The net effect could be positive or negative depending on the details of the changes.

5) For those whose parents fall in the middle of the income spectrum, the government is offering more loans by increasing the OSAP (Ontario Student Assistance Program) debt cap by several thousand dollars. Adding student debt is, without a doubt, the wrong way to go, and when we’re talking about students whose parents make in the range of \$70,000 combined, we’re hardly talking about the super-rich.

5) Insofar as there are moves towards a more progressive PSE funding model here, we should celebrate them as victories. However, we should be extremely cautious about these reforms, as they do not provide new funding to the PSE system as a whole.

6) The core demand of the student and labour movements regarding PSE funding must remain a universal reduction in tuition fees, with the goal of moving towards elimination, alongside real and meaningful increases in public funding allocations to PSE institutions financed through progressive taxation.

CONTRACT FACULTY DAY OF ACTION



by G. Graham

February 11 marked the first joint action of Ontario college union locals, part of OPSEU, and university faculty associations to demand fair working conditions for contract faculty.

Contract faculty (CFs) make up over half of the faculty in universities and up to 70% in colleges. These workers have four-month contracts—the length of one school term, with no guarantee of future work and minimal to no benefits. Many CFs have worked under these conditions for years. They teach the same courses and must have the same qualifications as full-time unionized faculty.

The Ontario Coalition of University Faculty (OCUFA) and a new college union-sponsored organization, Contract Faculty Forward, organized the action. Faculty, students and supporters from across the province posted and tweeted messages of support throughout the day. OCUFA held a press conference on the day at its coinciding conference on precarious post-secondary faculty.

Also, on the day, Fanshawe College and the University of Western Ontario put out a joint press release. “The status quo in the Ontario college system is erosion,” said Fanshawe OPSEU local president Darryl Bedford. “More and more students are

being taught by professors who are poorly paid.” At Fanshawe, a staggering 61 per cent of all faculty are on contracts that typically cover just a single 14-week semester. There were 33 per cent more contract faculty at Fanshawe in 2015, compared to 2006.’

Sweatshop U

Ontario colleges and universities tout themselves as progressive social leaders that promote human rights, diversity, environmental stewardship, etc. But, the conditions of the people that work in these institutions has been described as ‘Dickensian’. “It is shocking that in 2016 that a group of workers in the Ontario public sector is essentially laid-off and rehired every four months”, said one contract faculty. “The uncertainty and fear this produces effectively silences our voices”.

Indeed, a human rights on-line training module for faculty in one college, even includes a warning against equating workers rights with ‘human rights’.

Corporate Coup

Bloating administration, new building projects, and private enterprise adventures are trumping the delivery of public education. A recent study of Ontario colleges found that non-teaching administration positions had increased 55% in the past 10 years, at the same time as full-time

faculty increased only 22%.

Fanshawe recently purchased a private company for 1.6 million. Algonquin and Niagara colleges were recently forced to shut down satellites colleges in Saudi Arabia financed by Ontario student and government money. Former international students at Niagara College are launching a class-action lawsuit against the school and seeking more than \$50 million in damages for false promises that they would receive necessary credentials.

Strikes and union drives

Strikes by contract faculty and teaching assistants at U ofT and York in the spring of 2015 brought the issue of precarious post-secondary employment to the mainstream. The strikes made gains and sparked new initiatives in the colleges, including Contract Faculty Forward (www.contract-facultyforward.ca) and the February 11 day of action.

Currently part-time support workers in Ontario colleges, who work side by side with faculty, are in a union organizing drive to try to rectify this unfair situation (www.colleges-workers.org). Hopefully the faculty will follow suit and students and faculty will keep the pressure on to push back the corporatization of post-secondary education.

STICKING WITH THE UNION

Carolyn Egan

Trade Unionists for Bernie

It has been fascinating watching the Sanders phenomenon in the United States.

Hillary Clinton took 75% of the Black vote in the South Carolina primary which is a real weakness in the Sanders campaign. Spike Lee has come out for Bernie and Eric Garner’s daughter, whose father was killed by police in New York City, has made a strong video supporting him. So the fight is still on.

The very fact that an open “socialist”, albeit a social democrat, has become more than a fringe candidate for the US presidency is remarkable. It has sent a chill through the Democratic Party establishment and has thrilled so many who have felt they had no one who spoke to their interests.

Of course after years of being an independent member of congress and more recently a senator from the state of Vermont he has chosen to run within the Democratic Party. He has pledged to support its chosen candidate and as Chris Hedges and others from the left have said he is channeling all the momentum that his candidacy has generated into a party of business. After the election what will happen with all those hundreds of thousands if not millions who have been organizing for his election?

The 99%

All that is true but at the same time the very fact that he has garnered such broad based support shows that something significant is changing in the US political landscape. An avowed socialist won the New Hampshire primary in a landslide, virtually tied the Iowa caucuses and lost by 5 per cent in Nevada. It may be that he cannot sustain the support but something is happening beneath the surface that speaks to the legacy of the Occupy movement and its championing of the needs of the 99%.

Sanders is calling for a “political” revolution and has given a reason for so many of the disenfranchised to become politically active. His platform calls for a \$15 minimum wage, free tuition in public universities, healthcare for all, closing the ever increasing wealth gap, and providing veterans with the care they were promised on returning

home. No matter what happens in the election, hopefully these movements on the ground will continue and grow with broader support. So many have been electrified by seeing their issues become part of the national dialogue and these campaigns have to be continued. It is the fight from below that will make them a reality.

So many young people have become politically engaged and this must continue. As many have said, Sanders has made socialism a safe word in American politics. Polling is indicating that socialist ideas are becoming something that the US electorate, particularly the young, are becoming more open to.

Trade Unionists for Bernie

There are 10,000 activists in “Trade Unionists for Bernie” and they have been working hard in their unions. The Communication Workers, the American Postal Workers, National Nurses United, the National Union of Health Care Workers, the United Electrical Workers have all endorsed Sanders. The AFL CIO has not endorsed either candidate and neither have the United Steelworkers, the UAW, the Teamsters, the Amalgamated Transit Union, the Fire Fighters and others.

Clinton has SEIU, UFCW, AFSCME and the American Federation of Teachers but it’s out of the ordinary for so many unions to be withholding their support from the mainstream candidate in the primaries. If you talk to those involved, many rank-and-file members are working for the only alternative they see for a new American politics centred on the working class and economic struggle. Unfortunately there is no other party outside the Democrats for them to become active in.

What we are seeing is a revolt of the base in an American context. It is part of the same phenomenon we are seeing in Podemos in Spain and other such groupings. Sanders has popularized “socialism,” however defined, to an audience of tens of millions in the strongest imperialist nation. The question is what will happen after the election with all of those who have been mobilized.



Quebec: interview continued from page 12

It also helps having the FSSS [union representing health and social service workers] out in front denouncing the agreement. They represent a sector that can’t really strike, so it’s not surprising that they’re ready to be more militant, but the impact that it has to build confidence among other workers in other sectors is clearly important. And the militancy of the FAE [autonomous teacher’s federation] is important too. They’re outside of the Common Front and were able to push their members towards further strike action [in opposition to an offer identical to the Common Front deal].

SW: What does this mean for the solidarity the Common Front tried to represent?

NL: The Common Front has been amazing in bringing together a union movement that has been divided in Quebec, even

if that unity was brief. But it is also fraught: while there are common negotiations, the government has been able to offer enough side deals through local agreements that it’s really undermined their effectiveness. This is the situation in bargaining: in the streets is another matter.

Also, the failures or challenges of the model in Quebec are specific to the fact that they even have the capacity to mount a Common Front of unions in bargaining on this scale at all, which should be appreciated outside of Quebec where this has not yet been possible.

SW: What would you say about the state of things right now, with the Common Front leadership declaring that their part in the struggle is over?

NL: There is mobilizing happening here against austerity, and the unions are involved, but it’s being

lead by the community organizations, through the “Coalition du main rouge” (“Red Hand Coalition”).

[The “Red Hand Coalition,” also known as La Coalition opposée à la tarification et à la privatisation des services publics (“Coalition Against User Fees and Privatization of Public Services”) was active in mobilizing the community in support of the 2012 student strike, and continues now with more than 50 actions organized in the lead-up to the Quebec budget.]

In the end, the radical language against austerity used by the Common Front leadership was probably more successful than they themselves even expected. Despite the outcome of the deal, the Common Front again raised the possibility of bringing down a neoliberal government, and many who were listening believed them.

SocialistWorker

Quebec against austerity

by Chantal Sundaram and Pam Johnson

Over the past few months, *Socialist Worker* has covered the incredible standoff between every major public sector union in Quebec and a neoliberal Liberal government bent on enforcing an austerity agenda on public sector salaries and services.

The development of the Common Front, as well as the community resistance supporting it, represents the most militant expression of the labour movement in Canada in recent history. Sadly it has been almost completely ignored by both the media and the labour leadership in English Canada.

But now, a contradiction has opened up within Quebec: the salary deal negotiated with the Quebec government by the Common Front, a coalition of public sector unions representing 400,000 workers, faced opposition from some important sections of the public sector, notably teachers.

Salaries & services

The Common Front rejected a concessionary government contract offer and undertook a series of rotating strikes in the fall of 2015. This culminated in a one-day general strike on December 9 that brought 450,000 on to the streets and was the largest coordinated trade union action in Quebec since the 1972 Quebec General strike.

It achieved a deal in December for the common table that was negotiating salary and benefits for all, which was approved by the majority but opposed by a significant minority as falling short of expectations.

For many the deal was represented as twice the



salary increase that it will really mean for many in reality, and includes zeros in the first and final years of a 5-year contract.

During the fall, along with official trade union activity, parents organized their own actions in support of public services, including creating human chains around public schools. And on February 7, even after the Common Front deal, there was a demonstration of 20,000 people in Montreal in support of child services. That demonstration is an indication of the willingness to continue a fight for public services and restoration of government funding beyond the fight over salaries.

But the fight for salaries and service funding are linked. Many had hoped that the legal fight over salaries would spill over into a wider

fight for services.

What fueled the Common Front's show of strength is the ongoing anger and frustration at the Quebec government's austerity agenda that sees cutting public services and public sector jobs while keeping corporate taxes low as the solution to economic stagnation. This frustration, felt everywhere, has seen similar expression in other public sector negotiations, including recent "no" campaigns against concessionary bargaining in Ontario's public sector.

The other backstory in Quebec is the success of the student strike of 2012 that won its demands for a tuition freeze, brought down the Liberal government of the day and became a beacon for austerity struggles in Canada and internationally. There was an attempt

to revive a student strike movement in spring 2015, but then all eyes turned to the fall when the unions might take things to the next level.

From unions to community

There is clearly a willingness to continue the fight for services and to find the next angle in the fight against austerity. The No votes against the Common Front deal are not a rejection of solidarity but a legitimate expression of dissatisfaction with how far this particular battle was able to go.

The Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky once said that when we try to change the world we learn through a series of "successive approximations" that get us closer to understanding what

is necessary to achieve the change we're looking for.

In Quebec, for the time being, the torch is being passed again, this time from the unions to back to the community in this ongoing fight against austerity. And this time, it's not students but parents and others who use the services under attack who are asked to take the torch and carry it.

This was a pledge made by the Common Front leadership: to continue to mobilize beyond salary negotiations for restoration of government funding to education, health and other public services. And union involvement in community mobilizations does appear to continue, as on the rally for child services on Feb 7.

The most important backstory is that although salary demands were key to

bringing together the entire public sector on a united basis, the real question was always the radical restructuring of the public sector, with massive cuts to health, education, and childcare, and unions were focused on that as much as the common salary negotiations. The funding cuts will ultimately undercut whatever is negotiated in salary. But the government has been able to divide and conquer by offering different local deals outside of the common deal, at least for now.

For some perspective on how those struggles developed on the ground, *Socialist Worker* spoke with Nora Loreto, author of "From Demonized to Organized: Building the New Union Movement." Nora is a writer, blogger and activist based in Quebec City, and an active member of Quebec Solidaire.

SW: What was the significance of the Quebec City and Sherbrooke teacher locals voting no to the Common Front agreement?

NL: Every day in January I saw another announcement of another union voting against either the local sectoral agreement or the Common Front agreement, or both. The teachers' rejection of the deal is significant because the Quebec City teachers' parent union federation (the CSQ) had recommended adoption.

It demonstrates that the rhetoric of the campaign is felt deeply among the grassroots: that the Liberals are trying to destroy public education and that the unions are one of the few options that exist to stand in the way of that. I'm not sure that the leadership calculated for the members being ready for such a fight.

(see page 11 for more)

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No consent, no pipelines

By Michelle Robidoux

The Trudeau government has launched the long-overdue inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women, but at the same time it is continuing to support tar sands expansion.

The Chippewas of the Thames First Nation are challenging the National Energy Board at the Supreme Court over its approval of Enbridge using the 40-year old Line 9 pipeline to pump tar sands through 18 Indigenous territories, without their consent.

Many other First Nations are fighting similar battles, opposing pipelines and fracking through court cases, land defense, blockades, and demonstrations.

As Indigenous activist Amanda Lickers

stated when she and other activists interrupted an Energy East pipeline consultation in Montreal last September, "What we want TransCanada to understand is that no means no. This is Kanien'ke, this is Mohawk Land, and we are tired of occupation, we are tired of environmental disaster. This is our land and we are going to protect it."

The Liberal government can't claim that they understand the suffering inflicted on Indigenous communities because of systemic violence and racism over centuries, and at the same time support pipeline projects that run through Indigenous lands without consent, bringing the spectre of ruptured pipelines.

This contradiction speaks to the reality of the Liberal Party. It is a party of big

business, whose major allegiance is to the corporate elites in Canada and whose major funders are corporations.

As Trudeau said before the election, "We need to get our resources to market...in a responsible way and that means pipelines. But those pipelines have to achieve the public trust and the social license that is necessary."

Part of winning that "social license" is through his pledge to overhaul the pipeline review process to include climate impacts.

But as Indigenous activist Clayton Thomas-Muller said, "At the heart of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is the right to free, prior and informed consent. That means Indigenous Peoples have the right to say 'No' when it comes to

projects like pipelines and its responsibility of the government to listen."

Trudeau can't fulfill his promise to reduce global warming and respect First Nations while promoting tar sands.

In the face of these contradictions, a new wave of protest is growing.

Indigenous communities are intervening in the inquiry to demand it be led by Indigenous women, free from government interference, and that it investigate state violence.

And the Indigenous-led climate justice is continuing to demand respect for Indigenous sovereignty, an end to colonialism and racism, and a real climate strategy to transition away from dirty tar sands to just and sustainable green energy.