



Towards a Militant Feminist Movement: Confronting Men's Rights Organizing

CC MEMBER, Toronto

On the eve of International Women's Day, so-called men's rights advocates at the University of Toronto are holding an event confronting women's studies and academic feminism. This is a follow-up to their event in November featuring self-proclaimed ex-feminist Warren Farrell, author of the book 'The Myth of Male Power'. Warren Farrell is best known for his statements about women making false accusations of rape and his argument that incest can be a positive experience, if only women were not socialized to be victims. Though figures like this, who have written that, "before we called this date rape and date fraud, we called it exciting", make it tempting to point to these inflammatory quotes to justify our outrage at these groups, it is their fundamental discourse that we must contend with.

Men's Rights Associations have sprung up at universities across southern Ontario, including Guelph, Waterloo, McMaster and multiple campuses in Toronto. Their main position is that the hardships of men have been caused by women, the women's rights movement and in particular, feminists. They express this position with rhetoric ranging from downright reasonable-sounding to blatantly misogynistic, but by only focusing on the latter, we risk normalizing their fundamental message that feminism oppresses men. The exploitation and increased incarceration or suicide rates of men have not been created by feminism. Some of the supposed facts that they present, such as the prevalence of false rape accusations are simply untrue, but those about drop-out rates, incarceration and suicide often approximate truth. We do not need to negate these facts to contend with them, but instead, must place them in an accurate political context, that of capitalism, patriarchy, and white supremacy.

The emergence of these groups and the difficulties that we have faced organizing against them are not, as these misogynists claim, a symptom of a feminist movement on campuses gone-too-far, but a disturbing sign of the lack of radical feminist organizing in recent years. As of late, students and leftists have most often responded to issues of patriarchy through token lip service, and not organized responses. These misogynist organizations have seized on this organizing vacuum, so that we are now in a position where the historical fact of the systemic oppression of women is being challenged. As we began to organize a response to this most recent event, we had to confront the criticisms leveraged from our previous action – doors were blocked, there was a confrontation with the police, and



vocal or militant women present at the demonstration were identified and targeted on the internet, harassed and threatened.

As with populist white supremacist organizations, these misogynist groups have relied heavily on arguments of free speech and the "reverse oppression" faced by the white man at the hands of organized marginalized groups. In some spaces, the debate was successfully reframed to be about the illegitimacy of militancy and the virtues of free speech. We should know to expect these arguments. With the administration siding with the misogynists, many organizing around

this issue along liberal lines were visibly shaken. Many were afraid to confront the misogynists again, for fear of retaliation. Nevertheless, what must be done remains the same. We need to move towards reactivating a radical, militant feminist movement that can contend, not just with the backwards misogynists of the men's rights movement, but with the issues that continue to affect women everyday on their campuses, from systemic oppression in male-dominated fields to the high prevalence of sexual assaults, not by turning to the police or the University administration, but through a militant organized resistance.

Anti-Racism Rally to be held in London

BRENTINGTON AUNTIEFACIST, London

On March 23rd London, Ontario is hosting a rally against racism in Victoria Park at 5pm. Organizers are hoping to build upon the success of last year's anti-racism rally, which stopped racists from congregating on the streets of the city. A group going under the name CiTOP (Citizens Together Opposing Prejudice, pronounced STOP) is organizing a community-wide demonstration to highlight some of the systematic social and environmental issues of racism that are still thriving within the city and region. The organizers of this rally believe that racism runs deeper than just small groups of organized fascists (who may also organize on this day), and that it needs to be confronted on a larger level within this country. Speakers at the rally will discuss the many ways in which racism has and continues to affect their communities and the work they do.

With the continued prevalence of white supremacy within Canada, it is important that people come together to show that we do not believe that discrimination has any place in our society. CiTOP believes that racism has many forms, and that it needs to be addressed to make our community a safer, more vibrant place. Racism shows up today on indigenous lands, in politics, migration, prisons, workplaces, and almost every part of our society, and we encourage every person who believes that it must stop to come out and participate.

Besides the rally, there will also be a Decolonize Your Mind workshop series at the University of Western Ontario, hosted by the Women's Issues Network. This free two-day event will focus on issues of race, privilege, cultural appropriation, migration status, and other important topics. Everybody who is interested in learning more about how you can stop racism in your communities is encouraged to join us in London and to come to both events.

Which Way Forward for Ontario Teachers?

RICHARD R, Hamilton

It has been over a month since the Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL) held their one-day protest of the provincial Liberal Party leadership convention, mobilizing some 15,000 people on the streets of Toronto and then sending them all home again around 4:00pm. The protest was part of the trade union response to Bill 115, which enabled the provincial government to circumvent collective bargaining and mandate the terms of new “collective agreements”. Within the bill were draconian provisions for any attempt to challenge the legislation, through the courts or in the workplace. It is worth noting that while the union leadership were pushing for this day of action, they were also cynically hedging their bets in the form of thousands of dollars in union dues being funnelled into contributions to Liberal leadership candidates. In one case \$10,000 was donated to Eric Hoskins, a leadership contender who had in fact voted in favour of Bill 115.

After their preferred “social justice” candidate Kathleen Wynne won the Liberal nomination it seems that the Ontario Secondary School Teacher Federation (OSSTF) leadership thought the time was right for a rapprochement. On Friday February 22, members were surprised to hear that their union had advised them to resume extra-curricular activities. This was not in response to any good faith offer by the province. I’ve never sat at a bargaining table, but it strikes me that giving up something for nothing is a pretty poor strategy. Members were not consulted in advance of this recommendation and had to spend the weekend in suspense, awaiting a press conference the following Monday, some venting their frustrations over a Facebook group called “We ARE the Front Lines In Education”. The decision by the OSSTF also breaks solidarity with the Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario (ETFO) who have continued their abstention from extra-curriculars. This allows an opportunistic press to play the “good” teachers in the OSSTF and OECTA (Catholic teachers who were the first to submit to the province) against the quarrelsome rebels in the



ETFO. We have seen just that in the editorial pages of the Globe, Star and Sun.

Community groups, who mobilized in support of all education workers throughout January and supported the union’s day of action have been left hanging without an effective escalation path or any visible means of advancing the struggle. Worker militancy is not a tap that union leadership can simply turn on and off whenever it suits their negotiation strategy. If you mobilize tens of thousands of people and proceed to lead them ineptly and achieve nothing, its likely that less of them will volunteer to participate in future. It is demoralizing, and it burns out organizers to no purpose. It must be reversed.

If similar anti-labour legislation is to be stopped, unions must be willing to defy unjust legislation and be seen to be doing so. To do otherwise is posturing and this has been shown time and again to be insufficient. Work currently being undertaken by groups like the Rank and File Education Workers of Toronto, such as canvassing in working class neighbourhoods, show potential for broadening the struggle and taking the power out of the hands of politicians and bureaucrats. The task for militant rank and file workers in this situation is to build on this work and find ways to move forward without and in spite of union leadership, and make possible mass defiance of laws like Bill 115.

Rebel Fest 3: Building a Culture of Anarchism within Punk Rock

REBEL TIME RECORDS, Kitchener

Taking place April 26-27th at This Ain’t Hollywood in Hamilton, Rebel Time Records proudly presents Rebel Fest 3. With performers including Spanner, Hold A Grudge, The Fallout, Mayday, Action Sédition, The Class Assassins, plus tons more, Rebel Fest 3 will showcase some of the best political punk in Ontario and Quebec. Many of the band’s members are actively engaged in anarchist organizing, and provide a great example of the vibrant intersection of anarchism and punk rock.

A project of Rebel Time Records, Rebel Fest aims to highlight pressing issues within the music scene and society at large, and to celebrate a growing culture of resistance in Ontario. We know what you’re thinking, not another article about a subculture, let alone punk rock! We can already imagine eyes rolling, and the term “lifestylist” quickly coming to mind.

There are good reasons for such a reaction, and in many ways it is a welcoming sign – it demonstrates that some in the anarchist movement have realized the limitations of solely fighting for social change within the confines of a radical subculture. That is, they have realized that the form their political action takes, as well as its location, is of crucial significance. Within the punk scene, this means realizing that punk subcultures often create an exclusionary environment that can be quite alienating for some people. The punk scene shares similar demographics to the anarchist milieu in North America – mostly white, male, suburban, and middle class. Even in instances where

someone is coming from a working class background, they still are able to blend in, and benefit from the current makeup of the punk scene by default of their white skin privilege. The overall race and class makeup of the punk scene is admittedly limited.

In addition to issues regarding race and class, patriarchy is another ongoing issue within the punk scene. Harmful language and sexist behaviour is commonplace – from machismo in the dance pit, to the fact that it is quite common to see a show with 4-5 bands consisting of all males, to the dominance of men in positions of power, there are countless examples. It is important here to acknowledge that any movement against capitalism must incorporate an analysis of the lived realities of white supremacy and patriarchy, and work to build a collective response capable of tackling these issues. Whether in the punk scene, or outside of it, this means working in collectives and organizations that use directly democratic and/or consensus-based models to organize around these issues.

Rebel Fest celebrates the expression of working class people using music as a medium to voice ideas of social change, and part of this means facing the issues mentioned so far. We’ve outlined the clear limitations of punk rock and politics, and part of the work of Rebel Time Records is to continually work on addressing these issues. And while the limitations are substantial, we also identify with many experiences of subcultural punk spaces, and see the important role they play in attracting youth to radical politics. We also love the music, and have a deep appreciation for its history.

Whatever subculture we may find ourselves in, we need to fight off apathy and apolitical attitudes, while also stressing community organizing and working for social change. As the saying goes, “punk can’t change the world, but punks can!”

For more information: www.rebeltimerecords.com

COMMON CAUSE // anarchist organization

COMMON CAUSE is an Ontario-wide anarchist organization with branches active in Toronto, Hamilton, Kitchener-Waterloo, and London. We publish Linchpin monthly, along with additional content online. To find out more about our work get in touch with a local branch in your area:

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