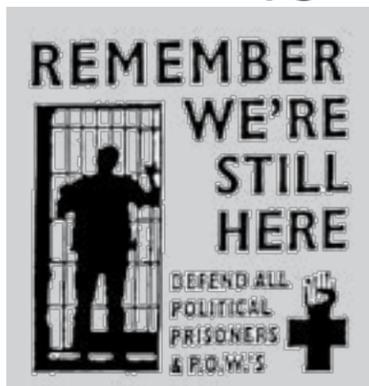




PRO CHOICE

Reproductive rights in Canada
pg. 4



Supporting political prisoners
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THE STRUGGLE AGAINST AUSTERITY



Steelworkers join a protest march, part of widespread strikes in France

ALEX BALCH

At the G20 Summit held this past June in Toronto, the heads of the world's most advanced capitalist economies met with their counterparts from the IMF and World Bank to hammer out a savagely coordinated attack on the international working class.

Central to the "decade of austerity" prescribed by the IMF – and zealously promoted by the meeting's host, Stephen Harper – are massive cuts to public spending, aimed at curbing the national deficits that resulted from injecting trillions of dollars into the international banking system in the wake of the 2008 economic crisis.

Effectively, this amounts to the largest transfer of wealth in modern history – and a particularly audacious act of class warfare, waged by the rich against the poor.

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The G20 in context: reformism in retreat, anarchism in action

BRANDON GRAY

The resiliency of the anti-capitalist movement was clearly demonstrated on the streets of Toronto during the G20 conference this past summer, in which a virtual torrent of criminal state repression failed to stop thousands from showing up to oppose the brutal austerity measures the ruling class is now struggling to implement.

Although the trade union bureaucrats of the CLC predictably betrayed the very workers that they are ostensibly supposed



to serve, anarchists of various ideological stripes at least managed to demonstrate some oppositional force to the summit; this conflict was merely one example of the many important confrontations that will continue to break out around the globe as the ruling class struggles to force working people to pay for their crisis.

Action was needed in the face of police-state tactics and the reformists' symbolically appropriate march-in-a-circle protest; the state lackeys of the richest national centres were holding yet another meeting to plan our collective defeat in the next chapter of class war, and this in and of itself demanded a militant response. This singular clash must be considered in proportion to the broader struggle to abolish capitalism and the authoritarian structures that enshrine and defend it. As always, within anarchism and the workers' movement, we must be willing to engage in constructive debates and self-criticism if we are to win this larger struggle. Only by placing such methods as those employed by the black bloc in their appropriate context can we begin



to constructively discuss how to sharpen our tactics and refine our strategies for winning.

In Toronto the state used a special body of armed agents – the Integrated Security Unit (ISU) – to render the city's downtown core into a temporary police state. Activists operated in a geographical area in which their basic democratic rights, generally used to morally justify the brutal dictatorship of capital, became a laughable fiction. Over a billion dollars was ironically spent securing

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about common cause

Common Cause is an Ontario wide anarchist organization with branches active in Toronto, Hamilton, London and Ottawa. Our goal is to build a strong voice for anarchism within community and labour struggles. We believe that the anarchist principles of self organization, direct democracy and direct action are the tools needed to defeat the attacks and obstacles facing our class and provide building blocks for creating a new society. To find out more about us please get in touch:

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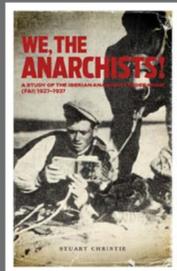
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Certain Days: Freedom for political prisoners!

SARA FALCONER

In many ways, the Certain Days: Freedom for Political Prisoners Calendar is an attempt to reshape the dominant narrative of history. Instead of marking the fourth of July as a time to celebrate Independence Day, it invites us to observe that on that date in 1977: “Washington: George Jackson Brigade plants a bomb in main power substation in state capitol in support of striking segregation prisoners.” More than merely a calendar, it is a detailed resource, a constant reminder, and a true collaboration. Published by a collective based in Toronto and Montreal, the project was suggested by Black Panther Party (BPP) political prisoner Herman Bell, who helps shape it with political prisoners Robert Seth Hayes and David Gilbert.

With the 2011 edition, we are proud to celebrate our tenth anniversary by offering 42 colour pages of art and insight from some of North America’s longest-held political prisoners, including Leonard Peltier, Antonio Guerrero Rodriguez, Herman Wallace, Sundiata Acoli, Mumia Abu-Jamal, Jaan Laaman, Daniel McGowan, Alvaro Luna Hernandez and Marilyn Buck (who passed away in August just weeks after being released from prison). It also features contributions from supporters around the world.

As we explain in our introduction, during the early years of the calendar, the events of September 11, 2001 transformed the political landscape in ways we were still coming to understand: new imperialist wars had begun, and here at home the state was using the post-9/11 climate as a carte-blanche to step up repression and retract hard

“conspiracy” model pioneered in the SHAC 7 and RNC 8 cases in the U.S. to terrorize dissidents involved in laying the framework for protests.

So it was a fitting time to go “back to basics,” bringing the focus back to the theme of political prisoners: their voices and perspectives, their contributions and the particular issues they face inside prison. Political prisoners are still in the struggle: as organizers, as mentors, and as comrades in need of our solidarity to win their freedom.

Of course, the very existence of political prisoners belies the state’s true purpose for prisons themselves: not public safety or crime reduction, but social control. This is a clear motive behind the Harper government’s recent so-called “tough on crime” legislation, announced in spite of the fact that crime rates have been steadily decreasing in Canada for the past 25 years. The fact that political prisoners generally get harsher treatment in terms of sentencing, parole, and day-to-day harassment within the “correctional” system underscores the purpose of the entire Prison Industrial Complex as a tool of repression.

Once you recognize these conditions, the need for projects like the calendar becomes evident. The issue at stake is the right to communicate. Prisons are a form of censorship, silencing the voices of millions.

The challenges in communicating with prisoners are formidable. Even for those who work, prison labour wages are so low that many prisoners have difficulty obtaining

stamps, paper and other basic necessities. Censorship of both incoming and outgoing mail is rampant and

“we are proud to celebrate our tenth anniversary by offering 42 pages of art and insight from some of North America’s longest-held political prisoners”

arbitrary. Even then, because prisoners are usually forbidden from writing to each other or anyone on parole, they are isolated from many of their comrades, sometimes for decades. Phone calls, often costing more than a dollar per minute, are difficult and infrequent between prisoners, their families and other outside supporters. The situation is even more stressful for those in solitary confinement - or “administrative segregation,” “special housing,” or “control units,” as the



most current euphemisms describe it. Political organizing is labeled “gang” or “terrorist” behavior, and many political prisoners languish in solitary. These labels—“gang member,” “terrorist” and “criminal,” among others—are part of a system of language that seeks to exert control through definitions.

It is therefore vitally important to give prisoners a chance to tell their own stories in their own words, and to create new—alternative—definitions through their own media. Helping raise these voices also combats our society’s “out of sight, out of mind attitude” towards prisoners. The calendar, for example, literally aims to make political prisoners more visible, on a daily basis.

Those voices can in turn have a tremendous impact on the individuals and movements in “free” – or as prisoners often call it – “minimum-security” society. Imprisoned black liberation leaders, including Malcolm X, Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale, wrote some of their most important works from prison. George Jackson wrote his pivotal book, *Soledad Brother*, as a series of letters to family, friends and supporters, sparking a passionate movement among prisoners and supporters, and riots when he was killed in 1971.

In the case of political prisoners, especially, those of us on the outside have much to learn from their vast political study and years of experience – all of which should not be devalued by their present circumstances. All prisoners are more than prisoners, and know about much more than prisons. Their first-hand experience of the lengths the state is willing to go to in order to exert power often leads to much sharper and more valuable

analysis than can be found outside. For us, the prison struggle involves integrating these prisoners’ voices in our everyday work - around all issues, not just those pertaining to prisoners.

Involving prisoners in our everyday struggles can also help us connect with the history of the struggles we are currently involved in. One of the goals of imprisoning

“one of the goals of imprisoning revolutionaries is to erase this people’s history - and we have a collective responsibility to resist these efforts”

revolutionaries is to erase this people’s history, and we have a collective responsibility to resist these efforts.

As a new generation of activists finds themselves increasingly targeted for repression, is it more crucial than ever that we support our movement’s political prisoners. Start by listening to what they have to say.

Funds raised from the sale of this calendar will be divided between the New York State Task Force on Political Prisoners, the Palestinian NGO Addameer, and the G20 Legal Defense Fund. Order now at www.certaindays.org. Join us on Facebook (<http://facebook.com/certaindays>) and help spread the word.

>>AUSTERITY continued from page 1

This past October, workers in Europe responded to this provocative act through a series of massive and highly coordinated strikes that paralyzed entire industries and struck fear into the hearts of the European elite.

In the great cities of Spain, Belgium, Finland, Sweden, Poland, Great Britain, Greece, Portugal, Germany, Ireland, Italy and France, workers poured out onto the streets with a single unified message: We, the workers of your capitalist economies, will not be made to pay for a crisis created entirely by you – the capitalist class.

In France – a country with a long and storied history of popular struggle – workers ratcheted up the impact of these strikes by barricading the country’s twelve major oil refineries and shutting down the country’s shipyards to incoming oil tankers. French workers were soon joined in the streets by tens of thousands of students, leading to clashes with police and widespread rioting that evoked cherished memories of the rebellion of 1968.

Though the actions across Europe have indeed been impressive in terms of their scope, coordination and the general militancy of their participants, they have also utterly failed to achieve their (rather limited) objectives.

Faced with the reformist demands of trade union bureaucrats, European governments have opted to call their bluff, pushing through cuts in the face of massive popular discontent. Wrapping their decisions in the rhetoric of inevitability, politicians have framed the crisis in terms of neoliberal market adjustments and economic scaremongering; they have ignored the workers’ demand to reduce national deficits by taxing the wealthiest members of society, and have shut this perfectly rational solution to the crisis out of the discourse of the corporate and state media.

These governments view these strikes with caution and alarm, but do not yet see them as a genuine threat to their continued rule. And who can blame them?

Writing in *Counterpunch*, Slavoj Žižek diagnosed the real source of the problem: an identity crisis within the left itself:

“The best indicator of the left’s lack of trust in itself today is its fear of crisis. A true left takes a crisis seriously, without illusions. Its basic insight is that, although crises are painful and dangerous, they are inevitable, and that they are the terrain on which battles have to be waged and won.”

Žižek goes further, addressing the root of the current dilemma by noting that it is the widespread acceptance of “democratic mechanisms” as the ultimate frame [of conflict resolution] that prevents a radical transformation of capitalist relations.”

Rather than appealing to our

politicians, who are already widely understood to be the mere puppets of international capital, the time has come for the working class to begin to exert ourselves physically to bring about the changes that we both ardently desire and rightly deserve. It is not a matter of merely convincing our governments to do the right thing through acts of moral persuasion: they understand the present situation all too well.

Instead, it is vital that we, the workers of the world, begin to realize our collective potential – and start to dismantle the oppressive economic systems that seek to frame us as mere spectators in our own lives. Ultimately, this means an unlimited general strike, with no set demands – save the long overdue demise of international capitalism, and “representative democracy” itself.

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Khalil Tian Shahyd

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Brandon Gray

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40 Days of Harassment: the battle for reproductive rights in Canada

MELANIE STAFFORD

“40 Days for Life” has once again set itself up on Bank Street in Ottawa, across the street from the Morgentaler abortion clinic. Anti-choice protesters are carrying signs that read things I’d rather not burden readers with. Suffice to say, it’s sensationalistic, sexist, shame-based bullshit. For 40 straight days on Bank Street, an empty baby carriage is symbolically bungeed to a post. Pamphlets are distributed that spew out misinformation already debunked by countless reputable health organizations. Street counselors sent by the Helpers of Gods Precious Children intimidate, harass, and bully women as they enter the building. Catholic school groups travel from Peterborough to visit the “ground zero” site.

40 Days for Life is an anti-choice campaign aimed at “saving the unborn”, where “the most visible component is the prayer vigil outside the Abortion Mills in every participating city throughout the 40 days, 7 days a week, 24 hours a day.” While the measures of success are questionable, the organizers claim that “the results of the 40 Day campaigns have been outstanding, with hundreds of mothers and their babies being rescued from despair and death.”

While this particular form of harassment and intimidation primarily targets cisgendered women, the same groups organizing and participating in the 40 days of harassment and intimidation campaign have also targeted the queer community, sex workers, and young people wanting comprehensive sexual health education.

40 Days for Life is promoted by the haters at Campaign Life Coalition. This group runs many hate-promotion campaigns, including a current campaign against comprehensive sexual health education, and another that opposes policies such as the Liberal government’s Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy, claiming that this initiative “will lead to the normalization of homosexuality”. I sure hope it does.

R.E.A.L. Women of Canada reinforces their supposed “pro-family” stance by endorsing the 40 Days for Life campaign. This group promotes a traditional wife-and-mother role for women and is stridently anti-feminist and anti-gay. R.E.A.L. Women is a strong cheerleader for social conservative causes and has been at the forefront of several battles, including the fight against gay marriage, interven-

ing at court to uphold Canada’s harmful prostitution laws, cutting funds to women’s groups, and interfering at the United Nations to curtail human rights for women everywhere.

With their “I regret my abortion” signs, the Silent No More Campaign also maintains a frequent presence on Bank Street. A project of the male-led Anglicans for Life and the Priests for Life intended to help support various anti-choice “awareness” efforts, Silent No More solicits tearful testimonies from guilt-ridden religious women who regret their abortions. Women experience all sorts of emotions following their abortions, relief being the most common one, and few women suffer long-term negative psychological effects because of their abortion. While I would agree that women need more safe spaces to discuss all of their emotions following an abortion, it is worth noting that there are no organizations out there with ready-made sandwich boards “I regret choosing to parent” and it is completely unfair to suggest that one person’s experience will be the same as someone else’s.

40 Days for Life has an impressive level of organization, including coordinators, a user-friendly website, and many participating churches and Catholic schools – each responsible for one day of harassment. This ensures city-wide participation, meaning the organizers are able to produce a consistently high number of volunteers.

Anti-Choice groups protesting in front of abortion clinics have a significant detrimental effect on society’s efforts to maintain safe

and secure access to abortion care. By attempting to prevent access to abortion services, these groups are launching a direct attack against women’s reproductive freedoms.

Anti-abortion protesters, with their gruesome photos and their rhetoric of blood and murder, disturb the peace, offend public decency, and inflict psychological damage. Their manipulative methods can shock, unnecessarily upset, and even traumatize women who have had an abortion, are about to have one, or may consider one in the future. Their attempts to block access to abortion clinics are against the law and a violation of privacy. Most alarmingly, many Ottawa anti-choice activists have engaged

“By attempting to prevent access to abortion services, these groups are launching a direct attack against women’s reproductive freedoms.”

in overt violence against providers and clinic staff, most of which is caused or encouraged by protests outside abortion clinics. As a pro-choice sexual health educator, I’ve received death threats, and my vehicle was vandalized with the words “there is a bomb inside” as well as “murderer”.

To comply with the Canada Health Act, as well as the Canadian Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms, abortion clinics are required to provide an accessible, safe and private environment for women seeking their Medicare-funded procedures.

The province of BC (through its Access to Abortion Services Act), clinics in Calgary, Toronto, and Hull, to name a few, have complied and enforced bubble zones - protest-free zones around abortion clinics. Consistently, rights to freedom of

expression are trumped by rights to access to health care.

Despite this being highly inappropriate, considering the precedents set all over the country, the city of Ottawa has sanctioned harassment of women for far too long by granting the 40 Days for Life campaign a permit to protest.

Public health and pro-choice organizations are under-funded and overtaxed already. Organizations in Ottawa don’t currently have the capacity to offer a viable counter to this campaign of misinformation, harassment, and intimidation; they are too busy supporting their current clients. Under a Conservative government, pro-choice orga-

nizations are justifiably concerned with their funding and charity statuses, leaving the task of providing meaningful pro-choice activism to be filled by grassroots organizers.

Here’s where the Pro-Choice Coalition of Ottawa - a small and dedicated group of sexual justice activists – comes in. In response to the 40 days of harassment and intimidation, PCCO-CPCO has organized an online petition and letter writing campaign demanding that the city revoke the anti-choicers’ permit. We believe that women should not have to run a gauntlet of anti-choice activists in order to access legal health services. The City of Ottawa must immediately revoke this permit in order to respect the dignity, privacy, and legal rights of women to unimpeded access to health services at the Morgentaler Clinic.

We also recently organized a Nov 1 fundraiser for Canadians for Choice’s abortion access fund, called “Bodies of Dissent: a panel on building radical support for our sexual justice movements.” When abortion services are only offered in 15.9% of all Canadian hospitals, and half of those hospitals only provide abortion services up to thirteen weeks gestation with wait times of up to six weeks and judgemental gatekeepers who actively impose their own moralistic, misinformed ideas, abortion is most certainly not as accessible as it should be.

We are frustrated with constantly having to act in reaction to well-funded and well-established anti-choice organizations. While we are spending so much energy trying to support those traumatized by sexist and intimidation-based campaigns like 40 Days, most of us in the pro-choice movement would rather invest our energies in tackling issues of poverty, racism, classism, homophobia, and ableism. Instead, we are stuck battling against harassing anti-choicers, uninformed health care workers, indifferent municipal employees, an organized “pro-life” caucus in government and well-funded anti-choice lobbyists.

Along with fighting the anti-choice activists on Bank Street, we’re also fighting them in Parliament. Bill C510 is a private member’s bill that would amend the Criminal Code to prohibit coercing a woman into an abortion via physical or financial threats, illegal acts, or through “ar-

>>G20 continued from page 1

more distinctly emphasizes the division between the organized rank and file workers and the top layer of bureaucratized leaders that have consistently betrayed their interests and sided with the bosses. Continuing in the tradition of Buzz Hargrove, the trade union tops have proven themselves again and again to be hucksters that peddle in the most pernicious form of reformism afflicting the labour movement, subordinating workers to the logic of global capital in the name of business unionism and false promises about saving jobs. As a taste of things to come, the Canadian Labour Congress worked with the violent thugs of the ISU to plan a protest route that not only facilitated the planned tactical deployment of riot troops and equipment, but also stayed blocks away from the outer security perimeter. During the main trade union-led march on June 26, the CLC marshals formed lines in front of riot police, directing the crowd away from the summit site to help the police isolate protesters who refused to submit to the police script. This criminal cross-class alliance indicates where the allegiances of the trade union bureaucracy lie. To add insult to injury, CLC president

The definite sharpening of the class war, measurable by the increased level of military spending employed against the domestic population,

umentative and rancorous badgering or importunity”. It was introduced in April by the chair of the Parliamentary Pro-Life Caucus, Conservative MP Rod Bruinoo of Winnipeg South.

This bill promotes abortion stigma, paternalizes women, and puts providers at risk. The bill is both redundant and misguided. It patronizes women by implying that they are frequently coerced into abortion, despite the fact that the vast majority of women make their own decision to have an abortion and take responsibility for it, and abortion clinics already ensure that their clients are making an uncoerced choice of their own free will. If coercion is present, it’s usually in the context of domestic violence. If the intent is really to protect women from abusive partners, we need better and more comprehensive solutions for supporting women living in abusive situations, perhaps with funding for women’s equity seeking groups.

When it was confirmed that the 40 Days campaign would still be allowed to happen in Ottawa this fall, the pro-choice community came together to organize volunteers who would stand outside in front of the clinic, symbolizing a pro-choice presence for passerby’s and clinic patients. When I participated in my first 2-hour shift at the Morgentaler Clinic, about sixteen people came up to our group to thank us. One woman just wanted to talk, and another got off the bus just to come and thank us (which led to a longer conversation on sexual justice). One man also stopped, presenting himself as a lawyer and asking why we didn’t already have a bubble zone in Ottawa. He asked if we could call the hate crimes unit, and I reminded him that gender wasn’t a ba-

sis for a hate crime in Canada.

Another man walked by, quickly interrupting the conversation to state that he came from “a family of nine children”, as if to say that being pro-choice implies that we are pro-abortion. While there are many feminists that identify as pro-abortion as a political stance, they certainly do not impose abortion as the sole option for people facing unintended pregnancy. That would be anti-choice.

“The City of Ottawa must immediately revoke this permit in order to respect the dignity, privacy, and legal rights of women to unimpeded access to health services”

What does it mean to be pro-choice? It means having the liberty and ability to make your own choices, uncoerced, regarding your sexual and reproductive health, and having control over your own body. The Pro-Choice Coalition of Ottawa affirms a definition of pro-choice that is inclusive of all aspects of sexual and reproductive health and honours the right to bodily integrity and privacy. This can include whether or when to have children, how to respond to pregnancy (whether with abortion, making an adoption plan or becoming a parent), whether to have sexual relationships, when to have them and with whom, and choosing how to best configure our relationships. Pro-



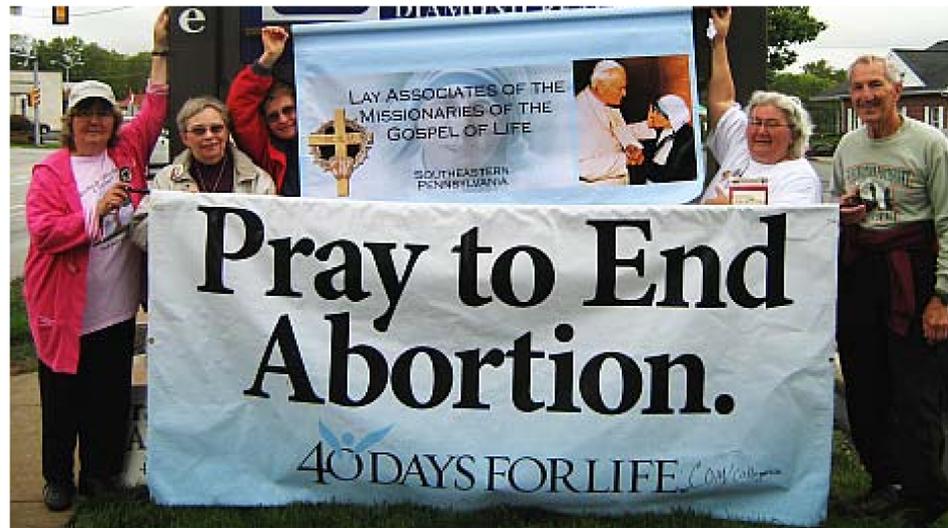
Ken Georgetti issued a public letter condemning “vandals” without even mentioning police actions. Proving he does not speak for them, about 250 stewards, retirees, and rank and file members sharply responded with their own letter condemning Georgetti.

In light of such state violence, it is beyond hypocritical to decry the breaking of a window at a bank like CIBC – an institution that posted profits of \$640 million in that quarter alone. Shame on those so-called progressives, who, in the heat of the moment, proved their contempt for the ‘rabble’ by urging the police to preemptively

choice includes having the right to choose which birth control option works best for you (if any), which methods you wish to use to practice safer sex, who you wish to include in making decisions about your sexual and reproductive health, how you wish to express your sexuality, choosing to come out or not and choosing whether or not to label your sexual orientation or gender identity without fear of discrimination. Pro-choice information is evidence-based, legal, inclusive and shared in an unbiased and factual manner. Pro-choice means allowing for all of the above to remain safe and accessible. Lastly, being pro-choice means respecting the decisions others make with regards to their sexual and reproductive health, and trusting them to be the expert in their own sexual well-being. For some people, pro-choice extends beyond the realm of sexual and reproductive health and each person’s definition becomes personalized for them.

The Pro-Choice Coalition of Ottawa envisions a community that celebrates healthy sexuality, its diversity of expression and reproductive choice as fundamental human rights for individuals throughout life.

arrest anarchists. As we continue to scrounge for donations to the G20 Legal Defense Fund, we must not lose sight of the true scale of wealth we already produce for our exploiters. We, the working class, do not need to “cut back” on anything; instead, we need to cut out the capitalist class and their archaic modes of production and exchange, and win back control over the wealth we currently produce. If this indeed remains our primary goal, we anarchists should be able to put our heads together and come up with winning strategies through constructive debate and discussion. Solidarity!



Neo-liberalism and home care

“If Mom didn’t take care of you when you were a child, would you be able to go to work?”

SCOTT NEIGH

“If your Mom didn’t take care of you [when you were a child], would you be able to go to work?”

Those are the words of trade union activist, graduate student, and single mother Laurel O’Gorman. They are her way of neatly capturing the idea that without the massive amounts of unpaid work done in the home, primarily by women, capitalism would grind to a halt.

And through the neoliberal changes of the last thirty years -- paid work that has become more precarious and more poorly paid, governments that have radically scaled back support for people in need, different groups of workers increasingly subjected to different rules -- the burdens of unpaid work have increased significantly. Yet many unions and community groups are still in the early stages of figuring out how to recognize and respond to the central importance of unpaid caring and domestic labour.

Women’s Work and Invisibility

“Women’s labour is often the most exploited,” according to Sharmeen Khan, an organizer and spokesperson for the Toronto Community Mobilization Network that put together much of the infrastructure that groups used for protesting the G20 summit in June. Pressure that gives women fewer options other than to engage in work that is underpaid or unpaid “is a strategic way of maintaining profit for a few... The unpaid labour that is often invisible is strategic in that.”

The invisibility Khan refers to shows up even in how many of us talk about what we do, where the word “work” is so often used to refer only to what we are paid to do. Caring for children and older adults, preparing food, cleaning, doing laundry, getting groceries, and the dozens of other tasks that make life possible get relegated to an assumed but undefined space that not only ignores their importance but ensures that they are often not seen as work at all. The invisibility when unwaged tends to correspond with poor pay and low status when this kind of work is done for a wage.

According to researchers Leah Vosko and Lisa Clark, despite modest increases in the proportion of such work done by men over the preceding decades, the time devoted to unpaid work by working age men and women still differed considerably in Canada in 2005. Men performed, on average, 3.5 hours a day of unpaid work,

compared to 7.3 hours for women. In households with a child under age six, the averages shifted to 6.1 hours for men and 12.6 hours for women.

This invisibility has many expressions in public policy as well. For instance, in the years that O’Gorman’s time was dominated by unpaid work in her home, her then-partner was working at a trade. Both are now pursuing further education -- he qualifies to access grant funding under a government “second career” program because his earlier work was waged, but she is able to access education only through taking on debt because her earlier work was unpaid. She said, “In my life, this is the most visible example of how unpaid work doesn’t matter and everything is about waged work...because what I was doing wasn’t ‘work.’”

Neoliberalism

Professor Pat Armstrong is a political economist who teaches at York University in Toronto, Ontario, who has done research on women’s work for more than forty years, most recently with a focus on healthcare. She said that the “most obvious” way neoliberalism has increased pressure to engage in unpaid work in Canada is “in cutbacks of what we call the welfare state.” This refers to the array of social programs enacted mostly after the Second World War which provide services in ways that socialize the costs and which support people living in need. Particularly since the mid-1990s in Canada, the welfare state has been under attack by business lobbies and many governments.

She says that in the healthcare sector, this means people are sent home from hospital “sicker and quicker” -- less care is provided by nurses and doctors, and now “most of that care is provided unpaid in the home...mostly by women.” The limited public dollars for homecare services are also now more often taken up caring for people who have been discharged from acute care hospitals so there are fewer resources to care for frail and elderly people (who are most often women) so it is generally family (again, mostly women) who have little choice but to take on that work.

Armstrong adds that it is evident from how governments have talked about the issue that this is not an unforeseen side-effect. Rather, “it is clearly part of the current healthcare strategies to do as much as possible by unpaid labour.”

Khan points out how neoliberal changes have affected different groups of women in different ways. For instance, as poverty has increased and accessibility of services related

to care provision has decreased, more and more poor women in Canada have simply had no good options. “A lot of the women who are in poverty do work hard, do work all the time” both in low-wage jobs and at unwaged work, but “rather than the state intervening to provide affordable childcare, the state will intervene only when there is neglect.”

In contrast, a response to this burden by some affluent households is to hire other women to perform domestic and caring labour, often poor and working-class women of colour brought to Canada as part of the Live-in Caregiver Program. This program subjects these women to much more oppressive rules for work than Canadian citizens have to face, including having to live with their employer, limited access to social services, restrictions on basic employment rights and on pursuing other work, and the threat of deportation if they demand better treatment. This is part of the “labour apartheid” that is the “essence of neoliberalism,” according to Khan. She added, “The lack of childcare support in this country has normalized this experience of hardship.”

In Struggle

Many public sector unions, like the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), have some awareness of the issue and respond by both political and workplace efforts to strengthen the welfare state. The idea is that high quality, accessible, not-for-profit services would give communities more options for meeting caring needs. As well, fighting to transform the low pay and precarious, casual character of caring work when it is waged would help to increase its overall status, including when it is unwaged.

CUPE also enacts measures to

reduce barriers to participation by its own members who might face burdens from unpaid caring and domestic labour, such as funding childcare during union events. O’Gorman, who is the president of the newly formed CUPE Local 5011, which represents graduate teaching assistants at Laurentian University in Sudbury, Ontario, said, “Overall, I’ve found that CUPE has really worked on that,” and cited numerous examples of how it has facilitated her participation. Still, she also cited other instances where barriers remain, and both in the position of her local as it goes into bargaining and her experience so far of processes within the union beyond the local level, the gendered impacts of unpaid domestic labour have not been a major focus of attention.

Armstrong, who has worked extensively with unions and community groups over the years, confirms that unions have some awareness of the issue and could be an important force in addressing it, “but I don’t think it’s at the top of their agenda, partly because they are so squeezed” by the many neoliberal attacks on the labour movement.

Progressive and radical “do-it-yourself” alternatives that seek to avoid reliance on the welfare state through local community-based initiatives have at times advanced some interesting co-operative models. However, these sorts of experiments are rare in Canada, and they often do not address the gendered burden of unpaid labour or the ways in which many poor and working-class women already do incredible levels of waged and unwaged work.

Even in the most visible mobilization against neoliberalism in recent years in Canada -- the protests against the recent G20 summit in Toronto -- this issue was largely absent. Though gender justice was one of the key themes of the organizing, and Khan said that issues of women’s work were definitely present in the initial discussions she was part of, it



mostly did not show up in what both mainstream and activist publics saw in June.

She cited a number of reasons for this. One was the general mainstream media disinterest in the issues motivating dissent against the G20, and their nearly exclusive focus on protest tactics. In addition, she related it to “the weakness of the women’s movement right now.”

However, she also said that after the Harper government advanced an agenda for maternal health in developing countries that excluded funding for abortion services (and, initially, contraception as well), many of the larger organizations

>>REVIEW Bananeras: Women transforming the banana unions of Latin America

by Dana Frank
Review by Karine Wehlm
and Peter Marin

This is a powerful book about the history of women banana workers fighting for gender equality inside their unions, set within a broader struggle against the exploitation of banana workers by the multinational corporations that dominate the industry in Latin America.

Dana Frank begins with a brief history of the banana industry and the creation of banana workers unions. The author describes the domination of the region’s politics and economy by the major multinational corporations (Chiquita, Del Monte and Dole) and the struggles of peasants, workers and socialist movements against them.

The author describes the conditions faced by women entering the banana plantations in large numbers in the 1960s. These women were confronted with sexual harassment at work, granted no maternity leave, fired when pregnant and often faced domestic violence at home - all in a homophobic and machismo culture in which they were forced to work a double workday (childcare, household chores and their 8-14 hours paid workday).

The heart of the book describes how these women organized to gain power within their unions despite opposition from their male co-workers. The author focuses mainly on Honduras - where women really only started to organize by 1986 - but she also talks about the struggles of women in other Latin American countries, such as Guatemala, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Columbia, Nicaragua and Panama.

The first organizing efforts in Honduras began within SITRATERCO, a union in the north of the countryside. Restructuring of the union in the 1970s

involved in protesting the G20, including labour and women’s groups, focused their gender justice-related energies almost exclusively around a version of reproductive choice wrapped in “a very simplistic analysis” and then “kind of wanted to shut out any other narrative, like around unpaid reproductive labour.”

Khan said choice “is important for sure, but there was a complete lack of analysis about what the G20, the IMF, the WTO do to women’s lives.” Through their role in reorganizing work and in imposing a host of other changes, she sees these neoliberal institutions in their entirety and not just individual



led to the creation of a section in which women workers found themselves in the majority. Jumping on this opportunity, these women organized - and after 2 years of struggle, they were able to win their fellow male co-workers to the need to form a women’s committee. Using this committee as a launching pad, by 1994 they had expanded their model nationally, through COSIBAH - the country-wide union federation - and regionally, within COLSIBA (the Coalition of Latin America Banana Union, founded in 1993 and today representing 40 unions in 8 countries) by launching a women’s secretariat in 1996. To give an example of how far their struggle has come, at the 2004 COLSIBA conference they sat together to compare their union contracts from a woman’s perspective, in an effort to standardize their contracts across the region.

The achievements of these women are impressive and inspiring - especially considering they had such scant resources, little free time and were organizing in countries where the state and bosses crack down hard on worker organizing. So how did they accomplish this?

From day one the women focused on self-education and collective empowerment. For example, the

policies as incredibly harmful to women around the world. She would have liked to have seen “more connections to different women’s movements in different parts of the world to make our analysis more concrete about how the G20 affects different groups of women.”

However movement organizations in Canada take up questions of unpaid caring and domestic labour, organizer John Clarke of the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (which he admits has also not directly addressed the question) thinks it is crucial that they do so.

“When a society starts to impose on women and demand they

perform for free labour that social service networks have performed, there will be a period of adjustment in which people will do what they need to do to get by,” he said. However, “there are only so many hours you can cut out of your sleep, only so much effort you can put in before it becomes unendurable.” For this reason, he thinks it is imperative that these issues “find political expression in the near future.”

For more of Scott’s writing, please see his blog at scottneigh.blogspot.com

incredible women of SITRATERCO began by sending two women from the women’s committee to workshops (eg. women and work, women and society, sex and gender, and leadership workshops). These women would in turn educate the rest of the women’s committee on the subject. Each of the women on the committee then further committed to educating 25 other women on the banana plantation. This went on for two years, with workshops held every three months on their only day-off. In this way they were able to empower the women in their union and thereby transform themselves.

These women were also successful because they not only focused on their work issues, but also tried to change things in their communities and in their lives outside of the workplace. For example, they worked to get training for other trades, since most banana women stop working in the plantations by their forties. They also provided education to women on how to raise their children in a gender-neutral manner.

There is much to be learned from the experiences of these women; women activists everywhere will gain a great deal of insight from the descriptions of

the workshops and conferences and from reading how the participants overcame some of the challenges of machismo, both within their unions and their own homes. As Iris Munguia, one of the women banana workers, puts it: “We hope that when you read this book it helps you reflect, and it turns into an incentive for exchange and communication, and for the search for alternative alliances to improve women’s lives – not just women in the banana sector, but all women”.

But the lessons here go beyond women organizing. Activists in Ontario struggling to grow and keep local groups alive, or union locals who struggle to build member participation have much to learn about the need for and advantages of making long-term internal education a key focus of their work.

The labour movement also has much to learn from the transnational organizing of the women within COLSIBA. These women point the way forward toward building a grassroots, worker-to-worker internationalism as an alternative to the internationalism of union elites that has little



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to do with their rank-and-file membership.

One of the other key lessons of this book is that class struggle is ineffective without an understanding of the role gender plays within the working class itself - and likewise, that the struggle for gender equality necessitates an understanding of class. The “mujeres bananeras” really show this through their struggle. These women made their unions stronger by fighting for gender equality, and through their struggles with their male co-workers for dignity and workers’ power on the banana plantations of Latin America.

This short, easy-to-read book is for everyone who wants to learn more about the history of women organizing (which is often neglected) and who wishes to be empowered by these courageous women’s victories in their struggle for gender equality. You can also find more information about current women banana worker’s issues and their organizing efforts online at <http://www.bananalink.org.uk>

>>REVIEW

Brian Donnelly's Obedience & Savagery

Show & Tell Gallery (Nov. 5 to Nov. 28, 2010)

www.briandonnely.org/

Review by Brendan Bruce

While the exhibit’s press release claims that Donnelly “pits realism against abstraction and black space,” his work could also be read as an alarming commitment to materialism. Contrary to the tenants of realism, the artist is not simply painting his subjects as they would appear in everyday life. Instead, the photogenic qualities of the subjects of these paintings represent socially constructed aesthetics, rather than a true representation of the human form. The poses of the subjects are specifically represented in animalistic, rather than human activity: an alligator sunbathing, a hound carrying its master’s catch, or a puma in the hunt. These activities construct visual narratives of human subjects—a human female outstretched relaxing, a worker doing her bosses bidding, or a woman in pursuit of her desires— involving human bodies that are painted with their muscles contorting and flexing in inhuman activities. In *Catch and Release*, pictured to the right, elements of this socially constructed materialism can be clearly seen. The grizzly’s face is portrayed in a collectively constructed representation of romantic splendor (the archetypical roar of a 19th century naturalism) and the human body is socially assembled by elements of contemporary masculinity (the normative male figure; toned,

youthful, and absent of any body hair on his appendages and torso). The subject’s object of need — in this case, the fish—is presented in relation to the animality of the grizzly bear, rather than the humanness the body: the work that the man is celebrating is that which is inhuman; the fish in the grasp the figure’s left hand is bleeding red—not white—blood without the separation of the animality of the object and the humanness of the subject.

In relation to this materialism, the political value of Donnelly’s work comes from the ways his paintings demand that we rethink space vis-à-vis the subject, specifically our subjectivity. The textured empty space has a void-like appearance, in which the audience attempts to situate the subject of the paintings; but Donnelly, more often than not, leaves the human figures exposed to this void (with partially erased appendages that discombobulate the idea of the closed body of the ego and open up the body by blurring the boundary between body and its surrounding void). The human bodies become backgrounds on which to project their inhuman or animal representations, just as the void acts as the stage upon which the subject is set. The dripping white ‘blood’ reveals another appearance of the usage of space in the paintings: there remain spaces within or between the aspects of the subject—thereby implying that the inhuman, animalistic aspects of the subject are not directly bound to the human aspect. Instead, there is a wound that hemorrhages; not another element of subjectivity, but the distance between these two aspects of the subject itself. The detailed layering of Donnelly’s painting (the human figure set upon the void, the white ‘blood’ oozing across the human form, and

the animal delicately layered over top of the white space inside the subject itself) provides not a hierarchy of these spaces, but rather gives an ordering—or a logic—to the interactions of the various aspects of the subject and the spaces that define these aspects.

Often the radicalism (or revolutionary expression) of art is narrowly defined by one of two factors: 1) that art’s content should be pedagogical—that art’s radical value is to critique what society is like, or more importantly, to show what society should be like—or 2) that the form of art is itself radical activity—that the disjunctures of the artistic style provide the needed radical statement. In the former, Donnelly’s exhibit could be read politically through the difference between the concepts of ‘work’ encapsulated in the obedience of *Accomplice* vs. the savagery in *Burden*. In the latter, it could be read in regards to the form of the painting, or what I have called ‘an alarming commitment to [socially constructed] materialism.’ Rather than looking for political expression in either one of these concepts, or in their formal conjunction, the politics of the exhibit are perhaps best understood as the politics of the bodies produced by the audiences’ engagement with the visually constructed space—in between their own bodies and the bodies in Donnelly’s paintings. While I was at the opening, individual audience members were pulling out their camera phones to get snapshots of the paintings, sometimes with themselves in the foreground of the shot. This act in itself provides a third dimension of space to this reading . . . one in which the image of the audience’s ego is separated from the painting by the space of the



Catch and Release. Brian Donnelly. Oil on Canvas. 60" x 72". 2010.

gallery. The dangerous connection between the audience and the animal aspect of the painting’s subject is ordered by the spaces created by viewing the works; in the snapshot the audience member is at a distance from the subject of the painting equal to the distance between the subject’s human and animal aspects. The open bodies in the paintings are replicated by the audience’s body in the snapshot (whether their legs merge with the textured void or drift out of electronic image captured by the phone). In this way, the subjectivity of the audience member is tied into the precarious logic of the painting: it is only the spaces within ourselves that separate us from the inhumanness of our subjectivity, and these spaces are not discrete and distinct but open and intermingled by the layering of aspect within visually constructed space. It is these encounters with Donnelly’s works that produce a political relationship that the audience must deal with—or rationalize away; namely, the socially constructed logic of space that separates us from the inhuman subjectivity found within all of our bodies.