

THE OUTCRY

anti-settler colonial // anti-imperialist
anti-capitalist

a publication of the
REVOLUTIONARY
STUDENT MOVEMENT

VOLUME I NO. 1

FEBRUARY 2016

CONDEMN THE OCCUPATION! FROM AFGHANISTAN TO PALESTINE!

UNIVERSITY LIFE AND THE POWER OF WEALTHY DONORS

Paul Bronfman, a Toronto film executive and a member of one of Canada's most powerful families, recently decided to withdraw funding from York University due to a mural in the Student Centre that he considers 'anti-Semitic' and even 'anti-Canadian'. This decision garnered widespread attention – in both local and national media – and it has generated heated discussion among students. The discussion has centred largely around whether the mural is anti-semitic or whether it depicts a legitimate form of resistance to an illegal occupation.

Unfounded accusations of 'anti-semitism' is the bread and butter of Zionists and other right-wing groups. These groups instrumentalize the past and present suffering of Jews around the world in order to justify a state-led project of occupation and violence against the Palestinian people. A large segment of the student body – including the democratically-elected York Federation of Students – are tired of these accusations, and they are attuned to the ways in which they stifle free speech. Unfortunately, there are clear signs that for the York Administration, the opinions of single wealthy individual matter more than the opinions of the majority of the student body.

Wealthy donors like Bronfman wield consider-

able power over university life. In the face of cuts to public funding, universities have come to rely on private donations and corporate funding. To attract funding by private and corporate donors, Universities have re-oriented internal funds and re-designed the content of learning in order to serve the narrow interests of big business. To make matters worse, wealthy donors now shape university governance, and Bronfman's decision to withdraw funding is a case in point. Bronfman's decision was designed to pressure the University into removal a mural that he finds offensive. Bronfman was neither elected nor appointed. He does not represent students, and he has no official mandate.

In a recent response to the Bronfman controversy, professor Steven Salaita – who recently won a lengthy legal battle with the University of Illinois over his tweets critical of the Israeli assault on Gaza in 2014 – offered a suggestion for how the York Administration should respond to Bronfman's blackmail:

"Succumbing to your demand would demean our community and devalue the tenets of higher education. Our university doesn't exist to cosset the violent imperatives of impertinent elites born into wealth. We aren't willing to put your ethnocratic fetish above the well-being of our

student body."

Sadly but perhaps unsurprisingly, President Shoukri issued a statement recently which suggests that the opinions of a single wealthy individual matter a great deal to the York Administration. Instead of defending the rights of students to freely express themselves creatively and politically, Shoukri suggests that York needs to build an 'inclusive community': "mural has given rise to a broader conversation about whether as an institution and as individuals we are doing all we can to ensure that all members of our community feel welcome and supported." The question is: who decides what an 'inclusive community' is? Is 'inclusivity' defined by a small group of York Administrators and wealthy donors? If so, then the 'inclusive community' is in fact a community where wealthy individuals decide how the university is run. In so doing, they get to decide for all of us what is 'racist' and what is a legitimate form of resistance.



*written by a member of Students
Against Israeli Apartheid (SAIA)*

CONDEMN THE IMPERIALIST OCCUPATION OF AFGHANISTAN!

Nearly fifteen years have passed since the US and its allies—including Canada—invaded Afghanistan and kicked off the long War on Terror. In this time, despite the promises of democracy and human rights, Afghanistan has been reduced to a state of permanent war, ruled by a corrupt puppet government instituted by the invasion. Despite being lauded as a "democracy" this government's values have differed little from the deposed Taliban except for one key point: it rules on behalf of imperialism.

Now as the fifteenth anniversary of the invasion approaches, we are being told that the occupation of Afghanistan has ended, that the imperialist armies are withdrawing, that the country has its own autonomous post-occupation government. The fact that this government is the machine of remote-control occupa-

tion, buttressed by foreign military bases, is often ignored. The fact that multiple first world corporations are invested in economically occupying Afghanistan is sanctified by the holy laws of the free market.

The imperialist occupation persists, whatever its current mutation, as does the resistance of the Afghan masses. Fifteen years of imperialist war on these masses has generated more anger and misery: while those of us who live in Canada generally experience the War on Terror as an abstract media spectacle, the people in Afghanistan experience it for what it is – an entire generation has grown up knowing nothing but the horrors of war and occupation.

Hence, as the fifteenth anniversary of the War on Terror nears, we need to reject the lie that the occupation of Afghanistan has ended by revitalizing the movement to oppose

the War on Terror, reigniting the strength it possessed when Afghanistan was first invaded. We would like to invite other groups and individuals of the anti-capitalist left to unite in a coalition to build an anti-imperialist protest movement around the ongoing occupation of Afghanistan, planning for a massive demonstration on the 15 year anniversary of its invasion: October 7, 2016.

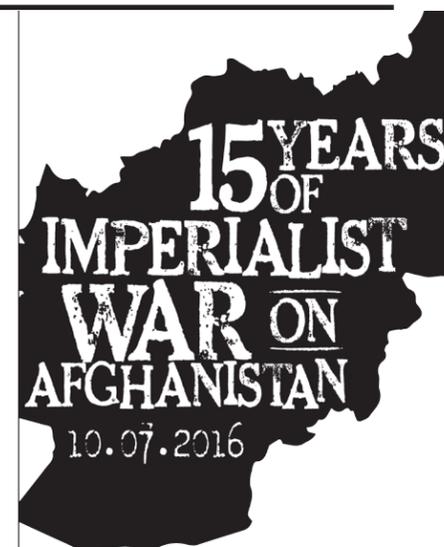


*Condemn the imperialist occupation
of Afghanistan!*

Condemn the puppet government!

*Condemn the ISIS invasion of
Afghanistan!*

*Support the progressive/
revolutionary resistance
of the people of Afghanistan!*



YORK TEACH-IN

Join us for a teach-in on the War on Afghanistan and found out more about the campaign

WHEN:
February 11, 2016
THURSDAY, 4PM

WHERE:
Student Centre, room 430

DEBUNKING DOGMA: TOWARDS A NUANCED CRITICISM OF STUDENT UNIONS

- BRANDON HART

On Monday November 30th last semester, students flooded a lecture hall in Accolade West to attend the York Federation of Students' Annual General Meeting. Tensions were high throughout the meeting building up to the contentious motion on e-voting in the student union elections this month. However, there were moments of high stress throughout the meeting starting with the examination and approval of our union's budget. I've been disheartened these past few weeks ever since the meeting, witnessing just how many students can be won over by the dogma of neoliberalism. The uproar over the budget, most specifically salaries, exposes this dogma acting through students most nakedly. Some find spending our dues on paying mostly our fellow students above minimum wage appalling. The fact that we hear crickets from many of these critics on the topic of bloated administrative salaries is no coincidence, and if it appeared that said criticism had no political motive than you fell into their ruse.

WHO'S TO BLAME? WHY?

At the surface level, these criticisms seem to be arising from regular everyday students. This is exactly what the leaders of "collectives" like Students for Democracy at YorkU and Reform YFS wanted you to think. As one unpeels these networks, they'll find themselves faced with opportunists who ran against the current YFS slate in the past and will likely do so in the future; working with the leadership and rank-and-file of the campus conservatives, Israel lobby groups, and what I've come to label the "Neoliberal activists." The latter proved themselves to be the most dangerous part of this equation, as they may appear apolitical, their rhetoric around creating "positive atmosphere" was applied to voting in support of e-voting (along with their bribing students with food and swag to vote "yes" to the motion). Many of these critics constructed an entire platform last year under the umbrella of the ABC (A Better Choice) party around the aforementioned salary issue. They thought they could win over students through this dogma by claiming they could save students a few bucks in dues by cutting the salaries of unionized employees and creating a scholarship out of that. Given that these same people supported e-voting so much (likely to make it easier for themselves to campaign in the upcoming election) along with the "Neoliberal activists", we can see how their search for "positive atmosphere" on campus and the opportunists budget restructuring become fingers on the same hand.

There's another party to blame, the YFS itself. There are easy jabs to make like the AGM being poorly advertised but there are broader problems with the structure and culture of union politics. As I've al-

ready established, there is always a political motive. In this regard, the YFS faces the major obstacle of representing all 53,000 students at the university. They therefore have to hold the appearance of being centrist when a student examines the union at first glance. Moreover when the union takes bold political stances on key issues, with BDS and their stance on Palestine being an example, they've faced harsh criticism that has emboldened their opposition even more. This is generally why the activities of the union appear shady and secretive; because when they open the floor to criticism, the opportunists are the first to the mic. This isn't an excuse though. More broadly, the culture of student unions is engulfed in pure lobbying, whether it's with the university or the provincial government, with no call to action or mass mobilization to engage rank and file students in these processes or give them a voice. Even the anti-imperialist politics of the YFS on the Palestinian or Tamil struggle; which we saw at the AGM; is pure rhetoric backed by little mobilization themselves. This culture of pure lobbying is exactly what has led students to be disengaged in the most basic element of the process, voting, with the expectant search for a solution through e-voting being its result.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Now it's not all bad, there's still something good to come out of this most recent AGM. I saw a packed room of students actively engaged in issues at the institution we study and work at. If that kind of mobilization and energy could be harnessed against the privatization of our university, rising tuition fees, or the securitization of our campus then we'd have something to talk about. As critical as I am of the union, I can guarantee that you'll see me supporting what I think to be the most progressive slate the YFS as a structure can handle. But student engagement in politics has to go farther than that. The AGM was a step in the right direction towards creating a culture of direct democratic engagement, something that e-voting ironically enough is diametrically opposed too. Yet, we as students are obligated by the existing system under the CFS to organize outside of the networks established by it, to make the left a force to fight back against the dogma, and to challenge not only our adversaries that tout this dogma but the powers that be. The Revolutionary Student Movement will be hosting a visioning meeting with OPIRG York and the Ontario Student Action Network for our upcoming General Assembly campaign. In doing so, we want to create more of these forums and a culture of real democratic engagement.

What is the Revolutionary Student Movement (RSM)?

The RSM is a Canada-wide revolutionary and anti-capitalist student movement. We are a movement guided by communist principles that serves the people in their fight for emancipation from the capitalist system. We support the peoples' struggles against capitalism, imperialism, and colonialism in Canada and internationally. We strive to support externally and maintain internally a strong anti-racist, anti-fascist, anti-ableist, LGBTQIA2S+-inclusive, and proletarian feminist culture in both word and action.



"I envy you. You North Americans are very lucky. You are fighting the most important fight of all. You are living at the heart of the beast."

- Che Guevara, 1964

CUPE 3903 DEFENDS TUITION INDEXATION

- M. BEFLER

On Wednesday, January 20th, 2016, members of Canadian Union of Employees (CUPE) 3903, along with allies from the York University Faculty Association (YUFA), University of Toronto's CUPE 3902 - and various other organizations and people who expressed solidarity - gathered at York University's main gate. This location, representative of their strike last semester, was a scene to protest the problem of York University altering the language around tuition indexation and the raising of tuition prices for international students.

From 12:00 to 2:00, the strikers endured the -6 degree weather (very warm in comparison to the strike in May 2015). The strikers held up traffic entering York University from Keele Street onto York Boulevard, letting cars go through the barricades to York in intervals. While being blocked, the cars honked in anger, leading way to CUPE's chosen representatives going over to explain the situation. When let through, the bystanders honked their horns in solidarity (give or take the odd van that decided to completely circumvent the barricade and drive off-road to get to Vari Hall). Several speakers spoke during the event: various speakers from CUPE 3903 and YUFA spoke on the subject, detailing the effects tuition indexation has on international graduate students (especially those who have minimal means of income); a member of U of T's CUPE 3902 spoke about how such policies are occurring in other post-secondary institutions across Ontario. There was also an extension of support to international students that have been attacked by reactionary forces, particularly the Turkish students arrested back in December for insulting President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

For those unsure what tuition indexation is, tuition indexation is compensation given to graduate students for tuition costs. With an increase in tuition comes an increase in compensation to ensure that the tuition costs will not overtake the wages of graduate students. York University decided to raise

tuition fees by \$7,000, claiming that only those who signed contracts with York may receive their compensations and will be subjugated to tuition fee increases until then. These circumstances render the wages given to graduate students almost useless, and only worsen the living standards of graduate students.

Such a move takes back to the Harris-years of the 1990s, where a multitude of post-secondary institutions (including York) increased tuition prices along with introducing summer-term tuitions.

What stopped such policies in the 1990s will be what will stop such policies today: the strike. For seventy-nine days in the years 2000 and 2001, CUPE 3903 went on strike. For seventy-nine days, they aimed to not only stop the culling of compensation for the current graduate students, but to prevent the culling of rights for future graduate students. Because of this, CUPE 3903 has one of the strongest collective agreements of any Teaching Assistant and Contract Faculty unions in the entire country. Now, since York University wants to repeat such policies, CUPE 3903 has already set up two strike events, the recent one on the 20th and one on December 17th where they disrupted a Board of Governors meeting with union-themed Christmas carols, and is hoping the administration of York will stop with the delays and vagueness.

CUPE 3903 already had a strike back in May of 2015, which lasted a month. The strike of the 20th can be described as a "preamble. If the York Administration fails (or refuses) to come up with a change of policies, there will be a strike in 2017. CUPE will not let the York Administration raise the tuitions of international students; such attacks on the students will not be accepted, as such is only an attack on the solidarity of the students that will be used to justify further increases on the students of York.

AN ATTACK ON ONE IS AN
ATTACK ON ALL!



The reason for Outcry

Why a left wing paper?

At York University, there is no paper that truly represents and expresses the interests of working class, marginalized, and oppressed students. There is no paper committed to speaking about anti-capitalism, anti-imperialism, anti-colonialism, anti-racism, anti-misogyny, anti-transphobia, anti-homophobia, and anti-ableism. Some of these topics may be mentioned sometimes in Excalibur, but they are often presented with a 'both-sides' slant in an attempt to be 'unbiased'. Outcry will be unapologetically left-wing, providing a platform for left-wing groups and students on campus. It will allow students who are active or inactive with politics on campus to understand and get involved with what's happening politically on campus. Outcry will provide left-wing commentary and critiques of events and groups on campus, and groups can broadcast meetings and events if they choose to. As the paper develops, it can become a medium between people and groups, in ways such as questions and responses between students and groups.

WHERE TO FIND US

Interested in writing for Outcry? Contact us via:

FACEBOOK: Revolutionary Student Movement - York University

TWITTER: @RSMYork

EMAIL: OutcryYorkU@gmail.com

RSM Website: mer-rsm.ca

RSM-York meets every **Tuesday, 5:00-7:00PM** at room 449C at the OPIRG Office, York Student Centre