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RESPECT INDIGENOUS SOVEREIGNTY



CLIMATE JUSTICE NOW

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55
Percentage of auto workers at Oakville plant who rejected their leadership’s concessions

20,000
Number of refugee children stranded in Greece, who the EU will not allow to travel

400,000
Dollars the Chippewas of the Thames First Nation must raise for their Supreme Court challenge defending their inherent rights

1 million
Number of workers who protested in South Korea this month

2 million
Number of students who went on strike last month

In their own words

“It was an incredible experience. I was very humbled to learn so much from all these nations coming together and unifying to take a stand to protect the water. What I saw was people putting themselves on the line, being arrested, and taking that risk because this issue is so important. It’s a crucial time in our history. All across our nation and south of the border, people are taking a stand against corporations that are destroying the water.”
-Crystal Sinclair of Idle No More-Toronto, on her experiences at Standing Rock

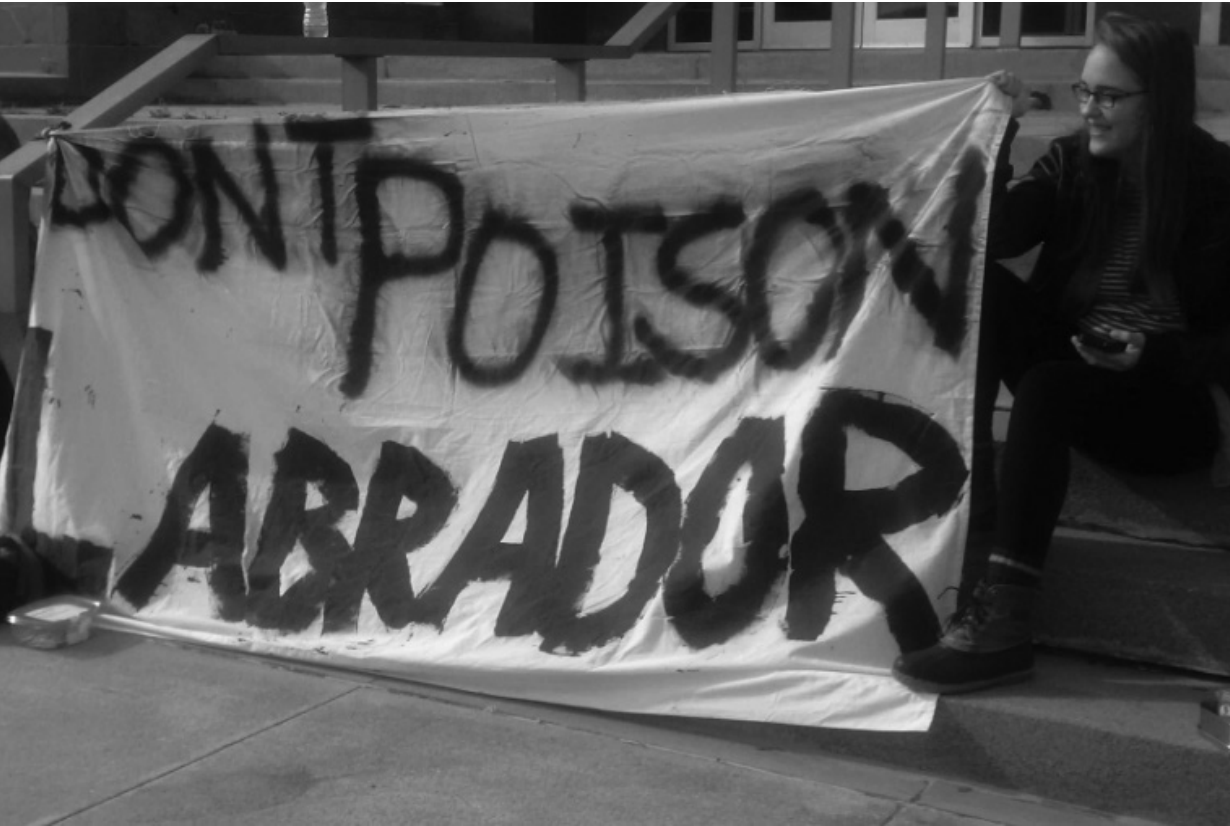
“Syriza won last year’s election by offering social change but has instead delivered brutal austerity. Workers have decided to hit back with a general strike this month, and are linking their struggles to those of the burgeoning anti-racist movement.”
-Greek activist Panos Garganas on the fight against austerity and racism

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Victory against Muskrat Falls dam

by D'ARCY BRIGGS

Resistance is on the rise in Newfoundland and Labrador, as well as in the rest of Canada.

October 7 marked a protest at the Confederation Building, at Memorial University, and outside the Nalcor Energy building in St. John’s. Protests continued at the proposed dam site itself as well in Rigolet. The demonstrations were organized by Coordinated Approach NL, and the Nunatsiavut government of Labrador. A die-in was later held on October 11 outside the Rooms Provincial Museum during the Liberal Government’s ‘Way Forward’ economic plan for Newfoundland and Labrador.

Poison
The main concern is centered around methylmercury contamination to the reservoir water. “It will have a major impact on our people because there will be methylmercury in our fish and in our seals,” said the Nunatsiavut government’s minister of education and economic development, Patricia Kemuksigak. “It’s our traditional ways and we won’t be able to hunt and fish anymore. It’s very important for food security, our way of life and our culture.”

A second risk from the proposed dam construction is the safety of the North Spur, an area which would be built into the dam and reservoir. This area contains high amounts of quick clays—clays that easily liquefy and

shift when disturbed. The area also contains layers of sand, creating the perfect conditions for landslides. If the North Spur area fails, losses of life would occur in Happy Valley-Goose Bay and surrounding communities as well as over \$60 million in damages. Nalcor and the Liberal government have stated that they have safety measures in place, but these measures have been criticized by professional engineers and hydroelectric consultants. One Muskrat Falls protester stated that, by continuing the project, it will “devastate a way of life, and that’s putting it mildly.” The Council of Canadians have now just released a joint-statement against both Site C and the Muskrat Falls development. The 9-point critique (<http://canadians.org/blog/9-point-critique-dams-vs-muskrat-falls-and-site-c>) cites economic, environmental, and cultural destruction as reasons for opposisiton.

Sadly, the case of Muskrat Falls is not unique in Canada. “Deeds, not words,” was the call of many across Canada targeted at the Trudeau government. The Liberals have approved the Site C dam in Treaty 8, despite the destruction it will cause to First Nations. The government is also reviewing the Teck Frontier tar sands mine. If approved, this would be the largest construction of its type. This is not a unique symptom of Trudeau, but the latest step in the footprints of Canadian colonialism and capitalism. What has caught many voters in Canada off-guard was the decidedly

‘un-Harper’ image of Trudeau as well as his campaign promises. It is now clear that Trudeau plans on doing nothing outside of backing the Canadian state, and we must unite together and let Nalcor, the provincial and federal government know that “Poisoning children is a crime, not on our watch, not our dime.”

Escalation
Events escalated, including solidarity protests across Canada, hunger strikes by Labrador residents and First Nations, and occupations of the Confederation building in St. John’s, the Aboriginal Affairs office in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, and the work site itself.

The catalyst occurred on October 15, the day Nalcor declared that they could start flooding the reservoir. A blockade of the Muskrat Falls site was set up at the entrance that day by protesters from all over the community. Early in the morning, the RCMP arrested many protesters on the basis of an injunction issued by Nalcor. Happy Valley-Goose Bay has also stated that they will not allow Nalcor to land its heavy industrial transformers on its port in order to transport them to the site. A similar statement was made by the NunatuKavut Community Council, by which they are pledging resistance to the project and will create blockades to keep Nalcor out.

Occupation of the Muskrat Falls worksite evolved into an occupation

of the site itself. “I wanted to be here to help keep my culture and traditions alive,” says Allyson Gear, a 13 year-old drum dancer. The protests and occupations have all been non-violent, with any property destruction or personal injury being caused by RCMP or security officers. More and more resistance to the project is coming from Innu, Inuit, as well as other First Nations and settlers.

Premier Dwight Ball dodged questions on the subject, stating only “It’s a very difficult situation right now,” and that he plans to meet with community and First Nations leaders. Other politicians in the provincial Liberal party haven’t fared any better. MP Nick Whalen stated that those community members concerned with methylmercury poisoning should “Eat less fish while MeHg levels are too high, and compensate.” Again, Whalen’s statement is emblematic of Canada’s ongoing conquest against First Nations’ traditions and practices. Whalen’s statement was made on Twitter in response to a comment made by NDP leader Earle MCCurdy where he said “If we can’t afford to clear the reservoir, we can’t afford to do the project.”

Victory in sight for Muskrat Falls, but fight not over

After an 11-hour meeting that ended early Wednesday morning, Premier Dwight Ball and representatives from the the Innu Nation, the Nunatsiavut Government and NunatuKavut Community Council have come to some consensus over the management over the Muskrat Falls site. Initial flooding of the site has been pushed back until “independent assessment confirms the timing and rationale of initial impoundment.” Further flooding has been set to spring 2017 in order to allow for more clearing of the reservoir area. An Independent Expert Advisory Committee will also be established which will seek to look at options for reducing health risks and possible methylmercury contamination.

While these actions are certainly all steps in the right direction, pressure must be kept on Ball and the rest of the provincial government to follow through on their promises and follow any recommendations put forward by the advisory committee. This meeting has created the potential to “Make Muskrat Right,” but we must all be cautious following these talks and keep Nalcor and the government accountable.

More and more and rising up for climate justice, not only in Newfoundland and Labrador, but across Canada and the globe. From Site C in BC to the Dakota Access Pipeline, people are rising up and demanding a system based on human need, not corporate greed.

Support Chippewas of the Thames First Nation

by VALERIE LANNON

On November 30, 2016, the Chippewas of the Thames First Nation (COTTFN) will have its hearing with the Supreme Court of Canada. COTTFN’s case against Enbridge will challenge the approval by the National Energy Board to allow Enbridge Inc. to flow tar sands oil through its Line 9 pipeline, on the grounds that the Constitutional “duty to consult” was not followed.

This pipeline runs between Sarnia and Montreal through over a dozen First Nations territories and numerous waterways that provide drinking water to millions of people in the most highly populated corridor in Canada. A victory by COTTFN will be a victory indigenous sovereignty and for all of us, and our support for COTTFN is essential.

The following are excerpts from a presentation given by Chippewas of the Thames First Nation Councillor and Elder, Myeengun Henry, at a presentation in Toronto, with fellow panellist Crystal Sinclair, on October 12, 2016.

How did COTTFN become involved in fighting Line 9?

We first heard about Line 9 after it had been built in 1976, while we were still part of residential schools and not thinking about pipelines. So we had no knowledge or commitment then. Years passed and we were aware of the pipeline, but it was doing light crude oil, and was not high on our agenda.

Then a few years ago we started looking at our environmental position and how to participate in reviews.

Then the NEB called for intervenors in the Line 9 reversal and we found out about tar sands oil, that it was dangerous for our land and water and should be kept in the ground.

We calculated how much wealth went through our territory since 1976. The municipalities (along Line 9) were collecting taxes from Enbridge, but we were not, so we lost billions of dollars and there was no Enbridge acknowledgement of this.

So we took a rights-based approach. Our Elders talked about our responsibility for the land and water and this brought our community together, and all agreed to not allow tar sands oil through our territory.

So we did a land use study and saw we could no longer pick our trad-

itional medicines because of pollution to the Thames River.

So we decided to intervene with the NEB process to stop Line 9, a pipeline like we saw in Marshall, Michigan (Kalamazoo) where the water is still unusable.

In the meantime, COTTFN has divested from all oil. We want to build 300 solar panels and be a role model.

This is a fight by a big corporation and the government supports it.

What does “consultation” mean to Enbridge?

We had discussions with Enbridge, who wanted to tell us how safe Line 9 would be. So Enbridge called neighbouring First Nations together and we asked, “where are the Enbridge leaders?” because all our First Nations leaders were there. Then we kicked out their technical people and asked for President Al Monaco. We were invited six times to Calgary. We explained the concept of the Two Row Wampum and gave them a wampum belt. In return, they gave me a ring, made from the metal used to build the Enbridge pipeline in Michigan.

Enbridge never agreed to give us the dollars owed to us historically.

What comes next?

We need to educate the public especially face to face because we are getting no media coverage. November 30th is the hearing so it’s urgent and we need to get more people involved.

We sent a delegation to Standing Rock, which is getting more attention. But because Line 9 already exists, it gets less attention.

Come to Ottawa on November 30th, where our hearing will happen along with Clyde River’s.

Go to the web page chippewassolidarity.org.

Support has been asked for the COTTFN legal fund since over \$400,000 is required. Please donate as follows:

- Send Bank Order: BMO Chippewas of the Thames Account: #2915 1998348 001
- Online Link: You can donate online through gofundme Email money transfer to ccouchie@cottfn.com
- Direct Money Transfer to: BMO Account 2915 1998348 001
- Mail Cheque or Money Order: Chippewas of the Thames First Nation (marked “legal fund”), 320 Chippewa Road, Muncey, ON N0L 1Y0.



Spain: millions of students strike

School and college students struck and protested across the Spanish state October 26 against exams they fear will bring back the elitism of former dictator Francisco Franco.

The strike last Wednesday, called by the Union of Students, involved students from the ages of 14 upwards and teachers who struck alongside them. Huge marches also involved many parents bringing younger children.

Organisers say two million students, or 90 percent, stayed out of class, and 200,000 people joined 70 marches across the state.

This academic year sees the first trials of exams for 15-16 and 18 year olds that could see them barred

from going to university.

On the march in Madrid, teaching student Amara told El Mundo newspaper, “It’s not fair that a student could work hard throughout their studies, but still need an exam in order to graduate.”

Maria, marching with her two children aged five and six years old, added, “I want them to have an egalitarian education. If they have one bad day it ruins a lifetime of effort.”

Marchers chanted “Get the workers’ children into university”.

Ana Garcia, general secretary of the Union of Students, said, “These exams seek to kick young people out of education—and it is we who come from the working class who will suffer most.”

On the day of the strike Spain still had no government after ten months of deadlock.

But prime minister Mariano Rajoy of the conservative PP won a parliamentary vote to form a minority government last Saturday.

It was only possible because all but 15 MPs of the Labour-type Socialist party abstained.

Marchers were furious at the compromise, chanting “Whoever doesn’t vote is with the PP”, “Rajoy out” and “More teachers, fewer ministers!”

The exams are part of a law voted in three years ago. It faced massive opposition at the time and its return could cause big problems for Rajoy’s fragile new administration.

It underlines the need for an independent revolutionary organisation to help shape the struggles.

Rajoy rushed to tell students that the exams would not be rolled out before a “national education pact”. The Union of Students pointed out that that was always the case.

It vowed to call more strikes on 24 November if the law wasn’t repealed, and called on trade unions to join them in a general education strike.

In a statement it said, “This government is weak, illegitimate, and we are going to bring it down.”

This is shared from Socialist Worker (UK)

South Korea: 1 million protest

by Workers’ Solidarity, South Korea

Around one million people took to the streets of South Korean capital Seoul on November 12, demanding president Park Geun-hye’s resignation.

It was the largest demonstration since 1987, when heated street protests and mass strikes forced the former military dictatorship to concede basic democratic rights.

The march coincided with an annual Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU) national workers’ rally.

Some 150,000 KCTU members marched, calling for Park’s immediate resignation among other demands.

They were joined by masses of ordinary people and marched on the presidential palace. Protesters

demanded equal rights for women and LGBT+ people.

Park Geun-hye’s free market reforms have attacked working class living conditions of men and women, straight or otherwise.

Workers

Having KCTU workers lead the march represented a step forward for the movement.

For many it was their first experience of any kind of political movement. The hope that fills their ranks has helped the movement grow fast.

But the inevitable twists and turns of such movements mean they could be unprepared as it develops.

From the platform the acting KCTU chairperson said unions will strike later this month.

The exact day of a general strike is to be announced by the KCTU’s currently imprisoned chair. He was

sentenced to five years for his role in “violent” protests in November last year.

The next step is a day of coordinated local actions this Saturday followed by national action on November 26.

Large sections of the ruling class believe that allowing the president to fall at a time of increasing instability could be dangerous.

But keeping Park in place only increases public anger. The main opposition leaders are now all agreed on demanding the president’s resignation.

The ruling Saenuri Party is split. Some of the internal opposition leaders have started talking about an “orderly resignation” or an impeachment of the president.

Sometimes our rulers are willing to eliminate the most hated individuals among themselves to try and resolve a crisis.

Sections of the South Korean establishment seem to be preparing for this, though not all the capitalists are agreed.

Days before the million-strong protest, thousands of construction workers went on indefinite strike and quickly reached a favourable deal.

Hundreds of car workers at General Motors’ Bupyeong factory marched from their workplace to the town’s centre, demanding that Park step down.

Even before the anti-Park movement started, rail workers had been on strike against wage cuts and rail privatisation. The movement needs to deepen its roots in this working class struggle.

Workers’ Solidarity is Socialist Worker’s sister newspaper in South Korea

Greece: strike against Syriza

by Panos Garganas

Syriza won last year’s election by offering social change but has instead delivered brutal austerity.

Workers have decided to hit back with a general strike this month, and are linking their struggles to those of the burgeoning anti-racist movement.

Adedy, the Confederation of Civil Service Unions, has said thousands of workers will strike on 24 November.

The resolution adopted by its executive committee states that strikes and demonstrations by sectors such as hospital workers, teachers and pensioners must escalate. It appeals to private sector unions to join the strike and fight for collective agreements, full-time jobs and against benefit cuts.

Health workers struck last month and organised a mass demonstration that marched across Athens to the ministry of health. Contingents from each hospital on the route joined the protest. Similar demonstrations are now planned across the country.

Pensioners protesting against a new round of cuts have been tear gassed. They have already lost 45 percent of their pensions over the past six years. Water workers have struck against plans to privatise public companies.

The Troika of the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund demands every firm, landed property or share holding owned by the state be transferred to a “super fund” controlled by Greece’s creditors. And the Syriza-led government has conceded.

Police

There are now fewer primary school teachers in Greece than police. The demand for more teachers is linked to the fight for the right of refugee children to go to school.

It is estimated that over 20,000 refugee children are stranded in Greece. EU governments are not allowing their families to travel to the countries they would like to go.

Most are kept in camps isolated from the cities. The Syriza-led government has made arrangements for just 1,200 refugee children to join afternoon classes.

Anti-racist organisations, such as Keerfa, and teachers’ unions say this is too little and demand full access to proper classes for all children.

They have already moved together with parents’ associations to isolate groups of fascists that have tried to block refugee children from going to school.

Anti-racist and anti-fascist activists are uniting with the strike movement to oppose austerity and racist policies.

Even among traditional Syriza members only one third renewed their membership between the first and second congress. That’s according to Avgi, the Syriza daily newspaper.

Rebuilding a left that supports workers fighting back against the policies of Alexis Tsipras is the most urgent task.

Panos Garganas is editor of Workers Solidarity, Socialist Worker’s sister paper in Greece

Working class music

Bruce Springsteen’s recently published memoir *Born to Run* is a book that, while you’re reading it, feels a little bit like being at one of the legendary Boss & the E Street Band concert marathons. It has the excitement, the poetry, the despair, the elation, the transformative power (and the length) of one of those concerts...and when it’s over you wish it could still go on!

While I was reading it, especially the early part of the book where Springsteen describes growing up in a working class neighbourhood in Freehold, New Jersey, it fell almost like reading my own autobiography. Not because the details of our lives are the same, nor that our preoccupations were the same – I know nothing about cars, guitars or dressing like a ‘greaser’ – but because Springsteen has long been the poet of the ordinary, the troubadour of working class America.

Working class

And reading about his childhood in New Jersey, growing up in the shadow of his Irish and Italian heritage, and living on the edge of poverty, there is much here for readers to identify with in their own backgrounds and their own stories.

He writes, “The grinding hypnotic power of this ruined place and these people would never leave me. I visit it in my dreams today, returning over and over, wanting to go back [...] It ruined me and it made me.” That one sentence – “It ruined me and it made me” – could be the organizing principle of the book. Springsteen takes a very dialectical approach to his music and to his life.

Springsteen’s search for meaning has always been rooted in material reality and his growing up as a working class kid in New Jersey: “Hank Williams, Woody Guthrie: here was music that emotionally described a life I recognized, my life, the life of my family and neighbors. Here was where I wanted to make my stand musically and search for my own questions and answers. I didn’t want out. I wanted in. I didn’t want to erase, escape, forget or reject. I wanted to understand. What were the social forces that held my parents’ lives in check? Why was it so hard? In my search I would blur the lines between the personal and psychological factors that made my father’s life so difficult and the political issues that kept a tight clamp on working-class lives across the United States.”

Springsteen asserts at another point in *Born to Run* that the ‘personal is political’ and vice versa. This melding of his personal experience with the life of his country and of the vast majority of working class Americans is one of the main reasons his music has continued to speak to huge audiences, not just inside the US, but the world over.

Whether it’s the haunting stories of the lost and the losers of his 1982 album *Nebraska*, the disenfranchised working class Americans of the recession of the early 1980s’ in *The River* (Springsteen acknowledges that the title song of this album was written in honor of his sister and her husband, who were victims of that recession) or the angry reaction to yet another economic meltdown borne by those at the bottom of society in 2012’s *Wrecking Ball*, his music comes from a personal, and at the same time collective, deep well of lived experience.

Anti-racism

The theme of race runs throughout the book as it does throughout the history of America. Springsteen acknowledges that he and the E Street Band haven’t always had the mixed audience they would have liked: “Since the inception of our band it’s been our ambition to play for everyone. We’ve achieved a lot but we haven’t achieved that. Our audience remains tribal...that is, predominantly white. On occasion—the Obama inaugural concert; touring through Africa in ‘88; during a political campaign, particularly in Cleveland with President Obama—I looked out and sang “Promised Land” to the audience I intended it for, young people, old people, black, white, brown, cutting across religious and class lines.”

He describes writing the song “American Skin”, a song about the police shooting of Amadou Diallou, an African immigrant, by plainclothes police officers as he was reaching for his wallet. The refrain “41 shots” underscored “the danger and deadly confusion of roaming the inner-city streets in black skin that still existed in late-twentieth-century America.”

Springsteen was referred to on the front page of the *New York Post* as a “dirt bag” and a “floating fag” by the then head of the New York State Fraternal Order of Police. But, as he writes, “My sweetest memory of the whole fiasco is that as I sauntered down Monmouth Avenue in Red Bank one afternoon, an elderly black woman approached me and said, “They just don’t want to hear the truth.””

After the phenomenal success of his 1984 album *Born in the U.S.A.* you get the sense that Springsteen was set a bit adrift by the level of fame and fortune he had attained. He disbanded the E Street Band and went his own separate way for some 15 years. Of course he continued working, making music and doing concerts during those years, but I think the music is much more individualistic and doesn’t speak to us in the same way.

It’s no coincidence that Springsteen decided to reunite the band in 1999. This coincides with the Battle of Seattle (the successful shutting down of the WTO) and a political reawakening across the country and globally.

When the economic meltdown of 2008 happened and many Americans lost their jobs, their homes and their hope, Springsteen struck back with *Wrecking Ball*:

“After the crash of 2008, I was furious at what had been done by a handful of trading companies on Wall Street. *Wrecking Ball* was a shot of anger at the injustice that continues on and has widened with deregulation, dysfunctional regulatory agencies and capitalism gone wild at the expense of hardworking Americans.”

ANALYSIS



Remembering the workers who ended WWI

by ROBYN KARINA

We’re told every November 11 to remember wars with national pride.

Everyone, including each and every unknowing child, is expected to patriotically wear their fake poppy over their heart and honour the “sacrifice” of being sent to kill or be killed.

When it comes to the First World War, let us not remember warmly the military officers and government leaders who agreed to stop the war only once they knew they wouldn’t make any gains by its continuation. We have had more than enough movie and TV dramas about these “heroes.” Instead our remembrance should be given to those that fought against the war—within and without—not those gladly tearing flesh and earth with bullets, bayonets, and bombs.

From war to revolution

Workers forced to slaughter each other by the command of an elite class from above for no other reason than the latter’s capitalist greed for power and wealth, in a word, imperialism – few things are as horrific. Yet out of the gloom of these nightmare years of 1914-1918 came not only the calls for the end of war forever and for international socialism but, most importantly, the physical action to bring them about. The Russian Revolution stopped the war on the eastern front, and it would be revolution in Germany that stopped war on the western front.

As the war neared its end in 1918, Germany’s allies Austria-Hungary and Bulgaria began pursuing peace negotiations, leaving Germany isolated. Some German generals even advised for an armistice, as the Allied forces neared and discipline in the ranks crumbled, but the Kaiser and his government refused. The gamble for glory was worth the risk of losing some 80,000 more lives of those lowly workers.

So on October 24 the Imperial Navy issued a last ditch effort: the fleet in Kiel was to take on the British Royal Navy. It was suicidal and everyone knew it—even the officers talked relatively open about the “death ride” to save the honour of Germany. The war-battered sailors, many of whom were from socialist working class backgrounds, decided for themselves that enough was enough.

Throughout the innards of ships and naval bases, radical ideas and plans brewed behind the commanding officers’ backs. In the shadows of lower decks and the open night air a “whispering campaign” and secret organising was developed. Unlike the spontaneous Russian mutinying sailors of the battleship *Potemkin* during

the 1905 Russian Revolution, these German sailors planned with revolutionary order and discipline.

The mutineers took over ships across the fleet, raised the red flag, and aimed their canons at the ships that hadn’t rebelled yet. Some, such as those on the battleship *Baden*, as anarchist sailor Ernst Schneider observed firsthand, elected rank and file sailors as new commanders. With such cries as “down with the war,” these sailors propelled the true end of the war and the beginning of the German Revolution.

The Navy was quick to suppress the uprising, and got 580 arrested, but many others, armed and moved by revolutionary ideas, got away to continue the struggle. On November 3 there was a protest for the release of those sailors imprisoned, which had calls for “peace and bread” accompany it. Upon reaching the military prison the demonstrators were fired on, and so they fired back.

The next day reinforcements to crush the rising came but they proved useless, as soldiers either joined the revolutionary forces or left the area completely. The streets swarmed with 40,000 sailors and dockers as they began setting up workers’ and soldiers’ councils—known as soviets in Russian—which gave them direct democratic control of their town.

That same day thousands of sailors armed themselves and set off in ships flying red flags towards the industrial centres of northern Germany to spread the revolutionary fire that had started. By November 6, the revolutionary councils were in power in Hamburg, Bremen and Luebeck. Within the next two days every major coastal city had them spring up. Finally on the 9th, the capital, Berlin, was taken by the armed working class masses.

That day the Kaiser, despite his willingness to repress the masses into submission with “smoke-bombs, gas, bombing squadrons and flamethrowers,” was forced to abdicate. His rule had ended by the hands of the workers of Germany, and the next day he ran to the neutral Netherlands to live out the rest of his life in exile.

Armistice

With him gone the government was left in power. It was led by the Social Democratic Party of Germany—a much different party than before the war, now being actively hostile to the revolting mass workers. At the party’s head was Friedrich Ebert, who earlier admitted to Prince Max von Baden, before the latter was forced to abdicate as well: “If the Kaiser does not abdicate the social revolution is

inevitable. I do not want it—in fact I hate it like sin.”

Two separate declarations were made on November 9. The first came in the morning by Philipp Scheidemann, a SPD minister, calling for a republic (this infuriated Ebert who wanted to save the monarchy if possible). Another was made later in the day by Karl Liebknecht of the Spartacus League—which was to rename itself the Communist Party of Germany a month later—in which he cried: “We must not imagine that our task is ended because the past is dead. We now have to strain our strength to construct the workers’ and soldiers’ government and a new proletarian state, a state of peace, joy and freedom for our German brothers and our brothers throughout the whole world. We stretch out our hands to them, and call on them to carry to completion the world revolution. Those of you who want to see the free German Socialist Republic and the German Revolution, raise your hands!”

Ebert’s first interaction with the revolutionary masses in the streets, after Scheidemann blunder, was to plea that they “leave the streets! Maintain law and order!” With the explosive German Revolution right under them, the aim of Ebert and the SPD government was to quell it so as to suffocate it later when a greater counter-revolutionary force could be amassed. Thus, the workers from below pressured the new ruling Social Democratic leaders above—fearful of workers’ revolution, workers’ control, and workers in general—to sign the armistice of November 11.

We won’t hear any of this history this Remembrance Day, for it doesn’t fit the ideological narrative of the ruling class. Instead, retellings of famous battles, especially those against Hitler’s forces in the Second World War, will be told through movie and TV dramas. The fact that the First World War was brought to its end because of revolutionary working class sailors taking direct armed action against not only the war but the capitalist state—this will not by most be remembered.

It is for this reason we must make as many people know these truly brave sailors that were willing to risk their lives so as to end the imperialist war putting millions of other innocent lives at risk. Let us remember those that fought against war and for socialist revolution. The German sailors that mutinied, finishing the anti-war struggle that working class socialists started at the war’s outset in 1914, will be on our minds this November 11.

Fascism and anti-fascist unity

Robyn Karina looks at historical lessons to help confront the current threat of the far-right

“If fascism could be defeated in debate, I assure you that it would never have happened, neither in Germany, nor in Italy, nor anywhere else.”

These words of Holocaust survivor, Franz Frison, in 1988, make clear that fascism, like other oppressive forces standing against human freedom, cannot be stopped by mere reasonable dialogue over a cup of tea. Fascism must be met and challenged with self-defence of the utmost fervour.

As Frison warned, “People who witnessed fascism at its height are dying out, but the ideology is still here, and its apologists are working hard at a comeback. Past experience should teach us that fascism must be stopped before it takes hold again of too many minds, and becomes useful once again to some powerful interests.”

Fascism, capitalism, and the working class

Fascism arises in certain conditions during capitalist crisis. Despite its occasional facade of being anti-establishment or socialist—as in the “national socialism” of the Nazis—fascism is strictly a capitalist formation utilised by the ruling class when the system is threatened. This was pointed out by Leon Trotsky to the Social Democratic workers of Europe, a month after Hitler was elected into power: “The results are at hand: bourgeois democracy transforms itself legally, peacefully, into a fascist dictatorship. The secret is simple enough: bourgeois democracy and fascist dictatorship are the instruments of one and the same class, the exploiters.”

Therefore if we are to ever bring a lasting end to fascism we’ll have to fully break free of capitalism. Our defensive struggle against fascism should both attack the fascists themselves and the system that created them.

It should be noted that while fascism has a petty-bourgeois foundation, fascists often look to recruit from working class communities. This is for three reasons:

1. Deluding workers weakens the far-left – the fascists’ most active opponents, whom the working class are most connected with in terms of class interests.
2. The workers form a mass, larger than the petty-bourgeoisie, from which an army can be built.
3. Workers are dejected and desperate from the hardships of capitalism, thus more susceptible to an ideology that appears strong and call for change.

Fascists, therefore, see the working class as a pool of potential fascist foot soldiers. As Hitler put it bluntly, the Nazis try to “burn into the little man’s soul the proud conviction that, though a little worm, he is nevertheless part of a great dragon.”

Beneath their thin veil of concern for living standards and community protection is nothing more than their hate for people of colour, immigrants, marginalised religious folks, and democracy. Ordinary working people are told the ills of society are not due to capitalism itself, instead the blame’s put on specific groups of innocent people.

Fascism lives by portraying itself as strong, while taking advantage of the needy and oppressed. By confronting fascists collectively we show them and

“It is essential that we don’t follow in the footsteps of the German Social Democratic Party, on the eve of Hitler taking power, by relying on the bourgeois state and its police to protect what little democracy and freedom we have. Nor should we follow in the footsteps of the Communist Parties of the time, refusing to form united fronts with the Social Democratic and anarchist workers. Anti-fascist workers must be united in action.”



anyone tempted by their ideology that fascism is anything but strong when working and oppressed people are united, and to adhere to fascist views has consequences.

The anti-fascist past of workers

Understandably, smaller groups and even individuals lashed out at the fascists. However admirable they were to confront and weaken those of the fascist movement, such acts—then as now—can’t stop fascism. Our true strength is our numbers.

It is essential that we don’t follow in the footsteps of the German Social Democratic Party, on the eve of Hitler taking power, by relying on the bourgeois state and its police to protect what little democracy and freedom we have. Nor should we follow in the footsteps of the Communist Parties of the time, refusing to form united fronts with the Social Democratic and anarchist workers. Anti-fascist workers must be united in action.

We can learn immensely from the Battle of Cable Street. In 1936 Oswald Mosley and his British Union of Fascists (BUF) were looking to gain momentum for their movement, so they decided to march through a predominantly Irish and Jewish part of East London to spread fear into the hearts of Jewish people and delusion into the minds of poor Irish dockers.

Workers and leftists, from the area and beyond, began organising their self-defence, despite the cries from the cowardly Labour Party and Jewish Board. 100,000 anti-fascists, composed of a diverse mix of workers, united in their class interest to fight off the 7,000 fascists and 10,000 police (4,000 of which on horseback). Their anti-fascist slogan was “They Shall Not Pass,” translated from the Spanish “¡No Pasarán!” of the revolutionary forces fighting fascists in Spain at the time, and prevent the fascists from passing through they did.

The defending workers didn’t just overcome the fascists but also the bourgeois state authorities, thus demonstrating the true potential of workers when united. Slander from the ruling class didn’t matter to the anti-fascists of East London, for the invading fascists and their police allies were defeated and the diverse communities had a greater sense of unifying working class solidarity than ever before.

It was not a single or even a couple organisations that drove

the fascists out of Cable Street, it was the working and oppressed people united in a coalition, equally leading in their shared struggle against the fascists and police.

We can see united anti-fascist action wasn’t a thing of the distant past of the 1930s by looking at Britain in the mid to late 1970s. With an increase in unemployment and austerity, came fascist organising. The National Front (NF) and National Party (NP) were making ground in local elections across the land. With this boost of confidence the NF decided to march through a borough of South East London, predominantly Black, in 1977.

The SWP decided a defence was needed. It wasn’t alone that they accomplished this; of the roughly 10,000 anti-fascists, 2000 were of the SWP, whereas the other 8000 were workers and youths—mainly Black—from outside the party. Together, as Tony Cliff described, “they broke through the police cordon and physically stopped the fascist march.”

What is most important about this example, which has been mirrored around the world to this day—against forces like Golden Dawn in Greece—is that thousands of diverse anti-fascists again came together and were able to defend their communities from the fascists and fascist-sympathising police. The SWP, essential in getting the mass of working people mobilised, was but one part of the anti-fascist movement. Unified cooperation is the foundation for stopping fascists.

“Workers of the world, unite” is not put into practice by any of us if we remain sectarian, atomised, isolated in our own organisational bubbles to the point of letting fascists roam our streets threatening our fellow people of colour, immigrants, Muslims, Jewish people, LGBTQ folks, people with disabilities, First Nations and Métis, along with those facing all other forms of marginalisation and oppression.

The diverse working and oppressed people must take united action against the forces that harm us all. Through this will blossom proletarian democracy out from where the old bourgeois democracy once limited freedom to an elite few. None of this can happen though if the working class remains alienated from itself, so it is the duty of every working class organisation to extend its hand to each other in solidarity against fascism and capitalism.

Vancouver today

Here in Vancouver, and the surrounding area, the fascist threat is exemplified by the Soldiers of Odin (SOO). Like many contemporary fascists they have learned to not outright say they are fascists, but rather call themselves anti-immigrant, anti-extremists, concerned citizens, etc. They are currently of relatively weak numbers and ability, but it’d be an immense mistake—not to mention a sign of historical ignorance—to conclude that means we shouldn’t watch them and prepare a defensive force with the utmost urgency.

They have taken to the streets—that is more than enough reason to prepare to organise. As stated above, however, we, as a general community of working and oppressed people, cannot rely on the actions of small, though brave, groups of anti-fascists, nor on the state’s police; what’s needed is a broad coalition united against fascism, willing, if conditions call for it, to take our streets back by confronting the fascists both physically and ideologically.

Here in Vancouver those that recognise the threat of fascism and the need for united action against it should come together. We could build a coalition against racism and fascism, one collectively led by members of all organisations involved, that would defend and organise the communities affected by the encroaching Soldiers of Odin. Some would shake their heads at our actions, some would call for peace with the fascists, while some would call the police who’d defend the SOO, but as history has shown—from the 20s and 30s to the 70s up to our current day—anti-fascist mobilisation is unquestionably needed wherever the weeds of fascism sprout.

By working and oppressed people coming together in self-defence against fascism we further recognise our common class interests. These interests reach and connect us beyond all boundaries the current capitalist system tries to emphasise in a divide and conquer tactic. Not only will we thwart the advancement of fascism, not only will we be rejuvenated with confidence and class consciousness, we will enrich ourselves with the realisation that our true strength is in our own hands when we are united—we, as a class, need not rely on anyone but ourselves for our emancipation. Together we are capable of building a better world.

Celebrating, and learning from, the Russian Revolution

Robyn Karina celebrates the advances and examines the retreats and defeat of the revolution that began 99 years ago



It's November, and so we celebrate the October Revolution of 1917. The difference in month is due to the different calendars used back then: the Russians used the old Julian calendar, therefore their revolution began on October 25, whereas in the more popular Gregorian calendar the date lands on November 7.

It has been ninety-nine years since the exploited and oppressed masses of Russia rose to show the world that another society was possible, one in which ordinary working people would collectively control their lives for the first time.

Across the world revolt was brewing and popping up; conditions for workers were horrendous and the First World War was a savage slaughter of millions of innocent people for the gains of imperialist nations. The Russians – with calls for “Peace, Bread, and Land” – erupted through Tsardom, through bourgeois democracy, and into a workers’ democracy.

The February revolution, began by women workers on International Women’s Day, put an end to the tsar, and the October revolution began to put an end to capitalism and build a better world.

The immediate aim of the Revolution was to bring peace after years of merciless world war, no matter what the cost; the people were dying at home and the front, and they demanded it be stopped. With that, workers, peasants, and soldiers had set up councils from which to control society in a directly democratic manner. The laws of old were thrown out and new ones were written.

The poor peasants were given the land that the rich previously had them work on. Women made huge advancements compared to other nations: women could vote, daycares and cafeterias were set up so women could break from domestic labour, and they were encouraged to take a direct role in the revolutionary workers’ state.

Decriminalisation of homosexuality and abortion were issued. Nations previously owned by the Tsar, e.g., Poland and Finland, were welcomed to either remain connected to the revolution or separate as independent.

Religious minorities, especially the Jewish and Muslim people, were reassured that, unlike under the Tsar, they were free to practice their religions without fear of themselves or their synagogue or mosques being attacked.

These were just a few of the gains brought by the Revolution, which occurred in a context of global revolt. As British Prime Minister Lloyd George frantically wrote in 1919, “The whole of Europe is filled with the spirit of revolution. There is a deep sense not only of discontent but of anger and revolt amongst the workmen against the pre-war conditions. The whole existing order in its political, social and economic aspects is questioned by the masses of the population from one end of Europe to the other.”

This was not isolated to Europe: in 1919 a revolution in Egypt rose against British occupation, and in the same year workers in Winnipeg organized a general strike.

Celebrating with Criticism

The best way to honour this world historic revolution is to apply Marx’s “ruthless criticism,” to it and its leaders; only in that way will we learn the best way forward, by being “ruthless both in the sense of not being afraid of the results it arrives at and in the sense of being just as little afraid of conflict with the powers that be.”

While we acknowledge and praise the successes of the revolution and the Bolshevik leadership, as Marxists we also must acknowledge and criticise the mistakes. As the flatterers under the guise of orthodoxy – the type of “Marxists” to which Marx said “I am not a Marxist” – disapprove of diminishing the glory of certain events and names, we, Marxists, with sharp eyes, analyse so as to be better prepared for advancing future workers’ revolutions to success.

The International Socialists have a history of being critical thinkers, even in regards to our leadership and tradition. Marx, Engels, Luxemburg, Lenin, and Trotsky – all have been challenged by our minds and pens.

Just as Trotsky disagreed with Lenin (on the nature the Revolution would have to take), so did Tony Cliff disagree with Trotsky (on the nature of the USSR under Stalin), and so have some disagreed with Cliff, just as some will surely disagree with me. Challenging our ideas, while remaining in solidarity with each other, is how we sharpen our minds.

One principle the International Socialists organise by is that of “Socialism from Below.” This, in opposition to the “Socialism from Above” of both Social-Democrats and Stalinists, maintains that the working and oppressed masses must take direct democratic control of society by themselves AND for themselves. It’s what Marx and Engels emphasised multiple times: “That the emancipation of the working classes must be conquered by the working classes themselves.” And what Rosa Luxemburg called for until her dying breath. Socialism from Below is the heart of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, i.e., the whole of the working class in power.

Nearly one hundred years ago Socialism from Below was put into practice in Russia, yet due to the incredible circumstances it degenerated into “Socialism from Above”, and Stalin reversed all the previous gains. It didn’t happen by a sudden coup, or because the very nature of the Bolshevik vanguard party predetermined it, but rather because of demoralising realities that brought about tactical retreats done out of the fear of risking the revolution.

From One Risk to Another

Socialism cannot be built in one country alone. This was recognised by Engels as early as 1847 when, in his Principles of Communism, he asked and answered: “Will it be possible for this revolution to take place in one country alone? No.” Going on to note that no one “is independent of what happens to the others.”

Therefore, if, after a successful taking of power, a revolution is isolated (especially in a backwards country like Russia in 1917), and surrounded by hostile capitalist nations, it will immediately start to degenerate as its initial burst of momentum from the masses dulls. Lenin and Trotsky knew this; they placed their hopes on the German Revolution erupting over the horizon to lead the world communist revolution. This was a realistic expectation, as the German revolution did erupt (ending the war and giving us Remembrance Day) and could have succeeded.

The revolution happening in backwards Russia before an advanced capitalist nation like Germany or England went against what Marx and Engels had predicted, but that didn’t mean it was lost, merely that it had to hold out until the proletariat in Germany or England rose into power and, in proper internationalist fashion, gave the Russian proletariat revolutionary support.

Besides a few small neighbouring nations – just as, if not more backwards – Russia was alone. The German Revolution was crushed along with many of its best leaders – most notably Rosa Luxemburg – with it. This heaviest of blows came in the already miserable conditions of



post-WWI and the ongoing Civil War (which included 14 invading imperialist armies and economic blockades). Few options were available, the Bolsheviks were stuck, and the Revolution felt as though it was slipping away day by day.

The Bolshevik leaders felt that only two paths existed: one consisting of fighting “from below” until the inevitable fall of the Revolution that such fighting would hasten, or the other of taking a defensive stance while waiting for other successful workers’ states to rise and help them. They took the latter. Their hope was that the new workers’ state could stick it out until the next batch of international revolutions (specifically in an advanced capitalist country like Germany or England) would again rise and this time succeed in taking power.

This path meant the Bolshevik leaders had to try to protect the revolution from the risk of failing by limiting it, by making tactical retreats. Out of the fear of risking the revolution, a standing army took place of the workers’ militias; democratic elections of commanding officers were eradicated; the saluting, the display of position in the military hierarchy, and the privileges of the higher-ups were reverted back to.

To make matters worse, as the Civil War pushed on, the most advanced workers gave their lives for the cause, thus leaving a void back home. With a crippled and shrinking working class in the cities, workers’ control and management was seen as impossible in the devastating conditions at hand, so – just as old tsarist army officials were put back into leading positions – bourgeois “specialists” were put into management positions over the workers at the workplaces they originally were to own. These specialists also got paid well above the average of skilled workers which, based off of the Paris Commune, was originally intended as the highest pay anyone could get.

Through the juggling act of fighting off the White Army of the old tsarist order (and its support from 14 imperialist nations), limiting the workers’ power to better defend them, and trying to sound confident to the masses to maintain their support (thus making a “virtue of necessity”), the Bolshevik leadership, trying to prevent the risk of the revolution failing, overlooked the fact they were producing another risk to the revolution which sprouted later as Stalinism.

Workers’ Revolution or Death

Revolution is inherently in risk from its inception, there is no way around that, no loopholes to dodge this problem. Degeneration will begin once the workers’ fervour and action stops. It’s the job of the revolutionary vanguard to get the momentum rising again in the masses whenever it halts or drops.

The risk that presented itself to the Russian Revolution came in the form the White Army and its 14 imperialist allies. This resulted in a fear of letting workers advance in such a way that was seen as incapable of defending the workers’ state. What started out as emergency measures from inside and out of the Party became the standard.

Thus what the Bolshevik leaders saw as a way of maintaining the revolution in hard times, protecting it from the risk of counter-revolution, mainly deriving from external forces, was in fact putting the revolution in risk of the internal counter-revolution of the bureaucracy with Stalin at the forefront.

This counter-revolution – the embodiment of the degeneration of the workers’ state and revolution – came, neither with a bang (in 1936 or 1928) nor a whimper (in 1924 or 1921); it

was a poison that entered the lifeblood of the revolution gradually, drop by drop, slipping nearly unnoticed into power in the name of defending the very revolution it killed. The leaders mistook the bitterness of this poison for that of a medicine – difficult to swallow but beneficial in the end.

This folly of mistaking poison for medicine sounds as though from an ancient tragedy, but it was a real historical event. Because of the reality of the situation, those leaders that drank the poison were not the only ones to succumb to its morbid embrace; rather it flowed through them into the workers’ revolution that it’d soon bury. The sin, mistaken for salvation, of those few above fell heaviest upon the masses below.

Had the revolution maintained its risk of being Socialism from Below, i.e., worker directed and executed, and expanding on all revolutionary fronts (militias rather than standing army, democratic elections of all positions from army to government with the ability to recall the elected, power in the workers’ councils, no one more than a skilled workers’ wage, cooperation between different revolutionary groups, etc.) then workers in advanced capitalist countries like Germany and England may have seen and learned by their example and led a successful workers’ revolution themselves.

Between taking the risk of not holding back workers from advancing socialism or the risk of dying slowly into a totalitarian dictatorship, a revolution, already inherently at risk no matter what it does, must take the risk of maintaining Socialism from Below.

Stalinism and the death of the revolution was not inevitable or due to the very nature of the Bolsheviks. Victor Serge, critical Bolshevik and Trotskyist supporter, observed: “It is often said that ‘the germ of all Stalinism was in Bolshevism at its beginning’. Well, I have no objection. Only, Bolshevism also contained many other germs, a mass of other germs, and those who lived through the enthusiasm of the first years of the first victorious socialist revolution ought not to forget it. To judge the living man by the death germs which the autopsy reveals in the corpse – and which he may have carried in him since his birth – is that very sensible?”

There are many lessons to be learned from the Russian Revolution of ninety-nine years ago, and the International Socialists will do all in its powers to critically study and put them into practice as true Marxists. One of those lessons is that of the relation between Socialism from Below (the Dictatorship of the Proletariat – the whole working class in direct democratic power) and the inherent risk of a revolution failing.

If we are to honestly recognise and practice Socialism from Below, the principal that “the emancipation of the working classes must be conquered by the working classes themselves,” we must see that no risk of failure is worth limiting or pulling back the revolutionary working class. This is neither ultra-leftism nor idealism; it’s recognising what socialism is and how it is built by the whole working class. Retreats and halts will undoubtedly be needed, but they can’t be enforced by any organisation from above the class; the class from below must decide its course of action. We, as a class, will make mistakes, as the Bolshevik leader Alexandra Kollontai recognised, but it’s through self-activity that we’ll learn the best methods.

Dialectically, the ends develop out of the means; as such socialism will never derive from holding back the workers’ revolution. Our choice, like that of the famous “socialism or barbarism,” is simple: workers’ revolution or death.

NDP ex-cop candidate defends culture of silence

by Evan Johnson

The Ontario New Democratic Party (ONDP) has nominated former Hamilton Police Association president, Mike Thomas, to be their candidate for the Nov 17 by-election in Niagara West-Glanbrook.

Thomas, a retired police officer of 30 years and former President and CEO of the Hamilton Police Association (2010-2014), will be representing the ONDP in the the riding recently vacated by former Progressive Conservative leader Tim Hudak.

In a press release, Ontario NDP leader Andrea Horwath stated how “thrilled” she is to to have Thomas as their candidate, and suggests that “Mike will work hard to show people that the NDP is different.”

Thomas: The SIU is unfair to police

In an op-ed for the Hamilton Spectator dated June 4, 2012, Thomas (writing in his official capacity as HPA president) responded to criticisms that there exists a “wall of silence” that confronts SIU investigations of police violence by dismissing them out of hand.

In the op-ed, Thomas writes that the SIU not only puts the police at a disadvantage, but that the process of civilian oversight as it currently exists gives the families affected by police violence too much power to shape the public narrative.

According to Thomas, “the SIU monopoly on media contact gives every party in a situation, except the local police service, an advantage,” and his overriding concern is that this access to the media “can cast both the police service and our members in a bad light.”

A rather shocking target of his criticism in his op-ed is victims’ families. Thomas goes so far as to argue that “third parties such as media outlets or members of the public including the family of the alleged victim can take the information and say what they want about it.”

The problem with the current SIU process, in Thomas’ view, is not that it consistently fails to deliver justice for victims’ families, or that it is ill-equipped in actually doing the investigations it claims to be carrying out in the public interest. No — the problem is that it gives the victims’ families too much power to seek justice on the public stage and find support from the broader community.

Near the end of his op-ed, Thomas trivializes the reality of police violence, arguing that “the sensational news report announcing the start of an SIU investigation usually pales in comparison to the short, back-page story indicating that officers have been cleared of any wrongdoing.”

In Thomas’ world, investigations into police violence are more often than not “sensational” reports, and this view certainly reflects the confidence felt by many in the police force that their friends in blue will eventually be cleared.

The burning question he is left with, is: “Who holds the SIU to account for any release of information that paints a case in a bad light either deliberately or unintentionally?”

Defending a culture of silence

In view of this “media monopoly,” what is Thomas’ conclusion for local police departments and associations?

The answer: maintain the culture of silence

According to Thomas, “the police service and the police association must remain silent,” and in his op-ed he dismisses the concerns of Ontario ombudsman, André Marin, who claimed at the time that “Police often don’t co-operate with the SIU as they should, and the SIU has no recourse.”

Despite various reports put out by the Ontario ombudsman’s office over the years leading up to this 2012 op-ed — such as “Oversight Unseen” (2008) and “Oversight Undetermined” (2011) — Thomas dismisses the concerns regarding police non-cooperation out of hand, and rejects the idea (put forward by Martin and others) that “the SIU given the power to force subject officers to provide a statement.”

“Thankfully,” writes Thomas, “we have the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms to prevent such a blatant trampling of the right to silence, a right that is fundamental to a free and democratic society.”

With this intervention, Thomas chose to reinforce the deadly culture of silence that exists inside police forces, and rejected any measures that would bring greater accountability for individuals and families who have been on the receiving end of police violence.

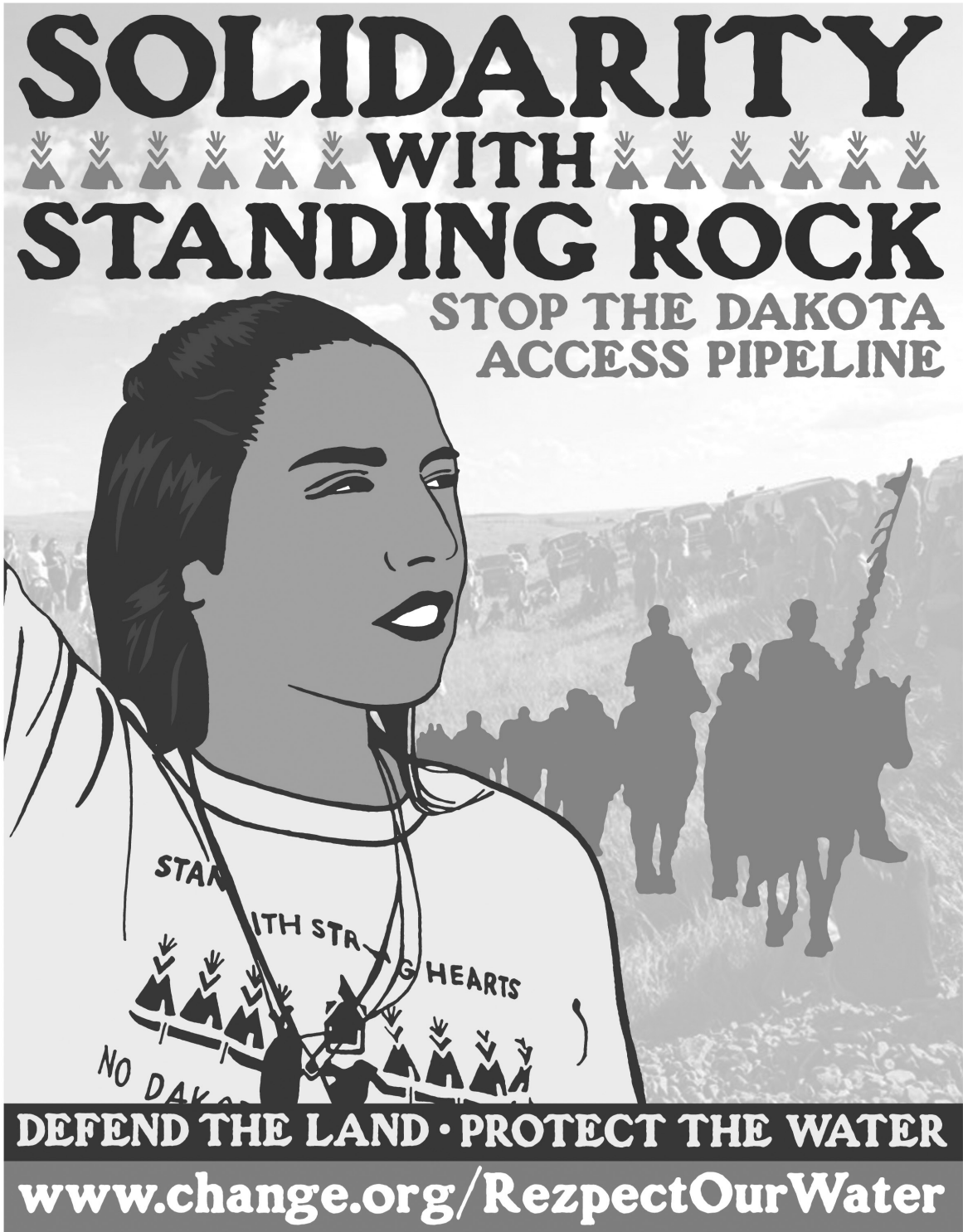
ONDP: Which side are you on?

At a time when organizations like Black Lives Matter-Toronto have been organizing to challenge anti-black racism, break the culture of silence that protects killer cops from facing justice, and to demand more accountability from the SIU, the Ontario NDP has put forward a candidate who stands on the opposing side of history.

It’s hard to imagine a candidate more at odds with social movement allies both in and outside of the party, including the work of NDP MPP Jagmeet Singh, who has been campaigning against the racist practice of “carding” used by many local police departments, and has been strongly in favour of creating an antiracism secretariat.

The NDP has a historic connection to the labour movement, which means labour activists have an obligation to speak out and make it clear that Thomas’ views are not welcome in a party that claims to stand up for the interests of working people. The labour movement has to demonstrate that they are on the side of those who are seeking justice, not those working to prevent justice from ever being delivered.

INTERVIEW



Interview with Crystal Sinclair: “Water is life, and we need to protect that”

Carolyn Egan spoke with Crystal Sinclair, an activist with Idle No More-Toronto who recently returned from a solidarity visit to Standing Rock in North Dakota.

I wonder if you could tell us what the issues are at Standing Rock, and why you chose to go down?

I chose to go because we have the Standing Rock community and all these other nations joined together in solidarity to take a stand against the Dakota Access Pipeline construction. Their issue is that this pipeline has desecrated sacred grounds that belong to the Standing Rock Lakota community. If it gets built, it will push approximately 570,000 barrels of bitumen a day through the pipeline. We know that pipelines break, and once the ground is poisoned and the water is poisoned you can’t use it, and it destroys life all around.

What was your sense of being there with so many Indigenous people and allies from across the United States and Canada?

It was an incredible experience. I was very humbled to learn so much from all these nations coming together and unifying to take a stand to protect the water. What I saw was people putting themselves on the line, being arrested, and taking that risk because this issue is so important. It’s a crucial time in our history. All across our nation and south of the border, people are taking a stand against corporations that are destroying the water. They have no regard for the life and the livelihood of people who live there

and who need to protect their water.

You and I were speaking earlier, when you were an organizer for Idle No More – you were saying how you were getting emails from workers in the tar sands. What were some of them saying at that time?

When we first got word on Bill C-45, which removed the protection of the waters here in our country, the tar sands issue came up and became part of the forefront of the struggle. Not that it wasn’t before, but it became more apparent what was really happening and why they were removing the protection of the water. In the beginning of Idle No More, when I realized that the water was at stake, I joined up on that issue. And it’s been my fight ever since. The issue was with this one worker who had worked for the tar sands – just a stranger out of nowhere, who found me on Facebook and sent me messages stating that he was a worker at the tar sands and had developed cancer that was destroying his life. It was a sad reminder to me that there are people who have jobs, and it’s not that we want anyone to lose their jobs, it’s not about that – it’s about building another community and how to live with each other in a new environment where we can still have people working in the workforce, but moving towards a sustainable future and sustainable jobs and greener jobs that benefit all of us.

There are campaigns both within the unions and the broader community for good green jobs for all – climate jobs, jobs for Indigenous

peoples, for racialized youth, for laid off workers – so that it is possible. You were talking about Germany, where you felt something like that had been happening...

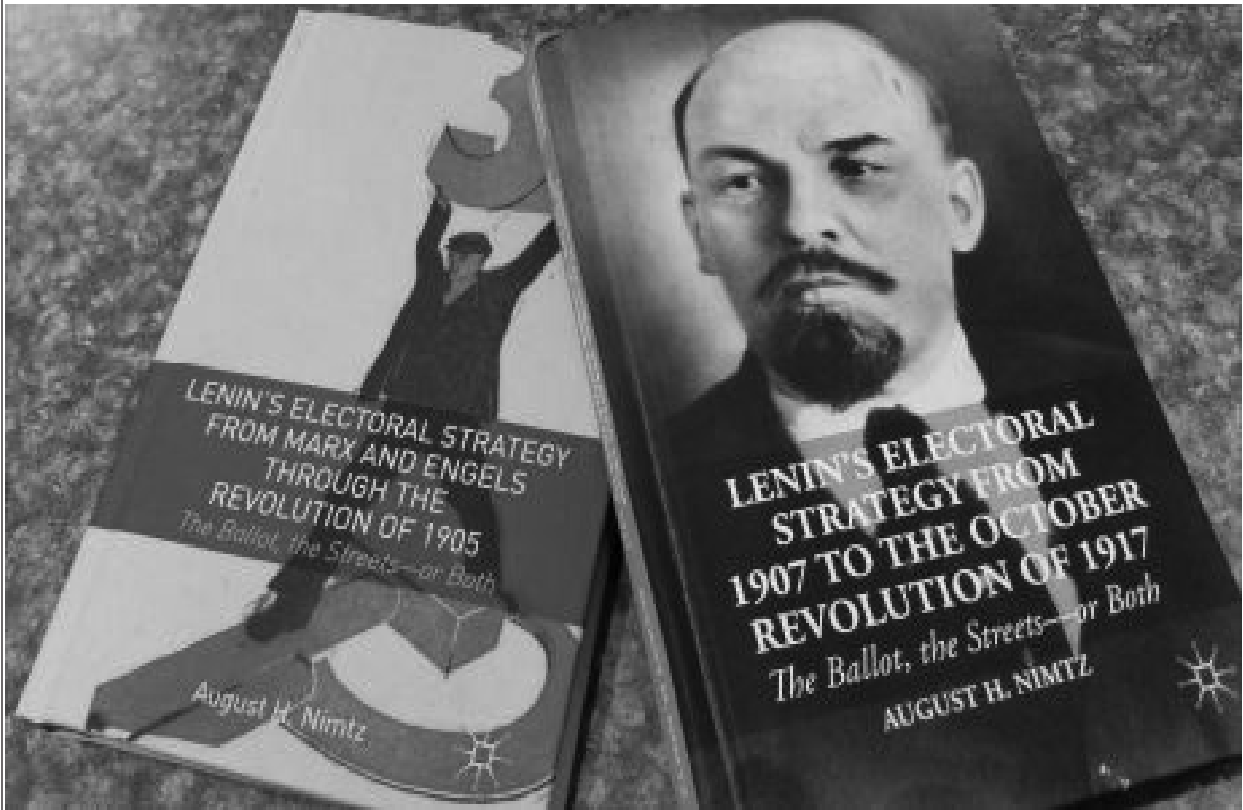
Yes, they moved away from fossil fuels and now they have a greener future. So we can look to countries like that and see how they managed to do it and had that transition.

In hearing you speak, it seems you are actually quite hopeful about the future, that we do have a capacity for maybe making the change that has to come.

I’ve always maintained that hope, because I believe that once people are educated in what is really at stake, I think that they are able to take that information and be willing to look into a future that sustains them as well. Because the water is for all of us. And what would we do if we didn’t have water anymore? Water is life, and we need to protect that.

So you believe that it’s possible for Indigenous people and trade unionists and environmentalists all to come together in a movement to push back on the corporations and governments in this fight we are in?

I say why not? We’re all in this together – we all drink water, we all like our showers, we all need water to live. And I think we could build that movement and make it strong, so that we can grow together and educate each other, and be able to work towards a sustainable future.



Lenin’s guide to elections

BOOK

Books: Lenin’s Electoral Strategy From Marx and Engels Through the Revolution of 1905, and Lenin’s Electoral Strategy from 1907 to the October Revolution of 1917
Written by August H. Nimtz
Reviewed by Bradley Hughes

You should read these books because our political lives are dominated by electoral politics and the decisions made by people elected to our parliament. Neither electoral politics as it’s usually pursued, nor the parliamentary institutions themselves operate in the interests of workers. August Nimtz uses the writings and actions of Marx, Engels and Lenin to explain what a revolutionary approach to this problem looks like.

Nimtz’ approach is the same as that of his subjects, Lenin, Marx and Engels: the working class is best able to represent it’s own interests and in struggling to do so, it can improve the lives of everyone.

According to Nimtz, Marx and Engels saw electoral campaigns, and participation in parliaments as a tool to build the confidence of the working class to take power for themselves. Since this can never be done through the institutions that capitalism has created to defend its power—institutions like parliament, the military, the courts and so on—workers will need the confidence to smash these institutions and create their own much more democratic state. In the process of doing so they will be able to eventually eliminate even their own state and create a world of true liberation.

If complete human liberation is your goal, and the only practical method is for workers to create and defend their own institutions to get there, then parliaments and elections are revealed in a whole different light. Elections for a workers’ party are not about gaining power, they are about organizing the working class to take power. Nimtz quotes Marx to make this clear: “Even when there is no prospect whatever of their being elected, the workers must put up their own candidates in order to preserve their independence, to count their forces and to lay before the public their revolutionary attitude and party standpoint. In this connection they must not allow themselves to be bribed by such arguments. . . that by doing so they are splitting the democratic party and giving the reactionaries the possibility of victory. The ultimate purpose of all such phrases is to dupe the proletariat. The advance which the proletariat party is bound to make by such independent action is infinitely more important than the disadvantage that might be

incurred by the presence of a few reactionaries in the representative body.”

Strategies and tactics

This describes the “anybody but Harper” position in the last federal election, and the recent “Clinton to stop Trump” arguments in the US. Those arguments benefit only the ruling class as their candidates (Clinton and Trudeau) can be relied on to rule against the interests of workers. In place of lesser evilism, revolutionaries should use election campaigns to put forward policies that benefit workers, and show how the politics of liberals (of the big L variety and of the social democratic variety) are only of benefit to the ruling class. By participating in elections in this way, the results are then a fairly accurate measure of the appeal of class politics to workers.

After the 1905 revolution in Russia, the Czar was forced to introduce a parliament. Elections to the Duma was always rigged in favour of the parties of the aristocratic land owners, but a few representatives of the peasants and of workers were elected. Lenin seized on this opportunity to put into practice the politics of Marx and Engels. According to Nimtz, Lenin’s writings on election campaigns, and tactics within the Duma are second only to his writings on the peasant question. Which leaves us an enormous resource for using elections against the bourgeois parties and the NDP.

In preparing for the elections to the Duma in 1912, Lenin wrote that to “every party at all worthy of the name a platform is something that has existed long before the elections; it is not something specially devised ‘for the elections,’ but an inevitable result of the whole work of the party, of the way the work is organized, and of its whole trend in the given historical period.” Elsewhere he wrote our “election platform can be expressed in three words; for the revolution!”

We can also see his analysis of a party platform in a negative sense, after more than a decade of agreeing with the Tories on the need for pipelines, the need for endless war, the need to ignore First Nations rights to their land, any platform the Liberals devised just for the election should have been greeted with great skepticism. Had the NDP campaigned by exposing common class nature of the Liberal and Tory parties, they might have won, but even if they did not, they could continue to build after the election as the Liberals continue polishing the most important planks of the Tory platform. However, to do so would require the NDP to put the interest of the working class above the interests of the 1%.

In the Bolshevik party, the deputies

in the Duma were expected to use their parliamentary position to build the party and to build worker’s confidence to fight for gains outside of parliament. This is the exact opposite of modern social democratic parties like the NDP where members of the party are there to work on behalf of MPs and MLAs, who never have to answer to the party’s members. As Lenin wrote to a comrade regarding the Bolshevik deputies, “our six deputies in the Duma . . . have now begun to work outside the Duma so energetically that it is a joy to see. This is where people will build up a real workers party!”

The responsibility to the members of the party became especially important when the First World War started in 1917. When the war started, one of the Bolshevik deputies, Badayev, spoke to the press: “The working class will oppose the war with all its force. The war is against the interests of workers . . . We, the real representatives of the working class, will fight for the slogan, “War against War.” Every member of our fraction will fight against the war with all the means at his disposal.” As a consequence of statements like this, and for refusing to vote in support of the war, the Bolshevik deputies to the Duma were arrested. Their trial provided more opportunities for the Bosheviks to organize workers’ opposition to the war.

These are just a few examples from over more than a decade between 1905 and the successful revolution in 1917. Nimtz convincingly argues that the revolutionary politics that Lenin and the Bolsheviks employed towards elections and parliament during those years helped to create the class conscious party that was able to lead the revolution. In fact, it was the success of the Bolsheviks in the elections to the Soviets of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies in September of 1917, that lead Lenin to the conclusion that it would now be possible for the Soviets to take power and form the first workers’ state.

These two volumes are a treasure for understanding elections. As revolutionaries, everything we do is built on the fact that working people are able to run our own lives and society much more democratically and effectively than our bourgeois representatives. Turning this fact into a weapon to use within and against capitalist parliaments is our urgent task.

LEFT JAB

John Bell

The revenge of forgotten America

And so the horror that was the 2016 election reached its conclusion. The two worst candidates in electoral history duked it out for over a year, and the worst one won.

This is sort of like how it must have felt the morning after British voters chose to leave the European Union. The punditocracy is in shock. Global markets tank in terror. The price of gold is spiking. The “smart money” is looking pretty stupid. The banks, big business, the so-called 1% and the majority of their representatives are preparing to convince President Trump to sign the Trans Pacific Partnership deal after all.

And like the Brexit experience, there will be many who will wake with remorse for casting a protest vote with Trump, begging “Can we have a do-over?”

The results are straight out of a shopworn 1980’s Hollywood script about a dystopian future – remember The Running Man. You saw that movie and laughed; Donald Trump was taking notes. The key element of those movies was the army of extras, American workers, dispossessed, simmering with anger, just waiting for a bigger-than-life saviour. Trump is a pretty down-market Ahnold, but he seized the moment.

These are the people who voted Trump in. CNN exit polls got it right: they reported a huge majority of voters in places like Florida and Ohio describing themselves as “angry” and “wanting change.” Whether Trump is the change they really need is another matter.

He spoke directly to them in his acceptance speech: “The forgotten men and women of America will be forgotten no more.” He talked about putting America back to work rebuilding infrastructure in almost New Deal terms. Whether he can and will do these things is, for a while, irrelevant.

I don’t want to suggest Trump’s election is a good thing. It also looks like he delivered control of Congress to the Republicans as well, and will appoint the next generation of Supreme Court Justices. For social movements that have become ossified and solely focussed on a legal strategy to win and defend gains this is a sobering moment. The only consolation I can offer is the consolation of history: no gains for women’s rights, LGTB rights, or civil rights were won first in the courts. They were won in the streets, in town halls, in church basements, in factory lunch rooms – the very places our movements have ignored and turned over to the Trump trumpeters.

I often think of the words of a wise friend who says that every workplace, any random gathering of people, is made up this way: 20 per cent are on the left and offer progressive, collective analysis and solutions; 20 per cent are on the right and will argue division and cozying up with the boss; and in the middle are the 60 per cent who can be pulled in one direction or the other.

In the wake of this election shock, liberals will blame those in the middle for being

racist or stupid. I blame us, the 20 per cent that should have been in there with them, feeling the hurt and anger of their dispossession and arguing to take it in a positive direction.

Bernie Sanders showed that this was possible. Imagine this morning seeing the stock market plunge, the price of gold spike, and the President-elect being a socialist. But where Trump took advantage of an already fractured Republican Party that couldn’t get its shit together enough to block him or find a consensus candidate to unite behind, the smarty-pants in the Democratic Party used every dirty trick in the book to block Sanders voters in a primary system that truly was rigged. Team player and nice guy to a fault, Bernie Sanders was no match for the DNC machine.

I am not going to pretend that Clinton was as bad as Trump; she actually was the lesser evil. First, this speaks to how monumentally evil Trump is. He knowingly encouraged racism and white nationalism in his campaign. He didn’t flinch when the KKK endorsed him. It is mind-boggling that it took this long for his sex crimes to be exposed – I’m talking about sexual assault and rape, not just the general aura of misogyny and contempt for women he never even bothered to conceal. Even his own supporters laughed when he claimed “No one has more respect for women than me. No one.”

At every stage of the campaign Trump revealed himself to be a self-satisfied bully used to having his money buy his every desire and protect him from any repercussions. He is not just the worst presidential candidate ever, he is well in the running for the worst person ever.

Yes, it meant something that Clinton could have been the first US woman president. There were moving scenes as women and men lined up at the grave of suffragette leader Susan B. Anthony’s grave to place their “I Voted” stickers there. But apart from that she was the candidate of the status quo, the epitome of standing pat.

The emails that haunted her campaign were not indictable, but that wasn’t the point. They, and the sleazy cash-for-connection workings of the Clinton Foundation, showed where her connections, support and empathy lie: with the so-called 1%. She shilled for the corner offices, the banks, the brokers, the people who had robbed a generation of Americans of their future. Trump –genuinely or not – spoke to that dispossessed America.

It was no contest.

Parties like the NDP need to give themselves a slap. Will you continue to move to the centre, to the status quo, and write off disaffected Canadians as a stage army that can trotted out at election time? Or will you take their grievances seriously and begin with them to challenge the system? They know the system isn’t working, and if you try to deny it (balance that budget, nominate that cop) they will turn their backs on you for ever. Rightly so.

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.



Activist calendar
movement events

STOP KINDER MORGAN
NO CONSENT NO PIPELINES

November 19, noon
Vancouver City Hall: 453 west 12th

November 30, 8am at the Supreme Court
<https://chippewassolidarity.org/en/events>

International Socialist events

WHAT NEXT AFTER THE US ELECTION?

November 19, 7pm
Steelworkers Hall: 25 Cecil, Toronto

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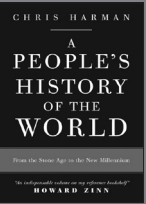
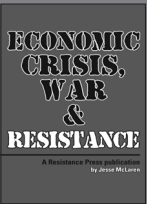
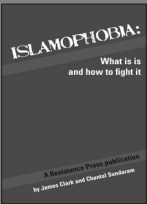
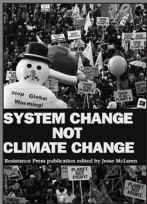
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SIT-INS AGAINST TRUDEAU

At 10am on November 4, a dozen young people staged a sit-in at the constituency office of Liberal Minister of Environment and Climate Change Catherine McKenna in Ottawa. The occupation was part of a series of sit-ins co-ordinated nationwide by climate justice organisation 350.org.

The office of Minister of Transportation Marc Garneau in Montreal was also occupied that day, while the offices of Minister of Natural Resources Jim Carr in Winnipeg and Minister of Indigenous Affairs Carolyn Bennett in Toronto saw sit-ins the day before. The message of all these actions was the same: to pressure the Liberal government to publicly opposed the Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain pipeline in British Columbia.

Katie Perfitt, one of those sitting-in at McKenna’s office in Ottawa, said that she spoke with the Minister over the phone and “during the call, she criticized Kinder Morgan CEO, Ian Anderson, for comments he made yesterday denying the science of climate change.” Perfitt went on to say that “simply disagreeing with climate deniers isn’t enough - we need politicians like Minister McKenna and Minister Garneau to stand up to big oil and publicly oppose the Kinder Morgan pipeline.”

PHILIPPINES: OPPOSITION GROWS

Women and worker activists held a noise barrage in Quezon City to express their outrage over the Supreme Court’s decision to bury the deposed dictator Ferdinand Marcos in the Libingan ng mga Bayani.

The groups World March of Women (WMW), Sentro ng Progresibo at Nagkakaisang Manggagawa (SENTRO) and Bukluran ng Manggagawang Pilipino (BMP) have been rallying to oppose President Rodrigo Duterte’s order to bury Marcos in the hero’s cemetery. “We shall never forget this day. The decision of the SC is a grave insult to the memory of those who died under Marcos rule,” according to Jelen Paclarin, Executive Director of the Women’s Legal and Human Rights Bureau (WLB). “The burial of Marcos in LNB is the death of justice – as the remains of the Dictator shall be laid in the ground, so shall what remained of hope and our faith in the justice system.” The group asserted that Marcos is not a hero, but a dictator who brought upon atrocities and suffering to the country and the Filipino people can never be called a hero.

Josua Mata, Secretary General of SENTRO, expressed that the SC decision tramples on the sacrifices of all trade unionists whose lives were taken in fighting the Marcos dictatorship. “This is another nail on the cross of democracy in the country,” added Mata.

“This SC decision does not represent the position of the thousands of Filipino people who have lived, experienced and understood the horrors during the Marcos dictatorship, said Judy Pasimio, Executive Director of Lilak (Purple Action for Indigenous Women’s Rights). “Our resistance to the burying of truth and that tragic part of our history will continue,” she added. The group noted that indigenous and Moro people have been severely abused during the Marcos regime.

Bukluran ng Manggagawang Pilipino (BMP), Focus on the Global South, Legal Rights and Natural Resources Center, Foundation for Media Alternatives, Youth and Students Advancing Gender Equality, iDefend, and the Coalition Against Marcos Burial petitioners were part of the action.

This is shared from SENTRO

AUTO WORKERS: CONCESSIONS AND RESISTANCE



By Ritch Whyman

The narrow 55 per cent acceptance of the new contract by Ford Canada employees, brought to end the third round of bargaining by the union representing autoworkers (UNIFOR) and GM, Chrysler and Ford.

Despite the automakers making massive profits the pattern set by the union leadership, while containing small gains and bonuses, included many concessions and setbacks for not just autoworkers by all workers in Canada and Quebec. Furthermore it maintained previous concessions made at the height of the financial collapse.

Concessions

The contracts maintain a 10-year “grow in” wage grid, where new employees will take 10 years to get to the same wage as more senior employees. Wages will go up by barely 4 per cent over the four year deal, in exchange for such paltry increases as annual bonuses. Furthermore the usual Cost of Living Allowance (COLA) designed to help keep wages in line with inflation has been suspended, so workers’ wages will fall below the cost of living again.

Despite being part of the Canadian Labour Congress’ campaign to defend and expand public pensions, the union leadership essentially abandoned the notion that new employees will ever see a company pension. The new contract relegates new hires into what is basically an RRSP plan. Meaning the future of new employees will be paying fees to Bay St. vultures, and dependent on the whims of the market.

This concession will embolden other employers to erode what few retirement securities exist for workers. If profitable Ford and Chrysler can force autoworkers to give up pensions, then why wouldn’t other employers follow suit? It also opens the door to further pension rollbacks in the next round of bargaining four years from now.

Rank-and-file

Despite these concessions the most interesting and important aspect of the recent round, isn’t what was in the agreements but the amount of rank-and-file opposition they generated, especially at Ford.

UNIFOR began its bargaining with perhaps the weakest employer financially, GM. From the onset the union framed bargaining around the question of gaining new investment guarantees from the company to maintain employment at GM Canada locations, in particular the Oshawa assembly plant. The Oshawa plant has seen employment fall from 23,000 in the mid 80’s to roughly 2,600 today. There were threats that the loss of the Camaro wouldn’t be replaced and the plant could begin to wind down in the near future.

With a back drop of fear about plant closings and the union having said only new investment and government subsidies could save jobs, GM workers gave the lowest ratification vote in recent memory. Despite the promise that 700 temporary employees would be made full time, the contract was only ratified by 65 per cent despite a hard sell by the leadership. Dissatisfaction with no changes to the wage grid drove

the low vote result.

Despite promises that investments will mean jobs are secure, this hasn’t been the case in the past, nor does the small print confirm all of the promised investment. Previous contracts also held out the promise of new investment, but then, like now, the agreement with the company stated investment depended on “market conditions”, and government subsidies.

At Ford the contract was outright rejected at the Oakville assembly plant and was only passed due to votes at the Windsor and Essex plants and parts warehouses in Edmonton and Brampton. Sadly sections of UNIFOR’s leadership played the anger in Oakville at the agreement off against job fears in Windsor.

When UNIFOR local 707 (which represents Ford Oakville workers) stated that the GM agreement wouldn’t be accepted, the local leadership in Windsor unfortunately denounced them as irresponsible and “gambling” with jobs. That by standing up to Ford Oakville workers were being “greedy” became part of the narrative to try to beat them into line.

Despite all these threats an astounding 55 per cent of employees rejected the offer in Oakville.

The rejection of the deal was driven by anger that UNIFOR had gutted pensions for new hires and maintained the 10-year wage grid. The leadership was booed by sections of the crowd.

Looking ahead

The rejection at Ford Oakville wasn’t only driven by newer hires stuck on the grow in grid and hybrid pensions, but by senior employees showing solidarity with new hires. The rejection is also based on the general deterioration of conditions at the workplace over the last four years.

The strength of the rejection at Oakville spells problems for UNIFOR’s leadership in four years. Currently of the 5,000 employees at ford Oakville over 2,000 are newer hires. Over 1,000 senior employees are already or close to qualifying for retirement. This means that employees on the wage grid likely will be the majority next round.

The continuance of the wage grid, low wage increases and ending of defined benefit pensions puts in question whether UNIFOR will be able to gain new support, let alone keep current supporters, at Toyota and Honda plants in Southern Ontario.

Every union activist should be concerned by the new agreement and prepare for what it may mean in bargaining with other employers. But there is also the glimmer of hope of young and new hires stating they want to fight against the corporate greed of Ford.

In a month when young workers opposed the CLC leadership and turned their backs on Justin Trudeau at a young workers conference, and young workers in Oakville opposed their leadership and said no, clearly there is a mood to fight amongst a militant minority in the union movement.

STICKING WITH THE UNION

Carolyn Egan

Labour and Standing Rock solidarity

Over five thousand people rallied at Queens Park recently and marched to the US consulate in solidarity with the Standing Rock Sioux.

Many Indigenous groups came to Toronto from across Ontario but the majority of the demonstrators were climate conscious residents from the area. The gathering was large and vocal which speaks to the growing climate justice movement and increasing links with Indigenous communities which are leading struggles across North America. At the Lower Churchill Hydro Project in Muskrat Falls, Labrador hundreds of building trades workers were forced to leave when local residents occupied the site; the Chippewas of the Thames are challenging Line 9 at the Supreme Court.

The Standing Rock Sioux are taking on the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) which goes through their lands. They have set up an encampment and have been met with dogs and batons protecting oil profits. Their courageous stand has drawn Indigenous people from the United States and Canada as well a climate justice activists. Thousands have brought their solidarity and this fight has become a symbol of resistance against Big Oil.

Unfortunately the trade union movement is split over the issue. There are 4,500 construction jobs involved and the North American Building Trade Unions (NABTU) has come out strongly against the indigenous peoples. Peoples who are standing up for their territory and legitimate fears of their water being contaminated by a pipeline break as has happened in so many places. NABTU has chosen to side with their class enemy the American Petroleum Institute. Although it is no longer a part of the AFL-CIO it has influenced its president Donald Trumpka who stated, “The AFL-CIO calls on the Obama Administration to allow construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline to continue.” This is a repre-

hensible position for which he did not get agreement from the affiliated unions, but relied on a past policy in support of pipelines. It places the largest labour federation in the US against indigenous peoples and their just fight to protect their territorial integrity and a sustainable environment.

Other unions are taking positions in support of the Standing Rock Sioux, including the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), the Communication Workers of America, the United Electrical Workers, the Amalgamated Transit Union, National Nurses United and many individual locals. The fact that they have spoken out is very important in this pivotal struggle.

The debate over jobs versus the environment has to be won in favour of climate justice. The International Labour Organization tells us that transforming to a greener economy could provide between fifteen to sixty million jobs over the next twenty years. The facts tell us that millions of good, green jobs can be created as we move to infrastructure projects that massively expand low carbon mass transit, extend renewable energy such as wind turbines and solar energy, and move to efficiencies such as green buildings both housing and commercial.

The International Trade Union Confederation has said, “There are no jobs on a dead planet.” The green economy is growing faster than any other section of the economy and we have to fight to make sure those are good union jobs and dialogue with rank and file workers that there are alternatives to the fossil fuel industries. This is a critical debate for workers and it is our job as socialists to actively engage in it. At a recent delegates meeting of the Toronto and York Region Labour Council the proceeds of the regular raffle held to support progressive causes were designated to the Standing Rock Sioux. We can win it.



SocialistWorker

TRUDEAU'S CLIMATE COP-OUT

"In 2015, the Liberal government got elected on promises to take climate action and they are failing on that promise. We need ambitious leadership that starts with freezing tar sands expansion and committing to building a renewable energy economy that works for people and workers. The first step is to reject Kinder Morgan this December."

This is how Gabriel D'Astous from 350.org explained the climate justice group's interruption of Environment Minister Catherine McKenna on November 1.

November 4 is the anniversary of Trudeau's swearing in as Prime Minister, and the day that the Paris Climate Agreement takes effect. As Trudeau said at last year's conference, "I am proud of the role Canada is playing in reaching this historic and balanced agreement, and I am confident that the world will rise to the challenge of addressing climate change."

While climate change is a historic challenge, the "balance" that the agreement struck was to set urgent goals of reducing emissions without providing any binding mechanisms to achieve them—while leaving out of the main text critical issues of climate justice including Indigenous rights and a just transition for workers. Now, after a year of climate rhetoric without climate action, the Trudeau government is going to the COP22 in Morocco, increasingly on the wrong side of the movement rising to address climate change.

Indigenous rights

Years of opposition to Harper, including from Idle No More and the climate justice movement, created a huge demand for change.



While the NDP lost by campaigning to the right and promising balanced budgets, the Liberals tacked left and won by promising "real change." This included specific climate justice promises of implementing the United Nations Declaration, infrastructure spending, and insisting that "while governments grant permits for resource development, only communities can grant permission." What's happened the last year?

As Mohawk activist and writer Russell Diabo explained, "Trudeau's biggest betrayal so far is his backsliding on his promise to adopt the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)... The Trudeau government is attempting to take the international minimum standards of

Human Rights of Indigenous Peoples' contained in the Articles of UNDRIP and interpret them through a Canadian constitutional framework, which continues to be used to dispossess, impoverish and oppress Indigenous peoples. Canada's founding constitution, the British North America Act of 1867, helped the fathers of colonialism immorally and illegally take the lands, territories and resources of Indigenous peoples, largely without compensation...

"By interpreting UNDRIP in accordance with Canadian constitutional law (as interpreted by the federal government and the Supreme Court of Canada), the Trudeau government is replacing the high international standard in UNDRIP of Free, Prior, Informed Consent with the lower domestic legal stan-

dard of the Crown's duty to consult with Indigenous groups. All the government has to do is justify infringement of Indigenous rights for the public good and, voilà, you can approve the Site C dam project in the Peace Valley the Liquefied Natural Gas project on Lelu Island, and probably the Kinder-Morgan pipeline. Justin Trudeau is continuing the proud Liberal tradition of betraying Indigenous peoples—and this is only year one of his mandate."

Climate jobs

Betraying Indigenous peoples goes along with backtracking on climate goals to the ones Harper promised, and supporting the same pipelines.

Catherine McKenna justifies this on the grounds that many workers "are just trying to get by every day,

figuring out how they're going to put food on the table."

But tar sands companies have fired tens of thousands of workers, Bombardier has fired thousands more who could be building mass transit.

The Liberals are repeating Harper's attempt to drive a wedge between workers and those concerned about the environment. Natural Resources Minister Jim Carr recently claimed that "People say, 'Leave the oil in the ground,' they don't want any development."

Not only is thus not true, but it implies the Liberals are ignoring the thousands of people who came to their townhall meetings across the country with the People's Climate Plan: meet 1.5 degree commitment through 100% renewable economy that is justice based to

support Indigenous communities and ensure that no worker is left behind.

Stopping tar sands expansion goes hand in hand with a mass expansion of climate jobs, as Kanesatake Grand Chief Serge Simon explained at the signing of the Treaty Alliance Against Tar Sands Expansion: "Tar sands are, I think, a national shame. If it were up to me it would be shut down tomorrow. But it would cause a lot of pain for people in Alberta, so our alliance is going to promote, in the strongest possible terms, massive investment in Alberta in another type of economy. These two actions, they go hand in hand. We're not proposing to destroy Alberta, we're trying to help it, and we're trying to help the country, and we're trying to help this planet."

Labour groups are developing concrete demands to put this vision into practice—from unemployed tar sands workers asking to be retrained in solar panels, to postal workers explaining how they can help in Delivering Community Power, to the million climate jobs campaign to expand renewable energy, energy efficiency and high speed rail.

Because the Liberals have continued Harper's corporate tax cuts their budget could only commit \$3.4 billion to public transit over three years (\$1billion/year), and Finance Minister Morneau changed this to \$23 billion over 11 years (just over \$2billion/year), which just extends the timeline without significantly increasing spending.

The Million Climate Jobs plan calls for \$17.6 billion over five years for public transit, \$10 billion for high-speed rail, \$23 billion for renewable energy and \$30 billion for energy efficiency. We need this mass transition, and we need it now.

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Fight for \$15 in Outaouais, Quebec

On October 20, more than a 100 people gathered at the Centre Tétreau in Gatineau, Quebec (Hull) to launch a local version of the campaign for a \$15 minimum wage in Quebec.

The crowd was made up of CEGEP and University students, local community and antipoverty activists, and union members and representatives from CUPE, the CSN, the FTQ, healthcare unions, and the President of the Outaouais Labour Council.

The meeting followed on demonstrations of thousands on Saturday October 15, which was Quebec's national day of action for both the "Minimum \$15" campaign launched by the FTQ, one of Quebec's two major union federations, and the new "5, 10, 15" coalition. On that day in

Gatineau (Hull), activists petitioned and leafleted for the campaign launch at a local shopping mall.

In addition to a \$15 an hour minimum wage, the "5, 10, 15" coalition aims for 5 days' notice of scheduling, and 10 paid sick days. "5-10-15" includes the CSN – the other major union federation in Quebec – and two other smaller union federations, the CSD and CSQ, as well as important community organizations like Au bas de l'échelle ("At the Bottom of the Scale") the FDNS (Front in Defence of Non-unionized Workers), the Immigrant Workers' Centre, and the "Collective for a Quebec Without Poverty." The campaign as a whole is also supported by Quebec solidaire (which had a contingent of 200 on the October 15 march, and helped initiate the launch of

the campaign in Gatineau).

The Gatineau meeting heard from a panel of speakers who inspired almost everyone in the crowd to sign up at least for more information or to be part of the local organizing and leadership of this campaign in the Outaouais region.

The first presentation came from a representative of Femmes immigrantes de l'Outaouais (immigrant women of the Outaouais region) who spoke about the particular challenges faced by immigrant women, including the difficulty of even securing paid work outside the home. Then a former organizer with the Workers' Action Centre in Toronto who has now relocated to Ottawa, spoke about the Fight for 15 and Fairness campaign in Ontario and its organizing model for creating links between

pre-existing organizations for non-unionized workers through the campaign. And finally, a representative of both Au bas de l'échelle and FDNS talked about the history of minimum wage campaigns in Quebec – noting in particular the importance of the Bread and Roses march of 1995 and the World March of Women of 2000 which brought the minimum wage issue to a mass audience, and gave a detailed presentation busting the myths and arguments most often raised against minimum wage campaigns.

The Quebec solidaire petition on the issue demands that the immediate raise to \$15 be indexed to the cost of living, and that this be for all workers in Quebec regardless of migratory status, schedule, place of residence or type of work.