

**EXECUTIVE BOARD REPORT TO THE  
TORONTO & YORK REGION GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING  
THURSDAY, AUGUST 4, 2016**

**“WAR AND CONSEQUENCES”**

Thirteen long years after the ill-fated invasion of Iraq, the people of Britain finally learned the facts about the web of deceit that surrounded Tony Blair’s decision to join George Bush’s campaign of “shock and awe”. It took only days to overwhelm the Iraqi armed forces, but that action unleashed a storm that is still being felt around the world.

In 2003 union members in Toronto joined millions of others in the global demonstrations against the planned invasion. We knew the so-called weapons of mass destruction were either a ruse or a convenient excuse to invade an oil-rich country that failed to fall in line with the Bush doctrine. In our hearts, we also knew that nobody could predict how this saga would unfold. Fortunately Canada stayed out of the invasion, in no small part to the massive mobilization in Quebec as well as the rest of the country.

Hundreds of thousands of lives later, with Iraq in ruins and suffering from ongoing turmoil, the consequences are obvious. The massive oil reserves, second largest in the world, have been effectively privatized for American and European energy giants. The U.S. imposed regime alienated huge sections of the population, plunging the country into civil war. Eventually that dynamic gave rise to the group known as Daesh that has brought so much grief to the Middle East and Europe. U.S. foreign policy then supported regime change in Libya and Syria, with dramatic impact on the politics of the entire world.

Canadians may be astounded by the tone of the American election, but vitriol and xenophobia has become a shameful new norm. Many observers credit the Brexit vote and Trump’s success to the anger of a white working class betrayed by global restructuring. There is no doubt that the corporate elites have pursued a callous drive for profit that has left millions of unemployed and communities in crisis. But the real danger to workers comes from right-wing populism that whips up anger against immigrants and Muslims while attacking unions, outsourcing jobs and gutting labour standards.

Labour Council has a proud history of standing for peace and solidarity, including supporting refugees who refuse to serve in unjust wars. In these troubling times there will be hard, perhaps unpopular, decisions to be made to continue that tradition. Union activists need to reach out to our families and neighbours who feel uneasy about the changing world, and patiently challenge prejudice or intolerance whenever it appears. We need to build bridges between all communities, and work hard to affirm our shared humanity in the face of adversity. We owe that and much more to the next generation.

The Executive Board recommends that Labour Council:

1. Work with affiliates and allies to combat the growing racism, xenophobia and Islamophobia within our society
2. Deepen our solidarity with newcomer communities and migrant workers
3. Continue to speak out against militarism and war
4. Urge the Trudeau government to stop deportations of U.S. war resisters and allow them to stay