

In Brief...

• Calvin Tillman, former Mayor of Dish, Texas, spoke about his experiences with **shale gas and fracking** to hundreds of people at venues in Richibucto, Memramcook, Fredericton and Woodstock on Oct. 21 and 22. “The stories that I hear over and over again and again, seem to get worse and worse. Every time I hear one of these stories, I tell myself that this is as bad as it can possibly get; only to hear one that is worse. I am a grown man who has stood toe to toe with very powerful politicians and a very powerful industry, but these stories break me. I look at the small children in these homes, and wonder about their future, how their lives will be impacted by all of this, and I think about my own children, who we tried to buffer from all this. I thought we had been successful, until I recently heard my son talking about us moving because of the ‘stinky compressor station.’ His life has certainly been altered,” said Tillman on his blog.

• The NB Council of Hospital Unions/CUPE Local 1252 is appalled by the provincial government’s announcement on Oct. 19th to **eliminate 14 jobs in hospitals and community health centres**. “This time, the government is targeting the rural communities. Community health centres in McAdam, Black’s Harbour, Minto, Harvey and Tobique Valley are being hit, as well as major hospitals in the province, mainly Miramichi and Dr. Everett Chalmers in Fredericton,” said Norma Robinson, president of CUPE 1252. “We were also informed that the hours of operation at those centres will be reduced.” Robinson says that seniors and low-income residents are going to suffer the most from the health care cuts because they are not able to travel to the major facilities.

• On Oct. 15th, thousands of people across Canada joined **Occupy Together**: a call for people around the world to join Occupy Wall Street, an encampment in the heart of New York City’s financial district. The Occupy movement has since spread around the world, including in the New Brunswick cities of Fredericton, Saint John, Moncton and Edmundston.

• After a 3.5 year legal battle, book publisher, Éditions Écosociété, and multinational mining company, **Barrick Gold**, have reached an out-of-court agreement. In April 2008, Barrick Gold filed a \$ 6 million dollar lawsuit against Écosociété for publishing *Noir Canada*, a book critical of Barrick’s operations in Africa. Écosociété has agreed to cease the publication of the book and make a payment to Barrick through their insurer. The authors of the book, Alain Deneault, Delphine Abadie and William Sacher, and the publisher vow to continue their work in bringing to light the abuses of Canadian companies in Africa. Écosociété and the authors of *Noir Canada* continue to call for an independent commission of inquiry that would shed light on the numerous cases of abuse that have been committed in Africa.

Occupy Fredericton

(continued from page 1) ... our banks and financial institutions that impoverished entire nations.

But capitalism must always grow. So now that the Third World has been sucked dry, the system is coming home to do the same to us. We’re only beginning to see what others in the rest of the world have experienced for years: the amassing of wealth among the few at the top, the dismantling of social programs and the impoverishment of the masses.

Now that we are the ones suffering, we finally realize what this system does to people.

Most importantly, our system is driving us all towards ultimate annihilation. As far as capitalism is concerned, everything, including our air, our water, our natural world, is a commodity from which to make money. As long as money can be made, be it from drilling for oil or fracking for gas, the consequences don’t matter. Even if it means making it impossible for the earth to sustain life.

This is how New Brunswick’s ongoing struggle against shale gas connects with the Occupy movement. We took our anti-fracking signs with us, as did others. Some people found that confusing. It may look like the message of the movement is unfocused and too diverse, but that’s because today’s attacks on the environment, labour rights, education, social security, democracy, peace, etc. can all be traced back to our capitalist system.

This movement is urgent. It is no less than a matter of life and death, for our species and for all life on earth. Chances are, you are part of the 99%. Join us.

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The Logic of Occupy Wall Street for Canada



Protesters at Occupy Toronto rally against growing inequality. Sixty-one Canadian billionaires have a combined wealth of \$162 billion: twice as much wealth as is in the hands of the bottom 17 million Canadians. Photo by Dave Steele.

By JUSTIN PODUR

The Occupy Wall Street Movement and the Occupy Together movements that are inspired by it actually have a simple premise: society shouldn’t be run for the unrestricted benefit of the wealthiest. The immediate grievance is the 2008 banking crisis, in which the U.S. banks engaged in fraudulent and criminal activity and were subsequently rewarded for doing so with trillions in government funds, while their victims reaped evictions and foreclosures.

Canada did not have a crisis of the same severity, for a few reasons. Canada has a different banking system with a differently-regulated mortgage authority (although there are important similarities in the way the government takes risks and the private banks profit, and the Canadian system is far from invulnerable to crisis). The government is in the mortgage-backed securities business, but not in the totally unregulated way that the business ran in the United States. Social democratic politics are a little bit stronger in Canada than in the USA. Because the Conservatives were in a minority government at the time, the other parties were able to wring a stimulus out of the federal government that blunted the recession (the Bank of Canada also provided emergency funds and lowered interest rates to help the banks). But the overall problem, and direction of society, is the same, and the Occupy Together movement should find fertile ground in Canada.

Who Are the 1 Per Cent?

The slogan of Occupy Wall Street is “We are the 99%.” So, who are the 1 per cent in Canada? A 2010 report by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) by Armine Yalnizyan documents “The Rise of Canada’s Richest 1%.” There are 246,000 of them and their average income is \$403,000. They hold 13.8 per cent of incomes, and pay some of the lowest taxes that the top 1 per cent have ever paid, historically.

To look within this 1 per cent (at a tiny fraction of it, 0.0002 per cent) economist Jim Stanford pulled some figures about Canadian billionaires from Canadian Business magazine for the Progressive Economics Forum. There are 61 Canadian billionaires, with a combined wealth of \$162-billion (5 times the size of the federal government’s budget deficit). This is 6 per cent of all personal net worth in Canada – they own twice as much wealth as the bottom 17 million Canadians. Their wealth increased by 8.4 per cent last year (while average hourly earnings in Canada grew by 2.5 per cent). On average, they added \$100-million per household, while the average household added \$524.

Through a few historical accidents, Canada has been spared the most spectacular aspects of the U.S. financial crisis, but it is hard to dispute that Canadian society is organized to benefit private corporations, and especially finance. The economics of

this favouritism has been documented extremely well over the years by the CCPA. A 2010 report by the CCPA’s Toby Sanger, for example, shows how the financial sector has had a 23 per cent profit margin during the past decade, compared to 7 per cent for non-financial industries. Sanger quotes “a leading bank analyst” who estimates that Canada’s top banks will have \$40-billion in excess cash by the end of 2012, the sum of all federal and provincial deficits projected for 2012-13. Corporate income tax rates have been cut from an average of 42.6 per cent in 2000 to 28 percent by 2011, with more tax cuts coming. The tax cuts in this sector, and the tax havens for the fraction of the 1 per cent, have helped bring about the revenue shortages that are then called “deficit crises,” which governments then use as pretexts for austerity budgets.

Extremes of Inequality

In a society based on layers of inequality, the 99 per cent is itself differentiated. Another 2010 CCPA report by Daniel Wilson and David McDonald reveals one of these inequalities. The median income for Canadians in 2006 was \$27,097; for aboriginal peoples, \$18,962, or 30 per cent lower. Scholar Grace-Edward Galabuzi has documented social exclusion based on race and gender. And a recent report by the Conference Board of Canada shows that income inequality in Canada is growing faster even than in the United States. All of these inequalities are within the 99 per cent, which highlights the need for a more equal society in general.

One comparison, made frequently in the media, that seems to drive progressives crazy is the one between Occupy Wall Street and the Tea Party movement, which is based on the magical idea that society should be able to afford things (from roads to wars) without paying taxes. When Tea Party politics got to Canada they helped elect Toronto’s current mayor and helped give the Conservatives a boost to a majority government. The Occupy Wall Street movement’s arrival in Canada could help discredit the austerity that the Conservative government will be putting forward in their next budget, and could help in resisting their plans to deepen inequalities and destroy what economic, social, and environmental fabric is left.

Justin Podur is a Toronto-based writer. He teaches at York University and blogs at killingtrain.com.



Occupy Moncton organizers Scott Agnew and Katia McElvoy speak at the Occupy Moncton Rally at Moncton City Hall on Oct. 15, 2011. Approximately 350 people attended the rally. Photo courtesy of Occupy Moncton.

Community Calendar

For details and updated event listings, visit nbmediacoop.org To list your event or to receive the community calendar by email once per week, email: community@nbmediacoop.org.

Native Awareness Days Lecture by Dr. Roland Chrisjohn. Chrisjohn will deliver a lecture, "It's Not Gonna Happen: The Indigenous response to capital in an era of unbridled capitalism," Tues. Nov. 15, 4:00pm. Holy Cross Conference Room, St. Thomas University. For more info on Native Awareness Days events, contact: nativesudentcouncil@gmail.com.

March Against Shale Gas. Sat, Nov 19. Starting at the Old Burial Grounds in Fredericton, sunrise ceremony at 7am and gathering at 10am. March begins at 11am and goes to the NB Legislature, 706 Queen St. Speakers and music. Contact Heather Whalen at heathbob1983@gmail.com.

Rally Against Shale Gas. Opening day of the NB Legislature, Wed, Nov. 23. 12 noon. Speakers and music. Contact Heather Whalen at heathbob1983@gmail.com.

2011 YMCA Peace Medallion Award Ceremony. The 2011 Peace Medallion will be presented to Jon Oliver on Nov. 26 at 7pm at the Hugh John Flemming Forestry Complex, 1350 Regent Street in Fredericton. All are welcome. When nominated for the award, Jon Oliver was described as an

“endearing gadfly to city, provincial, and federal officials. Jon reminds politicians of their responsibilities to the common good. Jon has motivated countless individuals, including many young people, to become politically engaged and active whether it is through participating in party politics or community activist groups, defending civil liberties, advocating for the protection of Fredericton’s natural spaces or building community in his neighbourhood.”

Cinema Politica’s documentaries take us to places like Afghanistan, Palestine, Jamaica, Sierra Leone, indigenous territories and prisons where dehumanization and destruction wreaked by capitalism and colonialism warrants our examination, analysis and action. In Fredericton, films are screened on Fridays during the university semesters at 7pm at Conserver House, 180 Saint John Street. In Sussex, films are screened the last Thursday of the month at 701 Main St. In Sackville, films are screened Mondays and Wednesdays this fall at Wu Centre, Dunn Building at Mt. Allison University. Cinema Politica chapters also exist in Bathurst, Moncton, Taymouth and Saint John. Check out film schedules here: www.cinemapolitica.org.

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