

Austerity, Ontario and Post-Secondary Education: The Case of “Canada’s Capital University”

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As austerity measures intensify around the world, the axe has come down particularly hard on post-secondary education (PSE).⁵⁰ So-called education ‘reform’ has shown itself to be a lightning rod for confrontation. In order to deal with unprecedented government budget shortfalls, caused, it must be recalled, by the lead agents of the capitalist class (its bankers, insurance companies and politicians), the public sector is now being strangled (McNally, 2010; Wolff, 2009; Panitch et al, 2010; Fanelli et al., 2010; McBride and Whiteside, 2011). The capitalist sector is, moreover, catching a second wind, and engaging further flagrant excesses as profitability once again reins supreme (Globe & Mail, 2011; Macdonald, 2011). Incredibly, rather than laying blame on the origins of the present (private sector-led) recession, budget shortfalls are being blamed on an allegedly bloated and inefficient public sphere, including the users and producers of those services (The Economist, 2011). The targets include both private and public sector unions, as well as universal social programs that aim to provide a modicum of protection against the vicissitudes of the market. Increasingly, then, the public sector is becoming a prime space for privatization, whereby market mechanisms are increasingly being locked-in thereby extending commodification and marketization. This is creating new openings for the privatization of public assets and services as a means to pay for the crisis.

In the United States of America, for example, this is particularly true at the state and municipal levels of government, as the recent measures in Wisconsin, Ohio, Rhode Island, Indiana, Oklahoma and Michigan amply demonstrates (Sustar, 2011; Gordon, 2011; Chivvis, 2011; Ryan, 2011). Like the U.S., in Canada the Federal Conservatives have responded with pay freezes, service cuts, corporate tax reductions, proposed asset sell-offs and the curtailment of social program spending with similar, sometimes deeper, cuts provincially (Evans and Albo, 2010, Fanelli and Hurl, 2010; Black and Silver, 2011; Jackson, 2010). As will be shown, in the province of Ontario much the same is occurring (Fanelli and Thomas, 2011; Evans, 2011). Unprecedented demand has made education a burgeoning industry, sustaining both a proliferation of private providers and a range of new entrepreneurial activities within public institutions.⁵¹ This has led to growing convergences in programming across the PSE sector, most insidiously visible in the competition for public resources, student enrollment and private sector investment. Increasingly, education is being redefined as an individual privilege, rather than a public entitlement. Like health care in Ontario, which has witnessed its incremental commodification and marketization via public-private partnerships (P3s), outsourcing and retrenchment (Sutherland, 2011,

⁵⁰ Used in this paper, PSE refers to Ontario's quasi publically-funded universities and community colleges of higher learning. Out title refers to Carleton University's marketing motto: "Canada's Capital University."

⁵¹ As we undertook reviews of this piece in late-August 2011, news broke that Ontario universities had set a new record for the number of first-year undergraduates with more than 90,000 students confirming their acceptance.

Loxley, 2010; Armstrong et al., 2001), access to education is increasingly based on one's ability to pay rather than based on a broader recognition of collective social rights. The growing influence of commercialization and research funded and controlled by corporate sector interests is, therefore, jeopardizing academic integrity, universal access, as well as the quality and value of education. Public value is ever-more understood as the ability to extract profits for services, rather than in terms of self-discovery, the development of critical thinking skills or in terms of its value as a public good. Since such undertakings ineluctably raise fundamental questions regarding the purpose and function of education, political interpretation is unavoidable. In what follows, we argue that neoliberalism has fundamentally transformed PSE in Canada with a focus on the province of Ontario. We address the following questions: To what extent have neoliberal policies transformed PSE in Ontario over the last three decades? How has the so-called Great Recession and, therewith, unprecedented federal and provincial budget shortfalls, impacted public sector unions' collective bargaining rights? How have students and labour unions responded? What are some progressive political alternatives to neoliberalized models of education? Our research is theoretically informed by critical political economy, in particular Marxist/socialist currents. We aim to empirically ground our analysis and address the above questions with a focus on the most recent round of collective bargaining between Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) Local 4600 and Carleton University in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada.

Neo-liberalism: Commodifying Education

Neoliberalism emerged in the context of economic downturn and political instability manifest throughout the 1970s (Harvey, 2005; Dumenil and Levy, 2011). The Keynesianism accord, which recognized the economic volatility of unfettered markets and the political power of the working class, arose in a period of relatively secure growth in North America and Western Europe from the 1950s to 1970s. In exchange for improving wages and minimal state protections, workers consented to capital's control over the labour process and control over investment and resource allocation (Panitch and Swartz, 2003; Przeworski, 1985; Desai, 2004). Keynesian social policy sought to mediate the play of market forces by sheltering basic social entitlements (e.g. health care, education, pensions) from commodification, and ensuring minimal safety net provisions (e.g. unemployment insurance, welfare, workplace injury compensation). Often centered around national macro-economic strategies with the aim being to alleviate interregional inequalities through redistributive programs, the period of Keynesianism witnessed the growing power of trade unions, as well as burgeoning women's and anti-racist movements. As class inequities narrowed due to the dilution of capitalist class power, however, capitalism entered a deep international recession leading to an erosion of profitability. This was the pretext leading to a sustained and intense period of capitalist class militancy (Hill, 2006; Klein, 2007). With the crumbling infrastructure of Keynesianism increasingly under stress, neoliberalism emerged as a response to the inability of Keynesian macro-economic policy to sustain accumulation by seeking to widen the scope of the market in all spheres of social and cultural life.

However, as Brenner, Peck and Theodore (2010, p. 184) argue, neoliberalism has increasingly "become something of a rascal concept—promiscuously pervasive, yet inconsistently defined, empirically imprecise and frequently contested." At its basic theoretical core, neoliberalism "proposes that human well-being can be best advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an

institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices” (Harvey, 2005, p. 2). By removing restrictions on corporate enterprise and international trade as well as severely limiting state intervention in the economy, neoliberal theory holds that such practices will bolster productivity, efficiency and the creation of wealth by fostering favourable conditions for capital investment and valorization. As social paradigm and ideology, the market is envisaged as ensuring that factors of production are paid what they are worth, thereby allegedly removing the need for social infrastructure, legal and juridical protections and unions, which are viewed as market impediments (Palley, 1997). Central to Neoliberalism has been the abandonment of full employment, national economic development and a shift from collective to individual culpability. This includes limiting wage increases to below increases in productivity, the systemic use of state power to impose market-imperatives and create new spaces for accumulation, monetarist shock therapy, regressive tax reform, the erosion and dismantling of social services, inflation-targeting, increasing foreign direct investment and trade liberalization, as well as limitations and the curtailment of free collective bargaining rights, ‘entrepreneurial’ local economic development, fiscal discipline, corporate and financial deregulation and labour market flexibilization (Pulkingham and Ternowetsky, 1997; Panitch and Swartz, 2003; Fanelli and Thomas 2011; Brenner et al., 2010). Moreover, neoliberalism increasingly became decoupled from the productive (or “real”) sphere of the economy and increasingly finance-led. In this sense, the rise of finance was often used to fight inflation, augment the wealth and income of creditors, and use the growing indebtedness of the multi-scalar state to launch a full-out assault against social provisions and de-leveraging of overt state involvement in the economy (Dumenil and Levy, 2001). Also, central to the rehabilitation of global capitalism in the midst of international instability in the 1970s, has been the geo-spatial reorganization of production, including the integration and subordination of formerly exogenous zones (e.g. the USSR, China) (Panitch and Gindin, 2004). The ongoing transformation of inherited regulatory frameworks at all spatial scales, sometimes incrementally and sometimes through more dramatic ruptures, have reshaped the contours of institutional landscapes and rewoven interconnections among them (Brenner, et al., 2010).

The mutability of neoliberalism, or its variegated character, is at once spatially heterogeneous and temporally distinct evolving along different, though interconnected, trajectories and experiments. As Streek and Thelan (2005) argue, many of these transformative changes have been incremental, yet systematically transformative. In the words of Brenner, Peck and Theodore (2010, p.188), “Since their initial appearance in the 1970s, neoliberalizing regulatory experiments have unfolded in a sporadic, yet-wave-like, non linear sequence, generating important cumulative impacts or sedimented patterings upon uneven institutional landscapes of world capitalism.” In seeking to constitutionalize central tenets of neoliberalism through legal and juridical means, the subsequent tendency has been to limit the scope through which national discretion can be exercised through socio-spatial reconfigurations along market lines. All things considered, rather than understanding neoliberalism as a monolithic policy bloc, emphasis must be laid on contextual specificity and broader generalizability. Peck (2010, p. 8) makes this abundantly clear: “By its nature, as an oxymoronic form of “market rule,” neoliberalism is contradictory and polymorphic. It will not be fixed. Perhaps, instead, the closest one can get to understanding the nature of neoliberalism is to follow its movements, and

to triangulate between its ideological, ideational, and institutional currents, between philosophy, politics, and practice.”

Neoliberalism, then, as an historical project seeking to transform and entrench social structures and parameters through a politically guided intensification of market-rule, necessarily demands institutional and cultural changes (Connell, 2010). Culture and politics, as much as the material relations of production, is fundamental to the production and reproduction of market dependence; ideology therefore matters and is an essential component in shaping neoliberal forms of capitalism. This includes, for instance, the press, media, prisons, churches and, central to our analysis, educational systems. As central sites of political contestation, the ability to shape perceptions, cognitions and preferences in such a way that the existing order is seen as natural, and by default without alternative, is crucial to the internalization and acculturation of a neoliberal ethos (Carroll and Carson, 2003; Lukes, 2005). A critical mass of neoliberal intellectuals have been essential for shaping consensus and developing close ties to the media, capital and the state, often through arms length educational institutions. Commonly, the task has been to develop class consciousness of their collective situation, shape consensus in policy making recommendations, negotiate compromises and concessions when differences arise, all the while extending neoliberal hegemony within the state and private sector (Carroll and Caron, 2003; Carroll, 2004; Langille, 1987). What is more, with the ascendancy of neoliberalism, the capitalist class (its leading business agents, think tanks, government ministers) is increasingly conscious of and acts on behalf of their class interests. This has been especially apparent in PSE policy design as overlapping memberships of governance boards and social networks of communication between elites provide the ideological means of distribution (via reports, books, press releases, conference documents, consultations with medias and state affiliates), which ensures a pervasive presence in civil society and the state (ibid).

For neoliberal governments, then, the desire is to reduce funding for universal public education while at the same time reorganizing education to fit the needs of “competitive” market pressures (Hursh, 2006). Education is envisaged as a commodity to be bought and sold like any other, while the market is presumed to effectively (i.e. profitably) allocate scarce resources. As Caffentzis (2005, p.600) has argued, “The neoliberal notion of academic freedom arises from viewing knowledge as a commodity...and education as a path to income generation that must be privatized and made profitable in order for it to be maintained effectively.” Recent budget cuts and privatization measures are merely the latest in a sustained assault on public universities. As a \$2 trillion global service ‘industry’ the potential for valorization has many capitals drooling at the mouth.⁵² Hence, many universities are streamlining their services and course offerings to those that address market considerations, or are “Business-related”⁵³, while those more critically inclined, and therefore less likely to buy into a purely market driven educational model, are isolated or have their program spending drastically reduced or axed all together. This includes

⁵² Approaching \$3 trillion in market “opportunities”, a 1999 report by Merrill Lynch identifies the educational sector as a major source of untapped privatization. As “performance-based” evaluations become more prevalent testing and assessment niche markets are also expected to grow between 10 and 15 percent annually (Albert, 2002).

⁵³ In fact, the 2009 Federal Budget noted temporary increases to graduate student funding but only for those “focused on business-related degrees”. This prompted a response from various academics across Canada who drafted an open letter in opposition to the special-interest earmarking of funding. (Rabble, 2010).

smaller departments and/or programs such as women's and cultural studies, history and philosophy, critical interdisciplinary centres, especially those focused on labour-capital relations, and smaller specialized programs, for instance, political economy or Canadian studies (see, for example, Donoghue, 2008). As such, the state increasingly recedes from maintaining investments in arts, humanities and the social sciences at a rate that is marginally comparable to the physical sciences or market-directed research (Lynch, 2006). Rather, university presidents and administrators navigate the grant economy seeking to partner with private sector financiers, thereby endangering scholastic independence by catering to the needs of powerful sectoral interests. This necessarily "curtails the pedagogic processes that potentially generates a critical perspective against the [capitalist] system..." (Kumar, 2010, n.p.). Therefore, it is essential that analyses identify the socio-economic and political processes, which give rise to such circumstances.

In agreement with Kumar (2010, n.p.), we argue that, "Education is more than formal institutional structures and classroom transactions. It is an arena that reflects the agenda and need of the dominant class interests in a society. Therefore, to understand whatever happens in education it is important to understand the class politics, or labour-capital conflict, characterizing a society." In this sense, the terrain of education and what is taught is at its very core a field of class struggle. Issues of accessibility, social justice and knowledge production are themselves deeply rooted political issues, and therefore, not devoid of ideological interpretation. In what follows, we focus on how the most recent austerity budget of the province of Ontario has impacted collective bargaining rights. Moving forward, we briefly examine the state of student/labour resistance before concluding with some radical policy proposals.

Ontario: Political Pretext

The Canadian state's distribution of administrative and institutional power is unique among many of its advanced capitalist counterparts, since its decentralized federation grants the provinces a significant amount of autonomy and control. For instance, the provinces (excluding the territories) are constitutionally responsible for social welfare, health and education, as well as have jurisdiction over natural resources (e.g. timber, oil, and mining), employment standards and labour market concerns. Relatedly, concerns of national interest, equal treatment and opportunity, equalization transfers, international trade (which brings resources under federal jurisdiction), and Aboriginal concerns is a federal responsibility (Clement and Williams, 1989; Fisher *et al.* 2006). Needless to say, many of these discretionary powers remain a fickle constitutional battle and the continued subject of hotly contested provincial-federal political debate. As such, Ontario has significant control over the direction of its PSE, though not without important influence from its federal counterparts. Commencing in the 1980s and intensifying throughout the 1990s, the battle against federal and provincial budget deficits, including the adoption of neoliberal assumptions concerning the role of the state, lead governments to inflict considerable cuts to education, social welfare, health care, as well as the selling of assets, Crown corporations and resources, including deficit reduction measures, downsizing and voluntary terminations amidst the consolidation of a neoliberal policy bloc (Carroll and Shaw, 2001; McBride, 2005). The influence of the federal government on the province of Ontario's PSE was felt most dramatically through reductions in transfer payments, loans and scholarships. For instance, between 1988/9 and 2005/6 consecutive federal governments reduced total transfer (both cash and tax points)

payments for PSE by 40 percent (in 1998 dollars), while simultaneously pushing for enhanced ‘partnerships’ with business counterparts in order to shift the burden of responsibility away from the state and toward the private sector (Fisher et al. 2008, p. 553). Of course, Ontario has historically been a province dominated by Progressive Conservative (PC) rule, which went unseated from 1943 to 1983. The year 1985 is enigmatic of a paradigm shift; that is, the culmination of a preceding decade of transition in Ontario politics, whereby neoliberal policies came to dominate political discourse. This drift toward the political and economic right, whereby neoliberalism would become the new orthodoxy, ushered in a tumultuous time in Ontario’s political affairs. This rightward shift in the province is evident through several successive governments, beginning with the 1985 ‘Accord’ that saw the New Democratic Party (NDP) support a Liberal minority government for two years, continuing with the social democratic NDP government of Premier Bob Rae (1987-1995), and taking its sharpest turn throughout the 1990s with the PC government of Premier Mike Harris (1995-2003). Harris’ “Common Sense” neoliberal revolution radically reoriented the province along market fundamentalist lines. This likewise translated into the deregulation of Ontario’s PSE fees and thereby the creation of a quasi-market in the public sector (Fisher et al., 2006, 2008; Jones and Young, 2004).

Dalton McGuinty’s Liberals were elected to the Ontario legislature in 2003 amid a torrent of backlash directed at the governing PC’s. McGuinty, who had first been elected as a Liberal Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP) in 1990 and was elected party leader in 1996, ran on a platform that prioritized public sector healthcare and education, environmental protection and a tax freeze. Against the backdrop of significant protests against the Conservative government, McGuinty was able to position himself as a ‘moderate’, becoming Premier of Ontario in 2003 and gaining a Liberal majority. Centrist/progressive intimations notwithstanding, McGuinty prioritized as his first task the tackling of the \$5.6 billion deficit inherited from the PCs, indicating that his underlying orientations were in fact neoliberal. Despite modest investments in health and elder care, education, municipal transfers and social assistance, as well as annual increases to the minimum wage, these improvements still failed to repair/counteract the significant cuts enacted by Harris’ Conservatives. In fact, between 1992/3 and 2004/5, provincial expenditures on PSE (in 2004 dollars) decreased by nearly 15 percent (Fisher et al. 2008, p. 553). Meantime, Ontario transfers to colleges and Universities per full-time equivalent student enrollment over the same period decreased by nearly 32 percent (CAUT, 2006). McGuinty’s 2007 election marked the first time in 70 years that the Liberals have been able to secure back-to-back victories in Ontario since 1937, despite the all-time lowest voter turnout (CBC News 2007a/b). Throughout McGuinty’s terms, he has shown himself to be a much more sophisticated and nuanced neoliberal than his predecessors. By reversing some (but not all) of the labour market reforms made by Harris, introducing new public management techniques in health care via P3s to build hospitals and the introduction of Local Health Integrated Networks to rationalize the health system along market pressures, including a focus on supply-side labour market responses to unemployment through Second Career/retraining, McGuinty’s Liberals have shown themselves much more comfortable veering between stringent neoliberal orthodoxy and political opportunism.

Ontario’s Response to the Great Recession

As the Great Recession intensified throughout the summer of 2007, the Ontario Liberal government of Dalton McGuinty has responded, like elsewhere, not

by rejecting neoliberalism, but by reinventing it.⁵⁴ With an expected budget shortfall of \$18.7-billion for 2010-11, and deficits expected to continue well into 2017-18, a number of measures were proposed in the Spring budget to re-establish balanced-budgets. Despite some modest expenditures and avoidance of the massive cuts being inflicted in many countries in Europe and state and local government in the U.S., Ontario has adopted policies of tax shifting that reduces corporate taxation for competitiveness and increases taxes on workers, new user fees, wage repression, erosion of social assistance and the streamlining of public sector services. With the transition from ‘rescue strategies’ to ‘exit strategies,’ Ontario provides a vivid portrait of the re-invention of neoliberal policies even by centrist governments attempting to avoid a hard right fiscal turn.

The government clearly signaled its intention to embrace neoliberal austerity measures in Finance Minister Dwight Duncan’s budget speech on 8 March 2010, during which he introduced the Open Ontario Plan (OOP) (Ontario 2010a). In both name and policies, the Plan signaled a new era of austerity in the course of reorganizing neoliberalism in order to reassert its legitimacy as both political philosophy and policy orientation. The OOP emphasizes five central courses of action: (1) tax relief; (2) privatization of public assets; (3) a wage freeze for public sector employees; (4) the development of “innovation corridors” to promote hyper competitive inter-provincial trade; and (5) reforms to (regressively) “modernize” employment standards legislation. We address here the first three as they most directly illustrate the austerity and public retrenchment dynamic at play amidst an age of austerity; the other two have been dealt with in greater detail elsewhere (Fanelli and Thomas, 2011; Evans, 2011). In terms of so-called ‘tax relief’, the government of Ontario lowered the general Corporate Income Tax (CIT) rate from 14 per cent to 12 per cent; it will be reduced further to 10 per cent by 2013-14. This includes reductions in the CIT for manufacturing and processing, the reduction of the Corporate Minimum Tax, and the elimination of the Capital Tax. As well, personal income tax cuts have also been enacted, due in part to counteract the imposition of the Harmonized Sales Tax (Fodor, 2010). Further, in another example of the pursuit of market fundamentalism, nearly \$1-billion will be lost by the government owing to cost overruns at public-private-partnerships and the introduction of privatization measures. All in all, following the full phase-in of Ontario's comprehensive tax reforms, the marginal effective tax rate, which measures the tax burden on new business investment, will be cut in half by 2018. As such, businesses will be subsidized by \$4.6-billion from tax cuts on income and capital over the next three years under the guise of stimulating “competitiveness” and attracting investment (expected to occur through private sector hiring, and ‘trickle-down’ economic theory)⁵⁵ Despite the continued erosion of funding for PSE in Ontario, as illustrated above, McGuinty’s Liberals continue to implement broad based corporate welfare schemes despite overwhelming evidence that corporate tax cuts fail to deliver on job creation or reinvestments in the economy (Loxley, 2010). Furthermore, this flies in the face of the most recent reports that shows the Canadian capitalist class bathing in excess amid income polarization unmatched since the 1920s (with particularly uneven racialized and gendered dimensions) (Conference Board of Canada, 2011; Yalnizyan, 1998, 2010; Hume, 2011). Meantime, students are expected

⁵⁴ Parts of this section are drawn from “Austerity, Competitiveness and Neoliberalism Redux: Ontario Responds to the Great Recession.” (Fanelli, and Thomas, 2011).

⁵⁵ See Government of Ontario, 2010a/b/c, 2010; Ontario Ministry of Finance, 2010; OPSEU, n.d.

to carry heavier debt loads, while educational infrastructure and resources are increasingly neglected.

Second, the Ontario government is contemplating the massive privatization of public goods and assets in order to pay down its deficit. McGuinty's Liberals recently paid \$200,000 to CIBC World Markets and Goldman Sachs to write a 'white paper' proposing the creation of 'SuperCorp.' The idea behind the mega-corporation would be to combine Ontario's Crown assets, including nuclear power plants, power generation and 29,000 kilometers of electrical transmission and distribution lines, its six-hundred plus liquor stores and gaming operations, in order to package and sell it off bit by bit.⁵⁶ These measures mirror the steadily advancing privatization of PSE in Ontario as there has been a proliferation of private career colleges opened since the 1990s as commercial enterprises. The number of these colleges rose from just over 200 in 1990 to over 450 by 2004 (Fisher et al. 2008). The trajectory of neoliberal PSE in Ontario is one where higher education is envisaged as serving business-related vocational and technical labour market needs, sustaining competition and ensuring market-oriented research.⁵⁷ Although there have been no clear and blatant indications from the Ontario government indicating a significant expansion of for-profit PSE, they continue to implement subtler forms of marketization such as increasing user-fees and commercial partnerships (which we will discuss further below). The politically sensitive nature of further marketizing PSE seems to have been put on hold in the course of an October 2011 election.

Third, following in the lead of the federal and other provincial governments that have enacted expenditure restraint and wage restraint for public employees, on 25 March 2010 the Ontario government enacted the Orwellian-titled *Public Sector Compensation Restraint To Protect Public Services Act*. The Act imposes a two-year wage freeze for 350,000 non-unionized public sector workers, roughly affecting 16 per cent of Ontario's workforce. It also indirectly affects 710,000 unionized public sector workers that are being prompted to take a two-year wage freeze. Premier McGuinty and Finance Minister Dwight Duncan have insisted that their government will not fund net compensation increases to operational costs associated with collective agreements, thereby indirectly stifling free collective bargaining.⁵⁸ In fact, Minister Duncan has gone out of his way in calling on universities to keep collective bargaining pay increases at zero per cent over two years, thereby earning himself the nickname 'Duncan Donuts.' After the two years, wage increases will be governed by

⁵⁶ Paralleling these developments are also measures that aim to weaken employment standards legislation by requiring that employees address issues of, say, health and safety or pay discrepancies, directly with their employer in advance of government intervention. The Bill would mandate workers to first confront the employer before filling a complaint regarding owed back-pay, wrongful dismissal, harassment, vacation and overtime, including the curtailment of employment standards officers' scope of operation. See Thomas, 2009; Fanelli and Thomas, 2011.

⁵⁷ For instance, the University of Ontario Institute of Technology—the first new university in the province in forty years—is explicitly oriented to serving the automotive, technological and electric power generation industries in the province despite its overwhelming public funding (see Fisher et al, 2008).

⁵⁸ Of positive note here is the arbitration decision by Norm Jesin awarding 17,000 workers in long-term care homes a 2% wage increase for 2010. In his ruling, Arbitrator Jesin said that employers and labour leaders must respond to economic decisions, not a government's fiscal policy, in setting wages (Benzie and Ferguson 2010). In a similar ruling, Arbitrator Martin Teplitsky, defying the Liberal's proposed wage freeze, awarded University of Toronto faculty and librarians a 4.5 percent wage increase over two years. Refusing to appear a "minion of government" and "compromise my independence", Teplitsky noted his ruling echoes average private sector wage hikes at 2.3 percent over the year in Ontario (Brown 2010).

the province's 1.9 per cent cap on expenditure growth. As a means of increasing revenues, Duncan has suggested bringing in more international students who pay on average more than \$15,500 in tuition fees, or roughly three times what domestic students pay per year (Carleton GSA, 2010-11).

It must be recalled that Canadian post-secondary education has been in dire straits ever since reductions to the Canada Health and Social Transfer changes enacted by the Federal Conservative government of Brian Mulroney (1984-1993) and continuing through subsequent Liberal governments (1993-2006) to the present Conservative government of Stephen Harper (Jones and Young, 2004). Between 1987-2007, the percentage of university operating budgets funded by the federal and provincial governments declined from 81 per cent to 57 per cent. For Ontario, spending as a share of university operating revenue between 1994-2004 decreased from 73 to 49 percent (Fisher et al. 2008, p. 554). While in 1990 tuition fees accounted for 20 per cent of institutional operating budgets, today it's over 50 per cent. Thus between 1991-2008 average domestic tuition fees across Canada increased by 176 per cent (Carleton GSA, 2010-11).

Approximately 40 percent of the Canadian population lives in Ontario, with roughly 42 percent of Canadians choosing Ontario as their destination for PSE. Ontario occupies the position as the most expensive province in the country to complete an undergraduate degree at, on average, just under \$6000 per year, while in 1990 the average cost of Canadian tuition was under \$1,500. Ontario is also the most expensive province to complete a graduate degree at roughly \$8,500 per year (Carleton GSA, 2010-11).⁵⁹ The tuition fee freeze that students won between 2004-06 was cancelled by the Liberal government and replaced with a tuition framework that allows for increases of between 5 and 8 percent per year until 2012. As a result, Ontario undergraduate students hold the largest debt at graduation at, on average, \$37,000 per student, and increasing to \$43,700 for PhD graduates (ibid). At \$9,718 average per-student funding, Ontario spends 20 per cent less than the national average of \$12,500 leading to larger class sizes and debt overhangs that have resulted in the number of summer days a student would have to work to make enough money to pay tuition fees for one year rising from barely over six weeks in 1980 to fifteen weeks by 2010 (based on undergraduate fees averaging \$5,951, minimum wage and an eight hour work day). As well, Ontario continues to provide zero funding transfers to universities for foreign students (ibid).

Both Premier McGuinty and Finance Minister Duncan have consistently reiterated that they are not ruling anything out when it comes to legislating further austerity measures, wage freezes or employee furloughs. Such measures will allegedly 'save' the government \$750-million over two years. Bearing in mind the public sector attacks at the federal and provincial spheres, McGuinty has urged Ontario municipalities to follow their lead and impose a 5 per cent target of austerity while freezing wages. McGuinty and Duncan have argued that the public sector has been 'sheltered' from the recession and should therefore 'tighten their belts' by sacrificing wages, benefits and working conditions. Not only does compensation restraint not extend to the private sector, it excludes those most generously remunerated by public

⁵⁹ This pales in comparison with Quebec's average undergraduate cost of \$2,415, which have been frozen for thirty-five years. It must be recalled that Quebec never passed the cost of federal funding cuts onto students, while college also remains free for residents and scholarships are 'needs-based' in an effort to reduce socio-economic inequalities. Similarly, between 2002-04, the government of Newfoundland and Labrador reduced tuition fees by 25 per cent and have since then been frozen (although austerity measures may undermine the freeze, and the Quebec differential).

tax dollars. The restraint measures exclude public sector managers and CEOs who are still entitled to “performance-related” pay and bonuses. This means, for instance, that CEOs in organizations in the public sector are not included, such as University Health Network CEO Robert Bell (just under \$831,000 per year) and OMERS CEO Michael Nobrega (at about \$1.9-million per annum); and neither are corporations heavily dependent upon public sector contracts, such as P3s, or for profit companies like Extendicare and its CEO Tim Lukenda (at \$1.5-million in yearly total compensation) (ref). The restraint act only targets workers, especially women, earning between fifty and twenty-five times less. Moreover, it needs stressing, that average public sector wages did not return to their real 1992 levels until 2008. The Ontario restraint agenda reduces public sector wages and begins to move them back toward their pre-1990s levels. As the impending case study will vividly demonstrate, Ontario’s austerity agenda played an intervening role stifling free collective between Carleton University and CUPE 4600.

Undermining Free Collective Bargaining at Carleton University

With the provincial government taking a firm stand on public sector wage restraint, the onus falls on public sector workers to protect the services they provide and use, and to achieve fair compensation packages for the work they do. In the Ontario university sector alone, some 25 locals of CUPE representing both academic and non-academic staff had collective agreements expire between March 31st and August 31st 2010. Through CUPE Ontario, bargaining units in the university sector were invited to sign on to the resolution developed by the Ontario University Workers Coordinating Committee (OUWCC). The resolution advocated that “Locals at the bargaining table in 2010 and 2011 commit to no concession bargaining and the core coordinated bargaining proposals.”⁶⁰ This included discussing the appropriateness of flat rate wage increases, and enhancing efforts at improving benefit and pension plans, employment equity and job security as well as collective agreement language on eliminating violence in the workplace.

Of the seven proposals contained in the OUWCC resolution, two are of particular importance. The first was committing to negotiating new wage and compensation packages in spite of the provincial government's desire to impose wage restraints. The second was encouraging Locals to sign three-year collective agreements. The goal in the former was to ensure that public sector workers are not the ones who must pay for bailing out the corporations and banks. In the case of the latter, encouraging locals to sign on to three-year agreements was one method of ensuring that coordinated bargaining could continue and that university locals could more effectively support and contribute to the struggles in other cities. The value and utility of coordination across the university sector raises several important strategic and political questions that in and of themselves require further unpacking and discussion.

In addition to coordinated bargaining at the provincial level, two Carleton University CUPE Locals (2424 representing support and administrative staff and 4600 Unit 1 representing teaching assistants (TA) and Unit 2 representing contract instructors) as well as the faculty association (Carleton University Academic Staff Association-CUASA) had collective agreements expire between April 31st and August 31st 2010. A third CUPE Local's (910 representing physical plant workers) agreement was set to expire at the end of December. All in all, then, Carleton's ‘Big

⁶⁰ For the full proposal, see CUPE-OUWCC, 2010.

Four' unions were essentially bargaining at the same time. This created the ideal circumstances – at least on the surface – for coordinated pressure. As one way to develop and enhance the cooperation of the different bargaining units, the four union locals joined with both the undergraduate (CUSA) and graduate (GSA) student associations in a loose association called Campus United. Together, various participants attempted to develop a pro-active support system through which activities and resolutions could be coordinated, but also a space in which bargaining strategies, tactics, messaging and due process could be openly discussed, debated and built upon. Weekly inter-union meetings allowed representatives to keep their own memberships informed and afforded the opportunity to see what issues could be harnessed together for purposes of collective bargaining. But there is a big difference between bargaining together and bargaining collectively.⁶¹ As Gindin and Stanford (2006, p. 382) remind, “we must nevertheless recognize that apparent unity never automatically implies active solidarity.”

Differences Between Workers

Despite what were very productive and helpful meetings over the summer and into the fall term, several key issues emerged. The most immediate was the differences between workers who held positions as ‘careers’ and those that held positions as ‘jobs’ as a source of temporary ‘funding’ to get through graduate school or as workers in part-time teaching positions. On the one hand, the faculty and the support staff with careers and a long-term investment in the Carleton community and, on the other, the contract instructors and teaching assistants that were either precariously employed with little job protections and/or graduate students with a set deadline for the completion of employment as stipulated in their offer of admission.

Further, it became apparent that the unions each faced their own internal issues that affected the extent to which a coordinated strategy could be developed and implemented, such as the legality of solidarity strikes and issues related to potentially crossing picket lines. For CUASA, there existed the traditional core of ‘business unionists’ who were much less concerned about labour solidarity than about what they deemed to be their own principal issues (as there was to some extent in 4600). It would be difficult to find a union today without some central concern with its own self-preservation. However the situation presented itself as an historic opportunity for Carleton's Big Four unions to demonstrate not only their cumulative strength in numbers, but to engage in the sort of social movement unionism premised upon the building of collective capacities, mutual reinforcement and cross-campus labour solidarity.⁶² While there was certainly strong coordination between 2424 and 4600, including joint events, a joint information picket and several instances of cost-sharing, a real opportunity was floundered largely resulting from the processual issues in filing no-board reports⁶³ that placed CUASA, CUPE 2424 and CUPE 4600 in legal strike

⁶¹ This transfer of information to members is often taken for granted but at Carleton it is a precious resource. For CUPE 4600, the contracts with contact information of members will trickle in for the course of months making the updating of a database a constant process. For the undergraduate and graduate student associations, the university does not provide a member list or contact information. Meaning that the only way either student association can contact members directly is by members individually signing up for a listserv, an arduous compilation to say the least.

⁶² There is valuable research examining the importance of union renewal. There is also significant debate as to what is meant by 'social movement unionism.' For strong starting points see Kumar and Schenk, 2006; Ross, 2008; Fanelli, 2011b and Camfield, 2011.

⁶³ Either bargaining unit can request a no-board report during the conciliation process with the representative of the Ministry of Labour. Once requested and granted, a no-board report places the

positions on three different days (November 15th, 17th and 22nd respectively). The result, as collective bargaining went on, first, CUASA, and later CUPE Local 2424 reached tentative agreements, leaving Local 4600 isolated without their most valuable allies.

The other noticeable issue affecting coordination between the different union locals was historical. In 2007, CUPE Local 2424 had gone on strike for 18 days. With the lingering anxieties at the possibility of another strike and the difficulties of watching the other unions cross their picket lines (despite some members coming out to engage in solidarity picket duty), no one was eagerly anticipating a strike. Yet, CUPE 2424 still received an 83 per cent strike mandate from its membership and it was clear that, if deemed necessary, job action would have taken again.

CUPE 4600 also faced a number of internal challenges. The largest and most apparent was learning from the mistakes made during the last round of bargaining (2008-09) in which the members voted 'no' to a strike mandate, which resulted in the subsequent loss of fixed tuition indexation.⁶⁴ This was against the backdrop of York University's widely publicized 2008-09 strike action that ended in debacle for both the university and the union, and public resentment over striking OC Transpo workers in Ottawa (Fanelli and Paulson, 2010; Newstadt, 2008). This created an environment that was less than conducive to strike action, let alone unions.

An additional challenge was mobilizing the membership, including the influx of several hundred new members. In this regard, several different strategies were employed. An active role in 'welcome-back' week events put on by the GSA at the beginning of the academic year that ensured face-to-face interaction with new members and to create an atmosphere where members felt the executive was always approachable. As well, the local hosted a 'meet your union' night that offered members the opportunity to socialize in a relaxed environment. There was also an effort to ensure at least one union executive member was present at each departmental TA orientation session to inform new members about their rights and responsibilities under the collective agreement, as well as to encourage them to be involved in their union.

In addition to mobilizing new members, it was equally important to ensure that wider communication and outreach strategy reflected key concerns at the bargaining table in such a way that would appeal not only to the membership but also to the wider community. Given that there were numerous issues for both bargaining units on the table, the bargaining teams selected three or four major issues to concentrate on and emphasized what were the most troubling aspects in the most reasonable ways possible. This proved to be a very effective strategy. By holding information tables several times on campus, participating in open-panel discussions and engaging in brief student radio Q&A periods, this led many to declare that 4600 had won the public relations campaign (Roberts, 2010).

Having run a strong mobilization and communication campaign, members of the respective bargaining teams focused on moving talks along with the employer at the bargaining table. This was by far the most difficult and frustrating aspect of this round of bargaining. It was apparent from the start that the university had little interest in seriously dealing with the union. This was in large part because of the

bargaining units in a legal strike or lockout position within 17 days of its receipt if a new collective agreement is not reached.

⁶⁴ Fixed tuition indexation protected Teaching Assistants from increases in tuition by fixing it to a particular year regardless of when the TA began their employment. With the lost strike vote, there is now a system of rolling tuition indexation wherein tuition is fixed to the first year of employment.

negotiations with the faculty association, and an administrative attitude of arrogance with regards to 2424 that had one of the University's bargaining officers declare that a 'monkey could do their job.' This relative unimportance was evident in that requests to begin bargaining in August were repeatedly met with the response that the employer didn't have a bargaining team together, that it was summer time and people were away on vacation. This disinterest in beginning the bargaining process led to filing for conciliation in mid-August to force the employer to sit down at the table.

Three dates for meetings were set for both units of 2424. The first meeting for Unit 1 TAs was held on September 8th to exchange proposals. The meeting scheduled for three hours was cut two hours short by the employer because they were unprepared to respond or pose questions about the union's proposals. The next session for Unit 1 was the first official conciliation meeting held on the 24th of September. In relation to this, it took the first conciliation meeting on the 23rd of September for the employer to exchange proposals for Unit 2! It is quite unfortunate that a difficult bargaining climate had to be made more difficult by unreasonable delays in simply beginning the negotiation process. However, by the start of October, bargaining meetings were held on a nearly weekly basis and while not every session was positive or necessarily productive, it should be noted that the atmosphere at the table was civil.

However, as CUPE 4600 moved closer to a legal strike position, the university administration demonstrated their true colours in regards to unionized labour. Under the guise of 'fulfilling their obligations to students' as well as 'protecting the welfare of students'⁶⁵ the university's "Contingency Plan" sent to all Deans and Associate Deans from Assistant Vice-President Academic Brian Mortimer on November 14th, stated that, "it is essential that the university have available all of the information that it requires to complete its mission even if some employees are on strike." Meaning that, "all documents, files, computer records, e-mail and voicemail that are part of the university's work must be accessible by appropriate supervisors and managers."⁶⁶ Further, the Contingency Plan requested that all departmental chairs and directors collect from TAs and Contract Instructors, "(i) all ungraded work (ii) all graded but unreturned work and (iii) all interim term grades...well before the first legal strike date." Quite clearly, the Contingency Plan sought to create the conditions for members of 4600 to scab on themselves by handing over the products of labour that would be withdrawn during a strike. Further, this Plan demonstrated just how little value the university places on the work performed by TAs and Contract Instructors by effectively stating that the work could be done without us if we were foolish enough to let them do it. In short, what the Contingency Plan at Carleton indicates is the willingness of senior university administration to undermine the bargaining position and power of unions by any means at their disposal.

Surveying the Outcome

The first obstacle in resisting the public sector wage freeze at Carleton was to convince members that such a move by the employer constituted a serious threat to working conditions and take-home pay. It was argued throughout the fall that this

⁶⁵ This is taken from an email entitled "Employee Rights and Responsibilities in the Event of a Strike" sent by the Vice-President Finance and Administration Duncan Watt on November 18th to all members of CUPE 4600 just four days prior to the legal strike deadline.

⁶⁶ The fact that emails and documents must be accessible by appropriate supervisors and managers should be a strong warning to other union locals in the university sector against using the university email service or saving grades on shared drives housed by the university server.

could not be accepted. Across Canada between 2003-09, rent, inflation, food and public transportation increased between 7 and 20 per cent, while tuition increased approximately 4.4% annually between 1999 and 2009.⁶⁷ As such, convincing the membership to grant a strike mandate proved rather straightforward. The challenge was to bargain from a position of strength, using support from the Carleton community and our members' strong strike vote mandates on October 29th of 74 per cent and 89 per cent for Units 1 and 2 respectively.

When the topic of wage increases was broached during the initial bargaining sessions, the employer responded that their hands were tied (by the province and the Board of Governors) and that they couldn't move from the province's direction of zero per cent over two years. This was unacceptable, especially since it was revealed that tuition rates would be rising 4.5 per cent each year between 2011-17, thus, seriously eroding the post-tuition income of graduate students. The union pressed the university's bargaining team to return to the Board of Governors and obtain a new mandate.⁶⁸ Despite the evidence and data presented that demonstrated increasing university revenues (a large part from increased enrollment and tuition costs), the university did not change their tune of austerity.

It was not until the strike deadline was approaching that movement began from the employer on wages. At first it was 'hypothetical,' then a proposed low ball 'signing bonus' offer. It was only when there was less than a week before the strike deadline that the employer began tabling wage increases. The increases to the base wage in part resulted from the tentative settlement reached with CUPE 2424, which saw increases of 1.5 per cent over the first two years and 2 per cent in the third and fourth. Similarly, the final offer tabled by the employer on November 20th (just two days before the legal strike deadline) included a 1.5 per cent wage increase for the first two years and a 2 per cent increase in the third year for Unit 1. It was the same for Unit 2 with an additional 0.4 per cent market sector adjustment in the third year. The inclusion of a market sector adjustment for contract instructors resulted from the growing wage disparity between Carleton and the University of Ottawa, which translated into roughly a 14 per cent difference per course taught.

Despite the climate of austerity, the CUPE 4600 settlements suggests some positive signs for university sector bargaining units in Ontario. First, successfully reaching new collective agreements at Carleton that included base wage increases should aid other university locals in negotiating similar agreements. Second, it demonstrated that provincial austerity measures and wage restraints constitute an unreasonable demand on the public sector. It does not take an arbitration ruling to prove this fact. Third, the fightback against austerity can result in a much more engaged membership, with new people volunteering for union positions. It also resulted in numerous other people that may have in the past remained indifferent to the bargaining process to attend meetings, ask questions and become more engaged.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ For more information on the rising cost of PSE in Canada, see Statistics Canada, 2008.

⁶⁸ One of the most difficult aspects of bargaining in the university sector is the fact that the people who sit across the table are not necessarily the ones who make key decisions, especially regarding compensation packages. The bargaining mandate is developed by a special executive council from the Board of Governors, which leaves the representatives for the university as pawns for their 'principals' instead of actual bargaining agents.

⁶⁹ While negotiations were ongoing with the unions on the Carleton campus, the university was also withholding the student fees that it collects and holds in trust for both CUSA and the GSA. This not only angered many people on campus, but demonstrated the inability of the Carleton senior administration to work with key campus communities. The student associations filed legal action against the university. See: Carleton GSA, 2010b

The task now, is to maintain and go beyond this mobilization by continuing to improve the working and the learning conditions for members of the Carleton community.

Moving Forward: Education as a Collective Right

It is clear that university unions confront increasingly neoliberalized educational mandates. Like other Canadian universities, Carleton has been steadily emulating the American model of privatized post-secondary education. The user-fee model, which assumes private, post-graduation returns by charging up-front fees borrowed against expected future earnings, has shown itself to be a fundamentally flawed model for post-secondary education characterized by inequitable access, student/work insecurity and capital cooptation (Marsh, 2011; Hill, 2009; Biddle, 2001). What is needed is a comprehensive publicly funded post-secondary education system financed through progressive taxation measures to re-establish equitable access to university education and a measure of insulation from the vulgarization of research and study by corporate interests (Aronowitz, 2000; Giroux and Myrsiades, 2001).

The Canadian Federation of Students' *Our Bright Future* policy series papers offer a number of important and forward-thinking proposals.⁷⁰ In order to cope with chronic under funding, many universities and colleges are turning to part-time instructors rather than full-time, tenured faculty, resulting in an increased rate of precarious employment as well as reduced student-professor face time. Democratic control over resources, knowledge production and public space is monopolized by private interests with no other aim but to make a profit.

A prominent example of this at Carleton is the attempted introduction of NAVITAS, a for-profit multinational educational corporation that charges (especially international) students exorbitant fees while setting up shop at publicly funded institutions by renting space, using the university name and logo in promotional materials, hiring non-unionized staff, appropriating intellectual property and offering an unaccountable commodity disguised as university education. Unfortunately, such agreements are increasingly a part of Carleton's strategy of marketizing education with a focus on corporate branding campaigns premised on business-related programs. This is also reflected in initiatives aimed at attracting foreign students who pay two to three times what domestic students pay in tuition fees. The VP of Finance at Carleton University, Duncan Watt, recently declared: "If we could find a way of actually attracting graduate students and paying them less money, that would be a

⁷⁰ A short list includes: Instituting a PSE framework that protects students from user-fee increases and progressively reducing tuition fees by five percent annually; prohibit differential tuition fee increases based on year and programme of study; tighten regulations on ancillary fees; create a new grant for Aboriginal students who attend PSE institutions; shift Ontario's debt-based student assistance plan to a grant-based system of financial assistance; eliminate, if not reduce, tuition fees during the research and writing stages of graduate degrees; provide additional funding to increase the hiring of tenure-track faculty positions to match growing student enrollment; fund the shortfall in deferred maintenance at colleges and universities; and stop the privatization of education by committing to affordable and accessible public education. It should also be pointed out that the Royal Proclamation of 1763 recognized that education is a treaty right of Aboriginal peoples, pre-paid in exchange for the use of Native land and resources. Moreover, under the British North America Act of 1867, responsibility to educate Aboriginal Peoples was assumed by the federal government which, having signed the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in 1976, committed to the progressive introduction of free higher education. See Carleton GSA, 2010; CFS Ontario, n.d.

very good thing for us.” (Watt, 2010) As it is, tuition is projected to rise by another 31.5 per cent over the next six years.

Carleton University is just one example of how Canada's post-secondary education is being slowly privatized. The corporatization of universities is being given further impetus by the turn to public sector austerity in order to bail out the private sector after the most widespread economic recession in history. Activists engaged in student, trade union and community organizing are going to need to stand up together to defend public services. The neoliberal axe of austerity will only continue to cut deeper and harder if it is not met with resistance.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have sought to examine the nature of the recent austerity measures enacted in the wake of the Great Recession with a particular emphasis on Carleton University and Ontario. While similar in intent and form to austerity measures enacted across the United States and Europe, the Open Ontario plan and the *Public Sector Restraint Act* demonstrates how the working class is being forced to pay for an economic downturn thoroughly centered in the private sector. Further, we reflected on how these austerity measures impacted the most recent round of collective bargaining between Carleton University and CUPE 4600. We also showed how CUPE 4600 worked with other labour unions and student associations on the Carleton campus to mobilize resistance to the curtailment of collective bargaining rights.

It must be said, however, that resistance to the neoliberalization of PSE in Ontario is very uneven. Unfortunately, many of the protests and demonstrations at campuses across Ontario have been sporadic without any sustained efforts at mobilizing ongoing political pressure. Rather, one-day marches, letter writing campaigns and individualistic forms of protest continue to mar the political and academic landscape. Larger, mutually reinforcing political questions, such as how public services and resources should be spent and deployed, including the interrelationship between education, democratic control and other goods and services, remain largely undeveloped. This includes the absence of a generalized critique of neoliberalism, let alone a serious exploration of the fundamental contradictions between capitalism and universal education. Moreover, in addition to being fairly small in numbers, the protests in Canada have been mostly isolated, lacking the internal pressure and coherence to build a larger movement of resistance. Even at Carleton where thousands of students and workers came together in the Fall and Winter of 2010 united around the rights of the unions to collectively bargain new contracts, the commitment to continue struggling since then has seriously waned.

The noticeable absence of mass student mobilization across Ontario (and Canada more broadly) is certainly reason for concern. The potential to build a broad student/worker movement capable of galvanizing mass support from across the country to resist the austerity measures is quickly slipping away as individuals and families scramble to maintain their standards of living. Indeed austerity measures coupled with deteriorating real wages and living standards may create the conditions for a reactionary rightward populist movement; however, it also opens up the space for increased radicalization and questioning of alternatives to capitalism. A new radicalized student movement would seek to show how cuts to education are simultaneously cuts to health care, pensions, old age security and so forth, by showing how the parasitic profit motive, as one faithful critic put it, ‘must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere and establish connections everywhere.’ A new student movement,

joined by community activists and trade unionists, among others, must demand that the proverbial powers that be stop placing the recessionary burden on the backs of workers and the poor and instead ensure that those who caused the crisis bare the weight of their mismanagement and greed. Such a movement, for example in Ontario, would naturally begin to organize across the province and create those linkages city-wide. The Greater Toronto Area alone, for example, contains York University, Ryerson University, the University of Toronto, with McMaster University and the University of Guelph nearby, including many community colleges. In Ottawa, Carleton University and the University of Ottawa are also closely linked, with central community colleges in the vicinity. This is in addition to colleges and universities across the invisible border that separates Ottawa (and the province of Ontario) with those located in the province of Quebec. The progressive political potential is indeed only limited by the imagination, but it is clear that new experiments, forms of organization, integration and protest are gravely needed. In fact, we would argue that the problem is not so much one of ideas, but sustained political and organizational capacities -- in other words, the failure to sustain political momentum in ways that counteract capital's ability to separate and divide us. The inability to do so will unfortunately result in deteriorating opportunities for quality and affordable PSE, as well as labour conditions devoid of security, pensions, benefits and living wages. All that to say, collective action on the part of the working class, especially from young students and workers, must begin with a recognition of capitalism's fundamentally antagonistic class relations -- relations that exploit and marginalize a great majority in ethno-racialized, gendered, sexist and able-bodied ways for the benefit of an insatiable minority. As Marx and Engels reminded some time ago, compelled by the forces of circumstance to organize itself as a class, 'ideas are as little eternal as the relations they express. They are *historical and transitory products*' (Marx, 1999). Thus the possibilities for change are endless.

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