

Days of Action: Ontario's Extra-Parliamentary Opposition to the Common Sense Revolution, 1995-1998

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Nesbitt, Douglas

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From 1995 to 1998, Ontario was the site of a sustained political and industrial conflict between the provincial government of Premier Mike Harris and a loosely-coordinated protest movement of labour unions, community organizations, and activist groups. The struggle was aimed at the defeating the "Common Sense Revolution," a sweeping neoliberal program advanced by the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario. The program designed to renovate the state, rationalize the social safety net, repeal barriers to capital accumulation, and decisively weaken the strength of organized labour.

What became a union-led extra-parliamentary opposition drew in large sections of the population often aligned with a political culture of statist collectivism encompassing both social democracy and "Red Toryism". The movement emerged at a time when the two major parties aligned with such ideas embraced neoliberal policies. Under the leadership of Mike Harris, the Red Tories were pushed out of the Ontario Progressive Conservatives in the early 1990s. Meanwhile, the one-term New Democratic government of 1990-95 made a decisive turn towards neoliberal austerity amidst a catastrophic recession, declining federal transfers, and employer hostility.

Through the union-led "Days of Action" of large political strikes, mass demonstrations, and numerous militant protests, the implementation of the Common Sense Revolution was slowed and weakened and the government's popularity greatly diminished. However, the province's union leadership was deeply divided over loyalties to the New Democratic Party following its turn to neoliberal austerity. One union leadership faction opposed the Days of Action while the other proved unwilling to escalate the scale of industrial disruption against the Common Sense Revolution. The crisis led to an open factional dispute within organized labour that culminated in the formal suspension of the political strikes in the summer of 1998.

The outcome was an unprecedented political defeat for the labour-led forces defending an expansive redistributive welfare state, and a retreat by organized labour from extra-parliamentary political strategies in favour of electoralism. The government managed to regain support before winning re-election in 1999. The end of the Days of Action marked the political triumph of neoliberal restructuring and permanent austerity, and the crafting of a new political and economic common sense that has endured in Ontario to this day.

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“action” includes an issue, matter, arbitration, reference, investigation, inquiry, a prosecution for an offence committed against a statute of Ontario or against a by-law or regulation made under any such statute and any other proceeding authorized or permitted to be tried, heard, had or taken by or before a court under the law of Ontario; (“action”). is admissible in evidence whether or not the witness or any of the parties to the action or proceeding has approved the method used to record the evidence and the proceedings and whether or not he or she has read or signed the transcript. R.S.O. 1990, c. E.23, s. 5 (2). Regulations. Copyright Commonwealth of Australia 1995. Except to the extent of the uses permitted under the Copyright Act 1968, no part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means including information storage and retrieval system, without the prior written consent of the Department of the Parliamentary Library, other than by Members of the Australian Parliament in the course of their official duties. Published by the Department of the Parliamentary Library, 1995. A key aspect of the above relationship is their differing perceptions of the common state: while Serbs basically opted for the unitarist goal, ie. the creation of a strong federal state of Yugoslavia, Croatian leaders tended to see Yugoslavia merely as a necessary step towards a fully independent Croat nation-state. Indeed, in our days, urban sprawl and deforestation ruin natural habitats for animals; moreover, air and land pollution makes their survival even more challenging. In these circumstances, humanity has no right to neglect the problem and refuse responsibility. In conclusion, although species become extinct regularly, this may strongly affect the balance in the environment in a negative way at some point; thus, our society should take action. Also, people often create life-threatening conditions for animals, and therefore, ought to proactively prevent their extinction.