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people's VOICE

**The heroes
of 1935**
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OH, CANADA? Tax haven for wealthy corporations



***Second-lowest corporate tax rates in
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Fears of more executions in Iran**

<p>3 A hollow "recovery"</p> <p>Celebrations of the so-called "economic recovery" ring hollow as unemployment remains sky-high. Meanwhile, ominous warnings point to the possibility of an even deeper crisis.</p>	<p>INSIDE</p> <p>10 G8/G20 actions</p> <p>The most powerful governments on earth are coming to Toronto this month, and the people's movements will be there to speak out.</p>	<p>12 Militant federation</p> <p>There is a global labour federation which struggles for an end to exploitation, oppression, poverty and war. It's the World Federation of Trade Unions, which holds its 16th Congress next year.</p>
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Events to remember the heroes of 1935

By Kimball Cariou

This month will see activities in Vancouver and other cities marking the 75th anniversary of a critical period in the working class movement of Canada. The year 1935 is best remembered for the "On to Ottawa Trek," crushed by the ruling class in Regina to block a radical challenge to the established capitalist order.

Other important events are also being marked, especially the "Battle of Ballantyne Pier," one of the key episodes in the struggle to organize the docks in Vancouver. Less well known but also important in the shaping of working class militancy was the brutal police attack in April 1935 against striking miners and their wives in Corbin, BC. These three pivotal events erupted in one province, reflecting the particularly bitter class struggle on the west coast for decades leading up to 1935.

In our next issue, we will look at the story of Corbin and the Battle of Ballantyne Pier. (The latter will be commemorated by the International Longshore Workers Union on Saturday, June 19, starting with a march from the Maritime Labour Centre at 9 am, a rally at New Brighton Park at 12 noon, and an evening dinner and



The strikers' delegation to Ottawa. From left, Tony Martin, Art Evans, Bob (Doc) Savage, Red Walsh, Mike McCauley, Paddy O'Neil, Jack Cosgrove, Peter Neilson.

dance. For details call ILWU Canada, 604-254-8141.)

Maintaining the memory of the Trek has been the aim of the On to Ottawa Historical Society in recent years. (See www.ontoottawa.ca.) The Society is holding a public event on Sunday, June 6, from 1 to 3 pm in east Vancouver's Crab Park. That location, at the north foot of Main Street, is where hundreds of Trekkers, led by the Relief Camp Workers Union, boarded CPR freight trains on the morning of June 3, 1935. Their

strategy was to take the demand for "work and wages" directly to the Conservative government of R.B. "Iron Heel" Bennett, notorious for opposing unemployment insurance or any other social program to ease the mass suffering of the Great Depression.

The June 6 event will be linked to the contemporary struggle to force governments to build social and low-income housing to alleviate the crisis of homelessness. Representatives of the homeless

and unemployed will be among a delegation heading to Ottawa, with stops along the way. The delegation will support Bill C-304, proposed legislation to implement a national housing program.

Sadly, the last of the original Trekkers of 1935 has passed away. Many of the survivors of this historic movement were first reunited 25 years ago, to mark the 50th anniversary of the Trek in 1985.

Veterans of the Trek also went to Ottawa along with labour and unemployed activists. They succeeded in winning a meeting with Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, using the opportunity to put forward demands for action to tackle unemployment during the prolonged recession of the early 1980s.

For modern day readers, the Wikipedia article on the Trek provides a better than average short sketch of this historic struggle. But this article ignores the key role of the Communist Party until the very end, when it states that the Party "was behind the organization of the Trek."

The Trek was actually organized by the Relief Camp Workers Union, one of the trade unions which emerged during the Depression after the opportunist labour leadership of the time utterly failed to lead struggles to defend jobs, wages and working conditions. Workers turned to unions largely led by Communists, who were not afraid to fight the bosses.

But the real impetus for the Trek was the situation in the relief camps scattered across western Canada, where the men (only single males were allowed) were paid just twenty cents per day for doing backbreaking labour. Forced together under terrible conditions, the men naturally began to organize into the RCWU. Some were veterans of the First World War, not easily terrified by authority, but with a strong sense of discipline and training.

After strikes and other actions in the camps achieved little, the RCWU called a meeting in Kamloops in the spring of 1935. That meeting was organized by 20-year-old Maurice Rush, a Young Communist League member who later in life became the BC leader of the Communist Party. The delegates called a walkout and brought about 1600 camp workers to Vancouver for a two-month series of protests in Vancouver. The story of that exciting spring is well told in a book called *Fighting Heritage*, published in 1985 by the Pacific

Tribune, one of the predecessor newspapers prior to People's Voice.

One of the leading figures in the 1985 effort was Regina's Bill Gilbey, a longtime labour leader in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. During the Dirty Thirties, Gilbey was one of countless young unemployed who criss-crossed the country looking for work until he was compelled to enter the "relief camps." His story refutes the claim that the Communists "used" the unemployed for their own ends.

Bill Gilbey was assigned by the RCWU to stay behind in Vancouver when the Trekkers hopped the freights. Somebody had to keep the union office running, put out news releases, and raise funds. By that time a Communist, Gilbey knew his task was important, but for fifty years he regretted missing the Trek. He eventually became the president of the Grain Services Union, and served for several tumultuous years during the early 1960s as president of the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour. When the time came to mark the 50th anniversary, he put countless hours into the celebration and was among those who challenged Brian Mulroney.

The famous photo of the eight Trekkers who went to Ottawa in mid-June of 1935 for talks with Bennett includes other Communists, notably Arthur "Slim" Evans, a veteran labour organizer, and young Bob ("Doc") Savage. These men and countless others took great risks during a historic period when fascism was on the rise and many revolutionaries paid the price with their lives.

The Trekkers who came together in 1985, Communists and other progressives, were genuine heroes. None gained riches or high status for their efforts, which led to the defeat of the Bennett government, the disbanding of the slave labour camps, unemployment insurance, and many other victories. Some died fighting fascism in Spain, others in the bitter war against Hitlerism. Some were blacklisted during the McCarthy era. Most remained active in the working class movement in various ways for the rest of their lives.

The Wikipedia article concludes that the On to Ottawa Trek helped "increase the notoriety" of the Communist Party. It would be correct to say that the Communists became known as the most determined fighters for the working class, willing to make the greatest sacrifices. Such notoriety is a badge of honour which Communists wear proudly to this day. ●

PV Fund Drive: \$50,000 in 2010
\$30,711 raised: 61.4%

Our Fund Drive for 2010 has now reached 61.4% of our target. By May 21, we have \$30,711 towards our goal of \$50,000. That means nearly another \$6,000 has been raised since the previous issue - a welcome addition, but also a reminder that we need to step up the pace. Several successful events were held in recent days, especially the Burnaby Club's annual Mother's Day Pancake Breakfast, which drew a record crowd of about 60 readers and brought in \$737. Great work!

Our Saskatchewan supporters are still in the lead, now with \$745 raised on their \$800 target, or 93.1%. With just \$55 more, Saskatchewan will be first across the finish line!

Ontario has jumped into second place, at 63.5%. So far we have received \$13,712 from Ontario readers towards their provincial target of \$21,600. Quebec is now in third place, with \$300 raised, or 60% of their \$500 target. Next is

Manitoba, with \$1,345 turned in or 56%, followed by British Columbia readers, who have passed the half-way mark, raising \$10,019 of their \$20,000 goal. Alberta remains at 39.7%, with \$1350 out of \$3400 raised. Newfoundland has sent in 20% of their \$400 goal, and we have \$120 from the Maritimes, or 10% of their \$1200 target. Another \$900 has been raised by miscellaneous and overseas friends.

This issue looks at the past, present and future of the working class movement. June will be a month to remember the battles of 1935, and to build solidarity with our sisters and brothers on the front lines of the struggle against neoliberalism in Greece. The capitalist agenda will be in our backyard this month, when the G8 and G20 come to Ontario. The working class press today remains a vital weapon in the battle of ideas, just as it was at the time of the On to Ottawa Trek!

British Columbia readers are

looking forward to the 18th annual People's Voice/Rebel Youth Banquet, starting 6 pm, Saturday, June 5, at the Russian Hall, 600 Campbell Ave. Tickets are just \$10; call Sam at 604-254-9836 for more details.

Our biggest fundraiser of the Drive is usually the annual Walk-A-Thon organized by the Lower Fraser Club. This year's event will be on Sunday, August 1, at Bear Creek Park in Surrey. Watch our next issue for more information. ●

18th Annual People's Voice & Rebel Youth Banquet

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The housing crisis in Canada

Here are some of the facts which the 2010 Homelessness Trek (see article above) will draw attention to:

* Canada's homeless population is somewhere between 200,000 and 300,000.

* 1.7 million residents struggle with housing affordability issues.

* Roughly half of all Canadians live in fear of poverty, and 49 per cent polled believe they might be poverty stricken if they missed one or two paycheques.

* Government numbers show a cost of up to \$6 billion a year to service a "core" homeless population of 150,000. That cost includes health care, criminal justice, social services and emergency shelter costs.

* The former national affordable housing strategy, discontinued in 1993, created 650,000 units providing housing for more than two million Canadians.

Economic recovery "hollow" without full-time jobs

The job numbers for April 2010 were "welcome news" for an economy wearied by unemployment and a staggering loss of family-supporting jobs, but the news isn't all good, warns the Canadian Labour Congress.

"This is the long-awaited boost from economic stimulus spending, with full-time jobs coming in construction and being taken up by the group hit hardest by the recession - men over 25," said CLC president Ken Georgetti. "These jobs are welcome and needed, but we shouldn't fool ourselves; these jobs are also temporary. When the stimulus spending runs out, and interest rates on mortgages go even higher, what's left?"

"We lost 20,600 manufacturing jobs in April, and almost 100,000 of these jobs in the last twelve months. Most of the new jobs created outside of the economic stimulus bubble were in retail and were part-time, lower paying jobs



Labour Day 2008 in Toronto: even before the crisis, hundreds of thousands of manufacturing jobs had been lost. (Photo: Ed Bil)

than the jobs lost since the recession started. Those who pushed (and pushed hard) for an economic stimulus package should take credit for the relief we're seeing, but we should all be deeply concerned about the quality of jobs being created in the long-term,"

said Georgetti. "We leased this jobs recovery with government spending. We needed to do it. However we need to focus on what's next, and that's a plan to create long-term, full-time, family-supporting jobs for Canadians. Without that, economic recovery

is a long way off," says Georgetti.

CLC Senior Economist Sylvain Schetagne noted that "even if the number of jobs created last month seems impressive, the quality of these jobs remains problematic. The level of employment in manufacturing remains dramatically low, and the long-term unemployment rate has reached a new record level since the beginning of the crisis."

In April 2010, the number of Canadians active in the labour market jumped by 92,000 and about 17,000 unemployed Canadians were able to find a job. In total the labour market added 109,000 jobs, but most were part-time (64,800). Many new jobs created last month were in retail and wholesale trade (+31,600), a sector where low-wage and part-time work can be found.

The number of jobs in manufacturing, a sector where many good jobs are found, decreased by another 20,600. Over the last year, more than 90,000 jobs have been lost in this sector. Since its peak in November 2002, over 575,000 manu-

facturing jobs have disappeared. In fact, April 2010 saw one of the lowest levels of employment in Canada's manufacturing sector in 30 years.

The unemployment rate in April 2010 was 8.1%, mainly because there were barely enough jobs created to absorb new entrants into the labour market. There were 1,498,300 people unemployed in April 2010, compared to 1,137,400 in October 2008. The number of unemployed in April remained more than 31% above what it was before the beginning of the jobs crisis in 2008.

Even more problematic, the percentage of Canadians unemployed for more than six months was at the highest level since the jobs crisis began in 2008. In April, 22.5% of unemployed Canadians, or close to one in four, had been unemployed for more than six months. The "real" unemployment rate, a rate that includes discouraged workers and involuntary part-time workers, remained very high in April 2010, at 11.8%. In April 2008, the "real" unemployment rate was 8.9%. •

Unions fight for worker on security watch list

The Canadian labour movement has stepped forward to protect the rights of Abousfian Abdelrazik, who remains on a United Nations security watch list that prevents employers from hiring him. Since the Harper federal government refused to lift a finger to assist Abdelrazik, trade unions have decided to offer the Montreal machinist a job.

The Montreal Gazette reported on May 19 that the Canadian Labour Congress has agreed to hire Abdelrazik for a week, while the Canadian Union of Postal Workers and the International Association of Machinists each plan to hire him for a day. The job offers are technically illegal, but union leaders say they will risk the consequences to help pressure the government to act.

"We recognize that the broader question of Mr. Abdelrazik (being able) to work and seek employment is a fundamental issue," CLC vice-president Hassan Yussuff said at a May 18 news conference. "We all

recognize the need to take steps to prevent terrorism ... but at the same time, we have to prevent innocent people from being caught in that web where they can't get themselves out without the assistance and leadership of their government."

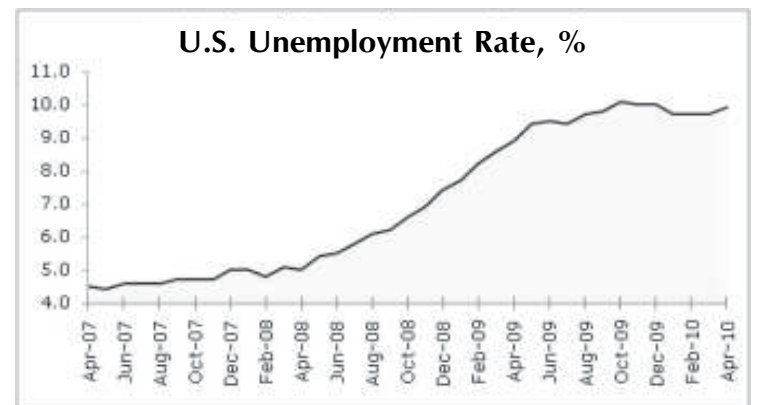
Although there is no evidence that he has committed any crimes, Abdelrazik's name is on the so-called 1267 list established by the United Nations Security Council in 1999 after the bombing of the U.S. embassy in Kenya and expanded after September 2001.

The Sudanese Canadian's ordeal began in 2003 when he returned to Sudan to visit his sick mother and was arrested for allegedly having ties to Al-Qa'ida. He said he was tortured during two stints in custody, and while both Sudanese and Canadian authorities cleared him of any wrongdoing, he found himself stuck in Sudan because of the no-fly order and the fact his passport had expired.

Abdelrazik spent 14 months

living at the Canadian embassy in Khartoum but Ottawa refused to issue him travel documents so he could return home because of the UN travel restriction. He finally returned to Canada last June after a judge ordered the federal government to bring him back.

"Physically, I came to Canada, but I'm still in a prison - a prison without walls," he said at the news conference. •



Does this look like "economic recovery" for U.S. workers?

Global economic outlook remains very shaky

Special to PV

The International Labour Organization has released statistics which indicate that the global economic crisis is far from over. The ILO's "Global Job Crisis Observatory" report of May 13 (www.ilo.org/pls/apex/f?p=109:1:0) warns that "the Greek crisis has morphed from a fiscal crisis in a single country to a regional crisis for the euro zone and has sent shock waves through stock markets worldwide."

The report goes on to warn about the consequences of downgrading of Greek, Portuguese and Spanish bonds during April, "making the financing of their deficits more costly and raising questions about possible future problems that may eventually require bailouts or restructuring. The financial health of the banks that are holding this debt - the bulk is held by European banks - has now also deteriorated raising concerns for renewed troubles in the banking sector, which has yet to fully recover from the global financial crisis... Some observers have questioned the viability of the European Monetary Union itself, amidst fears that some countries might be forced to exit from the common currency. This has led to a loss of

confidence in the euro which has fallen against the dollar from \$1.45 at the beginning of the year to below \$1.30."

In Western Europe, the recovery is said to be "on track", but industrial production remains 15.9 per cent below its peak of April 2008. Unemployment remained at 10 per cent in March for the euro area, about 0.2 percentage points higher than July 2009, showing that the "recovery" has not brought job creation.

Although world trade continues to pick up gradually, the trade recovery remains "subdued" in the developed capitalist countries, where export volumes are still 14 per cent lower than two years ago. A return of global trade to pre-crisis levels "should not be expected any time soon despite the strong recovery of developing country exports," says the ILO.

Meanwhile, fears are mounting about the economic situation in the largest capitalist economy, the United States. Recent testimony before President Obama's "bipartisan commission" on the country's budget gap projects bigger deficits for the foreseeable future, leading mainstream economists to focus on this as the number one priority.

But a more immediate crisis is the loss of 8 million jobs during

the past two years. Fifteen million people are officially unemployed in the U.S. while another 11 million are involuntarily working part-time or have dropped out of the labor force. Millions have been without a job for more than a year, with no end in sight. Payroll jobs increased for a third straight month in April, but the unemployment rate increased to 9.9% because the labor force grew faster than employment.

More ominously, the International Monetary Fund is now pointing to the danger of a sovereign debt crisis impacting all major economies. The IMF's recent fiscal monitor projects that by 2015, the proportion of public debt to GDP will reach 110% in the U.S., 250% in Japan and 91% in the UK, with comparable figures for most other large economies in Europe. These numbers do not even recognize unfunded contingent liabilities, which in the United States would add another 400-600% to the debt to GDP ratio.

The inescapable conclusion is that the recent events in Greece, which are now impacting the entire Eurozone economy, will inevitably hit the United States and Canada. When that happens, the crisis which broke out in the fall of 2008 may seem like small potatoes. •

Union-busting a sin: Catholic scholars

A group of Catholic scholars in the United States contends that management efforts to break labor unions are a grave breach of the church's social doctrine and tantamount to committing mortal sin.

A statement from Catholic Scholars for Worker Justice, released May 1, the feast of St. Joseph the Worker, offers a detailed argument that actions to thwart union organizing campaigns, stifle contract talks, unilaterally roll back wages and benefits, and break existing labor agreements are a "grave violation of Catholic social doctrine on labor unions."

"This violation of Catholic doctrine constitutes material grounds for mortal sin because it stands in grave violation of both the letter and spirit of Catholic social doctrine," said the document, titled "Union Busting Is a Mortal Sin."

The scholars said efforts to deny workers the right to organize violate the First, Fifth and Seventh commandments regarding idolatry, scandal and theft, respectively.

Joseph Fahey, professor of religious studies at Manhattan College in New York City and chair of the scholars group, told Catholic News Service May 14 that the statement analyzes the criteria for mortal sin much like a priest would during the sacrament of reconciliation.

"We said, 'What commandments does [breaking a union] violate? What specific matters of Catholic teaching does it go against? Is it a grave matter? If it is, is there an objective case for mortal sin?' Fahey explained. "We do make a case that if you work to violate Catholic teaching to the extent that you violate a worker's right to free assembly, you are involved in the grave matter of mortal sin." •

EDITORIALS

Looking back and ahead

June 2010 will be a special month for the working class movement, as we look back to the heroic days of 1935, and forward to the challenges of the 21st century.

This month will see commemorations of some critical episodes in Canadian labour history, notably the On to Ottawa Trek and the Battle of Ballantyne Pier. These and many other militant struggles laid the foundation for decades of working class movements. The resulting advances were many: unemployment insurance, pensions, organizing rights, equality gains, Medicare, and much more.

But under capitalism, the class struggle never ceases, and the balance of forces is constantly shifting. For nearly three decades, all these gains have been relentlessly chipped away by big capital and its willing right-wing political partners, even including social democratic governments at times. Now, taking advantage of the economic crisis which broke out in 2008, the ruling class mantra of privatisation, contracting out, cuts to wages and pensions, slashing of social programs and equality, is taking an even more vicious character. Many of the leading actors in this capitalist assault will be in Canada for the G8 and G20 meetings this month.

The role of the Canadian Labour Congress in helping to mobilize people's opposition during the G8/G20 is timely and welcome. But such opposition cannot be allowed to dissipate once the world leaders have returned home. We urge the CLC and its allies to take their cooperation an important step further, by convening a broad People's Summit to build the fightback around a unifying set of demands which will benefit working people, not big business.

The lessons of 1935 are highly relevant for today: No struggle, no progress! Workers will not pay for the crisis caused by capitalism! Unite to demand a People's Recovery!

Shameful decision by Pride Toronto

"They came first for the Communists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Communist. Then they came for the Jews, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Jew. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a trade unionist. Then they for me, but there was nobody left to speak up."

These words of Pastor Martin Niemöller, spoken about the Nazis in Germany, are relevant to the attempt to criminalize any criticism of the Israeli government's anti-Palestinian policies.

Pride parades, born out of the Stonewall Rebellion and other forms of LGBT resistance against oppression, have a long record in North America as celebrations of free speech and human equality. So it is sad to hear that Pride Toronto's board of directors has voted to ban the words "Israeli Apartheid" from any Pride events, directly targeting the group Queers Against Israeli Apartheid.

This shocking decision follows intense pressure from Toronto City Hall (one of Pride's main funders) and pro-Israel lobbyists, who claim that criticisms of the Israeli government amount to hate and discrimination. In fact, under the Harper Tories, criticism of the Israeli government's oppression of the Palestinian people is frequently labelled a hate crime. Pride Toronto finally yielded to this campaign to criminalize dissent, setting another extremely dangerous precedent to ban free expression and silence the voices of Palestinians and human rights activists.

It is distressing that this decision was made by some representatives of a community which has always had to struggle for its right to equality. Pride Toronto needs to be reminded that the stridently anti-Palestinian Harper Tories are also bitterly homophobic. Supporters of human rights and equality must stand together, not surrender each other to bigots.

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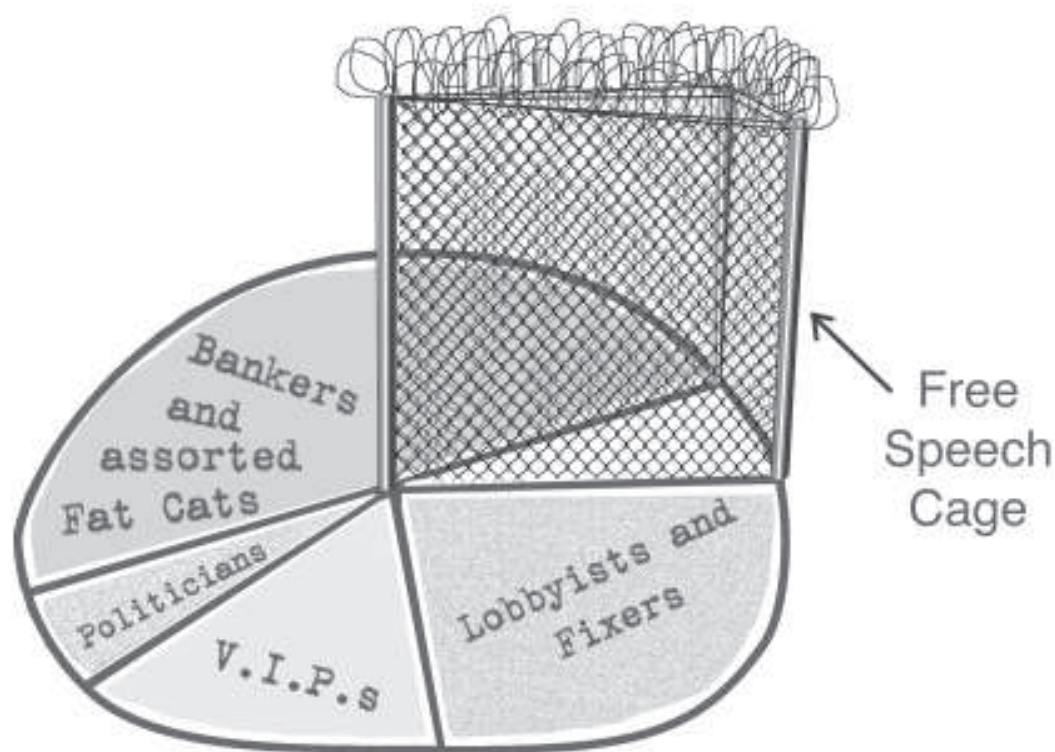
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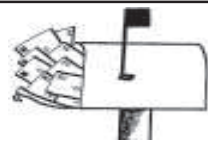
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The G-20 in Toronto

Room for Everybody



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Letters to the Editor

Why not a 6-hour day and a 30-hour week?

Referring to your May Day issue (May 1-15, 2010 "Global Class Struggle: Spain's largest union reaches labour accords"), I want to point out the concrete evidence of the value of the unity in action for all workers, as shown in Spain today.

Spain's largest union, CCOO, while watching the increasing united resistance of the solidly united public and private sector unions along with the rest of the peoples of Greece, each week have their own fightback inspired with real solidarity, resulting in progressive actions to move forward in Spain, taking up the International Workers' May Day demand for shorter working day hours with equivalent or more present-day daily pay.

Karl Marx and all workers who have followed his analysis of capitalism, how it works to squeeze out profits and huge savings from work hours, will salute the united Spanish workers who have moved forward. Long live our workers' international solidarity with all those who actively resist!

In Spain today, there are 4 million known unemployed workers and millions more under-employed. Almost equal numbers are over-worked in forced, necessary long daily hours of work, not to mention the millions of part-timers in short hours of daily precarious work, running from job to job - up to three or four jobs a day to pay the landlord or bank.

So it is a huge scientific workers' discovery in practice, that the Spanish workers have found the solution to the mass of wasted and squandered work power. They have bargained agreements with employers for a shorter work week (a reduction in the traditional 8-hour day) all at the same present weekly rate. With this accord, the CCOO workers have also attached a deep

over-haul contract requirement over the hiring practices of employers to ensure that they now hire youth workers and long-term unemployed to fill in the time gap of weekly work hours with additional full-time more secure work, as well for all new hires.

Indeed, with all of capitalism's present profits and huge inventories reported constantly today, as well as all the less-than-full capacity idle services deteriorating, it shows workers are working too many hours over-producing and stressing out workers' health. Now, other fresh workers need to be employed and re-employed with more secure full-time shorter work hour weeks, and have the new invigorated workforce with youth workers get consumption going to consume what is produced in such massive amounts now by stressed-out workers. With decent paid full 30-hour work week hours for the vast majority of workers, picking up the slack of so-called skilled-labour shortages with real employer on the job training, and ending huge inventories and services not being purchased without going into huge credit card debt, the Spanish workers bargained real social accords to benefit all of society.

Why not a 6-hour work day (30 hour work week) with all the new technology now used to produce and deliver services with such increased efficiency and ease? Already it seems with the increasing short hour part-time precarious work and the resulting less stress, the system can still make even more huge profits and savings. A shorter full-time work-hour week in Canada is quite likely already in practice for huge numbers of workers.

So the conclusion is to bargain

hard united, and to push hard in the streets for a legislated shorter working hour work-week with decent living wages, to get the millions of unemployed and under-employed precarious part-timers and huge numbers of well educated youth, all working a full 30-hour work week for everyone. This begins to end the divisive pitting of workers against worker and the unemployed. Workers sitting idle or under-used need to work full time, under less stress with a shorter working day, in order to purchase the huge supply of products and services now made by worker-produced new technologies. Let's unite to keep pushing the system to the brink of its final potential, until the day comes for the sudden leap forward toward a socialist and people-caring future, a future where all people's energies can be creatively let loose, manually and intellectually, for the betterment of all with real worker-democracy and science working hand in hand.

Dave Foreman, retired CUPE/
SCFP city part-time casual worker
on poverty-line pension, in
expensive Toronto.

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Harper Tories: accomplices in death of women

Statement from the Central Executive Committee, Communist Party of Canada

The Communist Party of Canada condemns the Harper Conservative government for its latest attack on women's reproductive freedoms, which shows that the so-called "pro-life" forces are accomplices in the deaths of women and children around the world. The escalating offensive by the anti-choice movement in Canada raises fears that women here may soon face legislation to restrict reproductive rights, or even attempts to eliminate access to abortion altogether.

Despite the fact that most Canadians support women's right to choose, the Harper Tories have decided to exclude from Canada's G8 maternal/child health package any funding for reproductive health care that includes safe abortion services. This policy, based on undemocratically imposing the religious views of a small minority, will have a deadly impact on women and children around the world.

Until now, Canada has acted through the United Nations to help provide a full range of reproductive health services, including safe

abortion where legal, and has consistently funded such services. For example, Canada was among the 179 governments at the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development which committed to providing universal access to a full range of safe and reliable family planning methods by 2015.

In developing countries, up to 20 million women decide to resort to illegal abortions every year, resulting in an estimated 70,000 deaths. Millions of these women never receive medical treatment for the resulting complications.

Over 200,000 children lose their mothers every year from unsafe abortion-related deaths, and the lifespan of the surviving children in such families is shortened. In countries where mass rape is used as a sexual weapon, lack of access to safe abortion services compounds the trauma imposed on women and girls, further reducing their chances to regain a normal life.

Harper's new policy means that to receive funding from Canada, aid agencies and healthcare clinics in developing countries will have to separate their programs, creating

costly administrative barriers. Groups which forfeit Canadian funding may lose much of their ability to provide other basic healthcare. Far from improving the health of women and children, the government's policy shift will cost countless lives.

The Communist Party of Canada demands that as part of the G8 initiative to improve maternal/child health, the Tories immediately pledge to fund the full range of reproductive healthcare for women, including safe abortion where legal, and quality post-abortion care for women injured from illegal, unsafe abortion.

We also condemn the growing campaign to introduce legislation to restrict reproductive freedoms in Canada. Women's right to choose is a fundamental human right, not subject to any so-called "compromises".

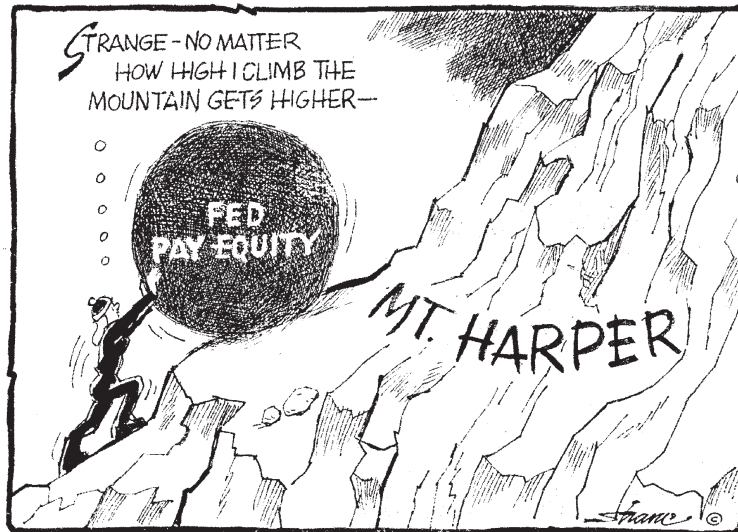
This campaign includes attempts to silence pro-choice voices (such as Conservative Senator Nancy Ruth's "advice" that pro-choice activists should "shut the f... up"), the statement by Cardinal Marc Ouellet calling abortion a "moral crime" even in cases of rape, and the bussing of students to inflate attendance at anti-choice rallies. The most dangerous, fundamentalist forces, which until now have largely been kept in the background, are today increasingly visible and powerful within the Conservative Party.

If the Tories win a majority in the next election, these far-right forces would seize the opportunity to press for a sweeping rollback of equality gains such as pay equity and the right to abortion. There is an urgent and immediate need to mobilize Canadians who oppose this "social conservative" agenda.



We urge full support for actions by pro-choice organizations, and also for steps to begin rebuilding a cross-Canada women's movement which can unite the big majority of women who support equality.

A Tory majority would also accelerate Harper's attack on a much broader range of human rights, civil liberties and democratic freedoms. The full agenda of Harper and his supporters is very clear: the forced imposition of bigoted, fundamentalist social views, the corporate drive to privatize public services and quash labour rights, and a widening campaign to criminalize political dissent. The Communist Party of Canada pledges to continue its efforts to help build a massive mobilization of Canadians to drive the Tories out of office, and to decisively defeat the right wing forces in the next election. ●



Coalition opposes Quebec's Bill 94 as a "step backwards in society"

A coalition of concerned organizations has been launched to speak out against Quebec's Bill 94, which targets Muslim women who wear the *niqab* full-face veil. The Bill states that if it is general practice for a service provider and a client to show their faces during service provision, "and that if an accommodation involves an adaptation of that practice and reasons of security, communication or identification warrant it, the accommodation must be denied."

The No/Non Bill 94 Coalition warns that the legislation "further entrenches gender inequality, marginalizing and isolating Muslim women who wear niqab."

"Our arguments are based in overriding legislation in our country," said Zahra Dhanani, Legal Director at the Metropolitan Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children (METRAC) during a news conference at the Newcomer Women's Services Toronto. "Section 2 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees freedom of religion and Section 15 guarantees equality before the law and equal protection of the law."

The Coalition, which has

submitted a brief to the Quebec National Assembly, says the niqab is neither a health or security concern, nor will it lead to communication problems. Many organizations, including the No/No Bill 94 Coalition, were not invited to make oral deputations during hearings held on May 18. These groups organized a press conference, rally, email blitz to the premier and a video.

Coalition member Zainab Zafar started wearing niqab five years ago and attends Ryerson University. She said she has never experienced racism on-campus or travelling in downtown Toronto.

"Of course, wherever there was a need for me to take off my veil for health or identity purposes, I've taken my veil off," said Zafar. She is shocked that a government would force women who wear niqab to take a step backwards in society.

"If such a Bill is considered what would be the difference between a Canadian and an oppressive society that exists in the world today?" asked Zafar. "Canada should not force a woman to take off her veil while other societies might force them to wear it. Let women have their freedom of choice."

After similar legislation has been passed in Belgium, Italy, France and Germany, there have been increased reports of acts of racism and attacks on Muslim men and women. ●

(With files from a May 20 report by John Bonnar on Rabble.ca.)

Communists slam McGuinty backdown on sex education

The Communist Party of Canada (Ontario) has sharply criticized the Liberal government of Dalton McGuinty for failing to implement the sex education curriculum that was to be launched in schools this fall.

"This multi-year curriculum had been developed over a long period, involving experts in the sexual health field, in child and youth development, in education curricula, and in consultations with parents, students, teachers, and the public," notes the CPC (Ontario).

"This provincial curricula was no surprise to anyone, let alone the Ministry of Education - it had been a long time in the planning and preparation. What is a surprise is the government's sudden decision to cancel months of work addressing a clear need for age appropriate sex education across Ontario, because of a backlash by fundamentalist religious groups and social conservatives connected to the Tory party in Ontario.

"Clearly the government is afraid of the Tories' fundamentalist religious and social conservative base, and is prepared to kowtow to it, rather than stand up for scientific and secular education and curricula,

in this pre-election period.

"The provincial Liberals are no doubt aware of the federal government's decision not to fund abortion in foreign aid spending - a concession to that party's right-wing, religious and socially conservative base, and a concession to northward creeping ultra-right-wing, religious fundamentalism in the US that has so distorted healthcare and education curricula in the USA.

"If the Premier is looking for a winning election issue to fight on, the defence of quality secular public education and healthcare is it. But this government wants some of those conservative votes, because on the economic front the McGuinty government is implementing a very right wing and conservative agenda hinging on corporate tax cuts and a VAT tax that will shift a further \$4.5 billion off the corporations and onto working people through the HST.

"This government is also launching a fundamental attack on free collective bargaining, with a public sector wage 'freeze' that will drive down wages of more than one million public sector employees over the next five years,

affecting their wages throughout their working lives.

"Not least, the McGuinty government is about to privatize significant public assets, which it knows will generate broad and deep public opposition.

"That's why McGuinty is pandering to the right, on the issue of sex education curricula. And that's why the public must force the government to implement the curricula and stand by secular education in Ontario's system of public education.

"The CPC(O) calls on the labour and democratic movements, academics, teachers and educational workers, health care workers, youth and students, women, and all those who value quality, universal, secular public education and health care, as well as equality rights, to speak up and demand the government implement the curricula changes, and defend secular and scientific curricula and health care in Ontario.

"This is yet another example of why religion and school should be separate, and why a single secular and universal public school system is in the best interests of students in Ontario." ●



Women wearing niqab at a Toronto anti-war rally. (Photo: Ed Bil)

Canada: tax haven for big capital

PV Vancouver Bureau

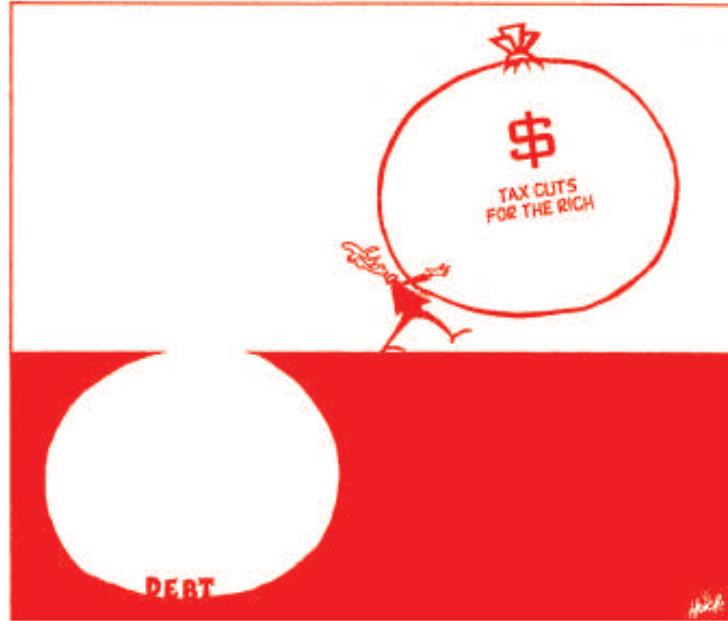
For years, right-wing think tanks, politicians and corporate media hacks have complained that business taxes are "too high" in Canada, supposedly driving away investors and jobs. But a recent study from the business sector prove the opposite: Canada is the second lowest taxation country in the developed capitalist world.

If corporate income tax rates were restored to the 2001 level (28%), an estimated \$30 billion more would flow into the federal treasury this year. That could provide desperately needed funds to expand social programs, extend and improve employment insurance, build low-income housing, protect the environment, and tackle other critical issues.

Instead, massive tax breaks for the corporations and the rich are adding to the burden on working families. Federal taxes on corporate profits are now at just 17%, heading to 15% by 2010 under the Harper Tories.

Canada ranks second to Mexico and far ahead of the U.S. on a list of "tax-friendly countries for business", according to a report released on May 12 by accounting firm KPMG. Netherlands is ranked third, followed by Australia, United Kingdom, USA, Germany, Italy, Japan, and France.

In general, businesses in Mexico pay 40.1 per cent less tax



than those in the U.S. Taxes in Canada are 36.1 per cent lower, or more than one-third. At the other end of the spectrum, corporate taxes are 81.4 per cent higher in France than the U.S.

Canada's low corporate taxes are "a huge competitive advantage when companies decide where to set up shop," according to Greg Wiebe of KPMG's Toronto office.

"Business has the ability to set up manufacturing, distribution plants, and offices anywhere in the world depending on where it makes sense. Having a competitive corporate tax rate hopefully allows you to attract more business and

investment into the country which creates jobs," Wiebe claimed. "We're a small country and have a relatively small economy. We need to take advantage of anything we can to attract business into this country."

Wiebe and KPMG did not address the negative impact of declining tax revenues on social spending in Canada.

The KPMG report tallies up the cost of income tax, capital, sales, and property taxes, as well as miscellaneous local taxes and statutory labour costs, in 95 cities across 10 countries. The U.S., the largest economy in the world, is used as a baseline.

While personal income taxes and sales taxes are still higher in Canada, payroll taxes have been reduced, capital taxes have been phased out, and corporate tax rates have been falling in recent years. Canada's overall federal and provincial corporate tax rates are approaching 25 per cent. The U.S. federal tax rate for business starts at 35 per cent, and state tax rates vary.

And the breaks for the business sector will keep coming with the so-called "harmonised sales tax" to be implemented on July 1 in Ontario and British Columbia. The HST "is likely to enhance Canada's

standing in the coming years," Wiebe said. "The HST is quite a business friendly way of applying a sales tax."

In fact, the HST is not actually a tax in the traditional sense. Consumers will pay the HST directly to businesses; none of the HST will go towards government revenues, despite considerable and deliberate misinformation spread by the corporate media and right-wing politicians. One "theory" advanced by these forces is that taxpayers will ultimately benefit from larger taxes paid by the companies which benefit from the HST, but since corporate tax rates are being slashed dramatically, even this "trickle-down" effect is doubtful. What is certain is that the HST will immediately transfer huge amounts - \$1.9 billion annually in the case of British Columbia - from consumers to businesses. Working people who can least afford this shift will be hit the hardest.

Canadian municipalities are also leaders in cutting corporate taxes at the local level, according

to the KPMG study.

Vancouver is rated the lowest-tax city on the list; its U.S. neighbour Seattle is ranked number 18. Nor is that likely to change under the Vision majority on Vancouver city council, which claims to be "pro-people." A huge shift of Vancouver municipal taxes is underway, away from businesses and onto homeowners.

Montreal and Toronto are in the top five for lowest corporate taxation, far ahead of eastern U.S. cities such as Boston (13), Philadelphia (14) and New York (27).

Low provincial taxes in British Columbia helped boost Vancouver to the top of the list, according to KPMG, which deems the city highly attractive "tax-wise" for manufacturing and corporate and information technology companies.

For research and development, Montreal ranked as the top Canadian city, taking the No. 2 spot behind Melbourne, Australia. Sydney (Australia), Vancouver, and Manchester (U.K.) filled out the top five. ●

Harper backs big banks

People's Voice Commentary - Ignoring growing public demands for the corporate sector to pay a higher share of the tax burden, PM Stephen Harper has launched a campaign against a global bank tax. Harper sent four cabinet ministers to global financial centres on May 18 to lobby against the proposal, which is supported by European countries and the Obama administration. The bank tax is intended to help cushion capitalist economies in the event of another financial meltdown, which is widely expected sooner or later.

Harper argues that the international bank tax would penalize "well-regulated" Canadian financial institutions. But his fundamental position is that "you can't tax an economy into prosperity; likewise you can't tax a financial sector into stability."

Instead, he will use his position as host of the G8 and G20 summits later this month to press for "a more sustainable system of financial regulation".

At the same time, Harper has stepped up his call for an end to stimulus spending, in favour of "implementing fiscal consolidation." In plain English, this means pushing ahead with more tax cuts for the corporate sector, along with further reductions in social spending. With nearly 1.5 million Canadians still out of work, and the likelihood of another round of financial meltdown still ahead, the Tory policy will inevitably worsen the next stage of the economic crisis for working people. ●

Garden River First Nation may set HST tolls



December 2009: Aboriginal peoples' protest against the HST at Queen's Park, Toronto

Some travellers in Northern Ontario may soon be paying tolls, thanks to the Ontario government's plan to remove point-of-sale provincial tax exemption for First Nations when it implements the "Harmonised Sales Tax". Last February, the Garden River First Nation near Sault Ste. Marie raised the possibility of charging vehicles passing through its territory. Signs have been posted along the Trans-Canada Highway announcing the planned toll booths.

"Garden River First Nation is going to continue to do what it needs to do to get government attention in regards to HST," said Chief Lyle Sayers. The action will not necessarily begin July 1, when the HST comes into effect, but Sayers says booths will definitely go up if a satisfactory resolution is not reached.

First Nations are demanding that the point-of-sale PST exemption be maintained whether a status Indian lives on or off reserve. They accuse the federal and provincial governments of ignoring treaties with First Nations which contain no provision for taxation.

While the province has signed an agreement with Ontario First Nations, promising to work together to preserve the tax-exemption, Sayers is not optimistic.

"If I was optimistic, I'd say let's put our signs away and then sit back and wait, but we've done that in the past and we know what's happened," said Sayers, noting that the province failed to bring the HST to First Nations for consultation before it was voted through at Queen's Park.

If the Garden River toll is implemented, travellers would have to pay or else drive along remote roads to reconnect with the Trans-Canada. ●

Anti-HST drive to pass threshold

By Kimball Cariou

After just six weeks of petitioning, the British Columbia Fight HST campaign to force a referendum on the "Harmonised Sales Tax" was on the verge of success. By May 16, organizers reported that 500,000 signatures had been collected. The final total could easily surpass the 600,000 mark, an astonishing one-sixth of the province's adult population.

Adopted in the early '90s under the Harcourt NDP government, B.C.'s citizen initiative legislation was crafted to make a successful petition drive nearly impossible. The rules require the signature of a minimum of 10% of voters in every riding across the province. By mid-May, that target had been reached in 72 of 85 ridings, with 51 actually exceeding 15%. The remaining 13 ridings, mainly in Vancouver and Burnaby, were expected to reach their targets soon. The Fight HST campaign aims to hit the 15% level in every riding by mid-June, to avoid any

possibility of falling short when signatures are counted by Elections BC.

The Campbell Liberals will then have to choose between conducting a province-wide referendum, or using their majority to vote down the proposal to repeal the HST. They could also try to challenge the petition in court. So far, the Liberals have chosen to keep arguing (with little success) that the HST is needed to improve the BC economy.

Each option has negative consequences for the Liberals. Backing down on implementation, which will start on July 1, would anger the big business forces which are the only supporters of the HST. But defying public opinion would drive down support for the Liberals even further, boosting the NDP's fortunes and opening the door for a new right-wing party to enter the scene. There are growing rumbles within Liberal ranks about replacing Gordon Campbell, but the premier's iron-fisted control has made it impossible for any

credible anti-HST alternative leader to emerge within his party.

Many British Columbians are increasingly angered at the flood of distortions and outright lies from the Campbell regime. For example, the Liberals keep trying to hint that the HST would bring in revenue for education and health care, which were hit with traumatic budget cutbacks. But most voters understand that the HST will simply transfer an estimated \$1.9 billion annually from the pockets of consumers to the business sector.

More voices are now being raised to question Campbell's tax cuts, the real source of the provincial budget woes. The Liberals cut corporate income tax rates from 16.5 per cent in 2001 to 10.5 per cent today, with another reduction to 10 per cent by 2011. They have also eliminated capital taxes and cut property taxes, especially for big companies.

These cuts have so far cost the

see BC HST, page 11

Greek workers refuse to surrender

Combined news sources

Tens of thousands of protesters gathered in central Athens on May 20 as the fourth general strike in recent months put new pressure on the Greek government. The latest protest was another huge success, despite predictions in the corporate media that the shocking deaths of three bank workers at the hands of so-called "anarchists" on May 5 would take the wind out of the country's working class resistance.

Public anger has not abated, as the social democratic PASOK government pushes ahead with plans for pension and salary cuts, and steep tax hikes. The measures are being imposed in exchange for a euro110 billion three-year "rescue loan pack-age" from other European Union countries and the International Monetary Fund.

The pension changes are particularly unpopular. The minimum retirement contribution period will be raised to 40 years from 37 years by 2015, and pensions will be set on the basis of earnings over a person's entire working life, instead of the last five years of employment.

Unions and the country's genuine political left stress that low-earners will suffer disproportionately from the measures.

"When will construction workers retire, at age 80?" Communist Party (KKE) MP Haralambos Haralambous said. "How do you expect him to carry a bag of cement on his back until that age?"

Following the previous pattern, the May 20 action affected all public and many private employers. The strike shut down businesses, closed schools, halted ferries and trains, and kept hospitals running on emergency staff. Participation was virtually 100 percent at shipyards, refineries and docks, 90 percent at construction sites and 70 percent in industry, banks, and state-run companies such as Public Power

Corp SA. In central Athens, members of the All-Workers' Militant Front (PAME, the communist-led labour federation) occupied the Labor Ministry.

There were two major demonstrations in Athens, including a march on parliament. "Thieves come out," the protesters chanted in front of parliament

where hundreds of riot police carrying batons and shields filled the steps.

"These measures are destroying everything we have fought for. Where are the measures against unemployment? We were not the ones who created this crisis," said unemployed Nikos Galiatsatos, one of the marchers.

The strike was called by unions representing 2.5 million workers, half the country's workforce. While the main public and private sector union federations are linked with the PASOK party, they have been compelled by rank-and-file demands to join the struggle against the government.

"It is incomprehensible,

outrageous, unacceptable to cut pensions of 600 euros, 700 euros," spokesman Stathis Anestis of the private-sector General Confederation of Labor (GSEE), told protesters. "At the same time, those who owe the pension funds and have looted the pension funds are immune; no one has gone to jail."

Solution for the Crisis: Greek Communist leader

Excerpts from a commentary by Aleka Papatrifa, General Secretary of the Greek Communist Party (KKE)

The KKE has always exposed, especially after 1991, the deception concerning the ceaseless development of capitalism,

competitiveness and productivity with the supposed common benefit for workers and capitalists alike. We spoke of the inevitable economic crisis in all the capitalist economies. We predicted the crisis, the inevitability of a deep and sudden sharpening of all social contradictions and intra-

imperialist ones.

... It is the living standard of the people, of the working class and low-income families that concerns us, not the profits of the capitalists.

Our strategy is to stop the barbaric measures from being imposed as much as we possibly can under today's conditions, to prevent them from being legitimated in people's consciousness, for working people to disassociate themselves from PASOK and ND and their policies, for the movement to regroup and move forward on a course of counter-attack in order to overturn today's balance of forces, for people's power. We are not indifferent and neutral observers, but since the political balance of forces does not permit us effective intervention in favour of the people, we put priority on the movement, outside of the Parliament.

The time has come for a social-popular front for political and mass action to take shape, to take on distinct form, developed from the existing militant forces that must be multiplied; that is the militant forces of the workers-employees in the private and public sectors, of the poor self-employed small businesses, the poor farmers, with a strengthening of the participation of the youth, children of working class and low-income families, especially those that study and work, are in training programmes, women and immigrants, fighters in the fields of science, art and culture...

The Greek people have to choose between two paths of development for Greek society, the path which is being followed and that which must be fought for by the people.

We maintain with facts and with proof that Greece, despite the serious and destructive damage that it has experienced in certain sectors due to the dominance of capital and of monopoly competition, has the pre-requisites to create and develop a self-reliant people's economy.

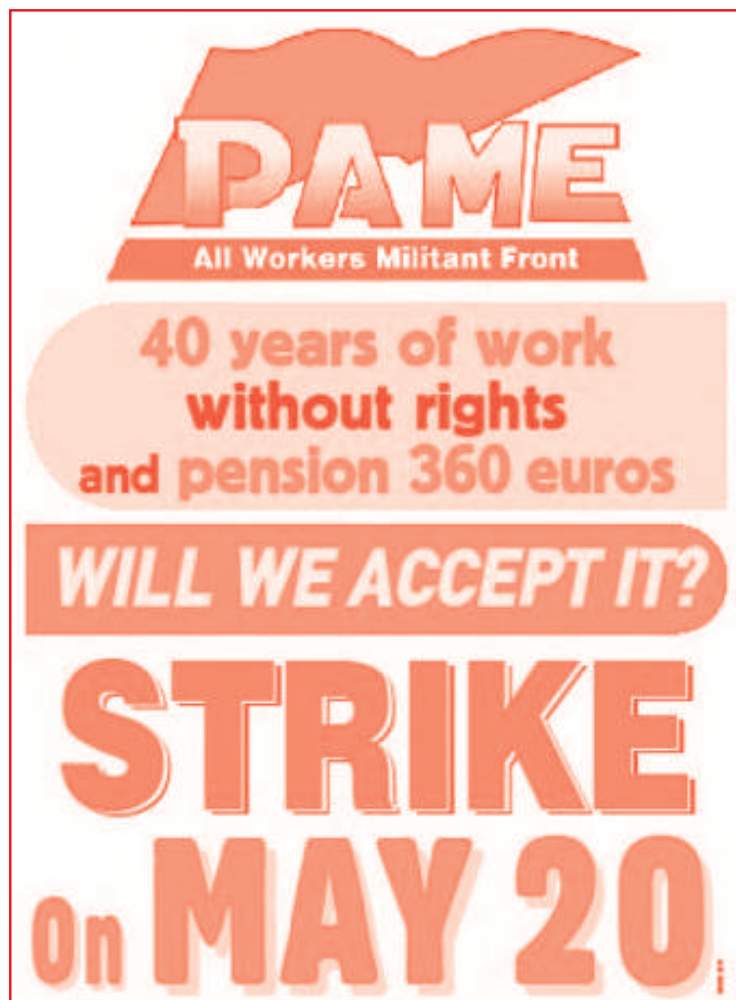
The negative developments of the last 20 years in certain branches of industrial production, in the agricultural economy, can be dealt with under different political-economic and social conditions. It's not too late.

Greece has a satisfactory level of the concentration of production, the means of production, a trade network, and a specific level of development in modern technology. It has a large, experienced labour force, with an improved educational level and specialization in comparison to the past, a large labour force in science.

It has valuable natural wealth-producing resources, important reserves of mineral wealth, which are an advantage in industrial production and the production of consumer goods.

It has the great advantage that it can ensure sufficient food supplies for people's needs as well as for

see KKE leader, page 11



Fears of more political executions in Iran

PV Vancouver Bureau

The British-based Committee for the Defence of the Iranian People's Rights (CODIR) has condemned the May 9 execution of five political prisoners accused by Iran's theocratic regime of actions against "national security" and "links with counter-revolutionary groups". Neither the families or lawyers of the five were aware of the executions in Tehran's Evin prison, and the bodies had still not been released about two weeks later.

Opposition forces say the charges against the five victims were fabricated by the regime to justify harsh treatment, including execution, of its political opponents.

Farzad Kamangar was arrested by Ministry of Intelligence officials along with two other members of the Kurdish minority, Ali Heydariyan and Farhad Vakili, in Tehran around July 2006. The three were sentenced to death after

being convicted of "moharebeh" (enmity towards God), a charge levelled against those accused of taking up arms against the state, in connection with their alleged membership of the armed group, the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK). The trial took place in secret, lasting only minutes. The death sentences of all three men were upheld by the Supreme Court. Also executed were Mehdi Eslami and Shirin Alam Hooli.

All five victims had repeatedly rejected the allegations of being involved in terrorist activities. In the case of Farzad Kamangar, a teacher and journalist, his main "crime" was that during a short visit to Tehran he had stayed in the house of Heydariyan and Vakili, whom he knew. The authorities alleged that they had discovered explosive materials from a car belonging to Heydariyan and Vakili.

Shirin Alam Hooli, a 28-year-old Kurdish woman, was sentenced to death for her alleged support for

PJAK, a militant opposition group. Convicted of "enmity against God", she was repeatedly subjected to torture and degrading treatment. She had no access to legal representation, and her rights as an accused were never observed.

Jamshid Ahmadi, Assistant General Secretary of CODIR, condemned the action of the Iranian regime in executing these political detainees.

"Fearing the eruption of a new wave of popular protests on the first anniversary of the fraudulent presidential election of 12 June 2009, the regime has attempted to inculcate a climate of fear and terror in Iran," he said. "The regime's rush to execute these prisoners, in the face of international concern about the sharp deterioration in the human rights situation over the past year, is a disgrace."

Iranians inside and outside the country and progressive forces all over the world have protested the executions. There was a general

strike in Iran's Kurdistan province on May 13 to condemn these killings, as four of the victims were of Kurdish background.

The executions raise serious concerns about the fate of other



Mansour Osanloo, imprisoned leader of the Tehran Bus Workers' Union (Vahed Syndicate). Could he be on the regime's hit list?

political prisoners in Iran. Jailed labour activists and teachers include Mansour Osanloo and Ebrahim Madadi, leaders of the Tehran Bus Workers' Union (Vahed Syndicate), and teachers like Abdolreza Ghanbari (who has been sentenced to death), Seyed Hashem Khastar, Rasoul Bedaghi, Abdollah Momeni, Mahmoud Beheshti Langeroudi, Ali Akbar Baghani, Mohammad Davari, Alireza Hashemi, Hossein Baastaninejad, and Ghorban Ahmadi (according to the Iranian Teachers' Trade Association). Hundreds of students, women's rights', human rights' and political activists are in prisons across Iran.

Labour organizations elsewhere have also expressed their outrage, from Education International to the International Metal Workers' Federation. In Canada, protests have been sent by the Canadian Teachers' Federation, Canadian Union of Public Employees, Canadian Union of Postal Workers, and others. ●



GLOBAL CLASS STRUGGLE

Settlement in Boron lockout

Locked-out borates miners in Boron, California, have voted by 279 to 95 to accept a six-year collective agreement which the Longshore and Warehouse Union says beats back most of the demands made by Rio Tinto, the world's fourth-largest mining company. The agreement calls for annual 2.5 percent raises, after five years of bonuses instead of increases under the previous contract. But the deal takes a step backward on pensions: new hires will receive 401(k)s with a 4 percent company contribution instead. Workers credited the victory to the outpouring of support from their own small town in the High Desert of Southern California and from other California unions, as well as throughout the ILWU.

"The biggest lesson we learned," said instrumentation electrician Mike Davenport, "is that it's not enough to be union for one day, to get the contract. You've got to reach out to others who've supported you. People were driving 100-plus miles to support us; we have to do the same."

Tons of food were delivered from the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor and other labour groups. The ILWU got doctors to volunteer for a free clinic. The local credit union - the only financial institution in Boron - let workers slide for three months on house and car notes.

The union and its allies dogged Rio Tinto company executives from Boston to London to Australia, and scabs were unable to keep up production. Much of the Boron workforce is highly skilled and familiar with the operation, coming from generations of mining families.

Rio Tinto spent thousands of dollars trying to convince the people of Boron that their neighbours were backward and greedy, but the company's ads didn't resonate. Workers painted their struggle as David v. Goliath: workers and families against a multinational conglomerate seeking to create "junk jobs," a workplace without rights.

(From www.labornotes.org)

"No More Fires, No More Deaths"

The National Garment Workers Federation of Bangladesh has launched a campaign entitled "No More Fires, No More Locked Exits, No More Garment Workers Deaths."

On May 1, 5000 garment workers - mostly young women - marched to support the campaign. NGWF President Amirul Haque Amin told the rally, "Since 1990, there have been 33 major garment factory fires in which more than 400 garment workers have been killed. During this same period more than 200 fires happened in which more than 5000 workers were injured. In addition, 64 workers were killed in the Spectrum Factory collapse in 2005. One reason for the large number of casualties is the practice of locking factory exits, as well as

a lack of health and safety inspections in many of the garment factories. Factory fires, locked exits, and workers deaths must stop."

The campaign is also demanding a new living wage for all garment workers set at TK.5000 per month (US\$71), the removal of all barriers to trade union activities in the garment sector, equal wages, rights and dignity for women workers, and reforms to Bangladeshi Labour Law.

Bucharest rally vs. wage cuts

Tens of thousands of Romanians rallied in Bucharest on May 19 to protest wage cuts. The 40,000 or so protesters blew whistles and yelled "Down with the Lying Government!" while blocking traffic in central Bucharest for two hours. Some pelted an official with the Economy Ministry with water and stones.

"You have pawned our future," they shouted, and union leader Iacob Baciu said they would call a general strike on May 31 if the government went ahead with plans to cut public wages by a quarter and pensions by 15 percent.

Prime Minister Emil Boc will ask Parliament to approve the cuts to begin on June 1, calling them "the only viable solution for the country's future."

Romania is struggling with a budget crisis, with funds to cover only 20 days out of every month, Central Bank Governor Mugur Isarescu says. The economy shrank 7.1 percent last year, and the government took out a euro20 billion (\$24.86 billion) loan from the International Monetary Fund, European Union and World Bank to pay state wages.

Finance Minister Sebastian Vladescu has said 70,000 of the state's 1.36 million jobs must be eliminated by 2011, yet another blow to the nation of 22 million, where the average monthly wage is about euro450 (\$575). The IMF predicts up to 1 million people in Romania may be unemployed by year's end, compared with the current figure of about 740,000.

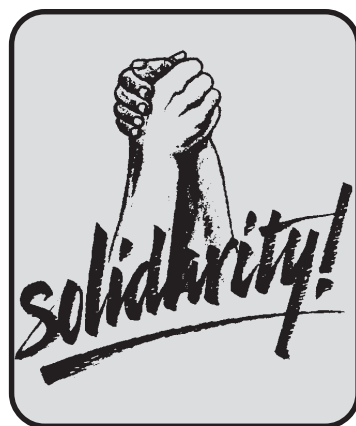
Egyptian worker protests escalate

Anger is mounting among workers protesting in front of the Egyptian parliament. One group of labourers from the Amonsito Textile Company, who have gone 26 months without receiving back pay, tore off their clothes on May 19 in an attempt to gain attention. Around 300 Amonsito workers condemned the lack of action on an agreement signed in April stipulating that they should receive 100 million Egyptian pounds (\$18.7 million Cdn) in compensation for their lost jobs.

On the same day, workers from a telephone equipment factory and the Nubareya Company organized a mock funeral and lowered an effigy representing "Egyptian companies" into a grave. Nubareya workers organized a funeral to draw attention to the fact that no officials have met with them throughout their protest. They said

they have not received salaries for 26 months, which lead them to eat only bread and salt.

Eight workers from the telephone equipment factory are on hunger strike in front of the parliament, demanding the end-of-service payment packages which have been given to other employees. Hundreds of workers from the Egyptian Copper Company also staged a sit-in in Tebbeen demanding higher wages.



Malaysian cable company tries to bust union

About 200 members of the Electrical Industry Workers' Union (EIWU) of Malaysia staged a peaceful picket in front of a major high voltage cable manufacturing company on May 19. They say that Federal Power Cables is failing to meet the terms of an agreement with the union. The company is located in the industrial city of Shah Alam, about 40 km from Kuala Lumpur. There was a heavy police presence at the picket, a common sight during industrial disputes in Malaysia.

Federal Power Cables has refused to grant contractual bonus and annual wage increments to more than 300 workers. After attempts to negotiate failed, the workers decided to picket outside the company premises.

Maniyan Poovan, General Secretary of EIWU said that at one stage the Managing Director openly stated that he does not like national unions like the EIWU, but preferred in-house unions. He also coaxed workers to leave the union by granting better conditions of employment than contained in the collective agreement.

The company uses favouritism based along racial lines to deprive long-serving workers of their promotion, Maniyan said, adding "the union has helped this company for five years to recover from a slump in business and now when it's business has turned around the management don't want to honour the provisions of the collective agreement and pay the workers their due benefits." He expressed disgust that the management is trying to bust the union which has represented its workers for more than 30 years.

Pakistan wage hike falls short

About 38% of Pakistan's estimated population of 170 million lives below the poverty

line. Their situation is made worse by the skyrocketing food prices, and the worst energy crisis to hit the South Asian country in years. The official number of unemployed is four million, according to the Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research (PILER), which promotes workers' rights.

When Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gilani's announced a 1000-rupee increase in the minimum wage on May Day, reactions were mixed. To many, a monthly take of 7,000 rupees (around \$83), assuming it is implemented, will hardly make a dent.

In October 2008, food price inflation was over 30 percent in Pakistan. Now it is 15 to 17 percent, higher than the pay increase. Economists estimate that a household of six spends an average of 8,583 rupees a month, about a quarter more than the new minimum wage.

PILER says that many labourers are still getting the old minimum wage of 4,500 rupees (\$53) two years after government had raised it to 6,000 rupees (\$71).

Over 70% of the industrial units in the Punjab province do not even pay the required minimum wage, according to a survey conducted by the Trade Unions Action Committee for Minimum Wages. In many cases where the 6,000 rupees is paid, working hours have been increased from 8 to 12 hours.

The minimum wage hike also excludes the 8.52 million workers in the informal sector. Of these, 70 percent are women.

Minimum wage ripoff in Korea

One out of 10 Korean workers is paid less than the legal minimum wage, according to a survey

conducted by the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions in March and April. Released on May 19, the results show that 10 percent of the 2,970 respondents said they received hourly pay less than the minimum 4,100 won (about \$3.50) set by law. The situation was worse among young part-time or irregular workers, with 30 percent of them paid less than the minimum wage.

"The Ministry of Labor cracks down on the violation of minimum wages once or twice a year. However, no sign of progress is witnessed. Regular monitoring is essential," said an official of the KCTU, the nation's second-largest umbrella labor group.

In March, an alliance of 25 union and civic groups announced a proposal on next year's minimum wage, which is considered an important indicator in deciding the average wage level across industries. The Alliance for the Minimum Wage has demanded a minimum hourly wage of 5,180 won, a 25 percent increase.

"Our proposal is never an overestimated amount considering the nation's economic size and situation," the Alliance says. "Korea ranked the lowest in the minimum wage again this year among the OECD nations. It's time to shun this shameful record."

Meanwhile, the Korea Employers Federation, a powerful business lobby group, demands to freeze the minimum wage at the current level, citing the uncertainty of the current economic turnaround. The official Minimum Wage Council, comprising 27 representatives from the government, labour and business, is currently reviewing the minimum wage. The Council's final decision is expected to be made by June 29.

Many items in our "Global Class Struggle" column are from the Labour Start website, 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.

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With strange bedfellows: mobilization against Preval gains momentum

By Kim Ives, Editor of *Haiti Liberté*. This article can also be read on the *Canada-Haiti Action Network website*: www.canadahaitiaction.ca/node/360

Thousands of demonstrators marched through Haiti's capital Port-au-Prince on May 10 calling for President René Preval's resignation and former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide's return from exile in South Africa. Parallel mobilizations took place in towns throughout Haiti, including Miragoane, Cap Haitien, Gonaives, and Jacmel.

The giant march came as Senators, mostly from the President's party, Unity, voted 16 against two to amend Article 232 of Haiti's 1987 Constitution, extending Preval's mandate from Feb. 7 until May 14, 2011. Deputies had approved the change in a May 6 vote of 56 for, three against and three abstentions.

On May 10, the 48th Legislature also expired, with only one third of the Senate remaining with a mandate.

Like the drop that overflows the glass, Preval's three month term extension seems to have finally released a flood of anger against a host of policies, including last week's sale of the state telephone company, the maintenance of a Provisional Electoral Council (CEP) which excluded 14 parties (including Haiti's largest, the Lavalas Family) from now postponed elections, and the 18 month "state of emergency law" that puts a foreign-led commission in charge of Haiti's post-earthquake reconstruction.

Marchers also reiterated long-standing demands that include an end to the six-year-old United Nations military occupation and stronger measures to resolve widespread homelessness and hunger four months after the Jan. 12 earthquake that devastated the capital and other nearby towns.

The Port-au-Prince demonstration was led by an emerging coalition called the Heads Together of Popular Organizations (Tet Kole Oganizasyon Popile yo), which is primarily composed of Lavalas base organizations with a smattering of formerly anti-Lavalas political personalities and alliances such as Evans Paul's Alternative for Democracy and Progress, Serge Gilles' social democratic Fusion, and Himmler Rebu's Platform of Haitian Patriots (PLAPH).

Dubbed "Operation Take No Breath" (Operasyon san pran souf), Tet Kole's mobilization aims to replace Preval with a provisional president and a Council of State similar to that which brought President Aristide's predecessor, Ertha Pascale-Trouillot, to power 20 years ago.

"Faced with this situation of terrible suffering in which society lives today, we, grassroots organizations, civil society groups, and platforms of principled political parties have decided in unity to reject the state of emergency law, the widespread corruption, the Constitutional changes, the maintenance of the exclusionary CEP, and the extension of the

presidential term," said Tet Kole's Paulette Joseph and Bateau Junior in a message read at the Champ de Mars' Constitution Place. "We have decided to launch a mobilization which will continue until the complete satisfaction of our demands. We demand the immediate resignation of President Preval for betraying the trust of the people, for violating the Constitution, and for liquidating the country for foreigners. We demand the formation of a provisional government to improve the living conditions of people who were victim of the Jan. 12 disaster. We want to lay the foundations for rebuilding a better Haiti. We demand the annulment of the 18 month state of emergency law."

Most of the demonstrators marched to the crumpled National Palace from St. Jean Bosco, where Father Aristide used to preach before the church was burned by neo-Duvalierist thugs on Sept. 11, 1988. Feeder marches from the Belair et Carrefour Feuilles slums also joined the masses in the Champ de Mars.

Near the Palace, Haitian riot police fired bullets and teargas at the demonstrators. Witnesses say that policemen beat several demonstrators including Makenson Pierre and Robenson Remy, two musicians with the "Easy Rara" street band whose drums and horns motivated marchers. Haitian police and UN soldiers arrested four demonstrators, and unconfirmed reports say several protestors were wounded.

Meanwhile, about 60 miles west in Miragoane and north in Gonaives, hundreds of people, mostly Lavalas partisans, also demonstrated with the same demands as the capital.

In Cap Haitien, hundreds of residents held an action of banging pots and pans to signal unhappiness with Preval's food policies. In Jacmel, the Alternative Movement for Haiti's Decentralization and Reconstruction (MADREH) held a sit-in with hundreds in front of the central government's office to demand Preval's resignation.

Many eyebrows have been raised at the sight of 2004 coup supporters like "student" leader Herve Saintilus, perennial politician Turneb Delpe, and Democratic Convergence leaders like Paul, Gilles and Rebu marching alongside Lavalas partisans holding aloft posters of Aristide's smiling face.

"One of our principal demands is that the government provide former President Aristide with a passport so he can return to his country," Delpe declared.

But many in Haiti's democracy movement fear that right-wing politicians are feigning support for Lavalas demands and will try to hijack the mass mobilization to push Preval from power and install an even more reactionary government.

"We are organizing now to provide leadership to this mass



Haitians have not forgotten: this photo is from a rally last Dec. 16, celebrating the 18th anniversary of the first election of Jean-Bertrand Aristide as president.

movement which is forming," Evans Paul said on Radio Tropical.

But Yves Pierre-Louis, a leader with the National Platform of Base Organizations and State Victims (PLONBAVIL), one of Tet Kole's key components, says that Lavalas and progressive militants are confident they will keep control of the movement.

"We are very aware of the dangers posed by allowing former

putschists into our alliance and demonstrations, and we talk about it all the time," he said. "But right now, Preval has gone too far in selling out the country and trampling the Constitution. He must be stopped. This requires a broad coalition, but we are not diluting our demands. Some politicians, who have been our opponents, are embracing our demands, or at least pretending to. Whatever the case, the unity and consciousness of the progressive forces in this mobilization are strong, and we will prevail."

Preval proposed Article 232's amendment as it has become clear that presidential and parliamentary elections are unlikely to be held by November, especially if he refuses to reconstitute the CEP. "I cannot just leave while an unfinished [electoral] process is underway," Preval said in a May 6 press conference.

The new Article 232 is worded so that Preval can leave office anytime between Feb. 7 and May 14, 2011.

Due to difficulties in organizing elections after the Feb. 29, 2004 coup d'etat against Aristide, Preval was not elected until Feb. 7, 2006, the date when a new president should have been inaugurated according to the Constitution. Preval began his five-year term on May 14, 2006. •

Romanticising the criminal: profile of a killer

In recent months the western media has frequently reported on a so-called "Maoist uprising" against the Left Front government of India's Bengal state, led by the Communist Party of India (Marxist). Our correspondent in India, B. Prasant, rips the lid off this anti-communist myth.

When things become tough, the "tough" is invented, demystified, made into a "romantic, tough-talking, hero", one who kills of Communists with impractical ease.

That was the violently anti-Communist "cold war" of yore.

Remember the film character Rambo and the single-handed way he destroyed Soviet columns in

Afghanistan? Hark even further back, and recall that the Hitler-jugend (the Nazi youth brigade) called their criminal leader "the God's way out of hell", even when brave and battle-hardened Soviet troops were pouring across the border, and the "leader" was quaking in primal fear in an underground bunker.

Now look at what is happening in Bengal. The "Maoists" are patently losing their grip over people, instilled through the gun culture, extortion, mines, booby traps, and bloody killings.

Fear has a hold that cannot last long. Fear is a temporary phenomenon, especially when applied against the mass of the people by the ruling classes and their political outfits.

One recalls Mao Ze Dong, addressing a massive rally in 1949 in Guangdong province that, just as the imperialist and exploiters sharpened their claws, the masses whetted their unity. Mao's words were "let them sharpen their weaponry, we shall hone ours."

What has happened over the past two months in the red clay zone of Bengal, called "captured terrain" by the likes of Kishanji and the corporate media? The killings of CPI(M) cadres and the rural poor are becoming comparatively rare. The village-based committees keep a sharper and wider lookout. The "Maoists" are on the backfoot.

Developmental work is making a discrete, peripheral, but definitive appearance. However, not all is lost for the killers, as long as the forces of reaction with imperialist backing find newer ways to harass the poor and the exploited.

The time has come, the Patrika newspaper has decided, to pose the unconquerable myth of a villain. In writing the story of the Maoist "Kishanji", his life and love, his penchant for alcohol ("revolutionary stuff", you understand), the reporter may (or more probably, may not) have actually met the "Maoist" leader, on a "moonlit night where the faint light slides off the leaves". That is not important. What is important is the reporter's corporate bosses have asked him to write a romantic tale on "Kishanji."

The entire exercise is nauseating when one recalls the same "Kishanji" using his own hands to roughly sew together lips of CPI(M) workers before torturing them in public, killing them by chopping off body parts, and finally leaving them to die in a pool of blood. However, in doing all this, the ruling classes, - and the "Maoists" are the tools of the Indian ruling classes - create conditions that prove their undoing.

Answering a question about the necessity to kill poor villagers,

Montevideo elects first woman and Communist mayor

Communist Party of Uruguay member Ana Olivera became the first elected woman mayor of the capital city, Montevideo, in May 9 municipal elections across the 19 regions of the country.

Olivera, a French teacher with long experience in municipal affairs, was a candidate of the ruling left wing coalition, Broad Front (Frente Amplio). She was elected with over 50% of the votes cast, marking the fifth consecutive victory for the Frente Amplio in Montevideo. The capital city has been the stronghold of the Frente Amplio since the return of democracy in 1985. Last October, Uruguay's national election confirmed a second consecutive mandate for the Front, which took over 60% in that campaign.

The new mayor is scheduled to take office in July, taking over from the previous mayor, biologist Ricardo Ehrlich, who is currently Uruguay's Education and Culture Minister. Olivera has promised to improve the city's public transport system and garbage collection, and to organize the horse-pulled carts that circulate freely in the city searching for residues. In her victory speech, Olivera said she was proud to be the first woman elected as mayor and also very proud of the fact that the Broad Front has ruled Montevideo for 20 years, but also admitted advances have been insufficient.

Almost half of Uruguay's 3.5 million population live in Montevideo. Another woman, Adriana Pena, was elected Mayor of Lavalleja region. •

"People's Events" planned for G8/G20 Summits

Decisions taken by the G8 and G20 governments will have a major impact on millions of lives in Canada and around the world.

The 2010 G8/G20 Summits, set to take place in Ontario, present Canadian civil society organizations and groups with an opportunity "to strengthen our collective voice and lend cohesion to our efforts on the environment, poverty, human rights and social justice."



That's the view of the 2010 People's Summit Steering Committee, which is being held June 18-20 in Toronto. As a statement on the Steering Committee's website (www.peoplesummit2010.ca) goes on to explain, "The actions and policies of the G8/G20 and their member-states have significant impact on millions of lives the world over, and with this, comes an opportunity for us - a diverse civil society, including community-based organizations, non-governmental organizations, public, media and other groups - to work together to educate, empower and ignite positive change we would like to see in our world. We are people working for solidarity, self-determination, human rights, justice, peace, a healthy planet, and transformative social change. We are groups that question the status quo and the supremacy of global capitalism. We are a movement of many movements, organizing for the other world we know is possible."

The People's Summit is being coordinated by a committee made up of members of non governmental and civil society organizations, as well as non-affiliated peoples. As of late May, membership consists of representatives from the Canadian Federation of Students, Canadian Labour Congress, the Canadian Peace Alliance, Council of Canadians, CUPE Ontario, Greenpeace Canada, Ontario

Council for International Cooperation, Oxfam Canada, Polaris Institute, the Rainforest Action Network, the Sierra Youth Coalition, the Toronto Climate Campaign, and the Toronto Community Mobilization Network.

The following is a partial list of events being organized around the G8/G20 summits taking place in Ontario this month.

People's Summit 2010 Launch Event, Building a Movement for a Just World: Solutions and Stories from North and South, Friday, June 18, 7 pm, Carlu Hotel, 44 Yonge St. (7th floor), Toronto.

"People First: We Deserve Better!", People's Summit Open Forum, Sat., June 19, 9 am-6 pm, Room 2158, Medical Sciences

Building, University of Toronto, 1 King's College Circle. Pre-registration: CLC Ontario Regional Office, 416-441-3710.

"No Rights, No Rules - Migrant Workers in a Globalized World", organized by UFCW, Sunday, June 20, 1-4 pm, Hart House at the University of Toronto.

Forum for Solidarity on Mexican Labour Rights, Sunday, June 20, 9 am-4 pm, Chestnut Hotel, 89 Chestnut St., Toronto.

UFCW Canada: "The Walmart Globalization Forum", Monday, June 21, 1-4 pm, Hart House at the University of Toronto.

"Mining Transnationals in the G20: The Vale Case", United Steelworkers Teach-In, Friday, June 25, Steelworkers Hall, 25 Cecil St., Toronto.

Shout Out for Global Justice!, Join the Council of Canadians to challenge the G20 and demand trade, water and climate justice, Friday, June 25, 7 pm (doors open 6 pm), at UofT Convocation Hall. Tickets \$14 for Council of Canadians members, \$20 for non-members, from UofT Box Office, (416) 978-8849, uofttix.ca.

G8 & G20 Public Rally, 1 pm, Sat., June 26, at Queen's Park. Take this rare opportunity to speak out on priorities that the world's most wealthy and powerful nations should adopt: economic recovery, the environment, human rights, decent jobs, and social justice.

During the week of June 21-24, there will also be a number of themed "days of resistance." For details, visit the website www.g20.torontomobilize.org. ●



People's Co-op Bookstore expands community support

VANCOUVER - One of the People's Co-op Bookstore's biggest membership meetings in many years was held on May 14, packing its premises at 1391 Commercial Drive for a lively discussion on the future of the store. After an in-depth exchange of views and information, the members voted overwhelmingly to support efforts to continue the store's operations. The meeting focused much of its attention on a detailed proposal for a new business plan, putting the main emphasis on building community support.

The three-year plan was put forward on behalf of the Fundraising Committee mandated by the store's 2009 Annual General Meeting, held last September. While the cooperative's rules precluded a direct vote on the ambitious plan at this meeting, the consensus was to back the concept of building on the store's strength's as a community literary and

political hub, and to continue to hold both in- and out-of-store events. One element of the plan is to expand the retail and meeting area within the current premises, by carrying out renovations which would downsize the storage space.

Like many other bookstores and



small businesses across Canada, People's Co-op faces ongoing financial challenges. But the positive experience of the Fundraising Committee since last fall gave the membership considerable cause for optimism. A wildly successful 65th anniversary celebration last January at the nearby WISE Hall drew about 300 supporters, and sales and memberships are on the rise. Further fundraisers will be announced in

the near future. In another recent success, the "Stars of Vancouver Readers' Choice Awards" conducted by the *Vancouver Courier* newspaper gave People's Co-op a First Place in the category of "Bookstore Eastside."

The meeting elected six new Board members, reflecting the increased community support. The new members come from a wide range of backgrounds, as activists in the anti-war, labour, and other movements.

Volunteers are needed to keep the momentum going, for example by helping out at two major Commercial Drive events this month: "Italian Days" on Sunday, June 6, and "Car-Free Day" two weeks later, on June 20th. The Fundraising Committee also welcomes new participants. Call manager Ray Viaud or co-manager Jane Bouey at 604-253-6442 to find out details.

Readers across Canada can order from the store online, at www.peoplescoopbookstore.com.



MUSIC NOTES

By Wally Brooker

Gil Scott-Heron cancels Israel concert

African-American poet-musician Gil Scott-Heron, 61, joined the growing list of artists who will not perform in apartheid Israel, when he cancelled a May 25 concert in Tel Aviv. Scott-Heron made the announcement at London's Royal Albert Hall after being confronted by picketing fans and pressured by an open letter from the international boycott campaign. A prominent member of Artists Against Apartheid in the 1980s, Scott-Heron declared that he would not play in Israel "until everyone can." He recently returned to form with his acclaimed 2010 album *I'm New Here* after being distracted for more than a decade by personal problems. Scott-Heron joins other notable musicians boycotting Israel, including Sting, Carlos Santana and Brian Eno.

Born Free too much for YouTube

UK hip-hop artist M.I.A. has released a controversial video of her new single *Born Free*. To say that it expresses discontent with the "War on Terror" is to put it mildly. Daughter of a militant in Sri Lanka's Tamil Tigers secessionist movement, M.I.A. charges that country's victorious Buddhist majority with genocide against the Tamil minority. YouTube pulled the video on April 27 claiming that scenes of nudity and graphic violence violated its rules. It depicts a heavily-armed SWAT team, complete with U.S. insignia, raiding an apartment block and rounding up young red-headed boys. They are taken to an abandoned area where one is executed and the rest are made to run through a mine field. The disturbing work will mean many things to many people. M.I.A. is unlikely to be hurt by the ban. Anyone can see it at her website: www.miauk.com.

The Chieftans' American history lesson

The Chieftans' new album, *San Patricio*, tells the story of Irish soldiers who deserted from the U.S. army during the Mexican-American War of 1846-48. The Saint Patrick's Battalion fought with distinction on the Mexican side. Irish immigrants were discriminated against in 19th-century America, and with a history of resistance to British imperialism it is no surprise that they sympathised with the Mexican people. While the San Patricios are honoured in Mexico and Ireland, their story was suppressed in the U.S. for many years. Coming at a time of rising struggle for immigrant rights this deeply anti-racist album challenges the dominant narrative of American history. *San Patricio* is co-produced by guitarist-folklorist Ry Cooder (of *Buena Vista Social Club* fame) and features a stellar cast of Mexican and Mexican-American musicians.

Silvio Rodriguez plays Carnegie Hall

While the Obama administration shows little sign of relaxing the embargo of socialist Cuba, the hardline has eased somewhat in the field of travel and cultural exchange. Famed Cuban singer-songwriter Silvio Rodriguez, 63, has been granted a travel visa. The singer, known for his eloquent lyrics, will play historic Carnegie Hall June 4 and give additional concerts in Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Miami. The last time Rodriguez set foot on U.S. soil was in 1980, while Jimmy Carter was still in power. Rodriguez is co-founder of the Nueva Trova Cubana (New Cuban Song) movement, which reflected the revolutionary enthusiasm of the sixties and continues to be popular throughout the Spanish-speaking world.

Thoughts on the 2010 JUNO Awards

The 39th annual JUNO Awards show, broadcast on April 18, was about the hard sell of corporate pop music, hair care products, cars and soft drinks. Winners not in the big-money market were relegated to the non-televised gala the previous evening. Among the winners at the televised event, top marks for crassness go to singer Michael Bubl , who thanked Canadian radio for "playing the heck" out of his song, and when presented with the "Pepsi Fan Choice Award," praised the soft drink giant before thanking his fans. The predictable finale featured reggae star K'Naan singing his hit *Wavin' Flag*, joined by a host of pop stars, including cuddly teen idol du jour Justin Bieber. Highlight of the broadcast: a Newfoundland & Labrador tourism ad that showed apparently "real" people making music in their community and homes and asked "Isn't it time you got the Top 40 out of your system?"

Singer-activist Lena Horne (1917-2010)

Singer, actress and civil rights activist Lena Horne died May 9. Horne was one of the first African-American performers to tour with an all-white band, and the first to sign a long-term movie contract. Although her roles were often cut when the films were distributed in the Jim Crow south, her movie contract stated that she would never play the role of a maid. While entertaining troops during World War II she refused to play to segregated audiences. In the McCarthyite 1950s Horne was blacklisted because of her relationship with friend and mentor Paul Robeson. Undaunted, in the sixties she appeared on the front line of the civil rights movement beside figures like Martin Luther King and Medgar Evers. Lena Horne inspired as a performer for decades while never letting up in the struggle for racial equality. ●

KKE leader: solution to Greek crisis....

continued from page 7

external trade. It has capabilities in the production of modern products, machinery, tools and appliances.

In order for a people's economy to exist for all, we must find a solution to the problem of ownership for the satisfaction of people's needs and not the needs of profit.

The choice is one: a change in the historically outdated social relations of ownership that determine the political system as well and concern the basic and concentrated means of production in the following areas: energy, telecommunications, mineral wealth, mining, industry, water supply, transportation.

Socialization of the banking system, the system of extraction, conveyance and management of natural resources; external trade, a centralized network of internal trade; housing for the people, research and the democratic

provision of information to the people.

An exclusively public, universal and free system of education, healthcare, welfare and social security....

The centrally planned development of society is a need that stems from today's demands, first of all the demands of humanity which is the primary productive force. The need to satisfy the wide-ranging modern needs of the working people, the need for the means of production to develop, for science and technology to develop for the benefit of the people, make central planning a vital necessity.

People's power promotes intrastate commercial agreements and exchanges, agreements for the utilization of techno-knowledge based on mutual interest.

The public debt will be re-examined under people's power with the main criteria being the interests of the people.

At the very beginning, people's power will have to confront an

organized internal and international reaction. The EU and NATO, the agreements with the USA, do not leave much room for maneuvering by EU member countries.

The solution to this problem by withdrawal from the EU is inevitable with the aim a self-reliant, popular development and cooperation that is in the interest of the people.

It is necessary to step up our activity on the basis of the struggle against the problems. We struggle ceaselessly for immediate gains for the working people and we will continue so that measures can be imposed by the power of the movement reducing the acute problems, and relieving the people.

We have developed positions and demands for every single problem and issue that has come up. However, that is not enough today; an alternative proposal for progress is needed so that the struggle has an aim, a goal, meaning, and ultimately can apply pressure in every phase. ●

What's Left

Vancouver, BC

Left Film Night, Sunday, May 30, 7 pm, "From Wharf Rats to Lords of the Docks," on ILWU leader Harry Bridges. Free, donations welcome, Centre for Socialist Education, 706 Clark Drive, call 604-255-2041.

DUKOT, film on human rights in the Philippines, June 3-4, UBC Robson Square, C-300 Theatre, 6:30 pm, \$15.

18th Annual People's Voice/Rebel Youth Banquet, Sat., June 5, 6 pm, Russian Hall, 600 Campbell Ave. Tickets \$10 advance or at door, call 604-254-9836 or 255-2041 for details.

On-to-Ottawa Trek, historical plaque ceremony and send-off for 2010 homelessness Trekkers, Sunday, June 6, 1-3 pm, Crab Park (N. foot of Main), check www.ontoottowa.ca.

StopWar Coalition AGM, Sat., June 12, 11-4, Maritime Labour Centre, 111 Victoria Drive.

75th Anniversary of Battle of Ballantyne Pier, ILWU-Canada events, Sat., June 19, march 9 am, from Maritime Labour Centre, 12 noon rally at New Brighton Park, evening dinner & dance.

COPE Solstice BBQ, Monday, June 21, at Vancouver Rowing Club. Support COPE's work at City Hall, Parks Board, and School Board. Tickets \$60, call 604-813-7627.

Winnipeg, MB

Defeat Veolia waste water contract, strategy meeting for supporters, Tue., June 8, for time & place, call Labour Elections Committee, 792-3371.

Calgary, AB

On-To-Ottawa Trek, 75th anniversary celebration, Wed., June 9, 7:30 pm, ATU Union Hall, 5325-1A Street SW. An entertaining multi-media celebration of history, labour and social conscience.

Toronto, ON

Harper's attacks on reproductive rights at home and abroad, panel discussion, Monday, June 21, 7 pm, 25 Cecil St., organized by Ontario Coalition for Abortion Clinics, 416-969-8463.

G8/G20 People First Forum, sponsored by CLC, Sat., June 19, 10 am-4:30 pm. For details, see report on page 10.

G8/G20 rally and march, Sat., June 26, 1 pm, from Queen's Park, call 416-441-3710 for details.

Fort Erie, ON

Canadian-Cuban Friendship Association-Niagara, social event Sunday, June 13, 2-6 pm, \$5 for a taste of cuba, BBQ, Cuban music, 1760 Ridge Road.

Montreal, QC

Palestinians And Jews United, vigil against the occupation, every Friday at noon, Sainte-Catherine and Union (near Metro McGill).

Solidarity with the Greek workers!

Support the PV 2010 Fund Drive!

Friends of Cuba rally in solidarity



TORONTO: Friends of Cuba rally at the Cuban Consulate on May 21, calling for the end to the US blockade and freedom for the five Cubans held in US jails. (Photo: Ed Bil)

At a time of new right-wing attacks against the sovereignty of Cuba, friends across the world are expressing their solidarity. The Canadian-Cuban Friendship Association (Toronto) issued the following statement for a May 21 rally at the Cuban Consulate:

We are here today to show our support for and solidarity with Cuba at this time of anti-Cuban

attacks. Such erroneous acts include an international campaign regarding so called "dissidents" in an attempt to discredit Cuba and its revolution.

We support Cuba's right to sovereignty and its right to be free of interference, terrorist attacks, and false campaigns and harassment.

We also support Canada and the UN's position that the blockade of Cuba is immoral and an affront to international law. The last thing we need is to import this failed policy from its supporters in Miami, Washington and the few who are trying to impose it here.

Terrorist organizations and individuals in the United States

act with impunity against Cuba, while five Cubans who had tried to expose and stop terrorism against their country, are unjustly in prisons in the United States. We demand their release!

In spite of an inhuman and immoral U.S. blockade against it, Cuba has free health care, free education, the right for food and shelter. It is internationally respected for its selfless support to other countries: Cuba sends DOCTORS NOT SOLDIERS!

Canadians have a long history of friendly relations with Cuba. At this critical moment we encourage all Canadians to speak out now against this vicious campaign. ●

British Columbia HST....

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6 - provincial treasury at least \$10 billion, without increasing investment or job creation. Investment in B.C. has risen on average just 0.26 per cent per year since 2001. The forest industry, one of the biggest HST boosters, had already wiped out 23,700 jobs by 2008.

If the Liberals reject a referendum, the growing wave of public anger may lead to recall campaigns against Liberal MLAs. That process would take more time, but it could drive the Liberals out of office well before the next election set for May 2013. Unfortunately, the NDP shows no sign of willingness to reverse Campbell's tax cuts for the corporations and higher income tax brackets. That could leave most voters - except those in ridings where Communist candidates are on the ballot - without a progressive alternative if and when the Liberals are dumped. ●

Kishanji...

continued from page 9

"Kishanji" is supposed to have told our brave reporter that "too many villagers were working for the administration." What the "heroes" do not reveal is that more and more of the rural poor are standing up for their rights under the Red banner of the CPI(M), and protests are leading to resistance.

The story has revealed the contradiction, to the detriment of the task to project "Kishanji" as the all-conquering popular, romantic hero. Thus, one should welcome more such stories in the bourgeois media. Lies piled on lies ultimately produce the burgeoning of class hatred, as the masses become politically conscious of the tasks that lie ahead. ●

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Send submissions to PV Editorial Office,
706 Clark Drive, Vancouver, V5L 3J1,
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Correcting two mistakes

A sharp-eyed reader caught an error in the otherwise excellent article by Ana Pha in our May 16-31 issue, "Is Marxism relevant to environmentalism?", which originally appeared in the Australian communist paper The Guardian. She writes at one point: "Humans had no idea that the extensive use of fossil fuels and other producers of greenhouse gas emissions would burn holes in the ozone layer, induce global warming and bring the human race to the brink of extinction..." This formulation confuses two distinct environmental problems. The depletion of the ozone layer is primarily caused by CFCs and other chlorine- and bromine-containing compounds, not by fossil fuels.

And we apologize for a second mistake by our editor in the May 16-31 issue. The article "Darshan Singh, a secular revolutionary" refers to the assassination by fundamentalists of Darshan Singh Canadian. At the time, Darshan was a Communist MLA in the Punjab legislature, not an MP as stated. ●

REDS ON THE WEB

www.comunist-party.ca

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www.ycl-ljc.ca

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WFTU Congress call: abolish exploitation, poverty and war

The Secretariat of the World Federation of Trade Unions has announced that WFTU's 16th World Congress will be held in Athens next April. Formed in 1945, the WFTU now has 200 national and sectoral trade unions in 110 countries, and 72 million members.

But the strength and potential of the new WFTU, the Call to the Congress notes, "lies mainly in its positions and action, in its strategy, its tactics and initiatives... its active involvement in the struggle, facing all current problems that affect workers."

"The period we live in," says the Call, "is one of aggressive imperialism, anti-labour neo-liberal policies and of the international economic crisis of the capitalist system. This crisis is expressed in all sectors: in the economic and social level, the environment, the quality of life, culture and climate change. Crises are in the DNA of capitalism and for this reason they come again and again. It is impossible for capitalism to solve the problems of the peoples of the world."

The WFTU points to Africa as an example, "a continent rich in wealth-producing resources but with the poorest people." The average life expectancy in Zambia is 38.6 years. In oil-rich Nigeria, 42% of the population have no access to drinking water, and diarrhea is the second largest killer of children, causing as many as 17% of the deaths of those under five. Conflicts fanned by imperialism continue in Somalia and Sudan, and wages remain abysmally low in most countries.

Meanwhile, in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan, "the US and European imperialists are continuing their occupation and military operations. They are threatening Iran and plundering the Asian Republics of the former Soviet Union. In Bangladesh the basic salary is \$26 per month, in Sri Lanka \$59 per month and in

Pakistan \$71 per month.

"In the Middle East the torment of the heroic Palestinian, Lebanese and Syrian peoples continues. Israel, with the substantial support of the USA, the European Union and its allies is still illegally occupying the Syrian Golan Heights, keeping Gaza isolated, murdering people in Lebanon and posing a grave danger to stability and peace in the Southeastern Mediterranean."

Unemployment and poverty are growing in the Americas; even in the U.S., the unemployment rate is 9.7%.

Slander and attacks continue against the heroic Cuban Revolution, Venezuela, Bolivia, and Ecuador, along with the occupation in Haiti, and support



for the dictatorship in Honduras. In Colombia, more than 210 trade unionists have been assassinated over the past five years, and the country is being transformed into a U.S. military base.

Unemployed workers in the European Union totalled 23 million by February 2010. The highest official unemployment rates among the EU states are in Latvia with 21.7% and Spain with 19%. Privatizations, the undermining of social security and the reduction of wages and pensions are a common strategy of all European governments, both neoliberal and social democratic. The Lisbon Treaty, warns the WFTU, "shows the reactionary attitude and the real role of the European Union."

But in response, "the global working class is responding with



The All-Workers Militant Front (PAME) of Greece is a prominent affiliate of the WFTU.

initiatives and struggles all over the world. The demonstrations of children in Pakistan against child exploitation, the struggles of teachers and electricians in Mexico, of fishermen and coalminers in Chile, of metalworkers in Peru, of construction workers, of immigrants in France and the USA, of air and land transport workers and workers in the car industry in many countries, of workers in the oil industry in Nigeria, of workers in India, coordinated militant action in Brazil and Bangladesh, the dynamic strikes in Greece, Nepal, Iraq,

Arab World, South Africa, Portugal, Turkey and many other countries have traced new paths in the class-oriented struggle. Millions of strikers in all continents with the participation of youth, women and migrant workers have provided a

new dynamic and fresh hopes."

"Since the 15th Congress in Havana," the Call continues, "under conditions of capitalist globalisation, we have posed the crucial question: under current circumstances, in the contemporary world, what kind of international trade union movement does the world working class need? Today, under the conditions of international economic crisis this question is even more pertinent and important.

"Do we today need an international bureaucratic mechanism to cooperate with multinationals and capital, or an international organization such as the WFTU that has chosen to move forward based on the principles, the culture and the values of the class-oriented trade union movement?..."

"Do we need an international bureaucratic aggressive trade

union mechanism that in words keeps an equal distance from Israeli occupation forces and the people of Palestine, that will participate in the slander against Cuba, Venezuela and Bolivia or do we need an international trade union organization like the WFTU that in theory and practice follows the principles and values of proletarian internationalism and labour solidarity?"

All trade union organizations are invited to the WFTU's 16th World Trade Union Congress, to share their opinions and views, and to help develop the prospects of the class struggle trade union movement for the 21st century.

The Call concludes: "Join us! Unite with ordinary people who were born and grew up with the working class in their countries, people who did not sell out their principles and values. Come to meet real sisters and brothers. Together we can achieve more. Join us, become a member of the large WFTU family and take part in its bodies and leadership. Come with us as a friend, even if you don't agree on everything with us. On the new path of the WFTU all militant trade unionists have a place, to struggle all together for the abolition of exploitation, for a world without injustice, poverty and war."

Information is available from the WFTU Secretariat by email <wftu-16Congress@hotmail.com>, or on the Federation's website, www.wftucentral.org. ●

Irish public workers saddled with cutbacks

Public anger against the Irish government's pro-business policies may be starting to boil over. One recent protest outside the Dail (Parliament) ended in violent clashes. When protestors attempted to fight their way inside, the police drew their batons and fought back.

Ireland is currently running a budget deficit of 14.3% of national income, almost five times the European Union's limit, and higher

than in Greece. The government has promised to bring the deficit below the 3% limit of national income by 2014, with drastic spending cuts and tax increases. A key piece of this "austerity" drive is the Croke Park agreement on cutting public sector pay and other "reforms." The participation by some union leaders in reaching the agreement has been condemned by many unionists.

Two of the main teaching unions recently voted against the Croke Park agreement. The Teachers' Union of Ireland rejected the deal by a margin of three to one, while the Association of Secondary Teachers Ireland voted "no" by a margin of 62% to 38%.

TUI General Secretary Peter MacMenamin attributed the large margin to the open-ended demand for the renegotiation of the teachers' contract, which is widely viewed as buying a "pig in a poke". Asked whether the TUI would be bound by any overall decision in favour of the deal by public sector unions, MacMenamin did not rule out a go it alone position.

ASTI General Secretary John White said: "Clearly the ballot results of the second-level teacher unions indicate that a one-size fits all agreement is not appropriate for second level. Second-level teachers have been put to the pin of their collars dealing with all the difficulties of society which manifest in their classrooms at a time when resources have been

cut and the whole middle management structure has been removed from schools."

On the other hand, members of the Irish National Teachers' Organisation, the largest in the country, voted to accept the deal by nearly two to one.

Other unions which have backed the deal include the Public Service Executive Union and the Association of Higher Civil and Public Servants. Meanwhile, the Civil Public and Services Union voted against the agreement.

At the biennial conference of the Impact public sector trade union, delegates rejected calls to urge a No vote on the Croke Park agreement. The union's National Education and Welfare Board branch had proposed the conference should recommend rejection. Amanda Richards, a delegate from the Health and Safety Authority branch, said she had been involved in the trade union movement for a number of years, but she had never seen a deal which resulted in a four-year pay freeze and an uncertain reversal of pay cuts presented as "a major achievement."

Other delegates pointed out that accepting the agreement would be "shackling ourselves as trade union members and activists," since it would adversely affect the pay, promotional opportunities and working conditions of Impact members and weaken the union movement. ●

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