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people's VOICE

Ballantyne and Corbin

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Israeli attack on the high seas draws world condemnation

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Victims of the May 31 assault on the *Mavi Marmara*



Angry protesters hit the streets in London, Ankara, Tel Aviv and hundreds of other cities across the globe after Israel's May 31 attack on the Gaza Freedom Flotilla.



3 Trustees under fire

For daring to stand up for public education and the interests of students and staff, Vancouver School Board trustees are again under fire from the Campbell Liberal government in BC.

INSIDE

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Trade unions in Canada and abroad are calling to end Israel's blockade of Gaza, where 1.5 million Palestinians suffer under terrible conditions.

10 Theocratic takeover?

A new book details plans by the fundamentalist forces around Stephen Harper to transform Canada into a theocratic religious state, eliminating basic human rights and social programs.

Ontario Natives ready to protest HST

Special to PV

The new Harmonised Sales Tax, which takes effect in Ontario and British Columbia on July 1, was at the top of the agenda for aboriginal chiefs gathered at the Oneida First Nation near London for the annual meeting of the Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians (AIAI).

Under the existing provincial sales tax, Ontario First Nations with Indian status cards get a point-of-sale tax exemption on purchases on and off-reserve. Status holders are exempt from the GST only for goods purchased on or delivered to native reserves. The HST will be administered solely by the federal government. There is no provision to extend the exemption for provincial portion of the new tax.

Randall Phillips, chief of the Oneida First Nation, said the HST was passed too quickly and without First Nations consultation. He said if the exemption isn't added, his community is ready to take action.

"We've talked about possible slowdowns of the major highways like the 401, and blocking the big international bridges and railway lines," said Phillips.

Officially, Ontario supports a

continuation of the exemption. On May 3, the province and the Chiefs of Ontario signed a memorandum of agreement that "commits the parties to work together to realize the continuation of the First



Nation point of sale tax exemption."

Phillips acknowledged the exemption was a "tough sell" with Canadians. He said there's a misconception that reserves are 'tax havens' for status Indians. But he said most reserves lack all but basic commercial amenities and residents are forced to shop off-reserve for most essentials. That means under the HST they will pay full tax on most purchases. That will add an estimated \$85-million to \$121-million tax burden to Ontario First Nations.

Provincial and federal

representatives met June 7 to discuss the matter again, but a June 2 e-mail from the Finance Department stated policy plainly. It read, "Status Indians will continue to be exempt from the GST/HST on purchases made on reserve, and on purchases made off reserve if the property is delivered to a reserve by the vendor or the vendor's agent. This approach is fully consistent with the Indian Act, which exempts from tax the personal property of an Indian or band situated on a reserve and their interests in reserve or designated lands."

Speaking at the AIAI meeting, chief Dean Sayers of the Batchewana First Nation near Sault Ste. Marie, said Canada's position

amounts to an attack on sovereignty. He said the treaties negotiated by his people were between sovereign nations and none of the treaties ever specified Canada could subject First Nations to taxation.

"It's like France trying to tax Mexico," he said, warning that his community was prepared to protest the HST with blockades of railway line through their territory.

In a May 11 Sault Star article, Chief Sayers wrote, "The spirit and intent of our relationship needs to be worked towards on the part of the Crown, and we don't see an agenda, we don't see a meaningful table that's being set, so we have to compel the Crown. Unfortunately, it's going to cause

some inconvenience, but we have to. It's getting worse. It's a constant, never-stopping erosion of our rights."

Sayers said the blockade will go up June 21 and, unless a three-way deal is signed between the province, the federal government, and First Nations, the stoppage would continue, "probably for the summer, maybe longer."

Anishinabek Nation Grand Council Chief Patrick Madahbee has commended the HST protest efforts by Batchewana First Nation.

"I applaud the efforts by Batchewana to protect our rights," says Madahbee. "This initiative will show the government that we have drawn our line in the sand on this HST issue." •

"Union members aren't Kleenex"

By Mikael Swayze/CALM

When a fleet coordinator at the Greater Toronto Airport Authority (GTAA) was fired in 2004 for allegedly claiming sick leave fraudulently, she filed a grievance. Arbitrator Owen Shime recently awarded her more than \$500,000 because of the lack of cause and the high-handed manner in which

the employer fired her. In addition, he found that employers of unionized employees have a duty to act in good faith in carrying out management functions.

The worker, a Public Service Alliance of Canada member, was a 23-year employee of the GTAA with no prior record of discipline or absenteeism. She suffered a work-related injury in the fall of 2003, took two days off work and was referred to a physiotherapist. However, she needed surgery. She had the surgery in February 2004 and was given a note saying she would be off work for four weeks.

She lived with a fellow GTAA employee who was off sick at the time and was under covert surveillance by the employer. The employer decided to also place the grievor under surveillance. They saw her running a few errands and seeming not to suffer any discomfort. They asked for more medical information and that she return to work sooner. Fearing being terminated, as her partner had been, she returned to work a week early. She was suspended and on March 24 she was terminated.

Because of the surveillance and the GTAA's refusal to believe her and her doctor and physiotherapist, she was referred to a psychiatrist who diagnosed her with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and with betrayal trauma. Here was

a 23-year employee with a perfect record, "stalked" by her employer and then fired while legitimately off sick. Her PTSD originated from previous assaults. However, the re-emergence of her PTSD symptoms was entirely a result of her firing.

The arbitrator found her testimony and that of her doctor and physiotherapist compelling. He was particularly critical of the fact that GTAA management saw fit to judge for themselves the grievor's medical condition solely on the basis of the video evidence.

The arbitrator wrote in his conclusion: "Employees are not like tissues to be used up and then thrown out at a whim into the bin of low level employment or unemployment. Employees, particularly those such as the grievor, who have been long term local employees, are entitled to both a reasonable consideration of their seniority and work record and to a reasonable investigation of their conduct before being discharged and accused of dishonesty."

He also found there is an "obligation on the employer not to conduct itself, without reasonable and proper cause, in a manner calculated and likely to destroy or seriously damage the relationship of trust and confidence between employer and employee." •

(Mikael Swayze is a staff representative with CUPE 3902 and CALM Secretary-Treasurer.)

PV Fund Drive: \$50,000 in 2010
\$35,009 raised: 70%

We're getting closer to the finish line, but we still need a big push to go over the top! Our Fund Drive for 2010 has now reached 70% of our target. By June 7, we have received \$35,009 towards our goal of \$50,000. Recent successful fundraisers included the 18th Annual People's Voice/Rebel Youth Banquet at the Russian Hall in Vancouver. Thanks to the Shelton family which provided most of the delicious dinner, and to all the other volunteers who made it a great evening.

Congratulations to our Saskatchewan supporters, who are now officially the first province to meet the target, with exactly 100% of their \$800 goal turned in.

Ontario is not far behind, at 85.2%, with \$18,397 of their \$21,600 raised so far. Quebec is

still in third place, with \$300 raised, or 60% of their \$500 target. British Columbia has moved into fourth, with \$11,467 of their \$20,000 target, or 57%. Next is Manitoba, with \$1,345 turned in (56%), followed by Alberta at 39.7%, with \$1350 out of \$3400 raised. Newfoundland has sent in 20% of their \$400 goal, and we have \$170 from the Maritimes, or 14.2% of their \$1200 target. Another \$1100 has been raised by miscellaneous and overseas friends.

This issue looks at the class struggles of 1935, in particular the Corbin miners' strike and the "Battle of Ballantyne Pier." Also, the tragic assault by Israeli commandos against the Gaza Freedom Flotilla, and the heroic response by the peace activists and the peoples of Palestine and the world, occupies a

prominent place in our pages. International solidarity has been a hallmark of the working class press in Canada from the very first issue of *The Worker*, back in 1922. Please send your donations to help us carry on this proud tradition!

Toronto-area readers should mark Saturday, July 3, 2-5 pm (rain or shine) on your calendars. That's the annual People's Voice BBQ hosted by the Davenport Club, at 58 Albany Ave. (one block east of Bathurst, north of Bloor). This feast is just \$20 for "all you can eat", and kids under 12 get in free. Please RSVP to let them know how many people to expect. You can email to olatif@sympatico.ca, or call 416-536-6671.

Our biggest fundraiser of the Drive is usually the annual Walk-A-Thon organized by the Lower Fraser Club CPC. This year's event will be on Sunday, August 1, at Bear Creek Park in Surrey. Call Harjit for details, at 604-543-7179.

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

Here's my contribution to the PV Fund Drive!

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

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58 Albany Ave., Toronto
(one block east of Bathurst, north of Bloor)

Please RSVP as soon as you can:
olatif@sympatico.ca (416)536-6671

CUPE Ontario: internal divisions consume convention

By Helen Kennedy, Toronto

CUPE Ontario has emerged from its recent convention in Windsor with divisions in its leadership and budget cuts that could hamper its ability to act as one of Canada's leading social unions. The union that has been on the leading edge of many critical debates in the labour movement over the past decade has been hobbled by an accumulated deficit. And, instead of coming out strongly in defence of free collective bargaining in the face of a provincial government that is creating a wage-freeze environment, the leadership appears to be consumed by internal divisions.

The CUPE Ontario officers,

President Fred Hahn and Secretary-Treasurer, Candace Rennick, were elected by the Executive Board when previous president Sid Ryan moved on to become president of the Ontario Federation of Labour in November 2009. Ryan had led CUPE Ontario for 17 years and provided much of the impetus within CUPE for a strong fightback against privatization, for supports for coordinated bargaining and for being a staunch defender of Palestine.

In Ontario, the March budget did nothing to stem the corporate tax cuts, which, according to Hugh Mackenzie at the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, will cost an additional \$2.5 billion by 2012-13.

Savings of course will be taken by implementing a wage freeze for all provincially funded organizations (eg. front-line, low-paid social and community service organizations) and all provincial collective agreements that expire over the next two years. Transit funding to expand Toronto's sorely needed infrastructure was slashed and postponed. The poor will see fewer benefits with a miserly 1% increase in social assistance combined with the elimination of the "special diet program" that thousands have relied on to supplement their families' nutritional intake.

However, from the onset of the Convention, the CUPE Ontario budget defined much of the debate. In her first report, Rennick revealed



CUPE 79 members at Toronto's Labour Day Parade last year. (PV photo: Ed Bil)

that CUPE Ontario had a deficit of just over \$1 million and that CUPE Ontario was "insolvent." While the fiscal year deficit was close to \$500,000, deficits from past years stood at over \$500,000.

The current year deficit was the result of a variety of factors. Several staff in the CUPE Ontario office have been on extended sick leaves and their positions were back-filled through book-offs. The budget overage in this category was almost \$300,000. Other areas in which CUPE Ontario spent more than budgeted included \$85,000 in strike support, over \$100,000 in campaign costs that were disallowed by the National, over \$100,000 in convention costs, and increased translation costs. Despite losing its largest affiliate (Local 79, inside municipal workers in Toronto), dues income exceeded revenue targets, due to the decision at the 2008 Convention to convert to a percentage system which results in automatic increases with wage settlements.

Rennick's proposed solution to the financial "crisis" was that CUPE Ontario had requested CUPE National co-sign a loan to assist the Division in "offering relief and

a path to financial stability." CUPE National's conditions? "A review of [CUPE Ontario's] finances and operations to better understand the seriousness of the situation and to help in identifying the most accurate amount of financing required." An auditing firm from Winnipeg was brought in to conduct the review. The result, published and distributed to the floor as the "Management Letter for Financial Structuring", outlined 103 recommendations, that if implemented would result in the National's signature on a loan agreement.

Other recommendations include gapping and staff lay-offs, making it more difficult to book-off activists, especially those from smaller and more female-dominated locals, and establishing a "budgeting culture" at CUPE Ontario.

The Action Caucus, which met at the convention, were alarmed with the strategy that would make CUPE Ontario more dependent on the National Union, given the latter's move to the right over the past seven years. The Caucus

see CUPE Ontario, page 11

Sinking Liberals lash out at Vancouver school trustees

PV Vancouver Bureau

Sinking fast in the polls, the B.C. Liberal government struck back this spring at a long-time target - public education. When Education Minister Margaret MacDiarmid appointed B.C. Comptroller-General Cheryl Wenezink-Yollande as a "Special Advisor" to report on the Vancouver School Board's budget crisis, she limited the terms of reference to get the political ammunition the Liberals so desperately need.

On the surface, that goal was achieved on June 4, when the Advisor's report was released. Corporate media outlets seized on the report, with headlines blaming the VSB trustees for "financial mismanagement." According to the Advisor (who is not independent of the government, as some media reports claim), the trustees are largely to blame for the district's \$16 million budget shortfall and the layoffs which will take effect in September.

After a mysterious one-week delay, the 88-page report was finally released on a Friday afternoon, one day after the provincial legislature was adjourned by the Liberals until the spring of 2011. It was sent simultaneously to the media and the School Board, giving the VSB trustees no opportunity to study the document before

reporters began calling with questions based on MacDiarmid's carefully prepared script. This follows the Minister's usual pattern; back in April, she appointed the Advisor (who is neither independent nor at arms-length from the government) without the courtesy of first informing the Board.

But having played these cards to their best advantage, the Liberals still have a problem. The fact is that the Advisor's report, which cost some \$200,000 to prepare, is loaded with mistakes, omissions, and unsubstantiated opinions. If the VSB trustees and supporters of public education can break through the initial media barrage, MacDiarmid and the Liberals could actually take another hit to their crumbling credibility.

At PV press time, the School Board was meeting with the Minister (who could only spare one hour!), and preparing to issue a detailed response. But highly-respected public education activist Dawn Steele shredded the report within less than 48 hours.

As Steele notes in a four-page response (found at <http://stopeducationcuts.org>) the report was suspicious from the beginning, since it singles out Vancouver at a time when virtually every school district faces similar shortfalls, some much larger in

percentage terms. The terms of reference excluded consideration of provincial funding, the primary cause of the budget challenges.

"Nowhere does the report examine the impacts on students and their educational achievement of Vancouver's planned \$16 million in cuts for next year," Steele points out. "Instead of advice on averting those cuts, it assumes most should proceed and suggests further 'savings' via new fees and more cuts. Vancouver is not alone. Most BC boards face the same challenges, but the report offers them no help, except to close more schools, charge more fees, or demand union 'concessions'...."

The report proposes some potential savings, but far less than the cuts planned for next year. Interestingly, despite repeated claims by MacDiarmid and Premier Campbell that the VSB is in a surplus position, the report confirms that a deficit exists, but argues it would have been less if VSB had cut more and raised fees earlier.

Astonishingly, most of the report's "solutions" are based on initiatives already in place or being implemented.

This recycled advice includes "attract international students" (Vancouver already recruits more than most districts); "close schools" (Vancouver just updated its school closure policy. As Steele points out, Prince George, after closing 10 schools for an expected loss of 200 students next year, then had to cut \$6.2 million from its budget); and "raise rental fees" (Vancouver earns more fees than most districts, and increases may force daycares to close).

From there, the report calls for new cuts to adult and continuing education programs, and to pre-kindergarten for inner city students. Both proposals would significantly increase public expenditures in future.

The Advisor proposes to reduce VSB advisory committees and the time spent listening to stakeholders. The advisory committees cost \$160,000, only 0.03% of the total VSB budget, but this item has been widely (and even deliberately) misunderstood. VSB committees (student services, facilities, employee relations, anti-

see TRUSTEES, page 11



BC Teachers Federation delegates rally against education funding cuts during their 2009 Convention. (PV photo: K. Cariou)

CUPE BC hits anti-trustee report

Commenting on the Comptroller General's review of Vancouver School Board operations, CUPE BC president Barry O'Neill says that excluding the education funding model from the review makes it particularly hard to understand how government can conclude that there is ample funding.

"From the outset - when the Board of Education had to learn about this review in the media - the process has looked like pure politics. And while we are not surprised, we are very concerned that the B.C. government has used the Comptroller General's office to put a chill on its critics," says O'Neill.

O'Neill says that at first glance some of the recommendations show a failure to comprehend the role that schools and public education play and the important links that schools have with their communities.

The report suggests that the Board export its budget problems to non-profit groups by increasing fees charged to child care programs using space in schools by \$1.8 million. This would place a crippling burden on the backs of non-profit groups, working parents and families who rely on community-based child care.

O'Neill also says that the report's critique of the Board philosophy that "public education should be needs-based as opposed to operating within a defined budget" is wrong-headed. "Parents elect boards to be concerned about the educational needs of students, not simply to find ways to operate within increasingly inadequate budgets," says O'Neill.

The report suggests that the Board could save up to \$5.7 million per year by shedding surplus school space through closing and consolidating schools. O'Neill notes that boards are obliged to hang on to surplus space in light of the intended expansion of early childhood education. "Where exactly are the cost savings going to come from with this recommendation?" he asks.

Boards of Education throughout the province are struggling with budget shortfalls, which the BC Association of School Business Officials recently estimated to be over \$300 million. CUPE BC has called for an emergency summit on education funding to address the situation facing VSB and districts throughout the province. ●

EDITORIALS

War crimes redux

Yet again, the country which claims to "lead the war on terror" has been exposed as a regime of war criminals. This time, a new investigation of the CIA's "enhanced interrogation program" ("mass torture" would be more accurate) has been released. Physicians For Human Rights (PHR) has uncovered evidence that doctors took part in human experimentation and research on detainees in CIA custody, acts which are utterly illegal and highly unethical. PHR says the experiments "appear to have been performed to provide legal cover for torture, as well as to help justify and shape future procedures and policies governing the use of the "enhanced" interrogation techniques."

Descriptions of this "research" are shocking. The physicians measured various "techniques" to help answer "important" questions: how much torture can prisoners endure before it kills them? How much water can be ingested before prisoners go into a coma? How long can prisoners be deprived of sleep before they lose their minds? What combinations of torture techniques yield the best results?

Similar "research" was conducted by the Nazis and Japanese fascists during World War Two. Sixty years later, U.S. health professionals are engaged in violations of the Geneva Conventions, The Common Rule, the Nuremberg Code and other prohibitions against illegal human subject research and experimentation. These are war crimes, not minor transgressions.

A Canadian government which believed in international law would immediately break its ties both with the U.S. war machine, and with the genocidal Israeli government. Instead, we are saddled with a minority Harper Tory government which calls these regimes its closest allies. To end this shameful situation, Canadians must press for a quick defeat for the Tories in Parliament, and then in the electoral arena, after an election campaign in which Canada's alliances with war criminals is made a prominent issue.

National Aboriginal Day

June 21 is National Aboriginal Day, a date to celebrate the struggles of Aboriginal peoples for social and economic equality, and for their national rights. This year, we salute the principled opposition by Ontario First Nations against the so-called "Harmonised Sales Tax," which threatens historic treaty rights. An important victory has been achieved with the news that the federal government will restore \$4 million in funding to the First Nations University in Regina.

But the challenges facing Aboriginal peoples under the racist oppression of the Canadian state remain enormous. For example, legislation tabled in Parliament will not meet the objective of ensuring that First Nations have access to safe drinking water. To Canada's shame, 114 Aboriginal communities remain under Drinking Water Advisories and 49 water systems are still classified as high risk. "Every family in this country should have access to clean, safe drinking water and First Nations should not be an exception," says Assembly of First Nations National Chief Shawn A-in-chut Atleo, but the Harper Tory government, like its predecessors, continues to drag its feet.

Other facts to consider: life expectancies for Aboriginal peoples are 5-7 years below the rest of the population; infant mortality rates are 1.5 times higher than the average; the suicide rate of First Nations youth is six times higher than the Canadian average, and the tuberculosis rate - a reliable yardstick for poverty - is 8 to 10 times higher. And the federal government still refuses to sign the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

But despite Harper's feeble protests that the government faces difficult fiscal problems, the Tories are about to purchase 65 U.S. fighter jets from Lockheed-Martin, at a cost of \$9 billion. Apparently the ability to kill people in other countries is an urgent priority, but improving the lives of Aboriginal people is not.

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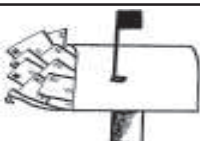
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LETTERS

People's Voice welcomes your letters. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity, and to refuse to print letters which may be libellous or which contain personal attacks. Send your views to: "Letters to the Editor" 706 Clark Drive, Vancouver, BC, V5L 3J1 or pvoice@telus.net

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Letters to the Editor

Wheat Board "democracy"

MP David Anderson and Prime Minister Stephen Harper have given a lesson about Canadian Wheat Board (CWB) democracy.

Legislation has been introduced to prevent small grain producers (delivering less than 40 tonnes to the CWB) from voting in board elections. Mr. Anderson describes this as putting farmers first. But, the irony is very large farmers that never deliver any board grains to the CWB would be still eligible to receive a voting ballot. Anderson and Harper say they want only "real" farmers voting in Board elections.

I think that means they only want open marketers voting in CWB elections. That's what David Anderson calls making the Board more accountable. Why does this legislation, coming from the right wing Harper government not surprise me?

Henry Neufeld,
Waldeck, Saskatchewan

Disappointed reader...

First of all I would like to say that I am a regular reader of the People's Voice online. I frequently enjoy the articles, which provide a fresh working class perspective on a number of topics, but I was quite disheartened to read the article written by B. Prasant in the June 1-15 issue. ("Romanticising the criminal: profile of a killer").

Prasant seems to suggest the Indian Maoist leader Kishanji is simply a bloodthirsty individual out to kill communists oddly comparing him to Hitler and Rambo. Prasant then goes on to write about how the "bourgeoisie media" are romanticizing Maoist exploits.

I just wanted to make a couple of observations. Firstly the majority of articles out there in the mainstream corporate media regarding the Naxalites have been extremely negative and critical of their actions. There may be a few sympathetic articles that 'romanticize' the Maoists but the overwhelming majority of media project them in a very negative light. In fact the majority of 'bourgeois' media project Naxalites in the exact same manner as Prasant.

The second point I wanted to address is Prasant's claim: "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".

In fact the Maoist movement has been active since 1967 - if their only method of gaining support was fear and violence Prasant would be correct - it would not have lasted long. The reality is the Maoists do have some genuine support among the most downtrodden in Indian society due to the material conditions inside India.

Internationally respected author Arundhati Roy spent time in the heart of Naxalite country talking with the rebels observing how things worked to get a better understanding of the situation. Here is an excerpt of an interview with Roy:

"If I was a person who is being dispossessed, whose wife has been raped, who is being pushed of their land and who is being faced with this 'police force', I would say that I am justified in taking up arms. If that is the only way I have to defend myself" said the Booker Prize-winning novelist. "There should be unconditional talks with the Maoists. We should stop thinking about who is justified. You have an army of very poor people being faced down by an army of rich that are corporate-backed. I am sorry but it is like that."

The reality of the situation is the Naxalites exist because Indian 'Democracy' is absolutely corrupt and has no desire or capability to meet the needs of the Indian people. We should be bringing to light the grinding poverty India's tribal people (and many others) are forced to endure. We should be discussing how the mega corporations like Tata are driving people from their land in an effort to rape India's resources to enrich themselves. We should be denouncing 'Operation Greenhunt' in which the Indian state has unleashed an orgy of violence and misery on the poorest people in society in the name of 'fighting terrorists'.

I don't think it is wrong to discuss concerns, challenge or flat out disapprove of Naxalite tactics. What I do think is important is to present a fair balanced approach to dealing with this topic. Publishing an article like this which sounds like many ruling class rants against the Maoists do nothing to help people understand the complicated situation in India. Maybe in a future issue you could publish an article dealing with the conditions in India, which have

allowed the Naxalite movement to grow into "India's largest internal security threat"?

Ian Sampson, via email

... and a reply

B. Prasant, our correspondent in India, has sent the following reply to the letter above.

Thank you for your interest in the Indian "Maoists", in Kishanji, and in the People's Voice.

In Bengal the "Maoists" have been known to be the agents of the ruling classes, and their recent and repeated *cris de coeur* about wishing to see the leader of a semi-fascist political outfit as the next Bengal chief minister legitimises this case. Cases have been reported where the arms and ammunitions these criminals use are from fresh supplies from the union [central] government's munitions factories.

As a former Naxalite myself, I was with the second central committee of the CPI(M-L) between 1968 and 1971, rejoining CPI(M) the following year. I may say that these self-proclaimed advocates of Mao Ze Dong thought, have killed principally poor peasants and landless labourers, as part of their fabricated "ongoing revolution," in Bengal as well in the provinces of Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu, targeting especially those who have shown their antipathy to the "Maoist" incursion. The people's resistance in Bengal led by the CPI(M), had recently put these criminals on the backfoot.

Their other "achievement" has been to run the CPI(M) down, killing in their raging antipathy for the Marxists, 400-odd CPI(M) workers, leaders, and supporters in eastern and central India - 298 in Bengal alone - from 2008, besides bringing about the recent attack on an express train, causing seven bogies [passenger cars] to be derailed and resulting in the death of close to 200 persons, injuring 300 more.

The point of view of the anti-Communist media and that of the self-proclaimed "intellectuals" cohabit cosily with each other. Both camps are eager to ensure that using the neo-Fascist "Maoists" as a facade they may try to undo whatever good the Left in general, and the CPI(M) in particular, have done for the uplift of the masses, especially the urban and rural poor, in India. The corporate media, contrary to your observations, have always put the "Maoist" goons upon a higher political pedestal vis-a-vis the CPI(M).

Communist Party denounces Israeli "piracy and murder"

Issued on June 1, 2010, by the Central Executive Committee, Communist Party of Canada

The Communist Party of Canada denounces the acts of piracy and murder committed by the Israeli government on May 31 against the Gaza Freedom Flotilla in international waters. This brazen military attack against unarmed civilians on the high seas - peace activists bringing humanitarian aid to the imprisoned people of Gaza - has rightly met with a storm of international condemnation.

The courageous Freedom Flotilla activists were carrying baby food, clothing, medicines, building materials and other supplies desperately needed by the people of Gaza, who suffer under a vicious blockade intended to starve the

Palestinians into submission. On board the Flotilla were members of Parliament, Nobel peace prize winners, and peace activists from all walks of life. Among them is Victoria resident Kevin Neish, well known to British Columbians as a long-time participant in many campaigns for peace, human rights and international solidarity.

The overwhelming reaction by Canadians is to call the Israeli attack on the Freedom Flotilla an act of war. Yet the Harper federal government, which was hosting Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu when this attack took place, has responded by calling for "investigations" to allow the state of Israel to buy time to evade international criticism. The position of the Harper government is utterly unacceptable. We join with others in demanding that



Communist Party banner at rally against Israeli aggression. (Photo: Ed Bil)

Canada condemn this war crime, press for the immediate release of Canadian citizen Kevin Neish [NOTE: later information revealed that two other Canadians were also kidnapped.] and all imprisoned members of the Flotilla,

and support the demand for an impartial international inquiry into this wanton action.

Canada must end its role as an apologist for the criminal actions of the Israeli state and come out squarely in favour of support for

a genuine political solution to the ongoing crisis, beginning with the demand for the immediate and unconditional lifting of the Israeli siege of Gaza. Such a new policy must be based on the implementation of all relevant U.N. resolutions, including Israel's complete withdrawal from all lands it has illegally occupied since the 1967 war; the dismantling of the Apartheid wall and removal of all Israeli settlements; the formation of a viable and genuinely independent Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital; the guaranteed right of Palestinians to return to their homelands; the certifiable denuclearization of Israel, and mutual security guarantees for all states in the region. Until such basic justice is achieved for the Palestinian people, the Communist Party will continue to support the international campaign of boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) against Israel. ●

New anti-free speech law takes effect in Poland

Statement by the Central Executive Committee, Communist Party of Canada

"Democracy" in the former socialist countries of Eastern Europe will take another body blow on June 8, when a new law takes effect in Poland, banning the depiction of anything considered a "communist symbol." In an outrageous twist, the law equates such symbols with the swastika and other Nazi insignia. The Communist Party of Canada condemns this legislation, which proves once again that democratic rights and civil liberties are being increasingly trampled across the European Union.

The legislation in Poland is an amendment to the penal code, criminalizing the dissemination of "communist symbolism." Signed into law last fall by the late president Lech Kaczynski, the measure was adopted by a nearly unanimous vote in the country's Parliament. The law includes a penalty of up to two years in prison for anyone who "produces, perpetuates, or imports, stores, possesses, presents, carries or sends a printout, a recording or other object" carrying "fascist, communist or other totalitarian symbolism" for other than "artistic" or "research" purposes.

In response, the Communist Party of Poland (KPP) correctly stated: "We strongly oppose efforts to equate fascism - which, based on racism, led to the bloodiest war in history thanks to the implementation of a plan to exterminate millions of people - with communism, which is built on the principles of social justice, and which defeated the genocidal fascists thanks to the utter dedication to struggle and sacrifice of countless millions of men, women and children. Despite even the most brutal repression we will not stop in our struggle for the victory of socialism, nor turn from the road to a victorious communist destiny!"

The free speech ban in Poland is just the latest such action taken by governments in Eastern Europe. Hungary imposed a ban on communist symbols in 1993; one of the leaders of the Hungarian Workers Party was given a prison sentence in 2004 for the "crime" of wearing a red star.

That sentence was overturned four years later by the European Court of Human Rights. Yet a similar law was adopted by Lithuania in 2009, and bans are also being considered in Estonia, Latvia and other countries.

In 2007, the Czech government outlawed the Communist Youth Union because it called for public ownership of the means of production. After a huge international outcry, that ban was finally overturned a few months ago by the Czech courts. But right-wing Czech parties are now demanding steps to outlaw the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia, the third-largest parliamentary party in the country.

This anti-communist campaign is also taking place on a continental level. The European Parliament last year proclaimed August 23 as a "Europe-wide Remembrance Day for the victims of all totalitarian and authoritarian regimes." The anti-communist measures in Poland and elsewhere serve broader objectives against the workers' movement. They aim to suppress the activity and contain the influence of the Communists, and to block discussion of the socialist perspective, especially in the conditions of the present capitalist crisis. As George Toussas of the Communist Party of Greece warned in a December 3, 2009 statement in the European Parliament, the Polish ban is "an act of provocation aimed at prosecuting anyone who offers resistance and fights for a better future."

Nor is this campaign limited to Europe. Here in Canada, anti-communist reactionaries with close ties to the Harper Tories are

preparing to build a so-called "monument to the victims of totalitarianism" in the National Capital Region of Ottawa. The real purpose of this "monument" is to serve as a rallying point for those who seek to restrict and ultimately ban the activity of the Communists in Canada.

In the face of this anti-communist escalation, communists in other countries are joining with the Polish Communists to express their opposition to the legislation. A number of Communist and Workers' Parties in Europe are sending MPs, MEPs, or other delegations to Warsaw to express their solidarity. Many parties will take part in a common day of action on June 8, 2010 with statements, news conferences, demonstrations, protests, and representations to Polish Embassies and EU offices, calling for the abolition of the anti-communist clauses and laws, and demanding the free, unhindered action of communists in all countries.

The Communist Party of Canada will join in these actions, by organizing pickets at Polish Consulates in Toronto and Vancouver. ●



Piotr Farfal, the new vice chair of Poland's public television, TVP, once published this magazine calling for the expulsion of Jews from Poland.



"We're getting some dangerous readings from the Income Gap."

Income gap getting wider in Quebec

A new report shows the earnings gap between the rich and the rest of Quebecers is at a 30-year high and poised to worsen due to recession.

The report, co-published by Institut de recherche et d'informations socio-économiques (IRIS) and the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA), looks at income inequality among Quebec families raising children under the age of 18. It finds income inequality got worse between 1976 and 2006 - in fact, 70% of Quebec families are earning a smaller share of the income pie than a generation ago.

"Quebeckers worked more and

the province's economy grew by 71% during this period but not all Quebec families enjoyed the benefits," says IRIS co-author Bertrand Schepper. "The lion's share of income gains went to the richest 10%, while the majority of Quebec families - the bottom 70% - ended up with a smaller share of the income pie."

Among the report's key findings:

Quebec families are working on average 321 hours more a year since 1996, which is the equivalent of an extra eight weeks of full-time work.

Most increased work time was accrued by families in the bottom 50% of the income spectrum but they're earning less than their counterparts a generation ago.

The richest decile of Quebec's families earn more today than a generation ago, without having to put in more time at the workplace. The further up the income ladder you go, the more striking the gains.

"The good news is that state's intervention is helping to lessen these inequalities," says IRIS co-author Eve-Lyne Couturier. "The bad news is recent policies by the Quebec government threaten to make the problem worse."

Who is Getting Richer, Who is Getting Poorer in Quebec 1976-2006 is available at www.policyalternatives.ca.

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"The lower deck was covered with bodies"

Kevin Neish, one of the Canadians on the Gaza Freedom Flotilla who were kidnapped by Israeli troops on May 31, was interviewed by Mark Forsythe on CBC's radio show B.C. Almanac, on June 3. The following excerpts are from a transcript by People's Voice editor Kimball Cariou.

CBC: What happened and when did you realise that Israeli commandos were coming aboard the ship?

Kevin Neish: There's two stairwells going between the two decks at either end of the ship. I was in the forward stairwell. Actually I did see the fighting. The Israelis were sticking guns in the first deck doorway and firing into the hallway.

CBC: To your knowledge, how many people were killed on board that vessel that you were on?

Neish: All the deaths happened on our vessel [the *Mavi Marmara* - Ed.] ...I saw two dead for sure when they took over the bridge and the captain announced, "stop fighting, the bridge has been taken over." The lower deck lobby area, when I went down at the end, was covered with bodies. They were all writhing, people were jumping on chests trying to keep them alive. There was blood

everywhere, bodies everywhere. I had blood on my pants.

CBC: There are allegations that IHH, the group behind putting this flotilla together, is an extremist group that has ties to Hamas and al-Qaeda.

Neish: I don't know anything about that. What I saw was a ship full of humanitarian workers, a ship full of



Kevin Neish, kidnapped by Israeli commandos

aid, a ship full of women. There was a whole deck of women. Old men. They had the patriarch, an 89 year old man, he was arrested and beat up. What I know is that I was threatened by the Israelis a number of times. When I was chained up they wouldn't let me go to the bathroom for 15 hours. You had to

beg to go to the bathroom. It was quite disgusting and filthy.

CBC: This is when you were in custody with the Israelis?

Neish: They had me tied up with plastic handcuffs for about 25 hours on the ship. I was one of the last ones to be released off the ship. That's why the embassy thought I was dead... Then I was jailed in Beersheba for a couple of days as well.

CBC: Do you have any worries at all that you were co-opted by a group that had ulterior motives?

Neish: No. (Laughs). No question in my mind. If they wanted to defend that ship they would have brought weapons on board. Immediately before the Israelis attacked, the crew and the aid workers were running around the ship finding things to defend themselves with. They didn't bring anything with them. When I came on board they searched my bag. I had a pocket knife in my bag. They threw it away because they wouldn't allow any weapons on board... When it was obvious the Israelis were going to attack, I could hear grinders going. They were grinding the chains off the fencing around the ship so they had something to use. If they were planning on attacking the Israelis with weapons, they would have brought weapons with them...



Within hours of the Israeli attack, protesters hit the streets in Vancouver on May 31.

I can tell you that I was treated very poorly by the Israelis. Like I say, I was 15 hours without being allowed to go to the washroom, and 24 hours without really being allowed to stand. I had guns put in my face, I had a revolver put right into my face. I had people aim guns at me steady. Anytime I tried to rise up and stretch, I had a gun on me. I had a dog snapping at me. You try and sit in one spot for 25 hours, with your hands trussed in front of you, and if you ask for the bathroom too many times, a soldier would walk over, take the tie wrap and yank on it and cinch it up so tight, the back of my right hand is still numb.

The whole night in the prison, both nights, they'd walk around every two hours and yell in the doors, "who's in here, what country?" ... This kept us awake all night. That was after two nights of no sleep, with the fighting and everything else. It was calculated, it was cruel, and it was demeaning.

....As far as being co-opted by anybody, I'm not an idiot. I've done this all my life. I've been in Guatemala, El Salvador, Colombia, and Palestine earlier. Nobody co-opts me. If anybody says I'm co-opted, come and tell me to my face. I wasn't born yesterday. ●

CALL FOR ACTION: Palestinian Boycott, Disinvestment and Sanctions National Committee

Occupied Palestine, 1 June 2010 - The Palestinian Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions National Committee (BNC) strongly condemns last night's fatal attack by the Israeli navy on the Gaza Freedom Flotilla carrying humanitarian aid to the occupied and besieged Gaza Strip. The BNC conveys Palestinian civil society's condolences to the families and friends of those killed by the Israeli assault and warmly salutes the principled solidarity and moral commitment of all those involved in the Gaza Freedom Flotilla.

In response, the BNC calls on international civil society to mobilize for an emergency Global BDS Day of Action on Saturday, June 5, 2010, the 43rd anniversary of the Israeli occupation of Gaza and the West Bank, including East

Jerusalem; and to pressure governments to start implementing trade sanctions and arms embargoes.

We call specifically on transport and dock workers and unions around the globe to refuse to load/offload Israeli ships and airplanes, following the historic example set by the South African Transport and Allied Workers Union (SATAWU) in Durban in February 2009 and endorsed by the Maritime Union of Australia (Western Australia).

The Flotilla, which was attacked in international waters in violation of international law, was carrying relief supplies that Israel has persistently prevented from entering Gaza, including medical supplies, cement and food. Israel's siege is considered a form

of collective punishment, a war crime under Article 33 of the Geneva Convention. All of the relief workers and activists on board the Gaza Flotilla ships were unarmed.

In legal terms, Israel's military assault against the Flotilla is an act of aggression against the countries whose flags the ships were carrying; politically, it is an assault against human decency and all people of conscience around the world who support freedom and justice.

Israel's impunity is the direct result of the international community's failure to hold it accountable for its ongoing occupation, colonization and apartheid against the Palestinian people. Israel's most recent war crimes committed in Gaza and documented in the Goldstone

Report as well as crimes committed in 2006 against the Lebanese people did not trigger any UN or official sanctions, entrenching Israel's feeling of being above the law. In fact, Israel's grave violation of international law was recently rewarded when the OECD voted unanimously to accept its membership.

The BNC urges international civil society to end this deep and fatal complicity. The BNC also welcomes and affirms the call of the UN expert on human rights Prof. Richard Falk who stated, "It is time to insist on the end of the blockade of Gaza. The worldwide campaign of boycott, divestment and sanctions against Israel is now a moral and political imperative, and needs to be supported and strengthened everywhere."

The UN Security Council has, unsurprisingly, failed to hold Israel accountable for its aggression against the Gaza Freedom Flotilla.

The BNC calls upon the UN General Assembly, the European Union, the Arab League and their member states to undertake practical measures which will end Israel's impunity for its massive and systematic violation of international law, including by:

- Immediately ending all collusion with Israel's unlawful blockade of the Gaza Strip and pressuring Israel's to guarantee unrestricted humanitarian access and freedom of movement of people and products into and out of the Gaza Strip.
- Bringing to justice all Israeli officials and military personnel who took the decision and/or implemented this latest massacre as well as earlier war crimes.
- Pressuring your government to immediately suspend arms trade with Israel, and to implement trade sanctions and arms embargos against Israel.

- In particular, we call on the EU to suspend the EU-Israel Association Agreement, the Mercosur to suspend the FTA, India to reverse the decision to hold negotiations around an India-Israel FTA and to stop arms deals with Israel, and Turkey to impose an arms embargo on Israel.

The BNC also calls on people of conscience and citizen groups all over the world to intensify BDS campaigns against Israel as the most effective means of holding it accountable to international law and ending its fatal impunity. ●

Journalist murdered in cold blood

A journalist covering the Gaza Freedom Flotilla was shot and killed by the Israeli commandos as he photographed their crime. Cevdet Kiliclar was one of 60 journalists on board the *Mavi Marmara* to provide accurate accounts of the Flotilla.

According to the activists on the main ship, when the Israeli commandos fired at them, Kiliclar photographed the incident, at which point a soldier shot him in the head. He died instantly. Forensic evidence suggests that the journalist was shot at very close range. This account was verified by British activist Kevin Ovenden when he arrived in Istanbul on June 3. The journalist, said Ovenden, had his camera to his eyes and was shot in the forehead; the bullet tore away the back of his skull.

Kiliclar, 38, was married with two children. His grieving widow, Derya Kiliclar, couldn't believe what had happened to her husband and said that she never thought the Israelis would kill peace activists even though she knew that children have been killed in Palestine. The last time she spoke to her husband was as he set sail from Antalya in southern Turkey. "He was very excited," she said, "because this was a humanitarian mission." ●



January 2009: During Israel's illegal invasion of Gaza, Toronto demonstrators rally to support boycott campaign. (Photo: Ed Bil)

Gaza Flotilla attack reveals the real "Axis of Evil"

By Finian Cunningham,
Global Research, June 5, 2010

(This commentary by Finian Cunningham was being written as the Rachel Corrie MV, carrying humanitarian aid to the besieged Gaza Strip, was intercepted by Israeli naval forces some 50 kilometres off the coast in international waters. Israeli commandos apparently blacked out satellite communications onboard the Rachel Corrie in a repeat of similar actions taken against the Free Gaza Flotilla on May 31. The Irish-owned vessel was taken into Israeli custody.)

This second violation of international laws by the Israeli state, involving piracy, armed aggression and abduction of foreign nationals, coming only days after its savage attack on the earlier convoy led by the Turkish-owned *Mavi Marmara* MV during which at least nine civilians were shot dead and dozens injured, clearly shows that the Israeli state sees itself beyond any legal or moral control. It is a self-justifying autonomous military machine that will fabricate any pretext for its actions, no matter how depraved these actions are. The US government under Barack Obama fits in the same criminal category given its bankrolling of the Israeli state with \$3 billion every year, the US refusal to sanction Israeli over its latest international aggression or its illegal and inhumane three-

year blockade of Gaza, and given Washington's own ongoing acts of international aggression and crimes against humanity in at least three other overseas territories: Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The aftermath of Israel's recent actions clearly demonstrate that the international community is now faced with a mortal threat from this US-Israeli axis—an axis of permanent state of war on the world.

Eyewitness accounts from aid workers, released after days of incarceration, flatly contradict official Israeli claims that their heavily armed forces acted in self-defence. Aid workers corroborate initial satellite images that show Israeli forces opening fire before and while boarding these ships.

Turkish autopsy reports show that nine of the dead were shot up to 30 times at point blank range.

"The Turkish forensic results also showed that a 60-year-old man, Ibrahim Bilgen, was shot four times in the temple, chest, hip and back. Fulkan Dogan, 19, was shot five times in the face, in the back of the

This multiple violation of international laws by Israel, perversely justified by Israeli leaders with the backing of the US, shows that the world indeed faces an urgent and virulent challenge to peace.

head, twice in the leg and once in the back from a distance of less than 45 centimetres," reports Press TV.



Some of the crew and passengers on the *Mavi Marmara*, before Israeli commandos attacked.

Yet such use of excessive lethal force against civilians continues to be justified by Israeli government leaders and tacitly by Washington.

Hours before the interception of the *Rachel Corrie*, Israel's foreign minister Avigdor Lieberman said: "We will stop the ship, and also any other ship that will try to harm Israeli sovereignty."

Note the ludicrous assertion that an internationally verified humanitarian aid ship is "harming Israeli sovereignty". Such a mindset is evidently beyond

any rational dialogue or supplication.

The same warped mindset is also revealed by media reports that one of the Israeli commandos involved in the raid on the *Mavi Marmara*, identified only as "Staff Sergeant S", is to be awarded a medal for valour for his single-handed killing of six civilians.

This multiple violation of international laws by Israel, perversely justified by Israeli leaders with the backing of the US, shows that the world indeed faces an urgent and virulent challenge to peace. This US-Israeli axis must be faced down

by the international community and legally held to account. The problem is that the existing international framework under the United Nations is clearly not up to the task. The quarantine and disabling of the US-Israeli warmachine will require a new international framework, perhaps headed up by members of the growing Non-Aligned Movement, such as Brazil, Turkey and Malaysia. One thing is for sure from the massive outpouring of public anger across the world, including the US and Europe, such an initiative would have critically important popular support. ●

Flotilla activists were shot in head at close range

Robert Booth, guardian.co.uk,
June 4, 2010

Israel is under pressure to allow an independent inquiry into its assault on the Gaza aid flotilla after autopsy results on the bodies of those killed, obtained by the Guardian, revealed they were peppered with 9mm bullets, many fired at close range.

Nine Turkish men on board the *Mavi Marmara* were shot a total of 30 times and five were killed by gunshot wounds to the head, according to the vice-chair of the Turkish council of forensic medicine, which carried out the autopsies for the Turkish ministry of justice on June 4.

The results revealed that a 60-year-old man, Ibrahim Bilgen, was shot four times in the temple, chest, hip and back. A 19-year-old, named as Fulkan Dogan, who also has US citizenship, was shot five times from less than 45cm, in the face, in the back of the head, twice in the leg and once in the back. Two other men were shot four times, and five of the victims were shot either in the back of the head or in the back, said Yalcin Buyuk, vice-chairman of the council of forensic medicine.

The findings emerged as more survivors gave their accounts of the raids. Ismail Patel, the chairman of Leicester-based pro-Palestinian group Friends of al-Aqsa, who returned to Britain on June 4, told how he witnessed some of the fatal shootings and claimed that Israel had operated a "shoot to kill policy".

He calculated that during the

bloodiest part of the assault, Israeli commandos shot one person every minute. One man was fatally shot in the back of the head just two feet in front of him and another was shot once between the eyes. He added that as well as the fatally wounded, 48 others were suffering from gunshot wounds and six activists remained missing, suggesting the death toll may increase.

The new information about the manner and intensity of the killings undermines Israel's insistence that its soldiers opened fire only in self defence and in response to attacks by the activists.

"Given the very disturbing

evidence which contradicts the line from the Israeli media and suggests that Israelis have been very selective in the way they have addressed this, there is now an overwhelming need for an international inquiry," said Andrew Slaughter MP, a member of the all party group on Britain and Palestine.

Israel said the number of bullets found in the bodies did not alter the fact that the soldiers were acting in self defence.

"The only situation when a soldier shot was when it was a clearly a life-threatening situation," said a spokesman for the Israeli embassy in London. "Pulling the

trigger quickly can result in a few bullets being in the same body, but does not change the fact they were in a life-threatening situation."

Earlier in the week, William Hague, the foreign secretary, said the government would call for an inquiry under international auspices if Israel refuses to establish an independent inquiry, including an international presence.

The autopsy results were released as the last of the Turkish victims was buried.

Dr. Haluk Ince, the chairman of the council of forensic medicine in Istanbul, said that in only one case was there a single bullet wound, to

the forehead from a distant shot, while every other victim suffered multiple wounds. "All [the bullets] were intact. This is important in a forensic context. When a bullet strikes another place it comes into the body deformed. If it directly comes into the body, the bullet is all intact." ●

WFTU urges strike against Israeli vessels

The Secretariat of the World Federation of Trade Unions has called for three-day strike actions against commercial vessels sailing to or from Israel. The actions will be led by the WFTU's transport affiliate bodies, the Trade Union International of Transport Workers, as "a practical demonstration of militant solidarity with the Palestinian people and against the blockade of the Gaza Strip."

The strikes will also back the WFTU's demand for an independent and democratic Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital, and condemn the killings by Israeli Defence Forces on May 31.

"No one must remain silent! No one must remain neutral!," says the call from the WFTU. "We must act now because we are all Palestinians!"

The dates for the three days of strike-boycott actions will be determined by each national affiliate union.

(www.wftucentral.org.)



Scene from the rally of 15,000 anti-war protesters held June 5 in Tel Aviv.



GLOBAL CLASS STRUGGLE

WFTU stands with Palestine

May 31 - The World Federation of Trade Unions condemns the new Israeli barbarism that has resulted in the murdering of people who just wanted to express their solidarity with the people of Gaza.

We are firmly on the side of the Palestinian people and we demand the withdrawal of all occupation troops from Arab territories. We demand the Gaza blockade to be immediately lifted and all passes to be opened straight away without restrictions. We demand the recognition of the Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital. We demand from the UN and international organizations to condemn the new incursion of the Israeli army and the U.S. policy, that supports this barbarism.

We call upon all WFTU affiliates and friends to express their solidarity in every possible

(Headquartered in Athens, the WFTU projects a policy of internationalism and class struggle against capitalism. It represents 70 million trade unionists in 95 countries. For more information, visit www.wftu.org)

ITUC condemns killings

May 31 - The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) condemns the killing of as many as 19 persons in a boat convoy headed for Gaza today, and the wounding of many more, as an outrage. A full, open and independent enquiry is needed to establish the precise details of what took place when Israeli soldiers boarded vessels in the convoy, which was organised to bring supplies to Gaza. Those responsible for violations of international law must be brought to justice.

"This appalling development underlines once again that violence and confrontation will not bring peace and justice to Palestinians and Israelis. The only acceptable way forward is through negotiation based on commitment on all sides to renounce violence. Given that the Israeli authorities have apparently said that the supplies in the convoy will in any case be taken into Gaza, the world can only wonder why this happened in the first place. In any case, meeting a humanitarian convoy with military force is unacceptable," said ITUC General Secretary Guy Ryder.

The ITUC also repeats its call for an end to the blockade of Gaza, to help bring an end to the ongoing humanitarian crisis there.

(The ITUC represents 175 million workers in 155 countries and territories, and has 311 national affiliates.)

International Transport Workers

MAY 31 - The International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), which represents professional seafarers worldwide, is shocked and appalled by Israeli forces' attack on the lead ship of a humanitarian aid convoy, the

Turkish vessel *Mavi Marmaris*... The ITF holds the Israeli authorities entirely responsible for the provocative storming of the ship, and condemns the harm caused to the civilians on board, who included peace activists and parliamentarians from many different countries.

With the rest of the international trade union movement, the ITF is calling for a full, open and independent enquiry to establish the details of what took place when Israeli soldiers boarded vessels in the convoy.

The ITF denounces Israel's blockade of Gaza and calls on the international community to support a political solution in which a viable Palestinian state can play a full part in international trade and commerce, which would include the full restoration of transport links.

COSATU (South Africa)

The Congress of South African Trade Unions is outraged at the murders by Israeli commandos... as a result of their armed attack on a convoy of ships carrying aid to the people of Gaza.

COSATU sends its condolences to the families and friends of those who lost their lives and calls upon the people of the world to condemn this act of Israeli state-sponsored piracy...

COSATU fully supports the call on the international community to pressure their governments to condemn this brutal deed and hold Israel accountable for the murder of foreign civilians at sea and illegal piracy of civilian vessels carrying humanitarian aid.

COSATU also calls for greater support for the international boycott, divestment and sanction campaign against Israel, which is proving again to be violent and ruthless in attacking and murdering those who stand in its way. We urge all South Africans to refuse to buy or handle any goods from Israel or have any dealings with Israeli businesses. COSATU reaffirms its support of the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to national sovereignty and the same human rights as any other people. We demand the immediate end to the Israeli siege and the illegal occupation of the sovereign territory which has been violently seized from the Palestinian nation.

International Federation of Journalists

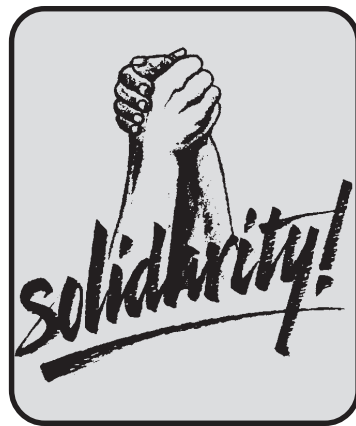
The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) reacted with shock at the news of the brutal attacks on civilians, including journalists, by Israeli forces in the assault on a flotilla that yesterday tried to breach the military blockade of the Gaza coastline in Palestine...

The IFJ is calling for an urgent and comprehensive international investigation into the incident and for the information blackout to be lifted.

"We join the European Union in demanding a full inquiry which must be independent in order to be

credible. We condemn any attempt at the blackout and censorship of news by the Israeli authorities which is hindering journalists from giving an accurate account of what is happening," said Jim Boumelha, IFJ President.

The IFJ believes that up to 100 journalists and media staff from a number of different countries were on board when the attacks took place. Aidan White, IFJ General Secretary, said the IFJ is fully



investigating the incident and plans to raise the issue at a special meeting of the United Nations Human Rights Council planned for Geneva.

"The international community must respond immediately to this outrage," said White. "The rights of journalists in conflict zones have been particularly highlighted by the United Nations and members states cannot stand by when one state acts in a reckless and dangerous manner."

CUPW (Canada)

On May 31, CUPW President Denis Lemelin sent the following letter to Prime Minister Stephen Harper, on behalf of the 54,000 members of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers.

You will be aware that the Israeli navy, in an act of piracy in international waters, has hijacked the international flotilla of ships which was attempting to deliver essential humanitarian aid to Gaza. The aid includes construction materials which would enable the people of Gaza to rebuild the homes destroyed by Israel in Operation Cast Lead in 2009...

I urge you to act swiftly to condemn this attack on the peace flotilla, which was breaking no international laws, and, that you demand to know the fate of those on board the vessels and to ensure that Israel releases the vessels immediately to allow this vital aid to reach its destination. Since Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is in Canada and has profusely praised you for maintaining strong relations with Israel, the Canadian Union of Postal Workers believes that you have an obligation to condemn this brutal attack.

Israel's occupation of Gaza is illegal under international law, and it has been accused in a UN report of committing war crimes in Gaza.

Your obligation must be towards a group of citizens peacefully attempting to deliver humanitarian aid, than to a country which repeatedly violates international treaties. CUPW calls on you to end the government's silence over

Israel's aggressive actions against the flotilla, and intervene now to demand its safe passage to Gaza.

CUPW is calling on you to condemn this wanton act of piracy against the peaceful flotilla taking aid to the people of Gaza. Finally, CUPW is calling upon you to take every step possible to bring about an end to the inhuman treatment of the people of Gaza by acting to end the siege and blockade that is taking place against them by the Israeli Government.

CUPE (Canada)

From a letter by Paul Moist, CUPE National President, to PM Stephen Harper.

It is deeply disturbing to learn that the Israeli navy, in international waters, attacked the humanitarian aid convoy killing ten and possibly more human rights activists and injuring dozens more. It is an outrageous violation of international law and I urge the Canadian government to condemn this brutal attack...

The Canadian government must call for the Israeli government to conduct an immediate investigation into this action and to make public immediately the rules of engagement issued to the troops who carried out this lethal attack. We must know the fate of those on board the vessels and ensure that Israel allow this aid to reach its destination. With Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Canada it is vital that the Government of Canada convey to him Canada's condemnation of such a horrific act.

CUPE supports a solution to the ongoing conflict that allows Palestinians and Israelis to live in peace. We condemn all acts of violence which make that peace more elusive.

Canada is in a position to take leadership in working to end the inhumane treatment of the people of Gaza and we are asking our government to do just that.

NUPGE (Canada)

From a May 31 letter by James Clancy, President of the National Union of Provincial Government Employees, to PM Stephen Harper:

The recent attack by Israeli Defense Forces on the Gaza Freedom Flotilla killing human rights activists has rightly outraged most Canadians and the world. I am writing you, on behalf of the National Union of Public and General Employees, to condemn this attack during your meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

This recent attack requires an immediate and strong condemnation from Canada. For Canada to remain silent on this attack as other countries and the United Nations criticize this horrific act on unarmed activists is unconscionable.

Mr. Netanyahu's presence in Canada following this attack accords you the opportunity to personally impress upon him our concern over Israeli aggression. Failure to do so is a betrayal of Canada's historical commitment to human rights. Furthermore, I urge you and your government to recall our ambassador to Israel and call for a meeting of the UN Security Council to discuss this matter.

Your government in the past has steadfastly refused to criticize the state of Israel. Surely this action by the Israeli Defense Forces on the eve of your meeting with the Israeli Prime Minister will end this silence.

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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Cheonan incident: questions and contradictions

By Sean Burton, PV
correspondent in South
Korea

For almost two months, the sinking of the South Korean warship *Cheonan* was marked with confusion, but it became very apparent within a short period of time who South Korea's leaders wanted to blame: their neighbour to the north.

On May 20, Seoul announced the results of the investigation into the sinking, charging the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK/North Korea) with responsibility. More specifically, Seoul claims that a small North Korean submarine fired a torpedo which caused an explosion that split the warship in two, taking the lives of 46 of the 104 crew members.

Seoul claims that its case is unshakable, but important questions remain. Seoul's evidence hinges on torpedo fragments which appear to have been rusting under the water for several months, and whose markings appear handwritten rather than inscribed, and using a different word than usual. The investigation team was entirely made up of states ideologically opposed to the DPRK and keen to tighten their economic strangulation of that country.

Beyond the torpedo itself are the questionable circumstances of the sinking. We are expected to believe that a small task-force of North Korean vessels made its way towards the South in secret, sunk the *Cheonan* and returned to base without being found by other patrol ships and helicopters.

This sequence of events is contradictory to earlier information. Until recently, it was maintained by the South Korean and US military that no unusual North Korean naval activity had been detected during the days surrounding the sinking. On April 2, Seoul announced that two North Korean submarines were said to have been in the area, but unconnected to the sinking. In any case, the official results specified that a different class of submarine was involved. Furthermore, a joint US-South Korean exercise was underway at the time, and the *Cheonan* itself specialized in countering submarines.

As the *Hankyoreh* reported: "...if things transpired as the investigation team announced, then a North Korean submarine penetrated the South Korean-U.S. surveillance net, waited precisely where the *Cheonan* would be approaching, sank the *Cheonan* in one shot, and then leisurely disappeared after completely avoiding a naval anti-submarine net..." (May 21, 2010)

Additionally, there were a number of statements from intelligence and military officials, including intelligence chief Won See-hoon and defence minister Kim Tae-young. Both men stated late in March and in early April that there was no indication of any North Korean movement, and that North Korean involvement was unlikely. It would seem that in the subsequent month, these opinions had been suppressed.

There are also conflicting reports about whether or not a

torpedo or its explosion were detected, and that given the location of the sinking, whether it was likely that the ship had run aground. An admiral representing the inquiry had stated that there was no sign of North Korean infiltration, but has since reversed that position. A soldier on a nearby island witnessed a pillar of water consistent with a torpedo explosion.

Given the complications, the incident may have been manufactured into a North Korean attack by the right-wing Lee Myung-bak administration.

The DPRK has strongly denied any involvement. A statement from the DPRK's Central News Agency (KCNA) in early April said the South Korean navy had only itself to blame for the loss of its ship. Since the results of the investigation were released, the DPRK accused Seoul of fabricating the evidence.

Most importantly, Pyongyang has offered to send representatives of its National Defence Commission to the South to verify the evidence.

The South clearly has no interest in accepting the offer, which could perhaps spark a new investigation.

Lee Myung-bak made his position clear late in May by ignoring the offer and stating unequivocally that North Korea deliberately attacked the South.



Investigators claim that this marking on a salvaged chunk of torpedo debris, which means "No. 1" in Korean, is consistent with markings found on another North Korean torpedo. They have not explained how this marking survived the explosion which destroyed the *Cheonan*.

He has ordered that all trade between the two countries cease, prohibited North Korean merchant traffic from Southern waters, and

ordered the military to step up its preparedness. There is even a plan to restart psychological warfare on the DMZ.

The US unsurprisingly backs its staunchly anti-communist ally. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton was in Seoul on May 26 to condemn North Korea and discuss further sanctions with the South. A large-scale joint anti-submarine exercise has also begun. The North has responded by announcing that it will fire directly at any loudspeakers and displays used for psychological warfare, and may well seize remaining South Korean property in joint economic zones.

Even if one were to accept that the DPRK sank the *Cheonan*, the fact remains that the hostile state of affairs was inevitable due to the belligerent stance of South Korea since Lee Myung-bak became president. Not only have tensions increased, but there was a naval clash last year in which a North

Korean vessel was heavily damaged with unknown casualties.

There have also been increasing restrictions on travel and trade which led the DPRK to seize South Korean property in a popular tourist area. The DPRK has announced that it will no longer abide by a series of protocols agreed to in 2004 to avoid accidental border clashes, particularly at sea.

Furthermore, the results of the investigation have yet to be totally accepted by a number of countries, most notably China and Russia. Russia is sending its own team to inspect the evidence, while China announced it desires a joint investigation between itself, the UN Command in Korea, and the Korean People's Army.

While meeting with Chinese premier Wen Jiabao, President Lee continued to press for support regarding sanctions, and the South Korean government is not keen to give the North a chance to defend itself. The situation continues to develop, and a peaceful resolution is not yet out of the question. Nevertheless, relations between the two countries will not improve until Seoul accepts some responsibility for increasing tensions, instead of pretending to be an innocent victim at every opportunity. ●

No war with Korea! For a made-in-Canada foreign policy of peace

Central Executive
Committee, Young
Communist League of
Canada

Canadian youth and students should be quick to reject and denounce the warmongering stance taken by the Harper Conservative government with regards to the crisis forming between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and South Korea since the March 26 sinking of the *Cheonan* naval vessel.

In a statement released on May 24th, Harper announced the government's intention to impose harsh sanctions, to support South Korea in a "decisive response," which did not rule out military action. The statement also condemned the DPRK for "egregious violation of international law," and "blatant disregard for international law," statements are darkly ironic coming from a Prime Minister and a government implicated in war crimes and torture in Afghanistan.

Harper's hypocrisy becomes further evident when considering the attack by apartheid Israel against the Freedom Flotilla which left several dead and dozens more wounded. The attack on the Flotilla, a group of unarmed boats bringing desperately needed humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip, has incited no condemnation from the Conservative government. While quick to condemn supposed attacks and violations of international law by the DPRK, Harper is unwilling to criticize violations by Israel against

the Palestinian people or their supporters.

Little evidence exists to implicate the DPRK in the sinking of the *Cheonan*. In fact South Korean sources, including the Defense Ministry, have made statements that no North Korean vessels in the area at the time of the attack. Despite this, the South Korean regime, backed by Washington, have presented the case as open and shut with the DPRK implicated in the crime.

The current Korean crisis is part and parcel of the cold war waged by US imperialism, South Korean ruling class, and their allies against the DPRK since the armistice which "ended" the Korean War in 1953. The demonization of the DPRK as part of an "Axis of Evil," and as a

"threat," is ludicrous when placed beside the reality of the DPRK, a poor country struggling for survival against hostility and economic sabotage by the US and its allies. The goal of this campaign is to achieve the total collapse of the socio-economic system in place in the DPRK and the reunification of Korea on a capitalist basis under US hegemony. It is also interesting to note that fortunes are to be made in arms contracts by keeping tensions high in the region, and that these tensions provide the only excuse for the presence of thousands of US troops in the region including in South Korea and Japan.

Harper's slavish parroting of Washington's warmongering threatens to entangle Canada in a

new military conflagration on the Korean peninsula. Such a conflagration would be an imperialist war for the benefit of multinational corporations and arms dealers which could cost innumerable lives.

The Canadian working class, youth and students, must categorically reject Canadian involvement in aggression towards the DPRK as they rejected Canadian involvement in the invasion of Iraq. What is needed is an independent and made-in-Canada foreign policy based on peace, disarmament, friendship, and sovereignty. It's time to run the war mongering Harper Tories out of office and to fight for a new future for youth which is not based on imperialist war and plunder. ●

Deplorable labour conditions linked to suicides

Maquila Solidarity/CALM

As Canadian consumers rush to get their hands on a new iPad, Apple Inc.'s latest gadget, Asian civil society organizations are protesting Foxconn, the world's leading electronics manufacturer and one of Apple's major suppliers, for its deplorable labour practices that have been linked to 12 worker suicides this year at one of its Chinese plants.

The workers complain of extremely low wages, excessive overtime, extreme productivity targets and a particularly harsh and isolating management system.

Foxconn has responded by

setting up nets around the factories' dormitories and buildings, bringing in mental health experts, and asking workers to contractually agree not to commit suicide and to report colleagues who appear to be undergoing distress.

Unfortunately, this blame-the-victim approach treats the suicides as a problem of the workers themselves and de-emphasizes the role that workplace practices played in the deaths.

Apple launched its fourth generation iPhone on June 8 and Asian labour rights groups are calling this date a Global Day of Remembrance for the Victims of Foxconn. They are demanding

that Foxconn shut down production for a month (with full pay for workers) to thoroughly investigate the underlying systemic workplace issues and management systems linked to the suicides. They are also asking Foxconn to facilitate the establishment of democratic worker organizations in the factory, so that workers can overcome their isolation and bring problems to management's attention in a collective manner.

Asian civil society groups are calling on consumers to boycott the products made by Foxconn, including iPhones, and iPads, throughout the month of June. ●



The theocrats in our midst

The Armageddon Factor: The Rise of Christian Nationalism in Canada, by Marci McDonald, 2010, Random House Canada

Review by Wayne Madden

People are well aware of the power and influence of the "religious right" in the United States. However, Canadians often believe they cannot have the same influence in Canada. For example, many people believe Steven Harper deliberately moved away from the strong religious ties and messages of the old Reform Party.

In *The Armageddon Factor*, Marci McDonald carefully shows how the religious right influences the Harper government. Evangelical leaders such as Charles McVety, David Mainse, and Faytene Kryskow; and organizations such as Canada Christian College, Crossroads Christian Communications, Focus on the Family (with various spin-off organizations), Equipping Christians for the Public Square Centre and REAL Women Canada have many allies in the government ready to implement their agenda. These include MPs and cabinet minister such as Stockwell Day, Pierre Poilievre, Jim Flaherty, Cheryl

Gallant, Garry Goodyear and Vic Toews.

Chapter by chapter, McDonald outlines how the religious right influences government policy on

science (supporting creationism or so-called "intelligent design"), social services (to move health and human care from government to faith-based organizations),

foreign policy (uncompromising and unquestioning support for Israel over the Palestinian people), human rights (against protection for LGBT persons), and health care (restricting access to abortion). She shows how they effectively use radio and television both to publicize their agenda and raise money, sometimes by very questionable means. There are also chapters on how they reach out to influence youth both through evangelism and private religious schools and universities.

McDonald's book is not just based on information gathered from the media. She attended events put on by religious organizations, interviewed key players and read their publications. Facts are checked for accuracy. Her coverage is fair and she records facts favourable to evangelicals. But the message is clear. The religious right is determined to move Canada toward a theocratic style of government. They support government run exclusively by "evangelical" Christians on what they believe to be "Biblical values".

The weakness of her book is that she does not suggest an effective response to the threat. This is important. As a Christian, I know that while believers may be

a majority in society, Christians are a minority. Fundamentalists - or "evangelicals" as they prefer to be called - are a minority within the Christian community, but with a lot of power and influence. Almost all politicians, not just Conservatives and U.S. Republicans, will listen to and accommodate them. Questioning fundraising practices and activities of evangelicals is simply not politically correct. For example, charitable tax status is not given to political action and lobby groups, yet many religious organizations with charitable tax status do engage in political action and lobbying.

This book is essential reading to anyone interested in protecting democracy. Throughout history, theocratic governments from the ancient Pagan Roman Empire to the Papal States and other medieval kingdoms to modern day Islamist States such as Iran and Saudi Arabia have proven to be either corrupt or tyrannical or both. We must defend religious freedom but allowing religious agendas to determine government policies is a threat to democratic rights and freedoms. We do not need to be afraid, but we must be informed and prepared to confront theocrats in our midst. ●



Costello cancels Israel concerts

On May 15, Elvis Costello announced via his website that he was cancelling two summer performances in Israel. He stated, "there are occasions when merely having your name added to a concert schedule may be interpreted as a political act... and it may be assumed that one has no mind for the suffering of the innocent. I... believe that the audience for the coming concerts would have contained many people who question the policies of their government on settlement and deplore conditions that visit intimidation, humiliation or much worse on Palestinian civilians in the name of national security. I am also keenly aware of the sensitivity of these themes in the wake of so many despicable acts of violence perpetrated in the name of liberation. ... I hope it is possible to understand that I am not taking this decision lightly or so I may stand beneath any banner... It is a matter of instinct and conscience."

The Vancouver-based singer's decision made headlines around the world. Costello is the best-known artist yet to publicly refuse to perform in Israel due to its human rights violations. Other artists who have done so include singer Gil Scott-Heron, Indian writer Arundhati Roy, British novelist John Berger, US poet Adrienne Rich, British film director Ken Loach, and Canadian author and activist Naomi Klein.

Israel's culture minister, Limor Livnat, responded to the news by saying that Costello "is not worthy" to perform in Israel.

However, Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME) recognized the importance of Costello's decision



Elvis Costello

and sees it as an example for others.

"The Israeli government may not realize it yet, but its brutal assault on Gaza has left an indelible mark on the international psyche," said CJPME President Thomas Woodley.

In addition to ongoing rights violations due to Israel's occupation of Palestinian territories, Israel's brutal three-week assault on Gaza last year left over 1400 dead, most of them civilians, including over 400 women and children.

"We encourage other artists to boycott Israel until it ends its illegal military occupation of Palestinian territories and its cruel blockade of Gaza, which is preventing the victims of last year's carnage from even rebuilding their lives and homes," Woodley continued. "We hope that Diana Krall, Elton John and others with scheduled appearances in Israel will show the same sensitivity and courage that Costello has," he added.

Krall - Costello's wife - still has a concert date in Israel in August. "When Israel ends its violations of international law, and respects the same standards other countries do, artists' appearances there will no longer provoke controversy," he concluded. ●

15,000 communist and peace activists march in Tel Aviv

15,000 communist and peace activists marched in Tel Aviv on June 5, to mark 43 years of Palestinian and Arab territories occupation, and to slam the IDF murder raids on Gaza-bound ships.

Dozens of fascist counter-protesters attempted to disrupt the demonstration, and at one point a smoke grenade was hurled at the protestors outside the Tel Aviv Museum. No injuries were reported in the incident. Later, right-wing protesters tried to attack veteran peace activist Uri Avneri, snatching signs he was carrying.

The demonstration, which was held under the slogan "The government is drowning us all," was originally planned by the Communist Party of Israel (CPI) and Hadash (the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality) solely to protest the occupation, but following the deadly Israeli raid on a Turkish vessel trying to run the Gaza blockade, the rally also addressed the criminal government's policies in regard to the Gaza Strip and the military operation that left nine foreigners dead.

"The government is drowning us all" read a large sign in the rally. Dov Khenin, a legislator for Hadash and leading communist militant, charged that "Barak has refused to move on the path of peace and leads [us to] a dangerous deterioration. The same people who sent the soldiers to take over the flotilla in the middle of the night are liable to send Israel to a new and terrible war". Hadash chair Mohamed Barakeh declared, "We will not let the crazy right wing push aside the left and the Arab sector into political isolation."

A spokesman for the organizers of the rally told journalists it "was an even bigger success than he expected" and that he believes the past week's events had led to an increase in the number of participants. It showed that "people are opposed to this government that is driving us toward international isolation and a new war."

The communist and pacifist protestors, who walked from Rabin Square to the Tel Aviv Museum, held up signs reading "The government is sinking all of us - we must aspire for peace" and "Israel, Palestine, two states for two people". The rally has been

organized by a communist and peace coalition that includes Hadash, CPI and Meretz parties, the Young Communist Guard (Banki-Shabiba), Peace Now, Gush Shalom, Yesh Gvul, Physicians for Human Rights, and other organizations. The march was led by CPI chair Muhammad Nafah, Knesset Members Muhammad Barakeh, Dov Khenin, Afo Agbarie and Hanna Sweid (from Hadash) and Knesset Members Haim Oron and Nitzan Horowitz (from Meretz). ●

(Report from Communist Party of Israel, www.maki.org.il/)



Photos from the June 5 rally in Tel Aviv show the welcome unity of Jewish and Arab peace activists inside Israel.



CUPE Ontario convention....

continued from page 3

considered a suggestion from CUPE3902 (University of Toronto) for locals to lend the Division the money needed to address the deficit - a plan that would allow CUPE Ontario to retain its fighting activism. As the convention ended, the Executive Board had met with those locals interested in pursuing this possibility.

Was there any good news coming from the convention? Aside from the very few resolutions being passed, the Convention did

pass a 2010 Action Plan that outlines a progressive fightback. Priorities for CUPE Ontario include building resistance to the Liberal government's "Open Ontario" plan, reaffirming a commitment to "no-concession" bargaining, strengthening sectoral and pattern bargaining, fighting privatization, strengthening collaboration with social movements, defend defined-benefit pension plans and fight to win progressive candidates to City Councils and School Boards in the upcoming municipal elections.

The newly elected Executive

Board needs to play a lead role in moving CUPE Ontario forward by implementing the 2010 Action Plan, despite the gloomy internal budget picture. CUPE Ontario needs to be at the forefront of a massive fightback against the provincial government's attack on public services. Strengthening the Action Caucus within CUPE Ontario is also essential. It is also the best way to strengthen left-centre unity and shore up CUPE Ontario as one of Canada's leading social unions. •

Condemn Israeli War Crimes - End the Blockade of Gaza

The following resolution from CUPE Toronto Council will be submitted to the Toronto and York Region Labour Council for discussion on June 21.

The CUPE Toronto Council:

- condemns these Israeli attack on unarmed civilians and ships in international water as an act of piracy, terrorism and war;
- demands the Canadian government immediately condemn these violations of international law, support the call for an impartial international inquiry, and press for an immediate end to Israel's illegal blockade and

siege of Gaza;

- calls on the federal government to support implementation of UN resolution 242 calling for the withdrawal of Israel to its 1967 borders and for the establishment of a Palestinian state, including the right of return.

Because:

- the six unarmed ships and 700 people on board including Members of Parliament, a Nobel Peace Prize winner, and prominent personalities from around the world, including Canada, were delivering humanitarian aid to Gaza, including baby food,

clothing, and building materials to rebuild homes, schools, and hospitals destroyed by Israeli carpet bombing in 2008;

- the unarmed and peaceful Freedom Flotilla was an international, humanitarian response aimed to break through the illegal Israeli blockade to bring relief to the people of Gaza in the form of life sustaining food, clothing and supplies for civilians;
- peoples and governments around the world, including UN President Ban Ki Moon have condemned these attacks, while only the Harper government has equivocated.

Trustees and public gear up to fight back....

continued from page 3

racism, etc.) are composed of trustees who are the voting members, and non-voting community, staff and student representatives. Claims by *Vancouver Sun* columnist Vaughn Palmer and others, that these non-voting members have a "veto" over committee proposals, are simply absurd. This misconception appears to stem from the Advisory team's failure to understand the structure of the VSB, and especially the long-established procedures to consult with stakeholder groups.

The key targets of this attack are unions in the public education sector, who argue that "good teaching conditions are good learning conditions." Although collective bargaining is done on a province-wide basis, the Advisor calls on the VSB to seek union concessions adding up to \$2 million, a union-bashing idea which is neither feasible nor responsible.

The Advisor is sharply critical of trustees who advocate for the interests of students, as though this is wildly expensive or an abdication of their responsibilities. In fact, the district allocates a mere \$16,000 per year for advocacy efforts.

In the end, the report says that Vancouver faces only \$11 million in cuts, not \$16 million. If so, the VSB projections are far more accurate than the Campbell Liberal government's recent whopping budget errors.

One of the puzzling claims is that the Vancouver trustees "lack professional competency." Given

that the nine trustees have a collective total of nearly 70 years on the Board, and many decades of additional collective experience within the school system, this is bizarre, to say the least. The "proof" appears to be that trustees engage in "advocacy", rather than making the budget balance. Yet the VSB has balanced its budget every year for decades, despite a long-term trend of declining provincial funding.

The Advisor calls for a "competency matrix", something which applies to no other elected officials in Canada. Such tools are used to assess professional bureaucrats and appointees who run government agencies and crown corporations. But under the elected school board governance system, professional competency rests with staff, and the report finds that Vancouver staff "competently managed financial affairs and administration..."

Steele's conclusions are important. As she emphasizes, "Vancouver now faces the loss of programs already on the chopping block for 2010-11, including elementary band, special education, supports for Aboriginal, immigrant and ESL students, and programs that support the achievement of at-risk and inner city kids. The report could pressure the VSB to inflict even deeper cuts. It does not avert any cuts and will make it even harder to attract and retain enrolment so that Vancouver's public schools can run cost effectively (and) compete with private schools."

This direction completely contradicts the report's call to "attract more students." It's a

vicious cycle, with for-profit private schools as the only winners.

This agenda has been the subject of wide speculation. The Campbell Liberals, including the Education Minister, have long been on a drive to privatize public assets and services. Prior to becoming a politician, MacDiarmid was a physician, and an avid supporter of Dr. Brian Day's campaign against universal public medicare in Canada.

Right-wing Vancouver NPA trustee Ken Denike may have let the cat out of the bag when he said the report opens the door for the Minister to implement broad changes to the entire education system. That could start with firing the VSB (as the Socreds did in 1985) or appointing a bureaucrat to push through budget cuts resisted by the trustees. It could mean merging school boards in British Columbia along the lines of the hated "health authority" model, or even eliminating boards altogether. U.S.-style "charter schools" are also rumoured to be a possibility.

Such drastic and anti-democratic changes might be difficult for an unpopular government crippled by the anti-HST campaign, when the Legislature has just been adjourned for nearly a year. On the other hand, the Liberals might see this as a useful tactic to turn public attention away from their HST fiasco. Much will depend on the ability of public education supporters, school trustees, unions, parent groups and students to expose the real agenda behind the provincial report in the coming days and weeks. •

What's Left

Vancouver, BC

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, contact Aaron Eddie at 604-813-7627.

Left Film Night, Sunday, June 27, 7 pm, "Plunder: The Crime of our Time," on the U.S. financial crisis. Free, donations welcome, Centre for Socialist Education, 706 Clark Drive. For info, call 604-255-2041.

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, 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.

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

BBQ for People's Voice, Sat., July 3, 2-5 pm (rain or shine), 58 Albany Ave. (one block east of Bathurst, north of Bloor). \$20 "all you can eat," children under 12 free. Organized by Davenport Club, RSVP to 416-536-6771.

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!

People's Voice deadlines:

JULY 1-31 issue: Thursday, June 17

AUGUST 1-31 issue: Thursday, July 22

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

"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 following is a partial list of events being organized around the G8/G20 summits.

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, U of T.

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. **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 U of T Convocation Hall. Tickets \$14 for Council of Canadians members, \$20 for non-members, from U of T Box Office, (416) 978-8849, uofttix.ca.

G8 & G20 Public Rally, 1 pm, Sat., June 26, at Queen's Park. Speak out on priorities that the world 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 www.g20.torontomobilize.org.

REDS ON THE WEB

www.comunist-party.ca

www.peoplesvoice.ca

www.ycl-ljc.ca

www.solidnet.org

Remembering 1935: Ballantyne and Corbin

By Kimball Cariou

Seventy-five years after a bloody police attack crushed an attempt to organize the Vancouver docks, the event will be marked this month by the labour movement. On June 19, the International Longshore and Warehouse Union-Canada will host a march from the Maritime Labour Centre, a picnic at New Brighton Park, and an evening dinner and dance.

The events commemorate the "Battle of Ballantyne Pier," a clash between striking longshore workers and heavily armed police. But the bigger picture shows that 1935 was full of labour battles in British Columbia. A total of 140,760 working days were lost to strikes and lockouts, nearly double the figure from 1934. As the "Great Depression" continued, desperate workers increasingly turned to unions and strikes to fight back.

Early in 1935, the Corbin Miners Association, a local of the militant Mine Workers' Union of Canada, launched a particularly bitter strike at U.S.-owned Corbin Collieries, near the BC-Alberta border. About 300 miners walked out on January 20, to protest the firing of their union secretary. Demands included better transportation down into the mine, and urgent repairs to company housing. In general, the miners at Corbin and elsewhere were fighting a constant struggle against company demands for wage cuts and layoffs.

The strike came to a head in mid-April, when the company decided

to hire scab labour. A special force of over 60 police was rounded up to help the bosses carry out this plan. On the morning of April 17, hundreds of miners and their wives confronted the cops on a narrow mountain ledge leading to the mine.

The women courageously stepped forward, forming a line in front of the picketers. Suddenly, a bulldozer roared ahead from the police ranks. Supposedly brought in to clear snow along the ledge, the dozer lurched directly at the women. The legs of several women were crushed, and one woman was dragged 300 feet by the bulldozer. Another had to be hospitalized after the machine's blade tore the flesh from her legs. A pregnant woman lost her unborn child after being clubbed across the shoulders and her abdomen.

The miners fought back, throwing rocks to halt the bulldozer. Over 50 people were injured in the battle, including 14 police. Seventeen strikers were arrested and held for three days, in a two-person jail cell. But the mine did not open.

The Corbin struggle dragged on for months, on the picket line, in the courts, and in the arena of public opinion, where the brutality of the company, the police and the government were widely exposed. Ultimately the CPR tore up the railway tracks into the town, which was abandoned.

But the strike was not in vain. The miners were part of a much wider fight which eventually compelled governments to allow

wider organizing rights. Just as important, the Corbin miners and other members of the Communist-led Workers Unity League took their radical outlook into the mainstream of the labour movement, laying the basis for the powerful working class struggle which achieved major victories in the following years.

The longshore dispute erupted on June 4, exactly one day after hundreds of members of the Relief Camp Workers' Union boarded freight cars to take their demands to Prime Minister R.B. Bennett. As the On to Ottawa trekkers wound their way through the mountains, the Shipping Federation was locking out thousands of longshore workers.

Most waterfront workers in this period were unorganized and faced a corrupt hiring process. Their exhausting work required brute strength to move heavy boxes, sacks, and bundles. Accidents, occupational diseases, manual lifting, and irregular wages guaranteed few workers lived to a comfortable old age.

As with the Relief Camp Workers and the Mine Workers Union, there were Communist Party members and other left-wingers among the leadership and rank and file of the waterfront strikers. During this period, company-dominated unions "represented" workers at ports along the west coast. The key shift took place in San Francisco in 1934, when radical labour leader Harry Bridges led a successful struggle which



Cops on horseback roamed the streets attacking people during the "Battle of Ballantyne Pier"

completely changed the balance of forces in the industry, including the emergence of the ILWU.

In Vancouver, after a company union signed an agreement considered unacceptable by its members, the workers elected Ivan Emery, a communist, to head the Vancouver District Waterfront Workers' Association; ironically, the VDWWA was originally an employer-controlled group which had been taken over by radical-minded workers.

The immediate issue behind the 1935 showdown was the loading of "hot" cargo by unorganized workers in Powell River. Workers at the Vancouver docks refused to unload the cargo, and strikes followed at all B.C. ports. Militant workers were soon fired, and hundreds of scabs were hired.

The workers were also demanding wage increases, union recognition, and a Fair Dispatch System. Of course, the strikers were also trying to rid the waterfront of scab labour.

Allied against them were the stevedoring and shipping employers, and other local bosses, politicians and pro-business media, in an anti-union "Citizens' League" that blamed the strike on the "Bolshevik menace."

On June 18, strikers marched down Heatley Avenue towards Ballantyne pier with the intention of closing down the docks. With them were thousands of supporters, from sailors and lumberworkers, to students and members of the Longshore Women's Auxiliary. Leading the way was Mickey O'Rourke, carrying a Union Jack flag and displaying his Victoria Cross from the First World War.

Squads of police on foot and on horseback lined the streets along the railway tracks. As the strikers crossed Alexander Street, they were attacked with tear gas and clubs. Scores of men, including a number of police officers, were hurt in the battle, described as an "orgy of sadism" by the *BC Workers' News*. The police trampled protesters with

their horses, clubbed them with sticks and fired tear gas through the windows of the nearby union hall. Homes were raided and more tear gas shot into tenement buildings.

"Vancouver will no longer tolerate Communist agitators who incite to riot," declared Mayor Gerry McGeer, ordering the arrest of Ivan Emery. In total 24 union members were arrested.

The strike and the display of labour solidarity continued for months, starting with a massive "unity conference" of 30 unions at the Orange Hall in Vancouver. Unfortunately, the union movement was outgunned by the city's powerful employer-media gang-up and the increased use of scabs. The final blow came from Justice H. Davis, appointed by the federal department of labour, who filed a blatantly pro-employer report into the strike in October 1935. Davis did not mention the police violence at Ballantyne, blamed the unions for "breach of contract," and claimed that the employer lockout had never happened.

The strike was officially declared over by the union on December 6. The only condition was recognition of the union of each worker's choice, which allowed divisions to proliferate in the waterfront workforce.

But in the long run, the seeds planted by the struggles of 1935 bore fruit. It took until the late 1950s to unite all B.C. longshore workers in one union, but this was achieved, largely thanks to the efforts of visionary leaders like the late Craig Pritchett. Today, waterfront workers are among the best paid on the west coast, and the ILWU carries on many of the progressive traditions of Harry Bridges, Craig Pritchett and other militant trade unionists. The 75th anniversary of the Battle of Ballantyne Pier will be a fitting occasion to pay tribute to their memory. ●

Much of the information in this article is found in the book "Fighting Heritage," Tribune Publishing Co., 1985



The leaders of the Corbin strike, including the 17 who were arrested and held for three days.

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10/11

**75th Anniversary of the Battle of Ballantyne Pier
Saturday, June 19, organized by ILWU-Canada**

**9:00 am - march from Maritime Labour Centre
(1880 Triumph St.)**

**12 noon - Unveiling of memorial and guest speakers
at New Brighton Park (north side of McGill St.)**

**5:30 p.m. - Dinner and dance at Maritime Labour
Centre, with live band and door prizes, tickets \$40**