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# people's VOICE

**75,000 march  
in Montreal**

**See page 7**

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## Global wealth ... and mass poverty



640 million children live without adequate shelter, 400 million have no access to clean water and sanitation, and 270 million lack health services. But in 2009, the number of billionaires world-wide soared from 793 to 1,011.

**- See report on page 6 -**

### **2** Free Speech

The Harper Tories want to shut down any criticism of the apartheid policies of Israel, but supporters of human rights are standing up against this attack on free speech and civil liberties.

## **INSIDE**

### **3** Coalition for BC

Faced with staggering cuts to health, social programs and education, unions and community movements are mobilizing to fight the Campbell Liberals.

### **7** Winning in Sudbury

5,000 union members and supporters rallied against Vale Inco in Sudbury on March 22. The outcome of this strike is crucial for the entire labour movement - will the CLC step up to the plate?

# Anti-free speech campaign hits roadblocks

## PV Vancouver Bureau

The campaign to shut down any criticism of the state of Israel ran into a couple of speed bumps in early March.

In one development, the Bloc Quebecois has decided to resign from the Canadian Parliamentary Coalition to Combat Antisemitism (CPCCA). M. Luc Desnoyers, one of two Bloc members formerly on the CPCCA Steering Committee, confirmed that the decision reflected the Bloc's unease in the face of "the inequality of opinions presented before the Coalition," and "the refusal of the Steering Committee to hear groups with opposing viewpoints."

The Bloc formally requested last November that Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME) and the Canadian Arab Federation (CAF) be heard by the Coalition, to diversify the almost exclusively pro-Israel viewpoints presented to the CPCCA. This and other requests went unaddressed by the Steering Committee, led by Conservative Scott Reid. Neither CJPME nor CAF was invited to participate.

"CJPME is absolutely opposed to anti-Semitism," declared Thomas Woodley, President of CJPME. "Nevertheless, if an

objective perspective is truly desired, the CPCCA hearings must welcome diverse, and potentially opposing viewpoints."

The CPCCA is an ad hoc coalition which until now has included MPs from the four parties in Parliament. The CJPME has argued that the Coalition's position - that any criticism of Israel is anti-Semitic - violates Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

In a related development, two attempts on March 11 to get the House of Commons to condemn "Israeli Apartheid Week" failed to receive the necessary unanimous approval of MPs in a voice vote.

The first motion, introduced by Tim Uppal, the Conservative MP for Edmonton-Sherwood Park, stated: "That this House condemns Israeli Apartheid Week for seeking to delegitimize the State of Israel by equating it with the racist South African apartheid regime, and that this House continues to support a peaceful resolution through a negotiated two-state solution that respects Israel's right to exist."

A slightly different resolution was then introduced by Bloc Quebecois MP Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois-Salaberry): "That this House denounce the use of the word apartheid to describe the Israeli

policy on Palestinians and the word anti-Semitic to describe any criticism against Israel, and that this House reaffirm its support for Israel's right to live in peace and security within sound, established borders, and reaffirm its support for the right of the Palestinian people to have its own state within sound borders and to live there in peace and security."

The second motion also lacked unanimous support. In both cases, an unspecified number of NDP members voted "no."

The defeat of Uppal's motion was welcomed by Independent Jewish Voices (IJV), a cross-Canada network of Jewish human-rights activists.

"This shows courage to stand up to the Orwellian attempts by Israel's supporters to bully Israel's critics into silence," said IJV spokesperson Sid Shniad. "Apartheid", the term Israeli Defence Minister Ehud Barak and former prime minister Olmert used to describe the occupation's effects, shouldn't be controversial. Whether or not you agree with the term 'apartheid', all Canadians should defend free speech and oppose limiting debate, especially considering these terms are part of the Israel mainstream debate."

IJV also commended Ontario

NDP leader Andrea Horwath for calling a similar provincial motion by MPP Peter Shurman "divisive by nature". The group urged the Ontario legislature to reject such motions in the future.

Meanwhile, the Canada-Israel Committee, a vocal pro-Israel lobby group, expressed "deep appreciation" for the Uppal motion.

"The use of the term apartheid to describe Israel is scurrilous and completely false and serves to intimidate and ostracize Jewish students on campus," claimed the CIC. "The attempt to compare Israel, a democracy that provides full rights to its Arab minority population, is part of a larger concerted campaign to delegitimize the State of Israel."

Moshe Ronen, CIC National Chair, condemned NDP House Leader Libby Davies (Vancouver East) "for not only scuttling any good faith attempt to reach all-party consensus on the issue, but

publicly taking credit for it."

Ronen attacked what he called Davies' "utter disregard for the plight of students who are bullied and intimidated on campus..."

Davies has responded that "the Conservative motion was designed to be divisive and to censor legitimate debate on the issue of Israel's policies as well as to specifically target activists who are engaged in debate and other activities on various campuses across the country. I didn't support either motion, and whatever one thinks about the term 'apartheid' in reference to Israel, I don't believe that Members of Parliament should have any role or influence in stifling open discussion and education on this issue. As someone who has visited the West Bank and Gaza twice (most recently in August of 2009), I know first-hand the impact and destruction caused by Israeli policies towards Palestinians." •

## May Day actions planned for Vancouver

VANCOUVER - Following up on last year's successful May Day event, the first organized by the labour movement here in several years, the Vancouver and District Labour Council's May Day Committee is preparing to mark the date again on Saturday, May 1. The day's activities will focus on building the fightback against the provincial Campbell government's brutal cuts to jobs and social spending. (See page 3 for news on the Coalition to Build a Better BC, the labour-backed alliance which is mobilizing resistance against the cutbacks.)

The afternoon will kick off with a march along Commercial Drive, starting at 1 pm from Clark Park, located at the corner of 14th and Commercial. This action will wind up with a rally at Grandview Park, on the 1200 block of Commercial.

Later that evening, labour activists and supporters will gather at the Maritime Labour Centre (1881 Triumph St., at the corner of Victoria Drive, three blocks north of

Hastings), for a celebration featuring cultural performances, displays, music, refreshments and speakers.

For further details, contact the Committee's chair, Ken Davidson, c/o the VDLC, 604-254-0703.

Meanwhile, CUPE BC President Barry O'Neill says that this year's May Day will be a "Community Action Day". CUPE BC is asking its members to mark International Workers Day by holding events to celebrate their involvement with the communities where they live and work.

"Out of the struggles of the international workers' rights movement came the eight-hour day, the five-day work week, improved working conditions and child labour laws - gains we could not have won without the solidarity of workers and the communities the workers lived in," says O'Neill. "As workers, we must recognize and commemorate May Day not only for its historical significance, but also as a time to celebrate the contributions of workers today." •

**PV Fund Drive: \$50,000 in 2010**  
**\$8,215 turned in during first two weeks!**

Just two weeks after our annual Fund Drive appeals went into the mail, readers are responding with a terrific display of generous solidarity. As of March 22, we have received a total of \$8,215, or 16.4% of our \$50,000 target for this year.

Leading the way so far is British Columbia, with \$5,120 turned in already. That's 20.5% of our \$20,000 goal for the west coast, thanks in part to very substantial donations from readers like Paul Belanger and Eric Waugh.

Several articles in this issue drive home the important role of *People's Voice*. We have reports on three recent major events: the huge march of 75,000 public sector workers in Montreal, the rally in solidarity with striking

Steelworkers in Sudbury, and the formation of the Coalition to Build a Better B.C. These important actions received some local coverage in regional papers, but almost zero attention in the big corporate media. They don't consider labour organizing news - but it's the number one reason for our paper's existence, and the best reason to support *People's Voice*.

The first fundraising event of the Drive, the annual Pasta Dinner held by the Vancouver East Club, was a success on March 21 - thanks to everyone who came for the dinner and the screening of *Capitalism: A Love Story*.

Donations are also starting to arrive in Ontario, where readers have contributed \$2525 so far, or 11.7% of the provincial target

of \$21,600. Early donations of \$250 from Alberta, \$120 from Manitoba, and \$200 from friends in other countries have helped kick the Drive into high gear. Let's keep the ball rolling!

The next fundraising event will take place before most readers see this paper. On the evening of March 27, Toronto-area readers will be at the GCDO Hall (290 Danforth Ave.) for some great music, food and refreshments, plus greetings from PV Editor Kimball Cariou. We'll report on this event next time.

The Burnaby Club has announced details of their popular Mother's Day Pancake Breakfast. Mark Sunday, May 9 on your calendars, starting 10 am, at 5435 Kincaid Street. It's just \$10 (or \$8 for readers under 12) for all the fabulous breakfast you can eat. For details, call Anna at 604-294-6775.

As a mark of appreciation for your generosity, we are once again offering supporters complimentary gifts. For each \$100 in donations, you can choose one of these black and white portraits, mounted on card, matted and ready for framing: Che Guevara, Clara Zetkin, Augusto Cesar Sandino, Bhagat Singh, Gall (Sioux), Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, Louis Riel, Jeanne Corbin, or Gladys Marin. Other choices include music CDs or a copy of our 2010 Women's Socialist Calendar.

**Here's my contribution to the PV Fund Drive!**

Enclosed please find my donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to the 2010 People's Voice Press Fund Drive.

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*Send your contribution to:  
 People's Voice, 706 Clark Drive, Vancouver, BC, V5L 3J1*

**MAY DAY 2010 GREETING ADS**

To mark May Day 2010, People's Voice will print greetings from a wide range of labour and people's organizations in our May 1-15 issue, which will be distributed at events across Canada. The deadline for camera-ready ads is April 24; if PV is preparing the layout, the deadline is April 22. Please check with us about the format if your ad is being sent electronically.

**Ad rates (based on 5 column page):**

One column-inch.....	\$10
One column x 2 inches.....	\$20
Two columns x 2 inches.....	\$35
Two columns x 3 inches.....	\$50
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Three columns x 4 inches.....	\$90
Two columns x 7 inches.....	\$100
Three columns x 7 inches.....	\$150

**Send greetings to People's Voice at:  
 706 Clark Drive, Vancouver, V5L 3J1  
 Fax (604)254-9803 E-mail: pvoice@telus.net**

# Momentum builds for B.C. anti-cuts campaign

By Kimball Cariou,  
Vancouver

As the full picture of the Campbell government's crippling cuts to social programs, health and education comes into focus, momentum is building for a powerful fightback campaign. Drawing together trade unions and a wide range of Aboriginal, student, women's and social justice movements, the Coalition to Build A Better BC will hold its first major rally on Saturday, April 10, 12 noon at the Vancouver Art Gallery.

Leaders and members of dozens of affiliated groups gathered on March 20 in Vancouver for a one-day conference to discuss the deepening crisis, which affects virtually every section of working people.

Formed just a few weeks ago, the coalition already includes (listed alphabetically) the Alliance for Arts and Culture, BC Association of Social Workers, BC Government and Service Employees' Union, BC Federation of Labour, BC Federation of Retired Union Members, BC Health Coalition, BC Persons with AIDS Society, BC Retired Teachers Association, BC Teachers Federation, BC/Yukon Association of Drug War Survivors, Canadian Federation of Students, Check Your Head, Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC, Council of Canadians, Council of Senior Citizens Organizations, CUPE BC, Federation of Post-Secondary Educators of BC, First Call, Health Sciences Association of BC, Hospital Employees Union, International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (Northwest District 250), Positive Women's Network, Positive Living Fraser Valley, Seniors on Guard for Medicare, Sierra Club of BC, South Fraser Community Services Society, Union of BC Indian Chiefs, Vancouver Rape Relief, and the Wilderness Committee.

In its initial statement, the Coalition calls for "building communities where every woman, man and child is treated with fairness and dignity, and respect is a shared responsibility..."

"Public, community and cultural services are essential cornerstones of a civil society. They are a critical component of our economic well-being, especially in difficult economic times. A strong public sector to support, build and regulate the private sector is vital to the social, environmental and economic health of the province.

"Due to drastic funding cuts, chronic underfunding and misaligned political priorities many of these services are at risk of disappearing, and putting our way of life and the environment at risk. Many of the cuts affect the most vulnerable people in our communities, particularly women, children, isolated seniors, and those with the lowest incomes. It is unacceptable for government to take more from those who have the least, in order to give more to those who have the most."

Despite their "no tax increase" rhetoric, the Liberals are jacking up fees and taxes on working people. The "Harmonized Sales Tax" will start gouging consumers and small businesses on July 1. Another

Vancouver regional transit fare hike takes effect on April 1, bringing fares a mind-boggling 66% higher than before the Liberals took office. BC Hydro rates will go up 9.11 percent this year, and by similar amounts over the next three years.

Young people have been the target of Liberal policies, such as the lowest minimum wage in Canada. Students have seen a 28% hit to StudentAid BC, and government revenue from tuition fees will exceed corporate income tax by \$200 million this year.

The latest controversial decision comes from the Ministry of Housing and Social Development, in the form of new cuts to health and medical services for people receiving disability benefits and income assistance.

A wide range of medical equipment and supplies will no longer be funded, including diagnostic testing devices such as glucose meters, contraceptive devices, and pre-made orthotics. Other changes will reduce the frequency of equipment repairs or replacement, and limit spending for necessary items such as motorized wheelchairs.

Recipients who need bottled water for health reasons will now have to pay themselves, since the \$20 monthly payments for this purpose will be eliminated on May 31. Dental cleaning, examinations and fluoride treatments will be reduced to once a year from the current twice annually.

Until now, the government has provided a minimum shelter



The Campbell government's first wave of attacks after the 2001 election sparked huge demonstrations. (File photo: K. Cariou)

allowance of \$75 to people between 59 and 65, even if they were homeless or not paying rent. That funding is being eliminated, so that people on the basic disability income of \$531 a month, plus the \$75 shelter allowance, will lose 12% of their income.

As *Victoria Times Colonist* writer Paul Willcocks said, "The income assistance and disability benefit cuts are cruel, wasteful and petty. Instead, the public affairs bureau - the government's \$26-

million-a-year communications arm - put out a news release headlined 'Province protects services for low-income clients.' In fact, it was cutting services for those people ... who are already dirt poor."

The accumulated impact of education spending shortfalls has also reached crisis levels. Despite Campbell's election promise to "make B.C. the best-educated, most literate place in North America", his government's refusal to cover rising costs means that public

school boards across the province face a total shortfall of about \$200 million.

Under huge pressure, the province has restored some funds cut last year, such as the annual facilities grant needed by Boards for maintenance of schools. But the Vancouver School Board, for example, is still looking at an \$18 million shortfall for the 2010-11 academic year, a gap which will inevitably force big layoffs, program cuts and school closures.

As pointed out by Vancouver Parents for Successful Inclusion, the impact could be worst for students with special needs. While the government's Bill 33 set class size and composition limits for regular classes, the legislation excludes core educational services for students with special needs. The group fears that "Local Boards facing unprecedented budget pressures and left with no other options will be forced to concentrate budget cuts on special education programs and non-enrolling supports for at-risk students to achieve the required savings."

In total, the Campbell government's latest round of layoffs, cuts, fee increases and new taxes spell the biggest attack on the working class of British Columbia since the Liberals took office. It will take a huge fightback to defeat this corporate-inspired agenda; the April 10 rally will be a critical test of strength for the labour movement and its community allies. ●

## Tar Sands protest hits Royal Bank AGM

Source: Rainforest Action Network

On March 3, more than 170 people rallied outside the Royal Bank of Canada's annual meeting in Toronto to demand that RBC phase out its financing of tar sands projects and recognize the right to free, prior and informed consent for Indigenous communities. Solidarity actions were held in other cities, including London, Calgary, Vancouver, Edmonton, and Victoria.

Since 2007 RBC has backed more than \$16.7 billion (USD) in loans to companies operating in the Alberta tar sands - more than any other bank. Tar sands projects will eventually transform a boreal forest the size of England into an industrial sacrifice zone complete with lakes full of toxic waste, spewing out emissions.

Four aboriginal groups want Royal Bank to use its influence to

stop Enbridge Inc. from building a 1170-kilometer pipeline to carry oil from the tar sands through northern British Columbia to Kitimat, where it would be loaded on tankers for shipment to the U.S. west coast or Asia.

The Enbridge Northern Gateway Pipeline is the largest crude-oil pipeline expansion in North America, crossing mountainous terrain, hundreds of rivers and streams, and roughly 35 kilometers of key salmon spawning waters. Enbridge is in the final steps of preparing its environmental application, which will be submitted to the federal National Energy Board.

First Nations community representatives were joined by members of Rainforest Action Network, Indigenous Environmental Network, No One Is Illegal, and Council of Canadians, making their outrage at RBC's investments heard. To the

thumping beats of a samba band, the crowd shouted "Cultural Genocide: who do we thank? Dirty investments from Royal Bank!"

Inside the shareholder meeting, Chief AILameman of Beaver Lake First Nation (Alberta), Vice Chief Terry Teegee of the Carrier Sekani Tribal Council of BC, Hereditary Chief Warner Naziel of the Wet'suwe'ten First Nation of BC, and Gitz Crazyboy of Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation addressed RBC Chief Executive Officer Gordon Nixon directly about the way tar sands extraction projects have jeopardized their health and their rights.

Downstream communities have experienced polluted water, water reductions in rivers and aquifers, declines in wildlife populations such as moose and muskrat, and significant declines in fish populations. Tar sands development has all but destroyed the traditional livelihood of First Nations in the northern Athabasca watershed.

Clearly feeling the public pressure, RBC spent half of the shareholder meeting addressing the issue. Recently, the bank convened a meeting with more than a dozen international banks for a "day of learning" about the reputational risks associated with the tar sands. In addition, according to information the bank provided to Rainforest Action Network during a February meeting in San Francisco, RBC is evaluating new lending criteria



Gitz Crazyboy of Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation speaks to the crowd in Toronto (Photos from Rainforest Action Network website.)



Participants in the Royal Bank rally in Toronto.

that would apply to the oil and gas sector, in particular to the tar sands. However, the bank has been reticent to include "Free, Prior and Informed Consent" in its policy, which would ensure that First Nations communities are respected in lending practices. ●

# EDITORIALS

## A springtime of hope

Radicals who want to create a better world often swing between bleak cynicism and blind faith. Hardened by past betrayals and retreats, we can succumb to the idea that nothing short of total revolution will achieve real gains. Or we can view any progress as a signal that the path to social change will now be straight and easy. For example, when we see the heroic struggles of the Greek workers against an outrageous attempt to make them shoulder the entire burden of capitalist crisis, one reaction is to shrug, "OK, but Canadian workers would never take such militant action." Another is to assume that a similar massive fightback is just around the corner in this country.

What's the truth? The Greek working class is certainly displaying a high level of revolutionary understanding. But there are also positive developments in Canada. The outstanding rally in Montreal on March 20 drew far more than the 50,000 public sector workers predicted by the Quebec Common Front unions. Given a clear goal and committed leadership, other workers in Canada will also flex their muscles. The labour-led Coalition to Build a Better B.C. has the possibility to strengthen links with the anti-HST campaign in that province, and to shake up the deeply unpopular Campbell Liberals. After a decade of lethargy imposed by former opportunist leaders, the Ontario Federation of Labour is moving into action around the economic crisis, and trying to overcome divisions which hindered a successful fightback.

This is not a moment to stand back and hurl insults at the shortcomings of these struggles. That doesn't mean there is no place for constructive criticism. It does mean that the main emphasis must be on all-out efforts to nurture these valuable shoots of resistance. The task of left activists in the labour and people's movements today is to help build truly broad, united, mass movements against the corporations and their right-wing governments. Not every springtime of hope brings a summer of victories, but this important opportunity must be grasped.

## Still here, still scary

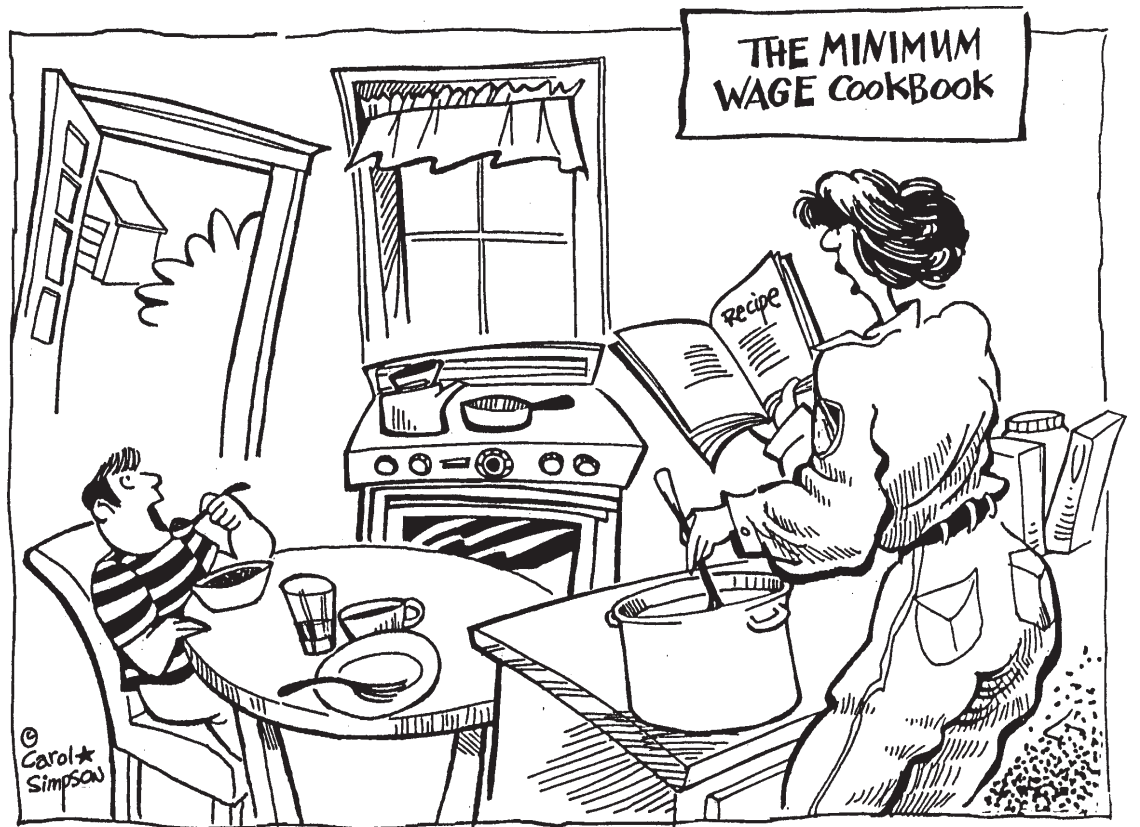
Here's the good news. After four years in office, Stephen Harper's Tories are still a minority in Parliament. Despite all the advantages of power, and the open support of the ruling class and the corporate media, Harper's polling numbers are lower today than during the past two elections. In part, this reflects the Tory capacity to remind working people of their vicious, reactionary politics. Whether it's their brutal imperialist war in Afghanistan, their utter indifference to mass layoffs, or their hatred for women's reproductive rights, the Tories regularly shoot themselves in both feet.

Even the sleazy attempt to paint themselves as "populists" has backfired, thanks to all those temper tantrums. It's hard to hold a pose with your Timmy's double-double when the Veteran's Affairs Minister is screaming at security guards for refusing to let him take his expensive bottle of tequila onto the plane.

Now the bad news. Stephen Harper is still in office, and still within spitting distance of a majority. Some argue that this hardly matters. Our response? Harper already runs the country like his personal banana republic. Wait until he has even less obstacles to slow the corporate attack and the fundamentalist agenda of his MPs.

Consider the tussle over documents on the Afghan detainee torture issue. Even now, the Conservatives are playing the "national security" card to deny any access to these materials. Imagine the degree of control a Harper majority regime would exercise over any embarrassing revelations or criticism.

Time is running out - an election is more likely by the month. It would be a terrible mistake to assume that the Tories will make enough blunders to lose. The outcome of the next election may shift the political terrain for years - defeating Harper remains urgent.



"Spaghetti with macaroni bits??"

## SPEAKING FRANKLY

## Open Letter to Saskatchewan's Conservative MPs

*In the wake of the Harper government's funding cut to the First Nations University of Canada, the following Open Letter was sent by Randy Lundy, Chair of the FNUniv Head Academic Council*

The Federal Government's decision to cut \$7.2 million in funding to the First Nations University of Canada is unprecedented in Canadian history. Never before has any government presided over the closure of any publicly funded university or college. Furthermore, the institution is the only First Nations owned and operated University in the country, and it is hard to imagine the government would consider such a cut to any other university in the country no matter its governance or administrative difficulties. As such, this decision appears to be motivated primarily by a political agenda and ideology. The suggestion that, in principle, this funding cut is based upon similar thinking that led to the creation of residential schools and amounts to a policy of assimilation (the erasure of cultural difference) is valid and appropriate. The federal government is acting in the belief that it knows best the educational needs of First Nations students and that they can be better educated in non-First Nations environments.

In the midst of this funding cut and the intense public debate that is taking place, the federal Conservative MPs of Saskatchewan have remained almost entirely silent, except for MP Gerry Ritz's public statement: "Where we had a problem was in the governance.... We've given them time to restructure...but the administration will be handled by the University of Regina" (*Regina Leader-Post*, March 4, 2010). Mr. Ritz did not repeat these comments when he attended a meeting between a Canadian Association of University Teachers-sponsored delegation and Minister Chuck Strahl on March 11, in Ottawa.

Mr. Ritz's silence since making those public comments suggests that either he misrepresented the position of the federal government on the issue or he simply did not know what he was talking about. Which of those scenarios is the truth remains to be seen.

The Conservative government, and Saskatchewan MPs in particular, must be reminded it presides over a minority parliament. While this government rests comfortably in the knowledge it is unlikely to lose seats in Alberta under any circumstances, it must be reminded this is not necessarily

If our politicians, federal and provincial, allow institutions such as the First Nations University to fail, the social, economic, and political costs will be enormous. Given the explosive growth in the young and primarily urban First Nations population in this province, the University holds unprecedented importance in ensuring that such youth are educated, productive, and contributing members of the larger society. The option is to allow this population to go uneducated, to propel the cycle of poverty, and to enforce continued reliance upon social programs for generations.

The costs of such a policy will be disastrous for our three largest cities (Regina, Saskatoon, and Prince Albert), for Saskatchewan, and for Canada. While the federal government may have hoped the decision to close the First Nations University of Canada could be made with little or no political cost, we must make it clear to the government and to Saskatchewan's Conservative MPs that there will indeed be a major political cost to their minority position in Parliament.

Rightly, the Provincial and Federal governments have demanded transparency and accountability from the First Nations University, and now it is time we as taxpayers demand the same from our governments. ●

## other voices...

the case in Saskatchewan. While we in Saskatchewan have come to expect these MPs to remain silent on all issues unless specifically instructed otherwise by the Prime Minister's Office, it is unacceptable for them to refuse to defend the interests of the province in this case.

For five years, there have been serious governance and administrative concerns with the operations of the University. However, the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, under the new leadership of Chief Guy Lonechild, has moved boldly to address these concerns, with the dissolution of the previous Board and the suspension of the President and Vice-President of the University. An interim Board is much smaller and depoliticized, with no Chiefs sitting as members. An interim Chief Operating Officer is now in charge of operations.

Critical changes, that have been called for by many Faculty members and students for five years now, have been made and will be permanent. Four days after these changes began, the federal government made the decision to pull the \$7.2 million in funding. Such a decision is incomprehensible, irresponsible, and unacceptable.

## PEOPLE'S VOICE

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### Volunteers and contributors for this issue:

Dave Arland, Ed Bil, Johan Boyden, Wally Brooker,  
Sam Hammond, Kevin Neish, Michael Oosting,  
Darrell Rankin, Liz Rowley, Malkeet Singh, and our  
mailers in Vancouver & Toronto.

Editor: Kimball Cariou Business Manager: Sam Hammond

Editorial Board: Kimball Cariou, Miguel Figueroa,  
Doug Meggison, Naomi Rankin, Liz Rowley, Jim Sacouman

## LETTERS

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Please check the address label on the front page to see if it's time to renew. Readers who find "2010/04/01" on their label, for example, will have their subscriptions expire with this issue, April 1-15, 2010. Don't miss a single copy - renew today!

# CAW calls for united action to stop Siemens closure

## PV Ontario Bureau

Hamilton - In early March, Siemens announced it will close its 100 year old operations in Hamilton. Effective July 2011, the company will move its gas turbine plant to North Carolina, where it will expand its low-wage, non-union operations at the expense of 550 Canadian jobs.

It was a shocking announcement, since management recently boasted that the plant was extremely productive and efficient. The company cited Ontario's shift away from fossil fuels for the move.

But the real reason is the non-unionized work force, poor labour laws and working conditions in the US Sunbelt states, and the low corporate taxes and tax concessions offered Siemens by the city of Charlotte and the state of North Carolina.

Siemens, a German multi-national, took over the Westinghouse

operations less than 10 years ago. Now, it has decided that bigger profits can be made in the US South, not in Canada where manufacturing is still largely unionized.

At a rally organized immediately after the closure announcement, a visibly angry CAW President Ken Lewenza blasted this latest plant closure and the governments that allow it.

"This isn't a company that's losing money. It's a company that in their opinion isn't making enough. But we have to ask ourselves, our governments and our MPs, "What kind of country do we want? It's not the country of continual job loss, manufacturing decline. We have a responsibility. Others have done it before us. We're going to fight and we're going to win."

Lewenza said the fight isn't only about Siemens, "it's about all the closures". Speaking about the almost half a million manufacturing

jobs that have disappeared in Ontario in the last five years, and the stripping of the Canadian economy and the misery of joblessness that has followed, Lewenza said "enough is enough".

"We're thinking about the next generation. Who's going to pay the taxes, who's going to pay for our public health care, who's going to pay for our infrastructure? Who's going to pay for education? Who's going to save jobs? Who's going to protect the interests of Canada, the interests of Canadian workers?"

He said the labour movement has to think about how to fight back, and called for a broad coalition of labour and its allies to mount an effective political and economic struggle to stop the closures and layoffs.

"These rallies work. You know just walking down the street and

begging - that never worked. At the end of the day, if we have to take over workplaces to fight for justice and fight for community, we're prepared to do that.

"We have to fight in a more militant fashion. We can march till the cows come home. But until we deal with capital moving from one city to another city, from one country to another country,



CAW President Ken Lewenza

moving workers from one side of the globe to the other end of the globe, we will always be under constant pressure from these global industries who think they have no responsibility from the communities that made them these incredible profits," he said.

Representatives from a number of unions were present, all of which are under attack by greedy corporations and reactionary governments.

The new CAW President has been making a series of speeches in Ontario about the need for a united fightback by labour and its allies. Newly elected OFL President Sid Ryan has made similar speeches. The CAW's re-entry into the OFL, after an absence of almost a decade, is expected shortly. Progressives are hopeful the move to re-unite labour in Ontario will bear quick results. ●

## Communist Party slams Siemens plant move

The Communist Party of Canada (Ontario) and the Hamilton Committee of the Party reacted quickly to the Siemens closure announcement, issuing a news release and a leaflet condemning the move and calling for new policies to defend the interests of workers.

It's true that U.S. sunbelt politicians don't care enough about the environment to rein in the corporations, points out the statement. But the real motive is North Carolina's pathetic labour laws: "Siemens' workers have no union, no collective agreement, no bargaining rights, no right to strike, and are paid wages far lower than any worker in the Hamilton operations. Benefits? What are those?"

The statement points out that the 550 families affected by the closure will join half a million others who have lost well-paid, unionized jobs in Ontario. After using their severance and their EI weeks to search for comparable jobs in an economy with 12.1% real unemployment, most will have to choose between lower-paid, precarious work, or welfare.

Federal and provincial governments have said nothing about the shutdown. "For Liberal and Tory governments, multinational corporations can do whatever they want. Concessions and sweeteners like the tax gifts and freebies in North Carolina are the only thing on offer in Ontario."

The Communist Party is demanding legislation that would force companies like Siemens to show "just cause" before a public tribunal, and prevent closures based on reducing workers' wages and union-busting. The Party also calls for an immediate end to the free trade deals, and an industrial strategy to create jobs and re-build Canadian industry and manufacturing on a sustainable basis.

The Party's statement urges "plant closure legislation with teeth - stop corporations putting plants on skids south to cut wages and break unions," and goes on to demand:

\* foreign investment laws that benefit Canada - not Siemens, US Steel, Vale Inco, and the rest.

\* bankruptcy protection for workers' wages and pensions.

\* massive public investment to create jobs, expand manufacturing and secondary industry.

\* raise wages and living standards, put Ontario back to work

\* anti-scab legislation.

\* a Bill of Rights for Labour guaranteeing the right to strike, picket and organize.

"Corporations and their right wing governments say the economic crisis is over. But it's not over for workers who continue to face massive unemployment, job loss, static wages, and declining living conditions. Now the attack is on the trade union movement itself, which corporations and reactionary governments know is

the backbone of a province-wide, and Canada-wide fightback movement."

In response, "Labour needs its democratic and community allies now more than ever, and communities need labour to beat back the corporate attack on cities, social programs, and public services.

"The OFL needs to convene a labour-community summit that can organize and mobilize a mass, united and militant response, that can put people in the streets and launch a counter-offensive against the corporate assault.

"We stand in solidarity with fighting members of Local 504, CAW, which has a long history of militant struggle from the early days of organizing in the 1930s and 40s up to the present. The struggle continues!" ●



"High five guy, the layoffs devastated another community but the balance sheet shows we made as much money as possible for us, the stockholders."



## Letters to the Editor

### Merge Olympics?

During the regular Olympics, it was impossible to not hear about the games and Canada's performance at the games. Every radio station, every television channel, every artistic performer and every politician was either broadcasting Olympic news and results or making sure they were in the picture. Even the NHL shut down for the duration of the games.

A few weeks pass and the Paralympics begin. The CTV network could not even carry the opening ceremonies live. Coverage of the games and results is limited. Performers and politicians have plenty of other "work" to do. The NHL carries on as usual and sportscasters remind us that training season for Baseball has started.

The athletes who participate in the Paralympics deserve as much or more attention than the athletes in the regular Olympics. In addition to the heavy training requirements for successful competition, they also need to overcome a variety of handicaps from loss of limbs to sight impairments.

Perhaps the real solution is to

merge the Paralympic games into the regular Olympic games for a three week festival that celebrates all athletes including differently abled athletes who do their best for the sake the sports they love.

Wayne Madden, Edmonton, AB

### On alliances...

We need to regenerate through our own efforts. We are to carry on constant propaganda among the working people. We have to build confidence. Though there are twists and turns in front of us, and many obstacles in our way, we have to analyse the difficulties and combat them.

The reactionary forces have also their own difficulties and crisis within crises. But one thing is in our favour, that we are new and rising and building forces. We have the future in the long run. We stand for active ideological struggle. But liberalism rejects ideological struggle and brings about political degeneration.

see LETTERS, page 11


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# Global capitalist poverty: facts and figures

By Kimball Cariou

We are often told that "a rising tide lifts all boats" - in other words, increasing totals of global wealth raise everyone out of poverty. Yet while the number of ultra-rich is growing, billions of people remain trapped in dire poverty. The reality is that under capitalism, wealth is concentrated in fewer hands while misery increases, unless this process is countered by working people organized to win basic reforms and revolutionary change.

One useful collection of data on global economic disparities is a website operated by Anup Shah. The "Poverty Stats and Facts" section of this website is found at [www.globalissues.org/article/26/poverty-facts-and-stats](http://www.globalissues.org/article/26/poverty-facts-and-stats). Here are some excerpts.

Almost half the world - over 3 billion people - live on less than \$2.50 a day. At least 80% of humanity lives on less than \$10 a day.

More than 80 percent of the world's population lives in countries where income differentials are widening. The poorest 40 percent of the world's population accounts for 5 percent of global income. The richest 20 percent accounts for three-quarters of world income.

According to UNICEF, 25,000 children die each day due to poverty. Around 27-28 percent of all children in developing countries are estimated to be underweight or stunted. The two regions that account for the bulk of the nutrition deficit are South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.

Based on enrolment data, about 72 million children of primary school age in the developing world were not in school in 2005; 57 percent of them were girls. Nearly a billion people entered the 21st century unable to read a book or sign their names.

Infectious diseases continue to blight the lives of the poor. An estimated 40 million people are living with HIV/AIDS, with 3 million deaths in 2004. Every year there are 350-500 million cases of malaria, with 1 million fatalities: Africa accounts for 90 percent of malarial deaths and African children account for over 80 percent of malaria victims worldwide.

Some 1.1 billion people in developing countries have inadequate access to water, and 2.6 billion lack basic sanitation. More than 660 million people without sanitation live on less than \$2 a day, and more than 385 million on less than \$1 a day.

Access to piped water into the household averages about 85% for the wealthiest 20% of the population, compared with 25% for the poorest 20%.

1.8 billion people who have access to a water source within one kilometre, but not in their house or yard, consume around 20 litres per day. In the United Kingdom the average person uses more than 150 litres a day. The highest average water use in the world is in the US, at 600 litres per day.

Some 1.8 million children die each year as a result of diarrhoea, and 443 million school days are lost annually from water-related illness. Close to half of all people in developing countries suffer from health problems caused by water and sanitation deficits. Millions of

women spend several hours a day collecting water.

The costs associated with health spending, productivity losses and labour diversions, are greatest in some of the poorest countries. Sub-Saharan Africa loses about 5% of GDP, or some \$28.4 billion annually, a figure that exceeds total aid flows and debt relief to the region in 2003.

Of the 2.2 billion children in the world, 1 billion live in poverty. Among the 1.9 billion children from the developing world, 640 million are without adequate shelter, 400 million have no access to safe water, and 270 million lack health services.

Worldwide, 1.4 million children die each year from lack of access to safe drinking water and sanitation. Another 2.2 million children die each year because they are not immunized, and 15 million children are orphaned due to HIV/AIDS.

Rural areas account for three in every four people living on less than US\$1 a day and a similar share of the world population suffering from malnutrition. However, urbanization is not synonymous with progress. In 2005, one out of three urban dwellers (approximately 1 billion people) was living in slum conditions.

In developing countries some 2.5 billion people are forced to rely on biomass - fuelwood, charcoal and animal dung - to meet their energy needs for cooking. In sub-Saharan Africa, over 80 percent of the population depends on traditional biomass for cooking, as do over half of the populations of India and China.

Indoor air pollution resulting from the use of solid fuels claims the lives of 4000 people a day, or 1.5 million people each year, more than half of them below the age of five.

In 2005, the wealthiest 20% of the world accounted for 76.6% of total private consumption, compared to just 1.5% for the poorest fifth. The GDP (Gross Domestic Product) of 41 heavily indebted poor countries (567 million people) was less than the wealth of the world's seven richest people combined in that year.

The total wealth of the top 8.3 million people around the world rose 8.2 percent to \$30.8 trillion in 2004, giving them control of nearly a quarter of the world's financial assets. In other words, about 0.13% of the world's population controlled 25% of the world's financial assets in 2004.

In 1960, the 20% of the world's people in the richest countries had 30 times the income of the poorest 20%. By 1997, the differential was 74 times as much.

In 2008, the World Bank announced a new global poverty line of \$1.25 a day. It also reported that while there has been some reduction in world poverty over the last couple of decades, this gain almost exclusively comes from China, where the poverty rate fell from 85% to 15.9%, or by over 600 million people.

Anup Shah's website lists various categories of spending in the developed countries, ranging

from cosmetics in the United States (\$8 billion annually) to the yearly total of worldwide military budgets (\$780 billion, actually nearly \$1 trillion by 2010).

Shah and others have compared military expenditures to the cost of achieving universal literacy and health care, access to clean water, and other urgent development priorities. But their figures are often out-dated.

**The world spends 14 times more each year on military budgets than it would cost to provide clean drinking water and adequate sanitation for half of those who lack these necessities.**

A current comparison would consider the costs of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) set by the United Nations in 2000, as a first step towards eliminating extreme poverty by the year 2015.

Target 10 of the MDGs is to "halve by 2015 the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation". The U.N. estimated that the spending on new infrastructure in developing countries to meet this target is \$42 billion for water and \$142 billion for sanitation, for an annual total over ten years of \$18 billion. To maintain these services would require annual spending of \$54 billion.

In other words, the world spends 14 times more each year on military budgets than it would cost to provide water and sanitation for half of those who lack these necessities.

US economist Jeffrey Sachs, who headed the UN Millennium Project, argues that to reach these goals, development aid must be raised from \$65 billion globally as of 2002 to between \$135 and \$195 billion a year by 2015. This could be achieved by redirecting less than

20% of global military spending.

Clearly, the human race does have the wealth and resources to tackle the global poverty crisis, along with the looming catastrophe of unchecked greenhouse gas emissions which are creating chaotic climate change. The barrier to real progress is the economic and social system which dominates most of the planet. The capitalist system of private ownership ensures that a tiny handful of wealthy billionaires reap enormous benefits from their control of resources, including the huge profits sucked out of the military-industrial complex which helps to maintain the power of the leading imperialist countries.

Interestingly, the trend is different in countries which aspire to socialist development. Cuba has

been hailed by the World Wildlife Federation for its successes in combining economic and social equality with environmental sustainability. Since the launch of the Bolivarian Revolution in Venezuela, the poorest sections of the people in that country have achieved rapid economic gains. And as noted above, most of the absolute reduction of global poverty numbers has come in China, despite the social and environmental strains which have accompanied the rapid growth rate and expansion of capitalist investment in recent years.

Each of these countries faces unique challenges and contradictions, but their experience shows that there are alternatives to the neoliberal model of "advanced capitalism". ●



Child labour for poverty wages is widespread in the "global south"

## Forbes: crisis hits only low income earners

By Vlad Grinkevich, RIA Novosti (Moscow)

The current global financial and economic crisis confirms the fact that during economic upheavals the rich get richer and the poor become even more destitute. On March 10, *Forbes Magazine* carried an updated list of the world's wealthiest people.

As of late 2009, the number of billionaires soared from 793 to 1,011 and their total fortunes from \$2.4 trillion to \$3.6 trillion (all amounts in US dollars).

The list's authors believe that an increase in the number of wealthy people highlights the end of the recession, but it may also signal the appearance of new bubbles in the economy.

Mexican telecommunications king Carlos Slim Helu opens the list with \$53.5 billion. He is followed by last year's leader, Microsoft founder Bill Gates with \$53 billion and American investor, businessman, and philanthropist Warren Buffet

with \$47 billion.

However, this does not mean that Gates and Buffet now have less money than before. On the contrary, they have both increased their fortunes by \$13 billion and \$10 billion, respectively.

There have also been some tactical changes in the list of Russian billionaires. For instance, ONEXIM Group CEO Mikhail Prokhorov, who has expanded his fortune from \$9.5 billion to \$13.4 billion in one year, has ceded first place to Vladimir Lisin with \$15.8 billion. Lisin, who is Chairman of the Board of Directors at Novolipetsk Steel, came fifth in the rating only 12 months ago.

Despite the crisis, the list of billionaires has grown by 200 people and their aggregate capital has expanded by 50 percent. This may seem paradoxical but only at first glance. This result was predictable, if we recall how governments all over the world have dealt with the economic crisis.

Anti-crisis measures essentially implied massive infusion of money into the economy. The United

States alone spent over \$10 trillion. Against the backdrop of a global recession, the funding could only be put to good use on stock and raw materials markets, leading to the creation of new financial bubbles.

Consequently, oil prices which had hit an all-time low of \$47 per barrel in December 2008, now stand at about \$80. Global financial indices are also climbing steadily. The Russian stock market grew by over 100 percent over the course of 2009.

The lists of billionaires and their countries of residence have changed. China, which posted a 8.7 percent GDP growth last year despite the crisis, is now home to 64, rather than 62, billionaires, ousting Russia to third place. Although Russia has suffered a harsher blow from the crisis than most industrial and even developing countries, it now has 62 billionaires, up from 32 in 2008, regardless of the fact that the national GDP has plunged by 7.9 percent by late 2009. ●

# 75,000 march in Common Front demonstration

## PV Montreal Bureau

On March 20, days before the expiry of collective agreements for employees of public and parastatal sectors, an estimated 75,000 members and friends of the Common Front, from all regions of Quebec, marched in the streets of Montreal. The united demonstration by Quebec's three main union federations, SISP, CSN and FTQ (Secrétariat intersyndicale des services publics, Confederation of National Trade Unions, and Quebec Federation of Labour) reminded the Charest government that the solutions to improve public services must involve negotiation.

Comprising 475,000 persons employed in public services, this is the biggest Common Front seen in several decades in Quebec. They include government workers and unionized employees of the health, education and other sectors. With some 300,000 members, including most of the province's teachers, the SISP is the largest component of the Common Front, united in this massive struggle with the CSN and the Quebec Federation of Labour, which includes CUPE affiliates.

Quebec Treasury Board president Monique Gagnon-Tremblay quickly called for a "blitz of negotiations" to reach an agreement by March 31, as desired

by the Common Front. The union leaders welcomed this announcement, but said they would "judge the tree by its fruit."

"On other occasions, including last February 19, the President of the Treasury Board announced a period of intensive negotiations," said the Common Front representatives. "We remain cautious and next week we will see the level of government commitment. Trade union members of the Common Front are available to negotiate aggressively, but there will be no global agreement without agreements at the sectoral level."

In the Common Front's view, this requires the government to show good faith by withdrawing some of the major irritants that impede progress.

"These negotiations are crucial for the future of public services in health, education for human security and environmental protection. The government must hear the message of the thousands of citizens gathered today to seek concrete solutions to problems encountered in workplaces that have a direct impact on services to the population," said the president of the CSN, Claudette Carbonneau.

"In the past, the public sector was the envy of many other sectors of society, but this is no longer the case today," added Quebec Federation of Labour (FTQ) President Michel Arsenault.



Common Front rally marches through the streets of Montreal.

"Wage declines year after year and deteriorating working conditions have ensured that the public sector has lost its former glory."

Arsenault points out that "in good years, salaries were frozen at 2% per year," leaving public sector workers falling behind the cost of living. "If we want to keep our services, we must pay the wages that this requires," he says.

For the Common Front, "it is

urgent to make a turn to ensure the sustainability of public services to attract and to retain a skilled workforce," said SISP spokesperson Dominique Verreault. "The staff shortage is already being felt in all categories of jobs for several years. It will worsen because of massive departures to retirement, poor working conditions and uncompetitive remuneration. The health, education and public service sectors are less attractive, and many are seduced by private companies that offer better working conditions and higher wages."

According to Claudette Carbonneau, CSN members simply want a good collective agreement. "Our members are tired of living on love and water... They are burnt out... They want respect," she said.

But the Common Front leadership is not optimistic about the government's intentions.

The CSQ, one of the largest affiliates of the SISP, said on March 19 it had "less and less hope" of reaching a settlement by March 31, the expiration date of the current collective agreement, which was unilaterally imposed by the government in December 2005.

"We continue to make the necessary efforts at the negotiating table, but we can never reach an agreement if the employer insists on wanting to cut back on our

working conditions, so as to bring us below the conditions under which we are currently covered by decree," CSQ president Réjean Parent said.

The Common Front is demanding wage increases of 2% per year to protect the purchasing power of employees. In addition, it wants an extra "remedial pay" increase of 49 cents per hour on average, or 1.75% of annual earnings, to make wages in the public sector more competitive. This would total 11.25% over a three year agreement.

Like other right-wing governments, the Charest Liberals are using the economic crisis as a club to attack public sector workers. They claim that the Common Front demands would cost an extra \$8 billion over three years.

Instead, the government wants to limit pay and benefits to a 7% increase over five years, with the salary raise held to just 5%. This offer could be "enhanced" by 0.75% for each of the last two years if economic growth is higher than expected.

The unions calculate that this "offer" would result in a wage decline of 8% over a five year period. In other words, the public sector workers would be compelled to accept drastically reduced pay and living standards to allow the Charest government get out of its fiscal deficit situation. ●



Union leaders at March 20 rally: from left, Claudette Carbonneau (CSN), Dominique Verreault (SISP), Michel Arsenault (FTQ)

## Winning the strike against Vale Inco

### By Liz Rowley

The nine-month old strike against Vale Inco by the United Steelworkers Union in Sudbury and Port Colborne, was marked by a 5,000 strong rally organized on March 22 by Local 6500. Supporters came from across Ontario, some travelling as long as eight hours to back the longest nickel mining strike in Sudbury's history.

The "Bridging the Gap" rally was intended to force Vale Inco back to the bargaining table.

Speakers from Vietnam, Australia, Germany, Indonesia, and the US brought greetings. Several spoke about their own strikes against Vale Inco, universally

described as a vicious global corporation out to break unions and maximize profits at all costs. Some (like the Australians) brought money; before the rally was finished, over \$150,000 had been donated by sister unions from across the globe.

USWA President Leo Gerard described the company's latest diatribe - an attack on the union as racist for refusing to accept an offer in excess of Brazilian miners' wages - as "low", shameful and a lie.

The proof was solidarity. Union of Ontario Indians Grand Chief Pat Madahbee told the rally that the UOI had passed a resolution supporting the strikers last fall,

and would continue to support the strike until victory. "We're with you! We're with you!", he said to a standing ovation.

The UOI is expected to organize blockades on the highways in and around Sudbury to stop trucks transporting "hot cargo" if the strike is not settled.

OFL President Sid Ryan pledged the support of Ontario's one million union members. "This strike is everybody's business!" he said, pointing out the breadth and depth of the corporate assault against workers and the need for a united response.

In reply to Vale Inco's campaign of disinformation, USW President Leo Gerard invited the company to

"Come to Sudbury tomorrow. We're ready to negotiate!"

Gerard and others called on Ottawa to review the Canada Investment Act, which allowed the Brazilian multinational to buy INCO three years ago. A secret codicil agreement signed by Vale was supposed to guarantee continued investment in Canada, along with current job levels. Vale has been accused of planning to reduce the work force from over 3,000 to 1,800 or less. The union is demanding the federal government rescind the agreement and the sale.

Strikers were invited to "stand up and look under your chair" for Sudbury Liberal MPP Rick Bartolucci, conspicuous by his

absence. Bartolucci's genuflection to the company and solemn recitations of "neutrality" have garnered universal contempt. His days as an MPP will be over in next year's election.

NDP leader Jack Layton and Ontario leader Andrea Horwath also spoke, supporting strikers and calling for federal and provincial anti-scab legislation.

The workers are more united today than nine months ago, as seen in the 89% NO vote in Sudbury and 98% NO vote in Port Colborne on March 12, when the company forced a ballot on their "last offer"



# GLOBAL CLASS STRUGGLE

## Facebook used to recruit scabs

A wary atmosphere prevailed at the office of Multi Link terminals at the Vuosaari harbour in Helsinki on March 17. About 15 men gathered there following an appeal on Facebook for scabs to break a two-week-long strike by Finnish stevedores. Harri Nordstrom, one of the owners of Multi-Link, told the group that they are making history. "For the first time ever, Facebook has been used for this kind of thing. Remember, only the workers are on strike, not the work", Nordstrom said.

Also present were three young entrepreneurs who established a Facebook group called "I am a volunteer stevedore in the AKT harbour strike". About 2,500 members have joined the strike-breaking group.

Multi-Link provides the scabs with a couple of hours of training in an office, after which they are taken on a small tour of the harbour area. Some have had experience in the field, but most have not. Some are students, while others have other jobs.

The tactic has enraged the strikers, who organised a protest the next morning at the city's Mussalo Harbour. A scuffle broke out at the harbour as about 100 strikers tried to prevent the scabs from starting work. Police were called in to protect about 20 strike-breakers who turned up to handle a backlog of about 1,000 containers.

Negotiations have resumed between the Finnish Transport Workers Union (AKT) and the Finnish Port Operators Association. The main issues in the dispute involve job security, working hour arrangements, and rules concerning subcontracting.

## Unions say: make Wall Street pay

The AFL-CIO and its allies are taking the fight for good jobs to the biggest Wall Street banks, accusing them of reckless greed which has done enormous damage to U.S. economy and jobs. From March 15-26, the labour movement is holding rallies and demonstrations at branches of the Big Six Wall Street banks - Bank of America, Citibank, Goldman Sachs, JP Morgan Chase, Morgan Stanley and Wachovia-Wells Fargo - across the country. They will tell the banks: "I Am Not Your ATM" and "Make Wall Street Pay for Creating New Jobs."

The AFL-CIO Good Jobs Now website lists the total assets of the Big Six, headed up by Bank of America (\$2.2 trillion), JP Morgan Chase (\$2.03 trillion), and Citigroup (\$1.9 trillion). The three highest paid executives of these three alone took home a total of \$58.8 million last year. In total, the Big Six banks received \$165 billion in TARP "relief" funds from the federal government during the financial crisis.

The AFL-CIO is calling for fees on Wall Street banks to pay back the cost of the bailout; a special levy on Wall Street bonuses; and a tax on the income of hedge fund and private equity managers, the wealthiest people

in the country, at ordinary income rates.



## Greece paralyzed by latest strike

Greek public transport was halted, flights grounded and state hospitals left with emergency staff only on March 18 as workers held yet another general strike to protest government attacks on jobs, wages, and pensions.

Yet another wave of labour discontent has followed the "socialist" PASOK government's harsh new austerity plan, introduced earlier in March to cut the country's deficit and win approval from Europe's big lenders.

Under intense pressure from the European Union, the government announced an additional \$6.5 billion in public sector salary cuts, hiring and pension freezes and consumer tax hikes.

The cutbacks, added to a previous \$15.24 billion austerity plan, seek to reduce the country's budget deficit from 12.7% of annual output to 8.7% this year. The long-term target is to bring deficits to the EU limit of 3 percent of GDP in 2012.

Resistance to the austerity plan has been spearheaded by the All-Greek Militant Workers' Front (PAME), which includes communist-led trade unions and supporters within unions dominated by PASOK and other political forces. On March 18, the wave of strikes and protests initiated by PAME was backed by unions whose reaction to the initial austerity measures had been muted. The latest strike, the second in a week, shut down all public services and schools, left ferries tied up at port and suspended all news broadcasts for the day. Taxi drivers, kiosk owners, and street vendors joined the strike, protesting against a draft law which would compel them to keep far more detailed financial records and issue receipts to all customers.

Workers at Public Power Corp., Greece's state-owned electricity company, walked out on March 16 and 17 to protest wage cuts of over 7 percent and pension reductions of more than ten percent. The 48-hour strike led to brief power cuts across the country. The union at the PPC threatened to call another 48-hour strike on March 24 if the government refuses to withdraw the wage and pension cuts.

The government claims the cuts are the only way to dig Greece out of a crisis that has hammered the common European currency and alarmed international markets, grossly inflating the country's

borrowing costs.

But unions say ordinary Greeks are being called to pay a disproportionate price for past fiscal mismanagement.

"They are trying to make workers pay the price for this crisis," said Yiannis Panagopoulos, leader of Greece's largest union, the GSEE. "These measures will not be effective and will throw the economy into deep freeze."

## Strike at Brazil John Deere plant

Most of the 1,700 workers at a John Deere manufacturing plant in southern Brazil went on strike on March 15 over pay demands. The Horizontina plant in Rio Grande do Sul state is one of three John Deere factories in Brazil, and produces agricultural machinery for farming powerhouse Brazil and its neighbours.

"We sat down with the union last Friday for the first time and did not expect them to go on strike this morning," said Alfredo Miguel Neto, John Deere's director of corporate affairs in South America.

Over 1,000 workers were taking part in the open-ended strike, which could affect exports to Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay and Chile. News reports indicate that the union is seeking a 10 percent pay raise, reinstatement of year-end collective holidays and bonuses for unhealthy working conditions.

## Threats against S. Korea unions

The South Korean government has threatened firm action against a rally by an outlawed public workers' union, calling it "an illegal collective action." A newly organized union of civil servants, formed after a merger of separate groups, is planning an inaugural rally in Seoul in late March. A large number of government workers are likely to take part.

"The government will deal sternly with civil servants participating in the rally in accordance with the law and principle, having concluded that it is an illegal collective action," the Ministry of Public Administration and Security said in a statement. Anyone found to have participated in the rally will be punished without exception, it said.

The union declared a struggle against the government in early March after the labour ministry rejected its registration as a legal body for the second time since last December. The ministry said the group retains dismissed public workers and staffers who are not civil servants as members, which is banned under labour laws. The union denies having dismissed workers as members and says staffers account for only eight of some 100,000 members.

Union leaders vowed in a March 18 news conference to go ahead with the rally and accused the government of oppression.

"We have been holding similar rallies every year since 2003, but the Public Administration and Security Ministry is threatening to punish the participants, defining it an illegal collective action," they

said in a press conference statement.

The union also filed a suit with the prosecution against Lee Dalgon, former minister of public administration and security, and another ministry official for abuse of authority and obstruction of duty. Lee resigned early this month to run for governor of South Gyeongsang Province in the June 2 local elections.

## Illicit work, asbestos affect European building workers

On March 3, the European Federation of Building and Woodworkers (EFBWW) announced a campaign against illicit work in the European construction sector. No other sector in Europe is more affected by various forms of social fraud and "black labour," with a very negative impact on working conditions and wages. A stronger enforcement of and compliance with existing rules at European level is required, says the Federation.

A second Federation campaign aims to get rid of all asbestos still existing in Europe. Even though Europe has a general ban of asbestos and asbestos-containing products, this deadly substance is still present in public and private buildings, in public transportation systems and in products of daily life.

Kyosti Suokas, EFBWW building vice-chair, underlined that the fight against all forms of illicit work needs practical measures and legal actions. Since the existing European legislative framework in this respect falls far short, the EFBWW is urging legislators to take concrete measures.

"Asbestos urgently needs a prompt co-ordinated action,"

according to Lars Vedsmand, EFBWW health and safety expert. The Federation's goal is to make Europe asbestos free by 2023. The focus is on comprehensive registration, safe working conditions, the training of workers and the recognition of asbestos related diseases and compensation of asbestos victims.

## Tanzania unions plan strike

The Trade Union Congress of Tanzania is planning a nationwide strike to protest the government's failure to improve workers' conditions of service, union officials said on March 19. The workers' grievances haven't been addressed despite them trying all avenues, leaving them with a strike as the last resort, said TUCTA general secretary Nicholas Mgaya.

"In 2008, we agreed with the government to meet at least once every four months to discuss workers' grievances but to date, no meeting has ever taken place," Mgaya said, adding that the workers would go on an indefinite strike starting May 5.

Among the grievances is the government's failure to tackle the high taxes being paid by workers, failure to raise the minimum wage and failure to organize meetings between the union and the state-run Labour, Economic and Social Council.

TUCTA has at least 320,000 members, mainly government workers including customs officials, local government workers, teachers and health workers. The workers have been embroiled in disputes with government since 2007, and almost went on strike in 2008 but didn't when the Tanzanian president Jakaya Kikwete declared the action illegal.

Many items in our "Global Class Struggle" column are from the Labour Start website, [www.labourstart.org](http://www.labourstart.org)

## Send me information on the Communist Party of Canada

The Communist Party of Canada, formed in 1921, has a proud history of fighting for jobs, equality, peace, Canadian independence, and socialism. The CPC does much more than run candidates in elections. We think the fight against big business and its parties is a year-round job, so our members are active across the country, to build our party and to help strengthen people's movements on a wide range of issues. All our policies and leadership are set democratically by our members. To find out more about Canada's party of socialism, contact the nearest CPC office.

### Central Committee CPC

290A Danforth Ave, Toronto, Ont., M4K 1N6  
Ph. (416)469-2446 Fax (416)469-4063 E-mail <[info@cpc-pcc.ca](mailto:info@cpc-pcc.ca)>

**Parti Communiste du Quebec** (section du Parti communiste du Canada)  
5359 Ave Du Parc, Suite "C"  
Montreal, Quebec H2V 4G9  
Email: [pcq@cpc-pcc.ca](mailto:pcq@cpc-pcc.ca)

**B.C. Committee CPC**  
706 Clark Drive, Vancouver, V5L 3J1  
Tel: 604-254-9836 E-mail: [cpbc@telus.net](mailto:cpbc@telus.net)

**Edmonton CPC**  
Box 68112, 70 Bonnie Doon PO  
Edmonton, AB, T6C 4N6  
Tel: 780-465-7893 Fax: 780-463-0209

**Calgary CPC**  
Unit #1, 19 Radcliffe Close SE,  
Calgary, T2A 6B2 Tel: 403-248-6489

**Saskatchewan CPC**  
Email: [mail@communist-party-sk.ca](mailto:mail@communist-party-sk.ca)

**Ottawa CPC**  
Tel: 613-232-7108

**Manitoba Committee CPC**  
387 Selkirk Ave., Winnipeg, R2W 2M3  
Tel/fax: 204-586-7824

**Ontario Ctee. CPC**  
290A Danforth Ave., Toronto, M4K 1N6  
Tel: 416-469-2446

**Hamilton Ctee. CPC**  
265 Melvin Ave., Apt. 815  
Hamilton, ON,  
Tel: 905-548-9586

**Atlantic Region CPC**  
Box 70, Grand Pré, NS, B0P 1M0  
Tel/fax: 902-542-7981



**Reflections by  
Fidel Castro**

# The Threatening Dangers

**Fidel Castro Ruz, March 7, 2010**

It is not an ideological issue related to the definitive hope that a better world is, and should be, possible.

It is a known fact that the homo sapiens has existed for about 200,000 years, no more than a tiny span of the time passed since the emergence of the first basic forms of life on our planet approximately three billion years ago.

The answers to the unfathomable mysteries of life and nature have fundamentally been religious. It would be senseless to pretend otherwise and I am convinced that it will forever be this way. The deeper science delves into the explanation of universe, space, time, matter and energy; the infinite galaxies and the theories of the origin of the constellations and the stars; the atoms and the fractions of them that made possible life and its briefness; the more questions man will have in search of ever more complex and difficult rationalizations.

The more involved human beings are in the quest for answers to such deep and complex endeavors related to reason, the more significant the efforts will be to release them from their enormous ignorance on the true possibilities of what our intelligent species has created and can still create. Living and ignoring it is tantamount to a complete denial of our human condition.

However, something is absolutely certain: very few even imagine how close we might be to the extinction of our species. Nearly twenty years back, at a World Summit on the environment held in Rio de Janeiro, I brought up this danger before a selective audience of Heads of State and Government who listened with respect and interest albeit unconcerned for a risk they perceived to be centuries or perhaps millenniums away. They certainly felt that science and

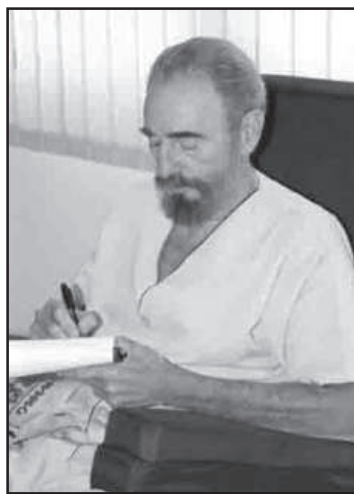
technology plus a basic sense of responsibility would suffice to tackle the problem. That important summit happily concluded with a great photo-op of distinguished characters, including the most powerful and influential. There was no danger whatsoever.

Hardly anyone talked about climate change then. George Bush senior and other dazzling leaders of the North Atlantic Alliance enjoyed victory over the European socialist camp. The Soviet Union was dismembered and in ruins. A huge amount of Russian money ended up in the Western banks, its economy broke up and their defensive shield vis-a-vis NATO military base was dismantled.

The former superpower that had contributed the lives of over 25 million of its people to World War II was left with only the nuclear power capability for a strategic response, something it had been forced to create after the United States secretly developed the nuclear bomb that it dropped on two Japanese cities when the adversary, already defeated by the irrepressible advance of the allied forces, was unable to fight.

Such was the beginning of the Cold War and the production of thousands of increasingly destructive and accurate thermonuclear weapons capable of annihilating the population of the planet several times over. Nevertheless, the nuclear confrontation continued while the weapons grew more accurate and destructive. Russia does not resign itself to the unipolar world that Washington intends to impose. Other nations such as China, India and Brazil are emerging with unexpected economic strength.

For the first time, in a globalized world full of contradictions the human species has created the capacity for self destruction. This in addition to unprecedented cruel arms such as chemical and bacteriological weapons: like napalm and white phosphorous used with total impunity against



the civilian populations, the electromagnetic weapons and other forms of extermination. No place on earth or in the sea, no matter how deep, is beyond reach of the current means of war.

It is known that tens of thousands of nuclear devices have been produced, even portable ones.

The greatest risk stems from the judgment of leaders with such decision-making power that mistakes or madness, so common in human nature, could lead to unspeakable catastrophes.

Almost 65 years have passed since the explosion of the first two nuclear artifacts due to the decision of a mediocre individual who was left in command of the rich and mighty American power after Roosevelt's death. Today, eight countries are in possession of such weapons - most of them obtained with US support - while several others have the technology and the resources to manufacture them in a very short time. On the other hand, terrorist groups alienated by bigotry could also resort to them, the same way that terrorist and irresponsible governments would not hesitate to use them given their unrestrained and genocidal behavior.

The military industry is the most prosperous of all and the United States of America the largest exporter of weapons.

If our species can escape the abovementioned risks, there is still a greater one or at least less unavoidable: climate change.

The population of the world today is seven billion, and soon, within 40 years, it will be nine billion. This figure is nine times what it was barely 200 years ago. I dare assume that in the days of ancient Greece the figure was about 40 times lower all over the planet.

What's amazing in our times is the contradiction between the imperialist bourgeois ideology and the survival of the species. The need for justice among human beings is no longer the issue; this is not only possible but unwavering. The issue now is the right and the possibility of survival of the human species.

The further the horizon of knowledge expands to previously unknown limits, the closer humanity is brought to the abyss. All sufferings known so far are hardly a pale reflection of what could lie ahead of humanity.

Three events occurred in only 71 days that humanity cannot overlook.

On December 18, 2009, the international community sustained the most important setback in

history as it tried to find a solution to the most serious problem threatening the world at the moment: the necessity to urgently put an end to the emission of greenhouse gases which are causing the gravest problem that mankind has faced until today.

All hopes had converged on the Copenhagen Summit after years of preparation following the Kyoto Protocol that the government of the United States, the most contaminating country in the world, had lightly decided to ignore. The rest of the world community, 192 countries - this time even the United States included - had committed to promote a new agreement. The American attempt at imposing its hegemonic interest was so shameful that in violation of the most basic democratic principles it tried to force unacceptable conditions on the rest of the world, anti-democratically resorting to bilateral arrangements with a group of the most influential United Nations member countries.

The States that make up the international organization were invited to sign a document that is no more than a travesty, a document that relates purely theoretical future contributions to curb climate change.

Barely three weeks had passed when at sunset on January 12, Haiti, the poorest nation in the hemisphere and the first to put an end to the horrible slavery system,

was hit by the greatest natural catastrophe in the history of this part of the world: a 7.3 degrees in the Richter scale earthquake only 6.25 miles deep and very close to its coastline struck the capital of the country where most of the dead or missing people lived in fragile houses built with clay. A mountainous and soil-degraded country of 16, 875 square miles where wood is practically the only source of domestic fuel for nine million people.

If there is a place on Earth where a natural catastrophe has become an enormous tragedy that place is Haiti, a symbol of poverty and underdevelopment, where the descendants of Africans live who were brought by the colonialists to work as slaves for white masters.

The event came as a shock to the entire world; people in every corner of the planet were shaken by the filmed images that seemed almost incredible. The injured, bleeding and moribund, crawled among the dead asking for help while the lifeless bodies of their loved ones lay under the debris. According to official estimates, the number of lethal victims exceeded the figure of 200,000.

The country was already occupied by the MINUSTAH forces sent by the United Nations to restore the order subverted by Haitian mercenary forces that

see FIDEL, page 11

## Cuba responds quickly to the crisis in Chile

By Mike Oosting

Even though the Cuban government had redirected most of its foreign support to Haiti after the disaster that occurred earlier this year, they didn't hesitate to send relief to the Chilean people when an 8.8 magnitude earthquake ravaged central Chile on February 27.

Cuba was the first country to mobilize a medical brigade to provide aid to Chile. Hours after the Chilean government's request for international support on March 1, the brigade was shipped out on March 2. This initial brigade was comprised of 27 Cuban doctors, 11 of which were specialists of various medical professions.

Roughly 12 tons of medical equipment and medicine was also donated by the Cuban government, invaluable in a place which was in desperate need of

medical supplies.

The brigadistas began to assist the quake-devastated nation immediately after arrival, setting up a temporary hospital in Rancagua, a city just 90 kilometres south of Santiago. As if this wasn't enough from the small Caribbean nation, on March 6 the Cuban government complemented its initial contingent with an additional nine medical personnel.

This is not the first time Cubans have aided Chile. In 1960 and 1971 Cuban relief workers were sent to Chile after major earthquakes struck the nation. These 36 men and women carry on the longstanding tradition of humanitarianism that has come to define the Cuban people. It is unclear how long they will have to remain in Chile, but they will stay until the situation has improved and aid is needed elsewhere. ●



Demonstrators stream into March 12 rally in New Delhi (Photo: Malkeet Singh)

## Huge protests hit India price hikes

By Malkeet Singh

Hundreds of thousands of Left activists hit New Delhi's roads on March 12, protesting the rising prices of essential commodities and the anti-people policies of India's NDA (National Democratic Alliance) government. They were even joined by sympathisers from centre and right-wing parties.

The call for the March 12 rally was given by four Left parties: Communist Party of India, Communist Party of India (Marxist), Revolutionary Socialist Party and Forward Block.

The Left Front parties also raised the issue of rising prices in the Parliament. When not allowed by the Speaker, they walked out in protest, supported by the Socialist Party of Mulayam Singh Yadav, Bahujan Samaj Party (of Mayawati), Biju Janta Dal, and even the BJP.

The base camp for the rally was at Ramlila Maidan grounds, and the main stage was at Jantar Mantar, at a distance of about 3 kilometers. People from the furthest states in the south and east camped near the stage overnight.

The protest march started at 9 am. Files of 30 to 40 demonstrators in a row were still moving from the base camp into the evening. For the first time, women took part in very large numbers, especially from the "cow belt states" of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. Muslims were also seen in very large numbers, and even a few Sadhus (godmen) from Haridwar in Uttarakhand.

The Left parties vowed to take their fight to a logical conclusion, announcing nation wide street actions on April 8 during which they will dare the central government to arrest their cadres. The parties plan to mobilize some 2.5 million people to take part in these civil disobedience protests. ●

# What Do Empires Do?

By Michael Parenti

When I wrote my book *Against Empire* in 1995, as might be expected, some of my U.S. compatriots thought it was wrong of me to call the United States an empire. It was widely believed that U.S. rulers did not pursue empire; they intervened abroad only out of self-defense or for humanitarian rescue operations or to restore order in a troubled region or overthrow tyranny, fight terrorism, and propagate democracy.

But by the year 2000, everyone started talking about the United States as an empire and writing books with titles like *Sorrows of Empire*, *Follies of Empire*, *Twilight of Empire*, or *Empire of Illusions* - all referring to the United States when they spoke of empire.

Even conservatives started using the word. Amazing. One could hear right-wing pundits announcing on U.S. television, "We are an empire, with all the responsibilities and opportunities of empire and we better get used to it and we are the strongest nation in the world and have every right to act as such - as if having the power gives U.S. leaders an inherent entitlement to exercise it upon others as they might wish."

What is going on here I asked myself at the time. How is it that so many people feel free to talk about

empire when they mean a United States empire? The ideological orthodoxy had always been that, unlike other countries, the USA did not indulge in colonization and conquest.

The answer, I realized, is that the word has been divested of its full meaning. "Empire" seems nowadays to mean simply dominion and control. Empire - for most of these late-coming critics - is concerned almost exclusively with power and prestige. What is usually missing from the public discourse is the process of empire and its politico-economic content. In other words, while we hear a lot about empire, we hear very little about imperialism.

Now that is strange, for imperialism is what empires are all about. Imperialism is what empires do. And by imperialism I do not mean the process of extending power and dominion without regard to material and financial interests. Indeed "imperialism" has been used by some authors in the same empty way that they use the word "empire," to simply denote dominion and control with little attention given to political economic realities.

But I define imperialism as follows: the process whereby the dominant investor interests in one country bring to bear their economic and military power upon another nation

or region in order to expropriate its land, labour, natural resources, capital, and markets - in such a manner as to enrich the investor interests. In a word, empires do not just pursue "power for power's sake." There are real and enormous material interests at stake, fortunes to be made many times over.

So for centuries the ruling interests of Western Europe and later on North America and Japan went forth with their financiers - and when necessary their armies - to lay claim to most of planet Earth, including the labour of indigenous peoples (both as workers and slaves), their markets, their incomes (through colonial taxation or debt control or other means), and the abundant treasures of their lands: their gold, silver, diamonds, copper, rum, molasses, hemp, flax, ebony, tin, nickel, coal, cotton, corn, and more recently: uranium, manganese, titanium, bauxite, oil, and - say it again - oil (hardly a complete listing).

Empires are enormously profitable for the dominant economic interests of the imperial nation but enormously costly to the people of the colonized country. In addition to suffering the pillage of their lands and natural resources, the people of these targeted countries are frequently killed in large numbers by the intruders.

This is another thing that empires do which too often goes unmentioned in the historical and political literature of countries like the United States, Britain, and France. Empires impoverish whole populations and kill lots and lots of innocent people. As I write this, President Obama and the national security state for which he works are waging two and a half wars (Iraq, Afghanistan, and northern Pakistan), and levelling military threats against Yemen, Iran, and, on a slow day, North Korea. Instead of sending medical and rescue aid to Haiti, Our Bomber sent in the Marines, the same Marines who engaged in years of repression and killings in Haiti decades ago and supported more recent massacres by proxy forces.

The purpose of all this killing is to prevent alternative, independent, self-defining nations from emerging. So the empire uses its state power to gather private wealth for its investor class. And it uses its public wealth to shore up its state power and prevent other nations from self-developing.

Sooner or later this arrangement begins to wilt under the weight of its own contradictions. As the empire grows more menacing and more murderous toward others, it grows sick and impoverished within itself.

From ancient times to today, empires have always been involved in the bloody accumulation of wealth. If you don't think this is true of the United States then stop calling it "Empire." And when you write a book about how it wraps its arms around the planet, entitle it "Global Bully" or "Bossy Busybody," but be aware that you're not telling us much about imperialism. ●

Michael Parenti's most recent book is *God and His Demons* (Prometheus Books, 2010). For further information, readers can visit his website: [www.michaelparenti.org](http://www.michaelparenti.org).

## Block Manitoba public sector wage freeze!

Statement of the Manitoba Committee, Communist Party of Canada, March 23, 2010

After handing out hundreds of millions of dollars to corporations by cutting their taxes, the Manitoba NDP government is attacking public sector workers with a wage freeze. If any group should pay for the expected provincial budget deficit, it is the corporations which have benefited from many years of NDP tax cuts.

An injury to one is an injury to all. The Manitoba NDP must back down, not the workers. The Labour movement must resist this attack or face more serious attacks later on.

The number one rule of a working class party - if the NDP can still call itself one - ought to be never attack your base, the workers. This is more than a monumental mistake by the Manitoba NDP government; it is an injury to workers that will be remembered for many years.

We need to remember the harm and sense of betrayal experienced by workers when past NDP governments imposed wage cuts and freezes, including when the Ontario NDP created the infamous Rae Days and broke public sector collective agreements in the 1990s.

Unsurprisingly, the Manitoba NDP's fortunes are falling in the public opinion polls. The Manitoba NDP is bowing down to the wealthy, the banks and the corporations, attacking the workers while helping the capitalists.

According to many statistical surveys, wages for working class families have essentially been

frozen for nearly three decades, while the handful of people who own the large corporations have seen their incomes skyrocket.

The plan to freeze wages just adds insult to injury.

The plan is dangerous because it divides workers along public and private sector lines. Many public sector workers do not earn high wages, yet the Manitoba NDP is trying to sell the idea that these workers can afford frozen wages more than workers in the private sectors.

Why does the plan exclude teachers and professors from the wage freeze? The Manitoba NDP is imposing the wage freeze on home, health care and other low income workers. But it is only cautioning school boards and other agencies to stop giving increases to teachers and professionals.

By attacking wages instead of bloated corporate profits, the Manitoba NDP is sending a clear signal to all employers that it is acceptable to freeze all workers wages.

The Labour movement must stand up to the bullying and resist this attack. In the Fall of 2008, the Harper government raised an idea similar to a wage freeze by proposing to ban the right to strike in the public sector.

The Harper government was almost toppled because of the massive protests outside Parliament led by the Labour movement. There should be the same outrage in the Labour movement and by all workers in Manitoba, in the public and private sector, in small and large shops, by workers in unions and who are not organized. ●



By Wally Brooker

## The Cozy JUNO Awards

More than a million Canadians will tune in to the 39th annual JUNO awards on April 18. The extravaganza celebrates the best musical "product" of the year. Although there are many talented musicians nominated in 39 categories, these are not exactly the peoples' music awards. Most winners will be determined by panels of judges hand-picked by the Canadian Academy of Recording Arts & Sciences. The board of directors of CARAS is stacked with presidents and CEOs of the biggest international record companies, distributors, concert producers and talent agencies. Board member Bruce Allen manages Artist of the Year nominees Jann Arden and Michael Buble as well as rocker Bryan Adams, who will receive the Allan Waters Humanitarian Award. Another board member, Vinny Cinquemani, presides over the firm that manages Artist of the Year nominee Diana Krall and represents Hall of Fame inductees April Wine. Very cozy indeed.

## Strike! A Labour Musical With Big Plans

*Strike!* returns for another theatrical run in Winnipeg July 29-August 4. The musical about the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919, first performed in full in 2005, is becoming an annual event, and with some major funding hurdles cleared and interest being expressed by some "name" actors, a feature film adaptation is getting closer to reality. *Strike!* composer Danny

Schur, on a recent Alert! Radio podcast, stated that shooting for the film will begin next year. The original production received significant backing from organized labour. For more information visit: <http://strikemusical.com>

## K'naan Links Up With Coca Cola

Canadian rap-reggae star K'naan has hooked up with Coca Cola for a new recording of his hit song *Wavin' Flag* that will be the official anthem of the FIFA World Cup in South Africa in June. K'naan has replaced lyrics that refer to war, hunger and poverty with lines like "celebration, it surrounds us" and "let's rejoice in the beautiful game." The 31 year-old singer, who came to Canada in 1992 with his family to escape civil war in Somalia, has been compared to Bob Marley. However, that great reggae artist never, to the best of my knowledge, watered down a song for a corporate sponsor. Does K'naan not know about the international boycott campaign against Coca Cola, whose executives are accused of complicity in the death squad killings of union activists in Colombia? For more information visit <http://killercoke.org>.

## Springsteen vs Music Monopolies

The U.S. Federal Trade Commission ruled in February that Ticketmaster used "deceptive tactics" while selling tickets to 14 shows on Bruce Springsteen's 2009 tour with the E Street Band. The ticket selling giant has agreed to repay about a million dollars to defrauded Springsteen fans. The company redirected online buyers to its resale affiliate TicketsNow, which charged three to four times the cost of a ticket and left many with what one observer described as "a really expensive lotto ticket." Ticketmaster recently merged with giant concert promoter Live Nation to create an even bigger monopoly, Live Nation Entertainment Inc., which the U.S. Dept. of Justice has allowed even though the two

companies are the biggest in their fields. The sharks backed off when "The Boss" complained, but one artist can't stop the entertainment monopolies. To do that requires a united political struggle. Meanwhile ticket prices keep rising.

## Olympic Medals in Music?

The big musical event at the Vancouver Olympics may have been K.D. Lang's extraordinary performance of Leonard Cohen's song *Hallelujah*, but another performance raised questions about the role of the arts in the Olympic "movement." On February 14 the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra gave a concert at the Orpheum Theatre, performing *Divertimento No. 1*, by Canadian composer John Weinzwieg (1913-2006). The song won a silver medal at the 1948 summer Olympic Games in London. That's right! From 1912-1948 the Olympic Games awarded medals in arts categories, including music, literature, sculpture, painting and drawing. Ironically, considering what's happening in the Olympics today, the arts awards were discontinued because organizers thought the artists were too professional.

## Oh! What a Lovely War comes to Toronto

Toronto area readers might be interested to learn that the Soulpepper Theatre Company's production of *Oh! What a Lovely War* is running until April 10 at the Young Centre for Performing Arts. The U.K. anti-war musical was first produced at London's East End Theatre Workshop in 1963 by the Marxist director Joan Littlewood (1914-2002). If you can't make it to Soulpepper, look for the brilliant 1969 film version directed by Richard Attenborough (available on DVD). The old WWI songs take on a new meaning. ●

## Sudbury strike crucial for labour...

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of concessions on pensions, the nickel bonus, and seniority.

Vale Inco thought strikers had been softened up or broken by the harsh winter, the loss of income (and even the loss of homes), and the use of scabs. The company was dead wrong.

Strikers have dug in for the long haul, and young workers have matured into picket line leaders. Like the process of mining itself, the heat and pressure generated by this strike has produced a new generation of union activists, committed to hold out "as long as it takes" to win.

So far, the strike has cost Vale Inco an estimated \$1.8 billion and counting. This doesn't include the loss of an estimated \$4 billion in annual profits that the company made in previous years. Put them together and the real figure is close to \$6 billion.

But this is a company with deep pockets and operations all over the world. Sudbury represents 3% of its global holdings, enabling Vale to utilize other sites to fill

orders for nickel and precious metals. Nickel prices are rising, and could generate a tidy profit if Canadian nickel were mined, refined and sold today.

### Is the CLC ready to lead this fight across Canada? The answer needs to be a resounding Yes.

Vale Inco's primary goal is to break the union, setting the pattern for union busting in the mining sector in Canada and internationally. That's why Vale has antagonized entire communities by bringing in scabs. It's part of a psychological assault, intended to provoke violence on picket lines.

Vale has fired ten union militants for "picket line violence", sued 25 strikers, and taken others to court, where the charges have usually been thrown out. Violence is what they are trying very hard to get. Police dogs were at the ready on March 22, and about 200 cops were in

reserve across the adjacent rail lines. So far the police have been careful, according to union members, and dogs have not been used.

But the scabs are working, producing precious metals which fetch a high price. They are housed in Vale Inco offices on the mine and smelter sites, (a fact the city ignores, though it breaks several by-laws), and flown in and out weekly by helicopter, also a breach of the picket line agreements set by the courts. The scabs are paid very well for their labour, including large allowances for their week "inside".

This work is extremely dangerous, and none of them are trained to do it, short of reading a manual and following directions from management/foremen on the job. At least two of the furnaces have been wrecked, according to strikers.

The whole labour movement has an interest in the outcome of this strike. It will set the pattern in negotiations throughout the mining industry in Canada, and it will link up with other corporate assaults on Canadian workers.

Regrettably, CLC President Ken Georgetti did not attend the rally. The CLC, of all organizations, should know that its role is crucial. It seems the miners and smelter workers in Sudbury are willing to fight "one day longer" than Vale Inco. Is the CLC ready to lead that fight across Canada? The answer needs to be a resounding Yes. ●

(Liz Rowley is the Ontario leader of the Communist Party.)

## What's Left

### Victoria, BC

**EARTHWALK 2010**, Sat., April 24, assemble at the BC Legislature grounds at noon, parade starts at 12:30 to info fair in Centennial Square.

### Burnaby, BC

**Mother's Day Pancake Breakfast**, Sunday, May 9, 10 am-1 pm, (last call for pancakes at 12 noon). All you can eat, \$10/person (\$8 under 12), 5435 Kincaid St. Proceeds to People's Voice, auspices Burnaby Club CPC. Info: Anna 604-294-6775.

### Vancouver, BC

**Coalition to Build A Better B.C.**, rally against Campbell government cutbacks, Sat., April 10, 12 noon, Vancouver Art Gallery. For info,

**Cultural Night Fundraiser**, a night of working class culture and fun with the Young Communist League at the Centre for Socialist Education, 706 Clark Drive, Friday, April 16. Live music, food, drink, and good company.

**Left Film Night**, Sunday, April 25, 7 pm, at Centre for Socialist Education, 706 Clark Drive. This month: *Life and Debt*, on the impact of capitalist globalization in Jamaica. Free admission, donations welcome, call 604-255-2041 for details.

**May Day**, Sat., May 1, rally and march starting 1 pm, from Clark Park (14th & Commercial), evening celebration at Maritime Labour Centre, 1880 Triumph St. For info, call VDLC, 604-254-0703.

### Edmonton, AB

**May Day Cabaret**, Sat., May 1, 7 pm, Ukrainian Centre, 11018-97 St., featuring Notre Dame des Bananes choir and Maria Dunn, tickets \$15 (\$8 low-income), call Naomi, 465-7893.

### Winnipeg, MB

**Marxism course**, classes underway; new students still welcome. 586-7824 or cpc-mb@mts.net.

### Toronto, ON

**People's Voice Fund Drive launch**, Sat., March 27, 7 pm, GCDO Hall, 290 Danforth (Chester subway). Cash bar, food, live music, greetings from PV Editor Kimball Cariou. Info: 416-469-2446.

**Public Sector Leadership Summit**, Thursday, April 15, 7 pm, 89 Chestnut St. Meeting of union leaders and stewards in greater Toronto to map out a collective response to attacks on public services, wages, benefits and pensions. Info: Toronto & York Region Labour Council, 416-441-3663.

## People's Voice deadlines:

APRIL 16-30 issue: Thursday, April 8

May 1-15 issue: Thursday, April 22

Send submissions to PV Editorial Office,  
706 Clark Drive, Vancouver, V5L 3J1,  
<pvoice@telus.net>

## Fidel warns of "threatening dangers"...

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instigated by the Bush administration had undertaken actions against the government elected by the Haitian people. Several buildings that sheltered soldiers and commanders of the peacekeeping forces collapsed, too, adding to the painful toll in human lives.

The official reports estimate that, aside from the dead, about 400 thousand Haitian were wounded and several million, almost half the total population were affected. It was a real test for the world community that after the shameful Danish Summit had the duty to show that the rich and developed countries could be capable of tackling the threats of climate change to life on our planet. Haiti must be an example of what the wealthy nations should do for the Third World countries in light of climate change.

You can believe it or not, challenging the data - in my view irrefutable - of the most serious scientists of the world and the overwhelming majority of the most knowledgeable and honest people worldwide, who think that at the current pace the planet is warming up, the greenhouse gases will rise temperature not only by 1.5 degrees, but up to 5 degrees, and that the medium temperature is already the highest of the past 600 thousand years, long before the existence of human beings as a species on the planet.

It is absolutely unthinkable that nine billion human beings who will inhabit the world by 2050 could

survive such a catastrophe. There is still the hope that science may find a solution to the energy problem that today forces to consume in 100 more years the remaining gas, liquid and solid fuel that it took nature 400 million years to create. Perhaps science can find a solution to the energy required. The crux of the matter would be to know how long it would be, and how costly, before human beings can cope with the problem, which is not the only one since many other non-renewable minerals and grave problems demand a solution, too. There is one thing we can be sure of based on everything known until today: the closest star is four light-years away from our Sun, at a speed of 187,500 miles per second; maybe, a spaceship could cover that distance in thousands of years. The human beings have no other choice but to live on this planet.

It might seem unnecessary to deal with the subject if only 54 days after the disaster in Haiti, another incredible earthquake, 8.8 degrees in the Richter scale, with its epicenter 93.7 miles northwest of the city of Concepcion and 29.6 miles deep, had not caused another human catastrophe: this time in Chile. It was not the most severe in the history of that sister nation, for it is said that another one in the past reached 9 degrees, but this time it was not only a seismic event.

But, while in Haiti they waited for hours the occurrence of a tidal wave that never happened, the earthquake in Chile was followed by a huge tsunami, which showed up in its coasts almost thirty minutes or an hour later, depending

on the distance and the data that are still not accurately known, one whose waves made it as far as Japan. If it had not been for the Chilean experience in facing earthquakes, its sounder constructions and larger resources, the natural phenomenon would have taken the lives of tens of thousands or perhaps hundreds of thousands of people. Yet, it did cause about one thousand fatal victims, according to official reports, thousand of wounded and maybe more than two million people sustained material damages. Almost the entire population of 17,094,275 people suffered terribly and still endure the consequences of the earthquake that lasted more than two minutes, its repeated aftershocks and the moving scenes and suffering left behind by the tsunami along its thousands of miles of coastline.

Our Homeland fully sympathizes with and morally supports the material effort that it is the international community's duty to make in favor of Chile. The Cuban people would not hesitate to do for the fraternal Chilean people anything within the extent of its capabilities from the humane point of view.

I think it is the duty of the international community to objectively report the tragedy sustained by both peoples. It would be cruel, unfair and irresponsible to fail to educate the peoples of the world about the threatening dangers.

Let truth prevail above selfishness and the lies used by imperialism to deceive and confound the peoples! ●

## MARVIN BROWN

**Marvin Brown, a dedicated peace activist and long-time Communist Party member, died on March 11 in Nanaimo at the age of 85. Born in the United States, Marvin served in WW2 with the 101st Airborne. He was among the U.S. soldiers encircled for ten days during the Battle of the Bulge, and was one of those to take Hitler's Eagle's Nest in Austria. His experiences led him to devote himself to the cause of peace, and he moved to Canada after one of his sons was drafted during the Vietnam War. After settling in Nanaimo in 1987, he was involved in many struggles for peace, the environment and social justice. Marvin is survived by his partner Grace Tickson, and his five children, 12 grandchildren, and 15 great-grandchildren. There will be a celebration of Marvin's life at Bowen Park Auditorium, 1 pm, Sat., April 17.**

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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We have to see which is the major and primary issue and which are secondary and minor issues. For making alliances we must not divorce our socialist principle and class struggle.

We should be good in understanding the contradictions in society, internal and external developments. In making alliances we are to be vigilant. Who are our friends? Those that are on the side of the working people. Who are our enemies? Those that are anti-people and the reactionary element.

We must pay attention to unite with our friends to defeat the purpose of our enemy. Our closest friends are working people and petty bourgeoisie. The middle class is vacillating. The big bourgeoisie, multinational corporations, imperialists and their lackeys and right-wingers are our enemies. If we do not understand the problems, contradictions within contradictions and circle within circle, we shall commit big mistakes. Under no circumstances we must relax our vigilance.

Harjit Daudharia, Surrey, BC

## REDS ON THE WEB

[www.comunist-party.ca](http://www.comunist-party.ca)

[www.peoplesvoice.ca](http://www.peoplesvoice.ca)

[www.ycl-ljc.ca](http://www.ycl-ljc.ca)

[www.solidnet.org](http://www.solidnet.org)

# Danish court rules in "terrorism" case

The global imperialist campaign to smear liberation movements with the "terrorist" label has taken another twist in the case of charges against Patrick Mac Manus, an Irish-born member of Denmark's "Rebellion" group. In Copenhagen City Court on March 15, Mac Manus was found guilty of "attempting to collect funds" for two so-called "terrorist organizations" - the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) - and for "encouraging" others to do the same.

Judge Helle Hastrup, however, rendered a mild sentence of six months probation as opposed to 18 months imprisonment asked for by the prosecutor. Court costs of 110,000 Danish kroner (about \$20,000) plus 25% tax are to be shared by the defendant and the state. Hastrup could have demanded that all court costs be paid by the defendant.

The ruling that FARC and PFLP are terrorist organizations was based exclusively on a previous decision by Denmark's Supreme Court. In a similar case, seven members of a group called Fighters & Lovers had sold t-shirts with FARC and PFLP logos, with the objective of sending part of the proceeds to media projects on their behalf. The Danish political police confiscated the funds and arrested the activists for "supporting terrorism."

In 2007, Copenhagen City Court found them innocent because it determined that the liberation fighters in Colombia and Palestine were not terrorists. But in 2008, a higher court reversed this decision, and sentenced the activists to jail terms of two to six months. On March 25, 2009, the Supreme Court confirmed the judgment but found Denmark's terrorist law 114 to be "unclear" and reduced the sentence to probation.

Although Rebellion has several spokespersons, the police only charged 65-year-old Mac Manus. The City Court found him to be the key person, although it admitted that the prosecution had not proven that any funds were actually transferred to "terrorist organizations". The judgment was based on a claim on Rebellion's website that it had collected and

sent funds, and on emails on Mac Manus' computer confiscated by the police. Prosecutor Jakob Buch-Jepsen rested his case on Mac Manus' admission that he had donated \$4 (20 kroner) at a Rebellion party in August 2004. The prosecutor also read excerpts from wiretapped phone conversations and from the confiscated emails, indicating that Mac Manus was a spokesperson and that he wrote press releases and articles favouring struggles for liberation in Israel and Colombia.

Defense attorney Thorkild Hoeyer argued that the state had no hard evidence of crimes committed by Mac Manus; that the state had no evidence that FARC and PFLP are "terrorist organizations" as defined by international law; that any appeals to collect funds for said organizations were directed in

favour of liberation from terror; and that the defendant acted and spoke in satire, challenging the anti-terror law to a public debate, a la Jonathan Swift.

Judge Hastrup disregarded the argument of satire and held with the Supreme Court's 2009 ruling, regardless of terrorism or other international crimes Israeli and Colombia governments might commit, this is irrelevant to Danish anti-terror laws. If non-government liberation organizations commit acts which result in the death of civilians, then the groups are terrorists by definition of Danish laws from 2002. This places Denmark above United Nations conventions, which judge armed struggles in the context of actual conditions.

Amidst a flurry of flapping union and WW2 resistance fighters' banners, and shouts from scores of supporters outside the court,

Mac Manus responded to the court decision.

"This won't stop me or us. We will continue to seek an end to these terror laws, to their terror wars. Our struggle is worth it

regardless of court judgments. We act in the long history of solidarity, supporting those who fight for liberation and self-determination."

(With files from Ron Ridenour, "Dissident Voice") ●



Patrick Mac Manus outside Copenhagen courthouse.

## Colombian authorities may transfer Lilianny Obando "to high security" jail

By Kevin Neish

When Colombian union leader Lilianny Obando was a young child in Pasto, she once came upon a policeman rousting a peasant woman selling fruit, off the



Lilianny Obando during a visit to an Australian trade union office.

sidewalk. Lilianny ran into the street to collect and return the women's fruit, which the policeman simply threw back out. Then, to the horror of her mother and sister, Lilianny gathered up the fruit and pelted the policeman with them! The little girl was roughly "arrested" and taken to the station where she was scolded, threatened and eventually released, in the hope of teaching her a lesson.

The "lesson" Lilianny appeared to have learned that day was that the road to justice was through struggle. Today she is into her 18th month of incarceration in Bogota's Buen Pastor prison, in the high security Patio 6 political prisoner section.

She spent a full year here before she was even charged with "rebellion", a catch all charge used against any union activist, and "raising funds for terrorism" which she supposedly did while touring Canada in 2006 raising funds for her farm workers union FENSUAGRO (where I first met her).

In contrast, in February I watched on Colombian TV as a

female paramilitary leader and eleven government soldiers caught murdering peasants, were all released simply because they had not been charged within 90 days! The hypocrisy and double standards are so blatant it's truly astounding.

Lilianny is one of 7200 political prisoners held in horrendous prisons all across Colombia, many without charges. When I met her in Buen Pastor prison in September 2009, I immediately expressed my sadness at her situation. She rebuked me. "Kevin, this is just another front in the struggle."

And so it was. Lilianny has organized the prisoners to communally resist the oppression of the prison. Funds donated to her turn into food, cosmetics, craft supplies and clothing for other prisoners. Fiestas are organized for International Women's Day and other political celebrations. During my visits, other prisoners would regularly interrupt us to ask Lilianny questions and take her away to impromptu meetings.

It turns out she is treated as a sort of mediator among the prisoners. Like so many countries, Colombian prisoners have legal rights, but only on paper. Lilianny and her fellow prisoners have been forcing the authorities to actually respect these prisoners' "paper" rights.

Word got out about this fightback to the Communist Party leader, Senator Gloria Ines. She delivered a bound copy of the Colombian criminal code to Lilianny, who now uses it to help all the prisoners of Patio 6 to know their rights.

Through her earlier worldwide union fundraising tours she made personal contacts which are now bringing union leaders, journalists, parliamentarians and student activists from Australia, Canada, US and Europe to visit her. She tours them all through the prison yard, introducing these foreigners to the plights of unjustly jailed women from all across Colombia.

So Lilianny is still "throwing fruit" at the oppressors, and they are not pleased. The prison authorities first

retaliatory attack was to arbitrarily search her cell, seizing belongings and violently assaulting her. During my January visit they threw me out of the prison because I didn't have a newly required document, unavailable to foreigners. This obvious attempt to bar visits by foreigners failed following international protests and internal prisoner pressure.

The latest, most serious threat, is that the authorities have deemed Lilianny a "problem prisoner" and want to transfer her to the notorious La Tramacua prison (see *People's Voice*, Oct. 16-31, 2009) in the extremely hot, dry North, beyond the reach of her family and visiting foreigners, regardless of the fact that she has yet to be convicted of anything.

It is sad and astounding to think that Harper Government wants to reward Colombia with a free trade deal, for its supposed human rights improvements. Truly Orwellian.

Lilianny is waging a very effective struggle on her "front", but she and her fellow prisoners need our support. Please visit [www.freelilianny.net](http://www.freelilianny.net) to see how you can help with appeals, petitions and funds. And check out [www.victoriacasc.org](http://www.victoriacasc.org) to see video interviews and news reports on her trial.

You can send Lilianny and the other prisoners packages and letters and even call her on the prison payphone (011-57-1-5931082). She speaks English, but first you have to say to whoever answers "Hola! Lilianny Obando por favor"; then you will have four short minutes to speak to a true fighter.

Venceremos! Thanks for your support.

(Kevin Neish is a member of the Central America Support Committee in Victoria, B.C. He has been to Colombia three times in the last six months, touring the country to hear unionists, farmers and political activists tell their stories of state oppression. He has visited Lilianny Obando in prison eight times, and stayed with her family as a protective witness for several weeks.) ●

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