



There is no justice at Grand Valley

TAMMY LEE, Kitchener

On the early evening of January 28th protestors gathered outside of the Grand Valley Institution for Women (GVI), a federal prison in Kitchener, ON. Approximately 30 people came out to show their support for the women inside, and to draw attention to the ongoing abuse at the institution, which in recent months has garnered substantial media attention in the wake of a drugs-for-sex scandal.

A little over a week before the protest, Kinew James was found unresponsive in her cell at a psychiatric prison in Saskatoon, and later died in hospital of an apparent heart attack. Kinew, 35, had been serving a 15-year sentence, and was set to be released this August. Fellow inmates had heard Kinew shouting for help from her cell, and repeatedly pushing the distress call alarm. Despite the calls for help, guards ignored the alarm and allowed over an hour to pass before responding with the health care unit. A prompt response to the distress alarm could have been the difference between life and death for Kinew. Her family and several prisoner rights' advocate groups are demanding an inquiry into her death.

Observers have been quick to draw parallels between the experiences of Kinew James and that of Ashley Smith. Both Kinew and Ashley had histories of struggling with mental illness and self-harm, had their sentences extended for charges incurred while in prison, were routinely placed in solitary confinement, and died while incarcerated. In 2007 Ashley who was 19 and an inmate at Grand Valley Institution, died of asphyxiation after tying a cloth around her neck as guards watched, but did not intervene. An inquest into her death is ongoing, and continues to reveal exceedingly disturbing facts about the practices and conditions at Grand Valley.

Kinew up until only a few months ago was also an inmate at GVI, but was transferred to Saskatoon after coming forward with allegations that a guard at Grand Valley Institution was exchanging drugs and cigarettes for sex with inmates. Kinew was not the only person to make such an accusation. According to Kim Pate, executive director of the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies, at least 3 other women had made similar claims. These allegations hit the media in early November, and the guard in question (a relative of a senior manager at the prison) was suspended, and an internal investigation launched.

Only days after the death of Kinew James, the findings of the investigation were released. The Correctional Service of Canada and the Waterloo Regional Police announced that their investigation

had concluded that the drugs-for-sex accusations were unfounded. Several outside groups raised concerns throughout the investigation that evidence would be difficult to gather due to the fact that inmates, having no protection from the potential reprisals of guards are too afraid to speak up of abuse and offer testimony. This concern was dismissed by investigators who claimed that it had no basis. The accused guard, who had been suspended with pay, has since returned to work and the investigation closed.

To say that GVI and the prison system in general failed both Ashley Smith and Kinew James would be a massive understatement. However, to view their tragic stories as exceptional would also be a mistake – their experiences are not an exception to the rule, but rather the brutal norm of a system that fails all incarcerated women. No internal investigation or inquiry will address

this. The formal complaint mechanisms of guards investigating guards, of police investigating prisons, will never favour these women. There is no justice, and there is no accountability at Grand Valley. Isolation, deprivation, abuse, and sexual exploitation are inherent to the violent institution.



Community picket line held at Hamilton school



DEVIN K, Hamilton

Around 30 people walked the picket lines at Sir John A. McDonald highschool in Hamilton Wednesday morning. Rather than representing an official union on strike, the picket was organized by an assortment of community members acting autonomously. Cars were held for 2 minutes each, snarling morning rush hour traffic on Cannon Street, and created a line up which lasted into first period that day. The action served to demonstrate the potential for acting outside of official bodies meant to represent workers, and the laws that inhibit them.

Wednesday January 16th had been slated for a one day strike by the Ontario Secondary School Teacher Federation (OSSTF). The action had been called by the union as a result of a rank-and-file petition demanding the leadership respond to the imposition of Bill 115. Following the announcement of a similar action by elementary teachers for January 11th, the provincial government went to the Labour Relations

Board to have both declared illegal. Unfortunately the unwillingness of labour leadership to openly defy such a ruling meant that both unions backed down from the threatened job action.

The complicity of the state and the official channels meant to mediate labour conflict in acting against workers is a defining feature of our current era of austerity. Bill 115 and other such legislation have implications beyond the workers which they target, and therefor are in the interests of our entire class to find creative and militant ways to defy. The pickets at Sir John A McDonald exemplified an effective and easily reproducible tactic capable of, if they are to spread geographically and transcend particular workplaces or struggles, seriously throwing a wrench in this process.

The picket line on the 16th was met with an overwhelmingly positive response from teachers as they made their way into work. Police had one unit stationed keeping watch on the situation, but the picket line continued uninterrupted until they were voluntarily taken down shortly after 9:00AM.

Anarchists support striking refuelers at Toronto Island Airport

PAUL M, Toronto

The IWW and members of Common Cause Toronto have been hitting the picket lines in support of striking refuelers employed by Porter Fixed Base Operations (FBO) at the Toronto Island airport. The strike has been bravely fought by a mere 22 workers fed up with unsafe working conditions and low wages. Injuries due to poor training and heavy turnover have not been uncommon, and the workers currently earn an abysmally low 12 dollars an hour. As the workers continue their fight against their bosses at Porter, anarchists must keep up the support until the dispute is won.

Working with COPE (Canadian Office and Professional Employees Union), a largely white collar union, refuelers have shown tremendous initiative in escalating disruption at the airport in their fight to win a first contract. The initiative shown by these workers has been a refreshing change from other recent labour disputes. Disruptive action has been consistently hobbled in recent labour disputes in Ontario. Teachers, librarians, postal workers, and many others have been hemmed in by a bureaucratic union machinery adhering to a rigid set of passive tactics in a failing strategy to broker labour peace. Unlike in these larger disputes, the recently unionized Porter workers have shown a willingness to escalate tactics and to collaborate closely with other militant workers, including anarchists.

The Porter dispute has presented a unique opportunity for anarchists to build real relationships with a large number of workers on the ground, and to have a voice in the direction of the strike and its tactics. A recent 4:30am picket on Tuesday, January 22 saw around a dozen IWW and Common Cause members come down to the lines in the bitter -18 degree cold. While at the lines, some wobblers there for the third time, we witnessed workers stopping some cars going into staff parking lots for over 10 minutes with very little encouragement from our group. This type of delay is rare on picket lines today, with standard



delays being a mere 2 to 3 minutes. Even still, these exceptional tactics did not satisfy the confrontational attitude of some workers. As we exchanged names and numbers we felt heartened that we could collectively develop new strategies for increased disruption.

On Saturday, January 26, after the sluggish and demoralizing labour parade organized by the OFL to the Liberal leadership convention, a large number of anarchists and other unionists headed to the Island Airport with the help of the CUPE 966 flying squad bus. This time, with encouragement from the Porter workers, we fully blocked the only road into the airport causing serious disruption. The picket line was entirely anarchist, with workers wishing to avoid the legal ramification they might face, but cheering us on from the sidelines, many itching to join us. We were able to hold the line for nearly an hour until cops finally removed us without arrests. Though this one off event was clearly effective in slowing things down at the airport it was still a far cry from what's necessary to bring Porter to the table.

It remains to be seen if or when Porter will come to the table but what is clear is that when they do anarchists will have a real voice with the workers to help ensure that a strong contract is demanded. Our concrete and ongoing support of workers struggle at the point of production is crucial to developing militant class consciousness, and what we've seen at Porter is that this type of militancy is often latent in some sectors of the embattled working class. It is now up to us to tap the latent desires of the workers to hobble the smooth working of the airport against a growing uneasiness by COPE. Though we may eventually burn our bridges with the COPE higher-ups our goal is to use a strategy that wins and not be cowed by a labour movement too sheepish to be remotely effective. After this fight we hope the connections we've built with the workers, and not COPE, can carry forward into ongoing work, but it is up to us to make the space in our organizations necessary to carry the memory of past fights into new ones. If this is accomplished, and we don't lose the connections built in the Porter dispute, this could be a precedent setting struggle for Toronto anarchists.

London Prisoner Justice Film Festival

On the weekend of February 8th, London, Ontario is hosting a Prisoners Justice Film Festival. The wide ranging festival features short films and presentations on topics that are problematic with how humans are treated when they are forced into government detention.

On Friday, February 8th, the focus is on Queer, Trans, and 2 Spirit perspectives. This evening will have 5 films shown, and also will contain presentations from speakers who work with people who face discrimination within the Prison Industrial Complex. The event will be held at the Central Library (251 Dundas) starting at 7pm.

On Saturday, February 9th, the location shifts to Old East Studios (755 Dundas), and will begin at 1pm. There will be 3 different series presented on this day, starting with films based on Immigration and Indigenous people, and the state violence that is perpetuated against them. 5 films will be shown in this segment, which is hosted by No One Is Illegal London.

The next session that begins at 4:30, will be on Women and Mental Health issues, with a focus on the death of Ashley Smith. There will be a film detailing the issues surrounding the process which led up to her death, a discussion on the inquiry, as well as two written pieces from women who are currently detained within the prison system.

The final presentation on Saturday will begin at 7pm, and will shift its attention to Political Prisoners and the criminalization of dissent

within Canada. The films shown will be about G20 resistance activists who were pre-emptively arrested before the summit in Toronto.

On Sunday, February 10th, the festival continues at Old East Studios, starting at 1pm. The films shown will be focused on the struggles of political prisoners from Columbia and Cuba. Currently there are over 10,000 political prisoners in Columbia, and this segment will describe efforts of people who worked to create a better situation for their community, only to be thrown in jail for doing such.



The final event of the weekend is a panel discussion on Resisting the Prison Industrial Complex: From Reform to Abolition. This panel will begin at 5pm, and will feature speakers who presented various topics during the festival.

For more information, please find the website which includes more in depth content on all of the films and speakers at prisonjusticefilm.wordpress.com

COMMON CAUSE // anarchist organization

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

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