

In Memoriam

Dorothy-Jean O'Donnell



January 30, 1951 - February 10, 2021

With great sadness, the Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist) informs you that our comrade Dorothy-Jean O'Donnell passed away in hospital in Langley, British Columbia on February 10 after a courageous battle with cancer.

Dorothy-Jean was a passionate life-long political activist beginning in her high school days. At the University of British Columbia she became known for her resolute stands in the anti-war movement and the battle for women's rights.

She also came to know *The Internationalists*, the precursor organization of the Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist). Under the leadership of Comrade Hardial Bains she espoused their defence of an academic atmosphere on the campus. When the *War Measures Act* was proclaimed in 1970 to suppress the struggle of the Quebec people and the Attorney General of British Columbia announced that no one could speak about Quebec in any BC classroom, Dorothy-Jean made a point of speaking out against the *War Measures Act* in all her classes. She then left the University and became a serious organizer of the women's movement and to end the vicious discrimination against lesbians.

In 1973, Dorothy-Jean joined CPC(M-L) and took up the work to build the unity of Marxist-Leninists in one party. She was in the thick of the fight against state-organized racist attacks. As a bus driver in northern BC, she made many friends amongst especially the women of East Indian origin who

she defended without let-up, becoming a member of the East Indian Defence Committee and a founding member of the People's Front Against Racist and Fascist Violence.

She then worked in various industrial jobs in Toronto and returned to UBC to complete a law degree in 1986.

Dorothy-Jean was well-known in the community as "the lawyer who defends poor people." Since 1992 she dedicated her legal practice to defending marginalized workers, workers with compensation claims, Indigenous people facing police harassment and violence, and helping parents of youth in trouble with the law. She was also the editor of the Lawyers for Social Responsibility newsletter from 1989 to 1998.

A passionate advocate for electoral reform and democratic renewal, Dorothy-Jean was counsel for the Marxist-Leninist Party of Canada when the Party intervened as a Friend of the Court in a successful Charter challenge to the *Canada Elections Act*. She stood as a candidate for the MLPC in every federal election, and for the People's Front in several BC provincial elections.

Dorothy-Jean devoted her entire life to seeing justice done, the cause of peace and opening the space for communism.

A champion of the need to establish an anti-war government, in an interview with the *Lillooet News* during the 2011 federal election she denounced the unanimous vote in parliament which supported the NATO bombing of Libya. It was unconscionable to bomb Libya, a sovereign country, she said, specifically denouncing Canada's use of the cruise missiles whose testing "we demonstrated against 30 years ago." She consistently opposed the use of force to sort out problems between nations, called for Canada's withdrawal from NATO and for NATO and NORAD to be dismantled.

Without fail Dorothy-Jean upheld the dignity of labour and worked to humanize the social and natural environment, fighting to end colonial injustice against the Indigenous peoples, defend the rights of all to housing, shelter, a livelihood and against all forms of discrimination. Her advocacy and dedication are well known in the legal community in BC and she will be sorely missed.

Our condolences and deepest sympathies to Dorothy-Jean's partner Cardy, her sisters and brother and her many comrades and friends.

We will forever admire her courage, persistence, fidelity and devotion.

*Central Committee
Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist)*