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people's VOICE

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protesting in
Vancouver**
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Workers in Greece are being hit with massive cuts to wages, pensions and social programs. Their answer: we won't pay for the capitalist crisis.

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What's the CPCA?

The CPCA is the Canadian Parliamentary Coalition to Combat Anti-Semitism - the Harper government's latest weapon in its escalating war to silence any criticism of the state of Israel.

Canada-U.S. procurement deal condemned

PV Vancouver Bureau

The determination of the Harper Tories to press ahead with "deep integration" with the United States has been revealed again by the new Canada-U.S. procurement (Buy American) agreement, and the impending Canada-European Union trade agreement.

The "Buy American" agreement would bind the hands of present and future provincial governments, in return for access to a mere \$4 billion in potential U.S. government contracts. This agreement would accept World Trade Organization rules that restrict or even ban policies that encourage local development, such as "buy local" or domestic content rules, or investment requirements. The WTO's Government Procurement Agreement (signed by only 40 countries) explicitly forbids governments and agencies from including any condition or undertaking on government contracts. By signing Harper's deal, the premiers may surrender important economic and social policy tools used by provinces, cities, universities, school boards,

social service entities and hospitals.

According to CUPE Ontario president Fred Hahn, under terms revealed in leaked copies of the deal, Ontario will become the only province allowing unrestricted access to countries who have signed onto the WTO's Government Procurement Agreement for publicly-funded contracts supplying schools, universities, social services and hospitals.

Appearing with the Council of Canadians at a joint news conference, Hahn said, "This is a bad deal for Ontario and Ontarians should be aware of what their Government is giving away before it's too late. We are concerned that, in the long term, Ontario will be the only province required to give permanent and unfettered access to these vital sectors in the new trade deal when most of the other provinces and territories have exempted them and Quebec has protected itself with a clause exempting anything that pertains to culture."

Hahn is worried about local food procurement policies in place in the City of Toronto, and bottled water bans in cities and regions

across Ontario. Fair wage policies in place in Hamilton or Greater Sudbury's "Made in Canada" policy may also come under attack from American and foreign corporations. He points to Appendix A of the Agreement which lists the permanent commitments being made by Canada under the WTO's GPA as a major area of concern. He is also skeptical that the "interim" commitments on "enhanced access" that are being made directly to the US in Appendix C will ever come off the books.

Other Ontario labour leaders also fear that the deal gives away far too much in return for far too little, and say that Dalton McGuinty should refuse to sign on.

"This deal would limit the power of the provincial government to harness all the possible economic levers at its disposal to deal with the economic crisis," said Hahn. "The race to sell off or give away our province needs to end and the Premier should not sign this deal."

Meanwhile, secretive negotiations are underway for a Canada-European Union trade agreement, which would give

Canadian corporations better access to European markets in exchange for access by European corporations to Canadian services contracts amounting to as much as \$200 billion annually. Such an agreement would put even further pressure on provincial governments to privatize public services such as utilities, transportation, child care, education and public health care.

Delegates at the recent

Communist Party of Canada convention, held Feb. 5-7 in Toronto, warned that if Canadian and transnational capital succeed in imposing these deals, the result would be yet another critical blow against Canadian sovereignty. The final document adopted by the convention stresses that "everything possible must be done to mobilize the labour and democratic movements to expose and block these treacherous sellouts." •

Albertans win fight to stop hospital cuts

Labour, through the Alberta Union of Public Employees, has led a successful five-month campaign to at least delay the closing of 146 of the 246 beds at the Alberta Hospital, one of the province's mental hospitals. The campaign included personal letters, 30,000 signatures on a petition, and rallies. The newly-appointed Minister of Health, Gene Zwozdesky, has announced that the bed closings will be put on hold indefinitely.

Despite the feeling of victory from the announcement, a meeting to discuss fears over future plans for the hospital was held on Jan. 27, with more than 250 attending. The organizers did not want to relax their vigilance, because no plans have been offered by the province to redevelop the hospital. Concern was expressed by AUPE President Guy Smith over moving the 100 geriatric beds to the new Villa Caritas facility in Edmonton's west end. Many feel that the 100 beds are needed for long term care patients to prevent increased pressure on already overloaded hospitals and emergency rooms. The question is where do these seniors go? No representative from the Conservative government attended to give answers.

Three excellent speakers brought out significant issues regarding mental health in the province. Dr. Krista Leicht, a psychiatrist, addressed the need for sustainable planning and issues

with the move of the geriatric patients. The needs of the mentally ill do not decrease when the price of oil drops, she noted.

The second speaker was Sgt. Flora Wilson-Bates of the Vancouver police department and author of *Lost in Transition*, documenting how police calls involving the mentally ill escalate with a shift to deinstitutionalization. With the slow closing of the Vancouver area's main psychiatric institution and a lack of community services, many mentally ill people shifted to other hospitals poorly prepared to treat them, or to the street. Wilson-Bates gave statistics (1054 calls to police in 16 days involving the mentally ill) and examples of typical cases. Often the mentally ill end up in jail, where treatment still eludes them. She calculates the annual cost of policing the mentally ill at \$9 million a year.

The third speaker, Donna Wilson, is a registered nurse and a professor in the Faculty of Nursing at the University of Alberta. She discussed the ripple effect of closing psychiatric beds on the rest of the health system. Half of the province's hospital beds were closed under former premier Ralph Klein, and closing more beds at Alberta Hospital will see patients using acute care hospital beds. Blaming this on an aging population doesn't make sense, she said, because these patients are generally young, and Alberta has an overall younger population. •

PV Fund Drive: \$50,000 in 2010

With this issue, we officially kick off the annual *People's Voice* Fund Drive. As usual, we need to raise \$50,000 to help cover the costs of printing and distributing the working class press across Canada.

For the second consecutive year, 2009 saw an increase in overall paid circulation for *People's Voice*. That's a critical advance, at a time when progressive media outlets face complex new problems, but we need to keep this momentum going.

Some claim that the worst economic downturn in seventy years, which saw about sixty million workers lose their jobs in

the OECD countries over the past year, is now a thing of the past. But unemployment shows no sign of falling, and the crisis keeps erupting in new forms, such as the latest attempt to drive Greek workers and pensioners into abject poverty.

By the time this paper arrives in subscribers' mailboxes, Parliament will finally be reconvening, more than two months after Stephen Harper prorogued to avoid tough questions about the economy and the Afghan torture scandal. But working people can't expect answers or action from that quarter. Once again, it will be up

to our collective efforts to tell Canadians the true source of the economic crisis, and how to fight back to win a People's Agenda, not more corporate greed.

Many big working class struggles lie ahead this year - the ongoing campaign to restore and expand Employment Insurance coverage, strike battles in Sudbury and other communities, the Common Front negotiations by Quebec public sector workers.

On a global scale, the fight to make corporations pay for the consequences of climate change is entering a higher stage. The campaign to end the imperialist occupation of Afghanistan remains high on our agenda. Socialist ideals continue to gain support in many countries, as hundreds of millions reject the failed policies of capitalism. We are living in a time of life and death decisions for the future of our planet, and we desperately need stronger voices for revolutionary change.

People's Voice will continue to play our role in the fight against the capitalist crisis. We intend to keep growing our circulation, and to get thousands of copies into the hands of workers and their allies in every corner of Canada.

Of course, we need your support to carry out these plans. Every year since *The Worker* first hit the streets in 1922, supporters of the revolutionary working class press have come through big time, for our predecessor publications, and now for *People's Voice*. When you receive your fund appeal letter in the mail, please respond quickly and generously.

In our next issue, we'll report on the "Shopping Bag" for the 2010 PV Fund Drive. Until then, remember that *People's Voice* is your newspaper. Every contribution, large or small, helps us build it bigger and better! •



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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MAY DAY 2010 GREETING ADS

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

Ad rates (based on 5 column page):

One column-inch.....	\$10
One column x 2 inches.....	\$20
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Three columns x 4 inches.....	\$90
Two columns x 7 inches.....	\$100
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Multinationals cause \$1.4 trillion damage to global environment every year

PV Vancouver Bureau

The world's 3,000 largest companies are causing \$1.4 trillion worth of environmental damage every year, according to an unpublished UN report. As outlined by the UK's *Guardian* newspaper, about half the cost arises from the release of greenhouse gases, and most of the remainder is linked to local air pollution, and the over-use and pollution of freshwater and fisheries.

These unaccounted environmental costs equate to six to seven per cent of the companies' combined turnover, or an average of one third of their profits. Some businesses bear a much higher level of responsibility for the "environmental externalities" they cause.

Richard Mattison, chief operating officer of Trucost, which wrote the report for the UN, told the *Guardian*: "Externalities of this scale and nature pose a major risk to the global economy and markets are not fully aware of these risks, nor do they know how to deal with them."

The \$1.4 trillion figure does not include damage caused by social impacts, such as large-scale migration of people and other long-term effects of climate change.

Later this year, another UN-

backed study is expected to propose ways to make firms financially responsible for their environmental damage. This second report, led by economist Pavan Sukhdev, will apparently argue for the abolition of subsidies to harmful industries and increased taxes on companies that cause high levels of environmental damage.

It is expected to take a similar line to the UK's Stern Review in 2005 on the economics of climate change, arguing that it will prove more cost effective to address the damage done to biodiversity and so-called environmental services such as soil and water supplies now rather than delay action.

Mattison said it remained to be seen if governments are willing to take action to address environmental externalities. "It's going to be a significant proportion of a lot of companies' profit margins. Whether they actually have to pay for these costs will be determined by the appetite for policy makers to enforce the 'polluter pays' principle."

The *Guardian* also notes that "Amid growing momentum for more limits on operations, taxes and fines, investor groups such as the US-based Ceres, which represents more than 80 funds managing more than \$8 trillion of

assets, are lobbying hard for companies to monitor, report and reduce their impact before they are forced to by legislation. So far, however, reporting is patchy and hard to compare."

A breakdown of the different sectors covered in the Trucost report will be published this summer. By far the most "damaging" companies are energy utilities, where the \$400 billion total "cost" was dominated by carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases which are accelerating global warming, and

then by nuclear waste, acid rain and smog precursors, and metal pollution in water.

The two sectors with the next biggest impacts were "basic materials" such as mining, forestry and chemical companies, with costs of just over \$300 billion, and consumer goods such as cars, food, drink and toys, at just under \$300 billion. Damage by mining and similar businesses was predominantly from greenhouse gas emissions, followed by coal - which causes both greenhouse gases and smog-forming soot - then freshwater use

and pollution, and pollution causing acid rain and smog.

The biggest problem caused by consumer goods makers is their freshwater use, much of which was caused by food and drink companies, followed by greenhouse gases, and pollution from agricultural chemicals.

Industrial companies, including construction, aerospace and electronics, and the oil and gas sector, had the next greatest impacts at, respectively, \$200 billion and about \$175 billion. The damage caused by consumer services, including the media, was valued at approximately \$75 billion, again mostly from greenhouse gases, water and local air pollution.

The four sectors with the lowest impact - telecommunications, healthcare, technology and financial services - all caused environmental damage totalling less than \$25 billion each.

"The swath of companies these revolutions are going to affect is so very varied," said Mattison. "It's incorrect to say - as markets will - that these companies will adjust. Saying 'let's ignore it for the moment and governments will deal with that' is not really a position I think is tenable. There's a need for investors to act."

Meanwhile, a survey published by *New Scientist* magazine showed a "dramatic mismatch" between public perceptions about how damaging companies are and what they are doing to limit their impacts, and the professionals' assessments. Among the results, it found some companies "enjoy undeserved green reputations" while others are getting little credit for efforts to protect the environment. ●



"Official Restaurant" of the Olympics pays lowest wages

The "Official Restaurant" of the Olympics pays new employees less than BC's minimum wage, which is already the lowest in Canada.

"As part of our Olympic sponsorship we honour the hard work and exceptional performance of our restaurant crew...." according to McDonald's Senior Vice-President of Global Marketing, Dean Barrett.

"I talked to several McDonald's workers in the past few days who are making less than \$7 an hour and they are not impressed with the company," says B.C. Federation of Labour president Jim Sinclair. "These workers deserve a fair wage and respect. That's the real Olympic spirit."

British Columbia has the lowest minimum wage in Canada at \$8 an hour. It has been frozen for eight years. However, McDonald's in the Lower Mainland use the so-called training wage to lower starting salaries to as little as \$6.35 an hour. The Liberal government introduced the training wage by lowering the minimum wage by 25 percent for new workers and immigrants.

"For those watching the McDonald's commercials celebrating the spirit and values of the Olympics, it might come as a surprise that one of the largest global restaurant chains pays new employees the lowest wages in Canada," Sinclair said, calling on the company to eliminate the training wage and pay all starting employees a minimum of \$10 an hour.

"This company can find hundreds of millions of dollars to sponsor and promote the Olympics but they pay less than the lowest minimum wage in Canada to new workers," Sinclair said. ●



Young workers rally at Premier Gordon Campbell's office to demand higher minimum wages. (Photo: K Cariou)

Higher death rates for Inuit infants

Inuit infants die at well over three times the rate in southern Canada, according to a new study in the *Canadian Medical Association Journal*. A second study in the same journal says that 70 per cent of Inuit preschoolers live in homes where there isn't always enough food.

"Inuit children in Nunavut are faced with health challenges that are more severe than those in Southern Canada due to the socio-economic conditions facing the entire territory," said Dr. Isaac Sobol, the territory's chief public officer of health.

University of Montreal researcher Dr. Zhong-Cheng Luo looked at all four million births in Canada between 1990 and 2000, and births in 53 predominantly Inuit communities in the Arctic, from Labrador in the east the Mackenzie Delta in the west. After comparing births with deaths in the first year of life, Luo found the mortality rate for Inuit infants was 16.5 per thousand live births - a rate not seen in Southern Canada since 1971 and 3.6 times the Canadian average of 4.6 deaths. More recent information suggests that these

trends are not improving.

The lowest rate was in the Inuvialuit region in the Northwest Territories, at 13.4 deaths per thousand births. The highest rate was in the Nunavik region of northern Quebec, where 18.1 babies out of every thousand die before their first birthday.

The study also found a high rate of stillbirths, at 1.7 times the Canadian average.

Luo said many of the deaths are preventable, but also that poverty, overcrowding and generally poor living conditions in the North are taking their toll.

"Improving socio-economic indicators is of fundamental importance," he said. "That's the root cause. Infant mortality is a mirror of socio-economic conditions."

For the second study, Grace Egeland of McGill University surveyed 388 households in 16 Nunavut communities in 2007 and 2008. She found that 41 per cent of children between age three and five lived in homes where they either had no food for an entire day or where their parents couldn't afford to feed them at least part of the time. Two-thirds of the parents

said there were times when they ran out of food and couldn't afford to buy more. In all, 70 per cent of Nunavut's Inuit children sometimes don't have enough to eat.

"We had an anticipation that we had a problem with the food security issue, but I didn't realize the extent of it," said Egeland.

Consequences range from poorer overall health to lower school achievement. One of the consequences is higher rates of obesity, since it's easier to eat high-energy, nutrient-poor foods. "We find that obesity seems to track with food insecurity in developed countries," said Egeland, calling for measures such as higher income support, food banks and milk programs.

Nunavut funds a variety of food security programs, such as school breakfasts and "Drop the Pop," which encourages people to consume fewer soft drinks.

"Food security is a public health issue," said Egeland. "I'm hoping this leads to a really good assessment of health and health policy. Inuit are Canadians too, so let's look after each other." ●

EDITORIALS

IWD 2010 - time to fight back

Mahatma Gandhi was once asked for his views on western civilization. "It would be a very good idea," was his reply. That quote seems to fit this year's United Nations theme for International Women's Day: "Equal Rights, Equal Opportunities, Progress for All." What a great idea!

2010 is the 100th anniversary of the Copenhagen conference of Socialist women, which launched the annual celebration of International Women's Day. The upsurge of women's struggles which followed, and the "second wave" of feminism during the post-war decades, saw enormous gains for women's rights.

Unfortunately, that progress has been stalled or even rolled back by the global capitalist offensive of the past twenty years. Today, over 800 million women and girls live in poverty, and the strides toward equality achieved in the former socialist countries have been virtually wiped out.

The story is similar in Canada, where women are stuck at just 70.5% of men's earnings. While women have gained more access to higher education, men with doctorates are twice as likely to be named full professors, and women in academia earn only 79 cents for every dollar earned by men. In terms of elected positions, women in Canada have slid to 49th from 47th, accounting for just 22.1 per cent of MPs. Under the Harper Tories, Status of Women Canada has closed 12 offices, cut funding for women's advocacy groups, and eliminated the court challenges program, which helped women pursue equality rights. Governments have slashed supports for women's shelters and crisis centres. Right-wing politicians treat public child care as a barrier to the big box profiteers.

IWD 2010 will come just days after the federal budget, which will mark another step in the Tory campaign to wipe out social gains. The labour and democratic movements must begin to make women's equality a top priority in the battle to defeat the Harper Tories and win a People's Agenda. An injury to one is an injury to all - a united struggle for equality is the key to victory.

Return of the rogues

Prorogation over, MPs are heading back to Ottawa. Tens of thousands of Canadians took to the streets to condemn this interruption of Parliament, but to hear the Tories tell it, the nine-week break was more like a work camp than a holiday. It's true that MPs do constituency work while the Commons is not in session, and Parliaments have been prorogued before in Canadian history. But this occasion was different. Once again, Stephen Harper simply shut down Parliament to get out of a sticky political situation. It's a habit which veers scarily towards total concentration of political power in the hands of a prime minister with the support of just one-third of voters.

The minority government's contempt for popular opinion will be on full display when Parliament resumes. First up is a budget which will scrap any token efforts at mitigating the impact of the deep economic crisis which continues to batter working people. Last year the Tories were forced by circumstances present some budget crumbs - a few economic stimulus measures, minor tinkering with EI eligibility and benefits.

That's all history now. Using the federal deficit as their excuse, the Tories are reverting to form. It would be mistaken to characterize their platform as "downsizing government." The real Harper agenda is to strengthen the repressive aspects of the state - especially the military, but also the police, prison system, and the spy apparatus - while simultaneously gutting any social policies which serve to redistribute wealth from the rich to the rest of us. Yes, the rogues are back. It's time to hit the streets again.

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Tel: 604.255.2041 Email: pvoice@telus.net

Volunteers and contributors for this issue:

Dave Arland, Corinne Benson, Ed Bil,
Paul Bjarnason, Johan Boyden, Wally Brooker,
B. Prasant, Liz Rowley, Gurpreet Singh, and our
mailers in Vancouver & Toronto.

Editor: Kimball Cariou Business Manager: Sam Hammond

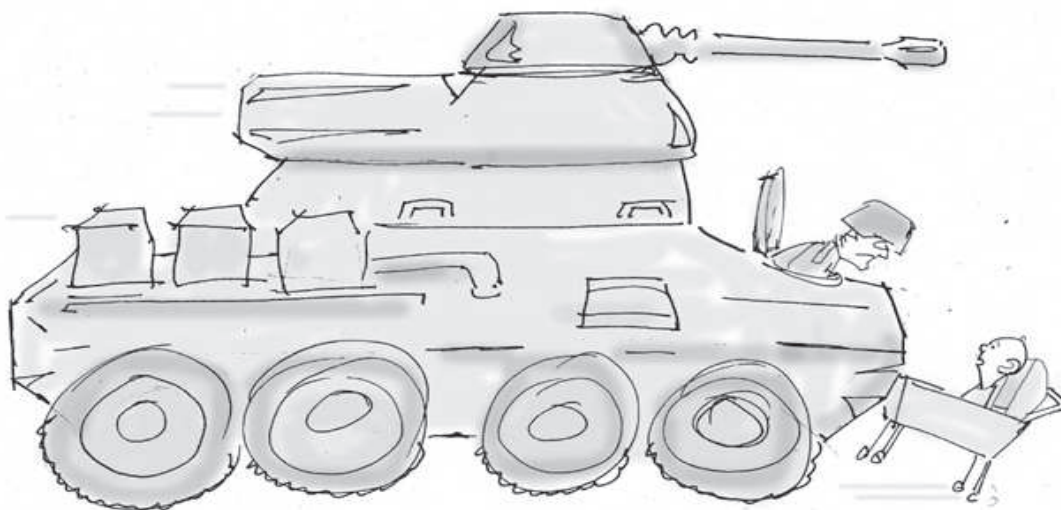
Editorial Board: Kimball Cariou, Miguel Figueroa,
Doug Meggison, Naomi Rankin, Liz Rowley, Jim Sacouman

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Harper spends 5 Billion Dollars
for new armoured cars.



Guess how much for child care.

SPEAKING FRANKLY

Canada, Olympic Hockey and Women

By Jane Bouey, Vancouver

My family recently went into one of the many large shops selling Olympic merchandise. There was shelf after shelf of Canadian hockey team t-shirts and jerseys - Crosby, Luongo, Brodeur, etc. We asked the clerks if they had any with names of the Canadian women's team. An embarrassed, "No", was the answer. Not a single item with Wickenheiser, Botterill, St. Pierre, Hefford, Oulette or any other woman.

Women's hockey has only been an Olympic sport since 1998. Canada won silver that year, and gold in 2002 and 2006. Canada has won 9 of the 12 women's world championships since 1990.

Hayley Wickenheiser has scored more points and played more games in international hockey than any male member of Canada's team. Yet it is difficult to find her name on Olympic merchandise.

Now it appears success may be jeopardizing women's hockey. Pundits are pointing to lop-sided wins by Canada and the USA, saying women's hockey does not deserve to be in the Olympics.

Let's look at this historically. Men's ice hockey first appeared in the 1920 Olympics. Canadian men dominated, winning six of the first seven gold medals awarded. In 1924, they outscored opponents 110 goals to three. In 1948 it was 69 to 5. And this was with amateur club teams. Later the Soviet Union dominated for decades. But there were no media campaigns to eliminate ice hockey from the Olympics.

There are now around 80,000 females in organized hockey in Canada, and 60,000 in the US, but less than 300 in Slovakia. China has less than 70. How is this the fault of the women? Women's hockey needs international nurturing, and people to champion it.

The President of the International Ice Hockey Federation has suggested that NHL President Gary Bettman go to China (like his NBA counterpart did) and promote hockey, particularly women's hockey.

Zuzan Tomcikova, the 21 year old Slovak goalie who let in 18 goals against Canada this Olympics, but stopped 49, says, "I really hope this helps us, because I don't think there was a lot of women's hockey games on television until now. I hope a lot of people at home see that. I hope

they see women's hockey is a good sport. I hope they like it and they let their daughter or their sisters or whoever they have at home play it. And it's going to become more popular, and it's going to get started."

When I was young in the '60s and '70s in Calgary, girls were strongly discouraged (or forbidden) from playing organized hockey. Instead we were invited to play Ringette. This was despite the fact that back in 1956, Abby Hoffman and her parents had gone to the Supreme Court and won her right to participate in boys' hockey.

Women's hockey has been played in Canada since the 1890s. There were organized leagues, particularly in universities and colleges, until the 1940s when participation fell. It remained largely dormant until the '60s, thanks to Abby Hoffman and other pioneers. Participation was still small, but grew steadily until the '80s when organized hockey began to flourish again. However, it still faces double standards.

Women's hockey was finally "given" the 1990 World Championship. But to the shock of the players and the anger of women across the country, the uniform given to Canada's team was pink. Not for a breast cancer awareness campaign, but because officials wanted to feminize women's hockey. Women were told at that training camp to dress "nicely" at public events. Those who did not were cut from the team. That lesson lingers. There have been subsequent warnings, from high profile women's Team Canada alumni and officials, that players better not express sexual orientation other than "straight" and gender identity other than "feminine".

Women's hockey challenges deeply held patriarchal norms against participation in traditionally "male" sports. The cost of taking part in "elite" sports disproportionately affects women who, on average, have a lower standard of living than men. The time involved in training is another barrier for women who are traditionally responsible for housekeeping and caregiver duties. Women who are Aboriginal, immigrant and/or women of colour face the additional barrier of systemic racism.

Women continue to struggle for equal access to sports. Look at the

women ski jumpers. Despite participation rates similar to a number of sports prior to introduction to the Olympics, they keep being shut out. A woman held the normal hill record at Whistler of 105.5 meters until the current games, when a handful of elite men slightly surpassed it. (The Gold Medalist jumped 108 meters.) Now it appears they may be punished for taking the matter to court. IOC member Canadian Dick Pound said, "It was a lot of bad publicity for the IOC. I know they don't appreciate it. I don't appreciate it."

However, thanks to women organizing to demand equity, and sometimes even going to court, the situation seems to be improving. The percentage of women athletes in the 2010 Winter Games is around 40%, up from 25% in the early '90s. Women's boxing will make its debut at the next summer Olympics.

For this improvement to take root, changes have to occur at the community and school level, demanding equitable ice and gym time and funding, as well as at the elite level. It will take women and men demanding that media celebrate women's bodies, not simply sexualizing and objectifying them. It will mean working to end violence against women. It will mean wider and broader participation of women throughout society. It will mean economic, social, and political equality.

One sign of our success will be more easily finding women's hockey team jerseys. That will mark a shift in the status of women in our capitalist society.

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Communist Party central convention ends with call for growing fightback

Delegates at the 36th Central Convention of the Communist Party of Canada finished three days of spirited and constructive debates on Sunday, Feb. 7, at the Steelworkers Hall in Toronto. The Convention concluded with a rousing call for broad political mobilization to defeat the Harper Tory government, and to build support for a People's Alternative to the capitalist crisis which continues to devastate working people in Canada and around the world.

Earlier on the final day of the Convention, delegates re-elected Miguel Figueroa as the leader of the Communist Party. They also chose a new 20-member Central Committee from across Canada, including Communists who are active in the trade union movement, anti-war campaigns, and a wide range of struggles for Aboriginal rights, civil liberties, increased minimum wages, social equality, municipal reform, defense of public education, and many other issues.

The CC elected a new Central Executive Committee of the CPC, including Figueroa, the leaders of the Party in Ontario, Quebec and British Columbia - Liz Rowley, Sam Hammond, and Pierre Fontaine - and People's Voice editor Kimball Cariou. The new CC will hold its first full meeting in late March.

The Convention followed four months of extensive discussion at the local and provincial levels, based on the draft political resolution issued by the outgoing leadership. The amended resolution will guide the Communist Party's work over the three years, including plans to nominate 20-25 candidates in the next federal election.

As the main resolution stressed, "Unprecedented developments are shaking global capitalism to its very core, less than two decades after its so-called 'final victory' over socialism. It is mired in the deepest

world-wide economic crisis since the Great Depression of the 1930s. Meanwhile, structural aspects of its systemic decline continue unabated - especially militarism and war, and an intensifying environment crisis, both of which threaten the very survival of humanity. The root cause of the crisis lies in the private ownership of the means of production and its contradiction with the increasingly social character of production... Anti-capitalist sentiments and advocacy of socialism as the systemic alternative to decadent capitalism are growing to varying degrees. These are dynamic times indeed, full of dangers and challenges and also with the potential of resurgent socialism."

The resolution outlines "a comprehensive action plan - an economic and political solution which serves the interests of people, not profits." This plan includes a wide range of immediate and longer-term policies to create jobs and advance the living standards of working people, to protect the environment, and to defend Canadian sovereignty and world peace. Unlike any other party in Canada, the CPC calls for expanded public ownership of key industries, withdrawal from NAFTA and other corporate "trade deals," a shorter work week with no loss in take-home pay, and immediate return of Canadian troops from Afghanistan.

As the resolution says, "Only united action on a mass scale, drawing millions of working people into struggle, can breathe real life into such a comprehensive anti-crisis plan. That is why we have urged the leadership of the labour movement - the Canadian Labour Congress, the labour centrals in Quebec, and all of their key affiliates - to come together along with its allies in the social movements in an emergency conference to

articulate such a unified program of demands, a fightback strategy based on escalating mass action, and with committed resources to see it through.

"Such a perspective could help to bring together a broad People's Coalition which our Party has long advocated. Such a Coalition would of course emerge largely from the united grassroots struggles in communities across the country, fighting in the workplaces and on the streets to defend the people's vital interests. As it matures, a People's Coalition would become Canada-wide in character, moving the mass struggle onto the offensive, eventually taking on an electoral expression. This is the kind of Coalition required by our class and our country at this time of profound economic and political crisis, and our Party will work tirelessly to help forge such a new alternative."

In the next election, "the Communist Party will call for the defeat of the Harper Tories - the most deadly expression of the corporate domination of Canada - and to block the right, by also denying a majority to the pro-corporate, pro-war Liberals under Ignatieff, whose differences with the Tories are primarily over the pace and scale of imposing the continentalist and corporate agenda."

Delegates also endorsed special resolutions on a wide range of issues, from solidarity with victims of human rights abuses in Colombia and the Philippines, to support for protests against the painful social spending cuts being imposed on British Columbians during the Winter Olympics.

Several guest speakers addressed the 36th Convention, including the Vietnamese ambassador to Canada, Nguyen Duc Hung; prominent civil liberties lawyer Barbara Jackman; Canadian Arab Federation national president Khaled Mouammar; Cuban Consul-General Jorge Soberon Luis; Venezuelan Vice-Consul Scarlet Salazar Quiroz; and Roger Keeran and Thomas Kenny, authors of the 2004 book *Socialism Betrayed*, which analyses the destruction of the Soviet Union during the late 1980s and early '90s. Greetings were received from some 42 Communist and Workers' parties from across the planet.

Delegates and guests took the Saturday evening to enjoy a special dinner and cultural program, featuring performances by jazz musician Wally Brooker, Quebec folksinger Norman Raymond, poets Harjit Daudharia and Salimeh Valiani, and a set by Toronto chamber punk band Red Monkey. ●



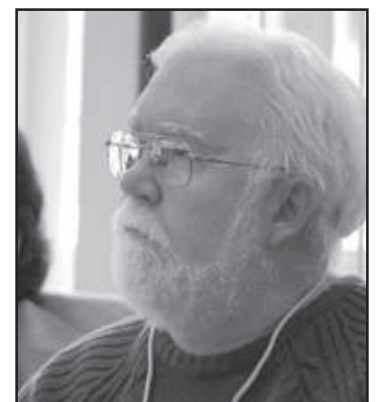
Musical acts at the Saturday dinner included Red Monkey (above) and Wally Brooker (below left).



Below, the CPC's new Central Executive: Miguel Figueroa, Liz Rowley, Pierre Fontaine, Kimball Cariou, Sam Hammond



Delegates (below) included Quebec YCL activist Marianne Breton-Fontaine; YCL General Secretary Johan Boyden; and Harjit Daudharia and Zach Crispin from B.C. (PV photos by Ed Bil.)



Guest speakers included (clockwise from top left): Canadian Arab Federation president Khaled Mouammar; Vietnamese ambassador to Canada, Nguyen Duc Hung; Cuban Consul-General Jorge Soberon Luis; civil liberties lawyer Barbara Jackman.



Olympic Diary: In the streets as the Games come to Vancouver

February 12 dawned dry and relatively clear in Vancouver. The Winter Olympics were about to begin, after twelve more hours of protests against this corporate extravaganza.

The day kicked off in Stanley Park, where Arnold Schwarzenegger carried the Olympic Torch, the mythic symbol invented by Nazi propagandists for the 1936 Games in Berlin. Perhaps the "Governator" was on the run from the environmental devastation, economic crises and social cutbacks tearing apart California.

It was supposed to be different here in British Columbia. The Olympics, we had been promised, would herald a "golden decade" of prosperity. Instead, the torch arrived in a city where 2,500 people sleep in the streets, 800 teachers

was happening. A few complained about missing their opportunity to see the torch, but most happily joined our impromptu celebration of resistance. Members of the local Carnival Band got the crowd dancing to drums and trumpets.

People's Voice editor Kimball Cariou has been reporting since 2002 on the impact of the Olympics in Vancouver.

High school students, herded out of classrooms and given little Canadian flags, eagerly showed off their anti-Olympic stickers. Before long, at least a thousand people were joyfully exercising their democratic rights, bolstered by the Victory Square contingent. The Communist Party banner was repeatedly photographed by media and demonstrators. We soon heard that the torch had been diverted down Clark Drive, a truck route far

were flocking to the protest site, bringing home-made signs and banners, engaging in lively debates with curious tourists. On the other side of the Art Gallery, a handful of "pro-Olympic" supporters waved flags, chanting "party, not protest." This group of about thirty soon waded into the main rally, belligerently seeking to provoke confrontations.

Drowned out by chants of "homes not Games" and "no Olympics on stolen Native land," they gradually moved to the fringes and scattered.

Meanwhile, a series of powerful speakers made their case on the steps of the Art Gallery. The Vancouver Games, they pointed out, were a huge expense at a time of deepening poverty and cutbacks, and an environmental disaster, not "the greenest Games ever." The "Olympic truce" was shattered by NATO's largest operation of the Afghan war, launched on the same day under cover of the Olympic news blanket.

By four o'clock, well over three thousand people were eager to hit the streets, far more than organizers had dared to hope for. The march wound through downtown, gaining numbers as supporters arrived after work. Dozens of TV cameras beamed the show of community anger to viewers across the planet. Within the crowd, many participants were filming banners and interviewing each other, sending the results to independent media websites. This was probably the most heavily documented protest in Olympic history.

That reality was well understood by the security forces, who kept their reserves and riot gear out of sight. Any attack against this colourful, peaceful rally would have been big news across the planet, a fiasco the Games organizers and city officials wanted to avoid. Yet it had taken months of hard work by the B.C. Civil Liberties Association, the Pivot Legal Society, COPE members of Vancouver City Council, and other democratic forces to block the threat of police repression against this march.

Eventually we pushed up against a solid line of cops and fences, across the street from BC Place, where the opening ceremonies were beginning. A few angry ticket-holders elbowed to the front, only to discover that the police weren't letting anyone through. Spewing invectives,



"Olympic Convergence" news conference.

these angry souls had to push back and find a different route to their seats.

After some jostling between a few "black block" anarchists and the cops, the rally was suddenly transformed into a street festival, complete with blaring dance music, choirs, loud chants, more speakers. Thousands of jubilant people blocked the street for over an hour, empowered by our collective strength.

Inside, a dazzling and expensive show was unfolding. For many, the highlight was a haunting performance of Leonard Cohen's *Hallelujah* by K.D. Lang. Just before she went on stage, a handler told her that a Georgian athlete had died during a practice run on the luge track. The tragic news, Lang told a CBC interviewer, had given her performance a very different dimension.

The next morning saw a far smaller action: the "heart attack" march called by anarchists to "block the arteries of capitalism" by stopping traffic and smashing a window at the Bay, a major Olympic sponsor. The ensuing arrests set off a storm of debates over tactics among Games critics. The most common view was that the police response was unnecessarily violent, but also that the action itself had undermined broader opposition by appearing to confirm the dire warnings of the authorities. Many noted that the police had refused to deny that they would attempt to infiltrate anti-Olympic movements.

But on Sunday, the annual Women's Memorial March lifted the mood once again. Held every Valentine's Day, this march pays tribute to the hundreds of murdered and missing women and girls in Vancouver and across British Columbia. Most of these women are Aboriginal, and the march links the demand for justice with wider indigenous struggles. This year, the authorities had attempted to block the march, citing Olympic security concerns. That move was defeated by the powerful determination of the Aboriginal women organizers. In fact, the clumsy official posturing backfired; this was the largest Memorial March in the history of the event, drawing some 5,000 people.

This huge success set the stage for two more political actions on Monday, Feb. 15. At noon, a boisterous crowd of perhaps a thousand social justice activists and other residents of the Downtown Eastside set off from

Pigeon Park on a march for housing. It was a short walk to an empty lot owned by Concord Pacific, the biggest developer in the province. Protest organizers had taken over the space to create a Tent City, featuring bright red tents to draw attention to homelessness. City officials had tried for weeks to block this effort, fearing worldwide exposure of devastating poverty in Vancouver. But in the end, the efforts of the organizers (particularly Pivot and the Streams of Justice organization) prevailed. The Tent City quickly became a magnet for the international media, and a gathering point of opposition forces during the following days.

Later that evening, Vancouver's broad-based anti-war coalition, StopWar.ca, held the next important event. By this time, Vancouverites were increasingly drawn to the athletic competition. On my way to this march, I joined a crowd watching Canada's Jeremy Wotherspoon skate at the Richmond Oval. The dominant racer in the men's 500 meter short track event over the past decade, Wotherspoon never achieved Olympic gold. On this night, at the end of his career, he was frustrated again, finishing sixth. The beauty and drama of the race showed why the Games are such a powerful spectacle, but one which has sadly been poisoned by the ruling class

see OLYMPICS, page 11



Protesters on Commercial Drive, February 12

have been sent layoff notices, and the cost of the Olympics is nearing an estimated \$8 billion.

At Victory Square, gentrification slams into the low-income Downtown Eastside. Here, a couple of hundred demonstrators gathered at 8:30 am. Anticipating opposition, police sent torch runners along a different route. Cheered by this small victory over the Olympic machine, the protesters began marching towards Commercial Drive, an area where residents voted against the Olympic bid back in 2003.

The "no" voters have seen a bittersweet vindication of our fears. Community activists warned that the Games would bring broken promises, homelessness, more expensive housing, a wider gap between rich and poor. Recent surveys show that 60% of British Columbians now agree that the cost of hosting the Games outweigh the benefits. Brutal cuts to health, education and social programs by the provincial government have reinforced this understanding. Far from being in a mood to celebrate, many Vancouverites were increasingly bitter as the Olympic party unfolded.

That was certainly true at Grandview Park, where demonstrators gathered at 9:30 to protest the torch run down the middle of our rebellious neighbourhood. The crowd quickly spilled onto the street, stopping traffic. People lining the sidewalks quickly realized what

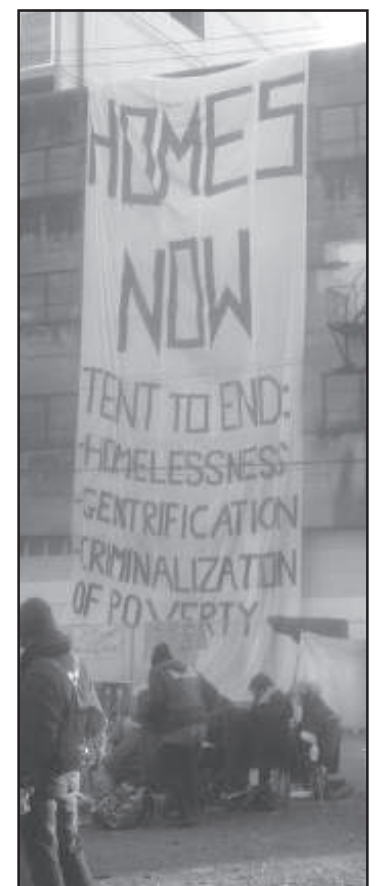
from any witnesses.

This second victory built anticipation for contending pro and anti-Olympic rallies at the Art Gallery starting at 3 pm. Protest organizers - the 2010 Welcoming Committee, led by the Council of Canadians, the Olympic Resistance Network, StopWar and other progressive groups - made few predictions. For months, police had warned of "terrorist threats", constantly harassing critics and installing a vast network of surveillance cameras and barbed-wire fences. Some 16,000 security personnel patrolled the streets while a fleet of helicopters buzzed overhead. Would this massive show of force intimidate people from expressing their opinions?

Half an hour before the starting time, the answer was clear. People



StopWar banner: "Canadian troops out of Afghanistan"



Tent City banner

Gender gap remains in a globalized world

Excerpts from a 2009 International Labour Organization report, titled "Gender Equality at the Heart of Decent Work"

Changes in the roles of women and men, their relations with each other, and the nature of the households, markets and societies in which they live, continue to accelerate in a globalized world. Gender equality cannot be achieved when biases remain embedded in economic and social institutions and in development processes. It often remains unaddressed or is addressed in an uneven manner. Shifting boundaries and values create tensions that are sometimes magnified by rapid globalization. Men and women may experience the day-to-day manifestations of these strains in their households, in their search for jobs and participation in the labour market, or in accessing credit, technology and assets as they continue to perform their socially ascribed roles. While some may benefit from new opportunities, many may continue with traditional gender roles and suffer from increased burdens and stress.

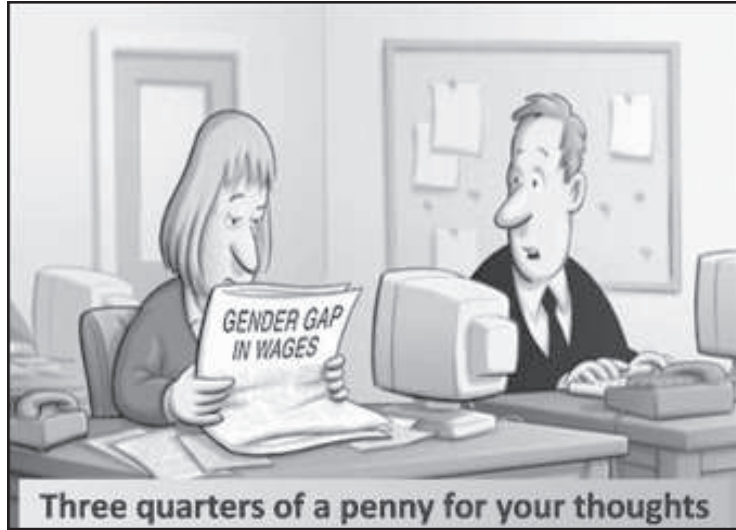
In 2008, the World Bank published new poverty estimates showing that close to 1.4 billion people in less developed regions of the world - about 26 per cent of the world's population - lived on less than US\$1.25 per day in 2005. This represents an increase of some 500 million people over previous estimates of 931 million in poverty. These estimates were not supplied with a gender dimension. To fill this gap, the ILO used the World Bank poverty estimates and data on the estimated earned income of women and men, published by the UNDP in its 2007-08 Human Development Report, to calculate the shares of overall poverty according to sex.

The data show that about 829 million people living below the poverty line were female (girls and young, adult and older women), compared with about 522 million in the same situation who were male. These findings confirm that poverty is increasingly feminized.

Poverty not only has a strong female dimension but is also embedded within rural communities. In almost all parts of the world, rural poverty rates are higher than urban ones and the depth of poverty is greater; some 75% of the world's poor live in rural areas in developing countries.

ILO analysis also shows regional differences. In Africa, of an estimated total population of about 909 million, some 373 million people were living below the poverty line in 2005; over 214 million of them were female and 158 million were male. Some 41 per cent of Africans lived below the poverty line, but the female population is poorer than the male population. Over 57 per cent of all persons living in poverty were women.

In the Americas, out of a total population of about 884 million, nearly 46 million persons were living below the poverty line in 2005; of these, ILO estimates suggest that over 27 million were women and girls and around 19 million were men and boys. The poverty rate is lower in the Americas than in



Africa: about one in 20 people live below the poverty line. Yet in the Americas the female population is relatively poorer than in Africa, as the female population comprises nearly 59 per cent of all people living below the poverty line.

In absolute numbers, Asia has the largest population living below the poverty line: out of a total population of 3.7 billion, about 913 million people live in poverty. Yet the overall rate - about 25 per cent - is far lower than in Africa, even if it is five times the poverty rate of the Americas. And female poverty is far greater than in the Americas or Africa, as the female share of poverty represents 63 per cent of all persons in Asia living below the poverty line.

Although it displays large intra-regional differences, Europe has a lower poverty rate: 20 million people live below the poverty line in European countries, which yields an overall rate of just over 2%. Yet the female proportion of the population living below the poverty line (59%) is as great as in the Americas.

Areas with the highest concentration of indigenous and tribal peoples are also those with the highest incidence of poverty or extreme poverty. A strong correlation between being indigenous and being poor or extremely poor indicates that indigenous female workers (and their children) may have fared worse than their male and non-indigenous counterparts in most socio-economic aspects.

Turmoil in the financial markets of the industrialized countries, which originated in the United States in late 2008 and spread worldwide, is creating great uncertainty. The latest ILO data project job losses of up to 50 million men and women across the globe to the end of 2009.

A distinction should be drawn between the disadvantaged position of women in global labour markets, and the immediate impact of the current economic crisis. In developed economies, there are signals that the crisis may be at least as detrimental for men as for women, and possibly more so initially, as witnessed by the stronger increase of the unemployment rate in developed economies for men compared to women in 2008 (1.1 percentage points for men versus 0.8 points for women). This has led to a narrowing of the gender gap in the unemployment rate in 2008, but only because the situation of men in the labour market worsened, not because of any equality gains. In addition, sectoral employment

patterns of men and women show initial job losses in the male-dominated construction and automotive industries.

At the other end of the spectrum, women make up two-thirds or more of the workforce in the education and health services sectors that have been less affected by the economic crisis in the short run. Forecasts point to other female-dominated areas of the economy, such as tourism and clerical support staff, as being next in line for layoffs, with redundancies in these sectors already starting in many countries.

The crisis has drawn attention to the need for a dramatic shift towards an improved globalization that includes sustainable and high-quality jobs, broader social protections and social dialogue....

Policies need strong gender components on mitigating, and preventing in the future, disparate effects on women and men.

The CEDAW Committee underscores the importance of recognizing the unique contribution that women can make in the timely resolution of the global financial and economic crisis and calls for the inclusion of women in the dialogue and decision-making processes.

ILO projections show the impact on and the likely rise in working poverty, implying that the working poor will get even poorer. In designing policy responses, care should be taken to protect the

working poor, who are, as noted above, mostly women...

Policy responses could include the following: (i) wider coverage of unemployment benefits and insurance schemes, reskilling redundant workers and protecting pensions from devastating declines in financial markets; (ii) public investment in infrastructure and housing, community infrastructure and green jobs, including through emergency public works; (iii) support to small and medium-sized enterprises and microcredit; and (iv) social dialogue at enterprise, sectoral and national levels, including consultations with national women's organizations. ●



Here in Canada, the capitalist economic crisis has hit women's pension rights and left hundreds of thousands without access to employment insurance benefits. (PV photo: Ed Bil)

By the numbers: millions of women face violence and inequality

* A new "Gender and Land Rights Database" launched by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization offers up-to-date information on how 78 countries differ in their legal rights and access to land. In most of the world, **women lag well behind men in ownership of agricultural land and access to income from land**, even though women are major producers of food crops and play crucial roles in providing and caring for their households. The database covers both national and customary laws governing land use; property rights and inheritance; international treaties and conventions; land tenure and related institutions; civil society organizations that work on land issues, and other related statistics.

* The new United Nations Special Representative on **Sexual Violence in Conflict** has promised a more coherent and effective battle against the scourge, citing recent mass rapes in the Democratic Republic of Congo. "**Sexual violence against women is not cultural, it's criminal.** It's not a women's issue, it's a human rights issue. It's for both men and women to make sure that women have the right to their body," Margot Wallstrom, a Swedish politician with a long history in defending women's rights, told a Feb. 9 news briefing in New York. The previous day, the UN Population Fund reported that more than 8,000 women were raped in the DRC during fighting between warring factions last year.

* Nearly all **young women in Azerbaijan (99 per cent) say they have experienced physical abuse.** Nearly half (45 per cent) of young Turkish women believe that wife beating may be justified for reasons such as going out alone, arguing or

refusing sex. These findings are from a recent series of Adolescent Data Guides, published by the United Nations Population Fund, on the situation of adolescent girls and boys and young women in 48 countries. The series includes reports from five countries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, where cultural norms often relate to the incidence of gender-based violence. Entering into marriage can put young women at greater risk for abuse in some countries. The percentage of 15-24 year old females who have experienced violence is slightly lower for Ukrainian women who have never married (7 per cent) than for married women (9 per cent). But in Moldova, 12 per cent of never-married young women have experienced violence, compared to more than 28 per cent of married women.

* The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has launched an appeal for \$1.2 billion to provide **life-saving emergency support to women and children** impacted by severe humanitarian crises. UNICEF's Humanitarian Action Report 2010 spotlights the desperate situation of children and women in 28 countries. Haiti was already classified as "in crisis" prior to the January quake which killed up to 200,000 people and left 2 million in need of aid. Every year, UNICEF responds to 200 emergencies, with 2009 witnessing repeated large-scale natural and human disasters in South-East Asia while emergencies in the Horn of Africa, Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) intensified. The greatest needs are in sub-Saharan Africa, where in 2009 some 24 million people in the Horn of Africa alone were affected by drought, chronic food insecurity and armed conflict. ●





GLOBAL CLASS STRUGGLE

Class struggle sharper in Europe

The temporary closure of two Alcoa Aluminum plants in Italy has ignited protests. On January 29, 200 Alcoa workers occupied the runway of the airport of Cagliari (in Sardinia), where the factory is located, shutting down air traffic. After the action began early in the parking lot, with support from the CGIL, CISL, and UIL unions, the workers occupied the runway where they faced police, who tried to remove them. The workers also went on strike in the plant in Fusina, where approach roads were blocked to prevent merchandise from being brought in or sent out.

During January, Italy witnessed many actions and protests by workers who are facing the consequences of the economic crisis. Europe now has more than 20 million people without work. Many immigrants, who are not "citizens," are not included in the official figures. Workers at the Fiat plant in Termini are facing layoffs during the last week of February and the first week of March, to balance the company's books, a decision affecting 30,000 workers and their families. Fiat's plan even earned criticism from members of Berlusconi's cabinet.

These and other protests are returning images of the class struggle to the pages of the daily press and TV newscasts, similar to the first half of 2009, when workers at 3M, Caterpillar and Continental used tactics that included kidnapping bosses and the seizure of factories in France.

Osanloo put in solitary, but soon released

Iranian bus driver and union leader Mansour Osanloo has been released from solitary confinement and then returned to the general section of Rajai Shahr prison. His removal in early February to a solitary cell, apparently as part of an increasing attempt to intimidate him, was met with immediate protests by labour organizations.

Mac Urata, Secretary of the International Transport Federation's Inland Transport Section, commented: "Such a speedy response to the outrage that was voiced at the stepping up of the campaign to break Mansour's spirit is gratifying. It's a relief that he is out of immediate

danger. It also underlines the importance of international opinion and solidarity. However, even a positive move like this does not obscure the fact that Mansour should not be in prison in the first place. Whatever promises the Iranian authorities may make to the



international community and the UN ring hollow when trade unionists like Mansour Osanloo and Ebrahim Madadi are imprisoned on trumped-up charges."

In July 2007 Mansour Osanloo, President of the ITF-affiliated Vahed Syndicate (Tehran Bus Workers' Union) was dragged from a Tehran bus by armed men who were later identified as Iranian security forces. This followed previous attacks and intimidation and happened only three weeks after he visited the ITF and union organisations in London and Brussels.

In October 2007, Osanloo was sentenced to five years imprisonment on charges of "acting against national security" and "propaganda against the state". His "crime" was to help found a genuinely democratic trade union for his fellow bus drivers.

Nestle Russia punishes union workers

Nestle's Corporate Business Principles state that the transnational seeks to "establish a constructive dialogue" with unions. In 2008, after a year of struggle, Nestle management conceded that the union representing Kit-Kat workers in the Russian city of Perm could negotiate over wages.

But less than two years later, workers are being squeezed again at Nestle Russia. In November 2009, workers at Nestle Waters Direct in Domodedovo, 30 kilometers outside Moscow, joined together to address the problem of eroding real wages and deteriorating working conditions. This Nestle subsidiary bottles and delivers Pure Life water to homes and offices. Workloads have increased substantially for drivers following the 2008 closure of one of the company's three Moscow-region distribution depots (increasing pressure on remaining drivers). Drivers are paid on a piece rate/bonus scheme. Working days of 12 hours or more are necessary to reach a reasonable level of pay. Last year, the number of dispatchers was reduced by 50%, increasing the workload on the survivors. Drivers and dispatchers formed a

union and obtained legal status by joining the All-Russia Trade and Service Employee's Union 'Solidarnost'.

Management immediately began interfering with the union's access to members. Drivers were reassigned to work as loaders, eliminating the drivers' bonus, or assigned to smaller vehicles, making it impossible to achieve the bonus quota even with 15-16 hours of work. Drivers who join the union have seen their pay cut by up to 40%. Union requests to negotiate work schedules, overtime and bonus pay were not answered.

On January 24, union members demonstrated at Nestle's Moscow headquarters. Three days later, union vice-chair Sergei Strykov was dismissed. Though Strykov had a perfect work record, he was accused of damaging the company by selling the extra bottles drivers have previously been rewarded for selling. Strykov is one of a group of workers who had filed a legal case against the company to recover unpaid overtime.

Union members and supporters rallied again on Feb. 5, to demand the reinstatement of Sergei Strykov, restoration of all former work assignments, an end to anti-union discrimination, and negotiations on working conditions and overtime pay.

Tanta Flax & Oils workers escalate protests

Workers from Egypt's recently privatized Tanta Flax and Oils Company are staging a sit-in outside the country's Council of Ministers. They escalated their protests on Feb. 17 by staging another sit-in, demanding that Egyptian Trade Union Federation president Hussein Megawer help resolve their problem.

The conflict has left some 850 workers with no source of income since January. Workers launched a strike last Dec. 9 after the dismissal of their local union leader, Salah Mosallam. The company responded by imposing a lock-out and withdrawing all raw materials from the production lines.

In early February, around 400 workers relocated their protest from the company's headquarters in the Delta village of Mit Hebeish to the Council of Ministers in downtown Cairo. They are demanding the payment of overdue bonuses, periodic pay-raises, the reinstatement of ten sacked workers (including three local union members), an increase in their food allowance, and a return to operations. These workers have also called for the company's liquidation and a guarantee for end-of-service reimbursements and early retirement packages.

Abdel Aziz Mohamed, employed at the company for the past 25 years, said, "I used to make LE450 [\$85 Can.] per month, but have not been able to generate any income for the past two months. I have to pay rent for my apartment, utility bills and school fees for my three children. What am I supposed to do to pay these bills and expenses? Have my wife work on el-Haram Street?" he added,

referring to a street famed for its belly dancing nightclubs.

"Following 32 years of service at the company, my monthly wage was only LE518 [\$98 Can.] which was barely enough for my own expenses," said Mohamed Gad Allah, another factory worker. "What am I supposed to do now with no source of income? Must I steal and become a thief?"

A handful of MPs from the Muslim Brotherhood, as well as independents, have visited the workers and expressed solidarity with their demands.

"The example of the Tanta Flax Company has proved that the policy of privatization is a failure," said Gamal Zahran, leader of the independent bloc in parliament. "I will be filing an urgent parliamentary petition to this effect."

Poverty in Germany

Five years after a radical pruning of Germany's welfare system, poverty is spreading like an infectious disease, reported the *Irish Times* on Feb. 19, pointing to "hordes of bottle collectors and bustling soup kitchens." Over 11 million Germans - 14% of the population - live in consistent poverty, up by a third in just 10 years.

That figure uses the European Commission standard which defines someone living on 60 per cent of the average median wage as at risk of poverty. This measure applies to a quarter of 19- to 25-year-old Germans, a fifth of families with three children and some 40 per cent of single-parent families.

Germany's post-war constitution included the idea of "social standing", obliging the state to ensure that all citizens, especially children, had the means to participate in everyday life. But

this obligation is being abandoned. Liberal politician Guido Westerwelle recently declared that Germany's welfare system "breeds late Roman decadence." There was no incentive to work, he complained, if hard-earned wages were barely above the welfare line.

Angry critics asked whether the problem lay in too-high welfare payments or too-low salaries. Earnings have been stagnant in Germany for years, rising just 0.51 per cent between 2001 and 2007, according to the International Labour Organisation.

Compounding this problem is an increasing gap between normal salaries and a new low-wage sector made possible by recent labour market "reforms". Some 6.5 million Germans (16 per cent of the workforce) now work for 9.62 euros (\$14 Can.) an hour or less, according to a recent study.

Aiding this race to the bottom is political opposition to a statutory minimum wage, led by Westerwelle and his Free Democrats, junior partners in the federal government. Though 80% of Germans support a minimum wage, like that in 20 other EU member states, Germany has no industry-wide pay floor. Instead, wage agreements are established on a sector-by-sector basis through collective bargaining. For anyone outside this bargaining net, it is not unusual to hear of hourly wages of about five euros (\$7).

For Germans on low wages - security guards, hairdressers, call-centre workers - the government provides an earnings top-up through social welfare. The official line is that a minimum wage would lead employers to outsource jobs to low-wage economies. Just how security guards and hairdressers could be shifted abroad remains unclear.

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.

Central Committee CPC

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

Parti Communiste du Quebec (section du Parti communiste du Canada)
5359 Ave Du Parc
Montreal, Quebec H2V 4G9

B.C. Committee CPC
706 Clark Drive, Vancouver, V5L 3J1
Tel: 604-254-9836 Fax: 604-254-9803
E-mail: cpbc@telus.net

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

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

Saskatchewan CPC
Email: <mail@communist-party-sk.ca>

Ottawa CPC
Tel: 613-232-7108

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

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

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

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



Union leader Mansour Osanloo

Greek workers battle austerity measures

Special to PV

Big rallies were held in 67 cities across Greece on February 10, as part of a highly successful general strike, largely at the initiative of PAME, the left-wing labour federation backed by the Greek Communist Party. No planes landed or took off from Athens airport, no ships moved in the ports, and participation by both public and private sector workers was high.

The strikers are protesting against the policies of the PASOK (Social Democratic) government, which is freezing wages and pensions, increasing the tax burden on workers, raising the retirement age by two years, and non-

replacement of retiring public workers. The main motto of the strikers was "We will not pay for the capitalist crisis".

Despite driving rain, thousands of strikers gathered in front of the Greek Parliament in Athens, and marched to the Labor Ministry. They were joined by a big delegation of the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), along with banners for the economic immigrants.

The strike was opposed by the Social Democrat-led trade unions which support the government, using the argument that "it is not Athens to blame for the anti-labor policies, but Brussels".

Another strike was called for February 24 with the same

demands.

While the Greek working class has repeatedly held massive strikes and demonstrations against neoliberal government policies in recent years, the country's economy is now in grave crisis. For leading circles of international capitalism, this crisis is seen in part as an opportunity to impose the right-wing policies which were widely seen as a key factor in the global meltdown which erupted in 2008. The European Commission in Brussels, for example, says the Greek debt is "manageable" - on condition that the PASOK government impose very severe austerity measures, such as reducing pensions and raising the retirement age, much like the International Monetary Fund dictates to developing countries.

The threat against Greece is that refusal to adopt such policies will mean much higher interest rates on the country's large debt load. Greece faces the prospect of refinancing about \$17 billion euros this year alone, placing PASOK squarely against the militant traditions of the Greek populace.

The situation in other countries is also difficult. Italy, for example, has a public debt to GDP ratio of 120 percent (much higher than Greece), and Japan is close to that level. Spain, Portugal and Ireland also face severe structural economic problems, and a similar



Strikers outside the headquarters of the Greek central bank.

threat of anti-working class policies dictated by the bigger capitalist powers of the European Union.

All this uncertainty has recently buffeted the euro currency. The possibility of Greece or one of the other stricken countries being unable to pay its debts - and either needing an EU bailout or having to abandon the euro - has been called "the biggest threat" to the single currency. In reality, such a development would weaken the relative strength of the continent's major imperialist powers, especially Germany and France.

Here at home, Bank of Canada Governor Mark Carney has made public statements about the "limits of stimulus," an unobvious hint that despite massive unemployment

levels, government spending will be slashed in the Tory budget during the first week of March.

According to pro-corporate media commentators, markets are "signalling" that the government spending which helped mitigate the impact of the crisis must end in order to "restore investor confidence."

But such threats seem to be having little effect in Greece, where the Feb. 10 strike was quickly followed by walkouts of customs officials and Finance Ministry employees protesting cuts to their supplementary income payments. Lasting several days, the action by the customs officials has caused serious disruptions to fuel supplies and other important imports. ●



WFTU banner at the Feb. 10 march in Athens

Deadly conflict continues in Bengal

The Left Front government of India's Bengal state, led by the Communist Party of India (Marxist), has been under intense attack in recent months, from right-wing forces, regional separatist movements, and Maoist groups. We report here some news of the CPI(M)'s response, from our correspondent in India, B. Prasant.

Bengal chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee recently addressed a series of rallies in north Bengal, at Siliguri, Coochbehar, and Falakata in Jalpaiguri. Each was packed with people from all sections of society, with women present in notably large numbers. They hung to Buddhadeb's words of hope, of development, of poverty alleviation, of peace.

February 12 was the date of the assembly in Siliguri, held by the Darjeeling Left Front. Speaking strongly for the unity and integrity of the nation, Buddhadeb pointed an accusing finger at the separatist moves initiated by the Gorkha Jan Mukti Morcha (GJMM), which want to carve a separate state out of Bengal.

Under present arrangements, the three hill subdivisions of Darjeeling, Kurseong, and Kalimpong are under the Hill Council, and Buddhadeb noted that more power could be transferred to this autonomous body. He reminded the audience that during previous attempts to divide up states along lines of language or other regional features,

the political parties of the ruling classes themselves had split with dangerous results. Buddhadeb urged the people of the plains and the hills to remain united and to work for the development of the region, for which purpose a divisive move would be disastrously counter-productive.

The basic theme of Buddhadeb's address at Coochbehar on Feb. 13 was the need to organise mass protests against the actions by violent thugs in the pay and protection of their chieftains. The rally was another mammoth affair as people streamed in from far corners of the district.

While bitterly critical of the anti-people Trinamul Congress bourgeois party and its "rainbow coalition of lackeys," Buddhadeb also commented on separatist groups like the "greater Coochbehar," and the KLO-KMP. He also attacked the right-wing UPA central government on the issue of rising prices. Despite difficult circumstances, the Bengal Left Front government has kept the price of several basic commodities to a reasonable limit in recent years, Rs 2 per kilo rice being a prime example.

The next whistle stop for the chief minister was Falakata, where he addressed yet another big gathering on Feb. 14. Here he again condemned the central government for raising prices, and called on the people to descend on Delhi when Parliament resumes March 12. This is necessary, he said, to fill the ears of the government with a roar of protest against all its anti-poor moves.

Buddhadeb repeatedly called

for greater unity of the masses against the policies of union government, the depredations of the separatists, and the conspiratorial moves of the divisive forces.

Over 100 CPI(M) activists have been murdered over the last year in Bengal, as the various opposition forces attempt to destabilize India's longest-running progressive state government.

The latest Maoist attack was launched on Feb. 15 by well-armed gunmen on the Silda camp of the eastern Frontier Rifles, mostly Gorkha personnel are members of the EFR. The attack came in the afternoon of a busy market day, with victims including local residents as well as a number of the local military force, and about a

dozen of the Maoists.

Our correspondent reports that this large-scale military action followed the arrest over the previous two weeks of about 70 local Maoist leaders and activists. There have also been caste-based splits among the armed opposition groups in this area. but in his view, "the most important factor is that the villagers are no longer fearful of the 'Maoist' gunmen along the entire western part of the red clay zone of Bengal. It would be unhistorical to read too much into this, as some well-wishers of us have done to the extent that the villagers are seen to be rebelling against the mightily armed marauders. This will ultimately happen - and this is what causes the killers an overwhelming fear to be felt creeping in."

Jyoti Basu remembered in Surrey

The late Marxist leader and former Chief Minister of West Bengal, Comrade Jyoti Basu, was remembered at a function organized on January 30 by the Indo Canadian Workers' Association (ICWA) in partnership with Radio India at Surrey's Strawberry Hill Public Library. Originally scheduled to release a calendar dedicated to the first Punjabi newspaper in Canada, the event was turned into a condolence meeting in memory of Basu, who passed away on Jan. 17.

After a moment of silence for the deceased leader, speakers paid tributes to Basu. The ICWA President, Surinder Sangha threw light on the contributions of Basu

to the land reforms and the progressive politics of India. Kulwant Dhesi, another ICWA leader, described Basu as a soldier of secularism, who stood like a rock against communalism. The Consul General of India in Vancouver, Ashok Das, paid tributes to Basu and highlighted the contribution of the left movement in shaping secularism and democracy in India. Harjit Daudharia, an alternate Central Committee member of the Communist Party of Canada, also addressed the gathering, as did the Liberal Party candidate from Surrey North, Shinder Purewal. The leader of the descendants of the

Prasant also points out an economic factor. "The 'Maoists' have carried on a lucrative trade in felling trees, establishing a nexus with the forest mafia. This could only be done with at least a reluctant, fear-laden participation of the rural masses. This chain of exploitation has been snapped in many areas as the tree-cutters, the headload carriers, and the forestry smugglers have learnt that getting cosy with the 'Maoists' was costing them too much - in terms of livelihoods as well as lives."

What is new, he concludes, is the rising curve of people's anger at the killings: "This shall be a vastly worrying factor for the guilty whose hands have been seen dipped in the blood of the innocent, too many times now." ●



A Tale Twice Told: *Invictus / After the Party*

AFTER THE PARTY: *Corruption, the ANC and South African's Uncertain Future*, Andrew Feinstein, Verso, 2009, ISBN 9781844673568, available at PeoplesCoopBookstore.com.

INVICTUS, starring Morgan Freeman and Matt Damon, directed by Clint Eastwood, 2009.

Reviews by Paul Bjarnason

One normally associates Clint Eastwood with lone gunslinging cowboys or Dirty Harry rather than with Nelson Mandela. In the film *Invictus*, Eastwood rises to the occasion. He portrays Mandela as having the social and tactical skills of a modern day Lenin.

The story is historical, so the plot is no secret. Mandela is released from jail in 1990, and gets elected as President of a new South Africa - a country divided by deep racial, economic, and social differences. The African National Congress is suddenly in power but with no experience in governing. They face a lot of transitional issues regarding the civil service and its relations with the new government.

The second theme is of South Africa's re-entry to international sports. In 1995 South Africa was to host the world's Rugby Cup. The South African Sports Federation wanted to eliminate the traditional name and colours of the Springboks rugby team. Mandela felt that this would isolate millions of Afrikaners. Rather than build a new country, it would either continue or exacerbate the differences, so he pushed to retain the name and colours.

The South African team, partly as a result of international isolation, was a third rate team. Mandela went to special efforts to enthrone the players to exceed their own expectations. The rugby crowd scenes have a Canadian connection, they were manufactured in Vancouver. The cinematography itself is inspirational.

Why Eastwood chose two Americans to play the leads is not known, but the choice of Morgan Freeman was inspired. Freeman has the dignity and gravitas to do justice to the role of Mandela. This is a film worth the money to see it - not just to feel good but it has lessons without being didactic.

After the Party is an

autobiographical analysis of the excitement and hope of a new ANC Member of Parliament. In the early years (1993), Andrew Feinstein, as a result of his knowledge of economics and finance, found himself as number 64 on the list of ANC candidates nominated for the Pretoria-Wits-Vereeniging Legislature. The ANC, to affirm its inclusiveness, had approached a number of less obvious persons. South Africa has a proportional representation system and parliamentary seats are filled in order from the lists of candidates. Feinstein was appointed to the Public Accounts Committee. He describes the difficulties: "running through all of the policy making and legislative process was a massive public participation initiative." This was time-consuming but rewarding when it worked.

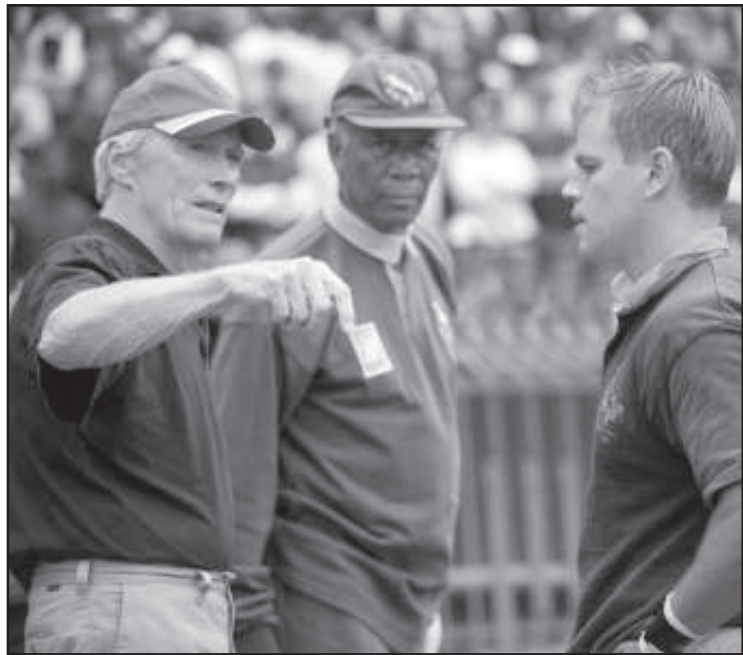
His first negative experience was on a trip to Hong Kong where he was confronted by businessmen wanting to establish a casino in S.A. An ANC MP was pocketing \$71,000 from the money they were fronting.

As a realist, and by 1997 an MP, Feinstein states "that as a small, open economy South Africa had little choice but to engage the global economy on its terms.... a constant tug-of-war between the need for social and material justice on the one hand and gaining acceptance of the global economic power brokers on the other." He was now on the Standing Committee on Public Accounts (Scopa), an audit committee of sorts. In their work they discovered and reported various dealing that could embarrass the ANC: "On ... these contentious issues we were supported and protected by the Chief Whip Max Sisulu and, where necessary by the President himself."

In 1998 Thabo Mbeki succeeded Mandela as president, and things changed. The rest of the book is about the growing corruption arising out of an arms deal and apparent kick-backs. Under the Mbeki administration Scopa and Feinstein were under attack. Bury the reports if they were embarrassing. When Scopa tried to continue its work, Feinstein was threatened with not being on the parliamentary candidates list. He eventually resigned.

This is a story of heroes in the Mandela era, and a growing number of villains in the Mbekiera, which Feinstein fears will not improve under Zuma. There is a lot of detail but it is an object lesson for us all - power [and money] can corrupt unless vigilance is maintained.

Both the film and book demonstrate that there is enthusiasm following a national liberation victory. This however can soon be subverted by the imperialistic interests in the form of globalism and does not necessarily lead to socialism. The book also shows a possible abuse of a purely proportional representation system which in this author's opinion supports a Mixed Member Proportional system. ●



Clint Eastwood, Morgan Freeman and Matt Damon on the set of *Invictus*.

2010 PV Calendar Still On Sale

Some copies of the 2010 People's Voice Calendar are still available. This year's theme is "Socialist Women," marking the centenary of the famous 1910 conference which adopted Clara Zetkin's resolution establishing International Women's Day.

As usual, the 2010 Calendar includes a wide variety of memorable dates for the working class movements, from birthdays of prominent revolutionaries to the anniversaries of watershed struggles for

peace, social justice, equality and socialism.

For your copy, send \$5 plus \$2 to cover postage to People's Voice, 706 Clark Drive, Vancouver, BC, V5L 3J1. The Calendar is also on sale at the Ontario bureau of People's Voice (290A Danforth Ave., Toronto, M4K 1N6) and our Manitoba Bureau (387 Selkirk Ave., Winnipeg, R2W 2M3).

Vancouver-area readers can pick up the Calendar at People's Co-op Books, 1391 Commercial Drive, Vancouver. ●



By Wally Brooker

"The Wild Proroguer" on Parliament Hill

Kudos to Trevor Strong of The Arrogant Worms, whose hilarious satirical song *The Wild Proroguer* spread quickly through cyberspace to help to build the movement that took the wind out of Stephen Harper's sails. As Canadians protested on January 23 against the shutting down of parliament, it was fitting that Strong

sang at the Parliament Hill rally. "If I'm at a rally, something's gone horribly wrong," he quipped, adding that Harper "came to power promising an open government, and now his government isn't even open." The Facebook group Canadians Against Proroguing Parliament now has more than 225,000 members.

Telethons silent on Aristide

Prominent musicians have made their appearances on the Haiti telethons, and the public has responded with millions of dollars in pledges. While many of the charities, such as Doctors Without Borders, are worthy of the Haitian peoples' trust, others like the Clinton Bush Haiti Fund are cause for concern, given the record of the two ex-presidents. As for the performers, was there a single musician on either the Canadian or U.S. broadcast who reminded viewers that democratically-elected President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was deposed by the USA, Canada and France in 2004 and is now living in exile in South Africa? Not one. Certainly not superstar Wyclef Jean, a Haitian-American musician who appeared on the "Hope For Haiti Now" telethon. After the earthquake, Jean called for the immediate intervention of the U.S. military, and back in 2004 he advocated the overthrow of Aristide.

Musicians sue industry giants

A massive class-action lawsuit against the four primary members of the Canadian Recording Industry Association is picking up steam with the naming of the estate of jazz great Chet Baker as lead plaintiff in the case. The four CRIA companies are Warner Music Canada, Sony BMG Music Canada, EMI Music Canada and Universal Music Canada. The lawsuit began in October 2008 when artists found that for decades works included in compilation CDs, such as top dance tracks of a certain year or live recordings, often were created or distributed without obtaining copyright licences. The infringers already admit they owe \$50 million but the full claim, according to Canadian law professor Michael Geist, could be as much as \$6 billion. The same companies have been charging for years that consumers don't respect copyright. Thousands of Canadian and non-Canadian artists are involved.

Buffy Sainte-Marie still inspires

Legendary singer-songwriter and activist Buffy Sainte-Marie is receiving accolades for her latest album, *Running for the Drum*. In December, she emerged as the big winner at the Canadian Aboriginal Music Awards with four awards including Album of the Year, Best Single (*No No Keshegesh*), Best Songwriter and Best Female Artist. The 69-year old phenomenon is still delivering inspiring music that speaks truth to power. For a jolt of righteous energy check out her video for *No No Keshegesh* on YouTube.

Songs of the Civil Rights Movement

President Obama and his family celebrated Black History Month on Feb. 10 with an evening of songs of the civil rights movement at the White House. Performers included Joan Baez, The Blind Boys of Alabama, Natalie Cole, Bob Dylan, The Freedom Singers, Jennifer Hudson, Smokey Robinson & Stevie Wonder. Natalie Cole sang Marvin Gaye's classic *What's Goin' On?*, with its anti-war lyric "we don't need to escalate, war is not the answer." Did you hear that Mr. President?

"Canto General" coming to Toronto

Toronto band Los Compañeros are planning one of their most ambitious projects ever. The group, founded in the late 1970s by exiles from fascist regimes in Chile and Greece, will perform Greek composer Mikis Theodorakis' setting of Chilean poet Pablo Neruda's epic *Canto General* at Toronto's Music Hall on Nov. 28 & 29. In addition to the seven-member group, there will be Canadian and international guest soloists plus a 44-member chorus, all under the baton of Margarita Theodoraki, director of Orquesta Mikis Theodorakis (direct from Greece). It may seem a long way off, but this is a major event. The oratorio has been described as "music for revolutionaries to sing while storming the gates."

Kate McGarrigle RIP

Admirers from around the world paid tribute to Montreal singer-songwriter Kate McGarrigle who died Jan. 18 after a long illness. She was 63. With sister Anna she formed the McGarrigle Sisters, a popular duo with deep roots in folk music, featuring extraordinary vocal harmonies. From their beginnings in the progressive folk music scene in Montreal in the sixties, the bilingual sisters achieved world-wide fame, but always stayed close to home in what Kate once called "the communist-socialist society which I adore."

Youth Festival in South Africa

The 17th World Youth Festival, the largest gathering of democratic, progressive and anti-imperialist youth around the world, will be held in December 2010 in South Africa. The World Federation of Democratic Youth has announced the decision following a special General Council meeting in Beirut.

"We view this as very positive and exciting," Johan Boyden, General Secretary of the Young Communist League of Canada (YCL), told People's Voice.

Jyoti Basu....

continued from page 9

Javed Akhtar and sung by Jagjit Singh as a tribute to Basu was also played. A portrait of Basu by Sheetal Anmol was displayed at the event. Anmol also prepared the portrait of Babu Harnam Singh on the calendar that was later released by Bakshish Singh, the son of Dhanna Singh, a martyr of the Babbar Akali movement.

This is the third year that the ICWA and Radio India have together released a calendar dedicated to the freedom struggle of India and the history of resistance against racism and discrimination by the Indian pioneers in Canada. This year's calendar is dedicated to the centenary of Swadesh Sewak, the revolutionary newspaper launched by Babu Harnam Singh and Guran Ditta Kumar on January 10, 1910. ●

- Gurpreet Singh

Free speech under attack by Parliamentary committee

continued from page 12

participants. It is also clear that Canada is to be a testing ground for what is being planned for other international jurisdictions.

Without a doubt, the main

Olympic diary...

continued from page 6

values of profiteering and chest-thumping nationalism.

At the Art Gallery, hundreds of anti-war activists grabbed banners and placards, heading into the streets to condemn Canada's dirty role in the Afghanistan war of occupation. StopWar's "troops out now" message met with a few objections, but mostly with support from onlookers. The rally stopped at several intersections, holding "medal ceremonies" for warmongers like Stephen Harper and General Rick Hillier. We wound up at the Tent City, where everyone grasps the connection between unchecked militarism and global poverty.

The Winter Olympics certainly have brought world attention to Vancouver. But even if most of the media coverage focuses on the Games and the celebrations, our protests broke through the official propaganda. Watch for even bigger protests during the 2012 Summer Olympics in London, where the price tag is skyrocketing and the social contradictions are just as shocking. ●

"Well over 10,000 young people are expected to gather for this festival which promises to be a powerful expression of the anti-imperialist, anti-fascist and anti-colonialist struggles led by youth, and this year's largest and the most significant political, cultural, broad-based mass international event organized by world's progressive and democratic youth and students forces."

2010 is the 20th anniversary of the release of historic freedom fighter Nelson Mandela, as well as the decriminalization of the African National Congress and the South African Communist Party. The decision comes after lengthy consideration and debate about the location of the Festival.

WFDY noted the "historical background of anti-apartheid struggle, the current process of transformation lived in the whole country (and the unity of all youth movement), and the fact that never in sub-Saharan Africa there was the opportunity to organize a WFYS, led to us decide that, in this moment, the most appropriate venue for the 17th WFYS is South Africa."

Boyden noted that the YCL Central Committee strongly supports the organization of a diverse festival committee, reflective of the youth movement across Canada including Quebec and Aboriginal youth. "We think a number of allies and other youth organizations will be very enthused to work on this festival despite some potential conflicts with the timing for us," he said referring to the December date for the Festival. "But youth in the South have been overcoming these problems for sixty-five years, so I think we'll be able to as well."

The WFDY also recently passed statements on the situation of the youth struggles in Greece, unfair sanctions against Eritrea, and the Vancouver Winter Olympic Games. "WFDY calls for sports to cherish fair-play and cooperation and promote peace, internationalism and solidarity - not militarism, elitism and consumerism" the statement said.

The next issue of People's Voice will carry more information about the Beirut meeting and Festival organizing. ●

People's Voice deadlines:

MARCH 16-31 issue: Thursday, March 4

APRIL 1-15 issue: Thursday, March 18

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

purpose of this redefinition of antisemitism is to create a serious chill on university campuses and in the media. Teachers will be afraid to discuss Israeli policies in their classrooms, while the various Israeli Apartheid Weeks will be prohibited by administrations on campuses across the country for fear of being charged with inciting hate crimes. Likewise, articles critical of Israeli government policies or actions (as rare as they are) will likely disappear from the print and electronic media. It is possible that websites could be shut down.

Organizations critical of Israel will be unable to rent public venues for meetings. Already, I've heard that some Palestinian support groups fear they may be charged under hate laws. In other words, what we will be seeing - in fact are already seeing - is a new form of McCarthyism. For me, as a Jew, one of the worst ironies here is that - should such legislation actually come to pass, as seems likely - antisemitism will actually increase. As Bahija Reghai has noted, by equating Jews with Israel and Zionism, the CPCCA reinforces "the reductionist and false notion that all Jews are responsible for the acts of the state of Israel."

...I don't think it's too extreme to say that if the proposals likely to come out of the CPCCA become law, meetings such as this one may well be very risky undertakings in the future. I should also point out that, if this

legislation comes into being, we will be in the bizarre situation of being able, in Canada, to stand up and roundly criticize our own government (for, say, something like prorogation of parliament or poor treatment of Afghani prisoners) in a way that we won't be able to criticize a foreign government. Something is terribly wrong with this picture.

So, here's what can you do: first, start by taking a look at the CPCCA website (cpcca.ca), so you can see for yourself where this Coalition is headed. We are also asking all of you here tonight to write letters to your MPs and party leaders... And help us spread the word about the secretive and dangerous CPCCA by inviting someone to speak to your group. As I noted at the outset, the term "solidarity" is not just about pity and charitable handouts. What is happening to the Palestinian people today will likely have serious consequences for us here in Canada tomorrow. However, history has shown that the degree to which governments - all governments - take away peoples' democratic rights and freedoms to serve their own ends always depends on the degree to which we allow them to get away with it. Together, let's insure that the current government doesn't take away our right to free speech. ●

(Naiman is formerly Professor of Sociology at Ryerson University, now living in Vancouver.)

What's Left

Surrey, BC

India Mahila Association celebrates IWD 2010, Fri., March 5, 7 pm, dinner, entertainment, dance, tickets \$25 at door, Bollywood Banquet Hall, 201-8166 128 St.

Vancouver, BC

Left Film Night, Sun., Feb. 28, 7 pm, "Aristide and the Endless Revolution," Centre for Socialist Education, 706 Clark Drive, donations accepted for grassroots Haiti relief efforts. Admission free, organized by Vancouver East Club CPC, YCL, and Centre for Socialist Education. Call 604-255-2041 for info.

IWD Dinner & Dance, Thur., March 4, 7 pm, Fraserview Hall, 8240 Fraser St., tickets \$35 (\$20 unwaged), for info call Vancouver & District Labour Council, 604-254-0703.

Hope for Haiti in Latin America, Fri., March 5, 7 pm, Room 420, Van. Community College, 250 W. Pender St., forum hosted by Haiti Solidarity BC.

Change the system, not the climate, Sun., March 7, 2 pm, Unitarian Church, 949 W. 49 Ave., public forum hosted by Canada-Bolivia Solidarity Ctee., suggested donation \$5-10.

IWD march and rally, Monday, March 8, 5 pm, from Victory Square (E. Hastings and Cambie), organized by Grassroots Women.

People's Voice Pasta Dinner, proceeds to PV Drive, Sun., March 21, 5 pm, Centre for Socialist Education, 706 Clark Drive. Organized by Vancouver East Club CPC, tickets \$12, vegetarian option available, call 604-255-2041 for reservations. Followed at 7 pm by the next Left Film Night.

Winnipeg, MB

Solidarity Rock, Sat., March 6, 7:15 pm. Supporting cultural exchange between musicians and artists in Cuba and Canada. West End Cultural Centre, tickets \$12, info 998-0636.

Remembering Shevchenko, Sun., March 7, 3 pm, Ukrainian Labour Temple, 591 Pritchard. Celebrating the life of Taras Shevchenko, with Festival Choir, Winnipeg Mandolin Orchestra, Yunist Dancers. Perogy dinner at 5:30 pm. Tickets \$20 from 582-9269, Association of United Ukrainian Canadians.

International Women's Day dinner, Mon., March 8, 6 pm, 257 King St. Tickets: Grassroots Women 237-9585.

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

Toronto, ON

Norman Bethune Day social, Sat., Feb. 27, at the GCDO, 290 Danforth Ave. Tickets \$5, door prize one week all-inclusive trip for two to Cuba. For tickets or info, call media sponsor People's Voice, 416-469-2446.

IWD 2010, Sat., March 6, rally 11 am at OISE Auditorium (252 Bloor St. W), march 1 pm, Info Fair starts 1:30 at Ryerson, 55 Gould St. Organized by Women Working with Immigrant Women and IWD Organizing Ctee.

Celebration of Life for Janet McMurray, 2 pm, Sunday, March 7, GCDO Hall, 290 Danforth Ave.

Kingston, ON

We Don't Stop!, IWD Fair, 11-4, Sat., March 6, music and performances, children's activities and more, Memorial Hall, 2nd floor City Hall, International Women's Week Community Coalition.

Ottawa, ON

Still Searching for Bread & Roses, IWD celebration, 2 pm, Sun., March 7, information, performances and refreshments, Bronson Centre, Mac Hall 211 Bronson Ave.

Montreal, QC

Women of Rock, festival to benefit Montreal women's shelters, 8 pm, Sat., March 6, at L'Alizé (900 Ontario St. E., corner St-Andre).

JIM BEYNON (July 26, 1946 - Feb. 18, 2010) passed away peacefully in Vernon after a short and intense battle with pancreatic cancer. His intelligence, sense of humour and his deep belief in and fight for social justice will be missed by all who knew and loved him.

Jim is survived by his wife Christine, son Alex, daughter Elena and son-in-law Jon Durkin.

No service will be held. In lieu of flowers donations can be made to the North Okanagan Hospice Society in Jim's name at 3506 - 27th Ave., Vernon, V1T 1S4.

REDS ON THE WEB

www.communist-party.ca

www.peoplesvoice.ca

www.ycl-ljc.ca

www.solidnet.org

The "Canadian Parliamentary Coalition to Combat Anti-Semitism": What It Means For Canadians

Excerpts from a talk by Joanne Naiman at a public forum titled "One Year Later...Gaza Remembered," held at the Vancouver Public Library on January 30, 2010

I'm going to talk about the Canadian Parliamentary Coalition to Combat Anti-Semitism (CPCCA), which has been meeting in Ottawa since last fall. "What Coalition?" you may be asking yourselves. Exactly: this entity has been almost totally out of the public eye since its inception. While many Canadians have expressed dismay about the recent prorogation of Parliament, few are aware of a committee whose main aim is, to quote one critic, "an attempt to curtail freedom of speech and academic freedom across Canada, and to possibly criminalize certain kinds of human rights discourse."

What, exactly, is the CPCCA? The Canadian House of Commons regularly sets up parliamentary committees to study particular subjects and make recommendations back to parliament. In the case of the CPCCA, however, this procedure was totally circumvented, and despite its name, this entity has no authority from parliament as a whole, despite being made up of 22 MPs from all four parties currently sitting in the House of Commons. The two key players in setting up the CPCCA (and who are ex-officio members of its Steering Committee) are Irwin Cotler - a lawyer, past president of the Canadian Jewish Congress, and former Liberal Justice Minister - and Jason Kenney, Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism.

In March of 2009, Kenney - who has been described by Murray Dobbin as "point man for Stephen Harper on issues involving Israel" - banned British MP George Galloway from entering Canada, almost certainly because he'd just led a humanitarian relief convoy to Gaza. He also recently reallocated funding away from the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNWRA) because of its assistance to Palestinian refugees.

At a recent conference in

Jerusalem, Kenney boasted of his government's "zero tolerance approach to antisemitism." As examples of this he noted the following actions taken by his government: (1) the elimination of funding to the Canadian Arab Federation (whose leadership he described as anti-Semitic and apologists for terrorism); (2) ending contact with "like minded organizations" [to the Canadian Arab Federation] such as the Canadian Islamic Congress; and (3) the de-funding of KAIROS, a church-led NGO agency, which Kenney (incorrectly) described as "taking a leadership role in the [Israeli] boycott, divestment and sanctions campaign." To further quote Kenney: "The existential

threat faced by Israel on a daily basis is ultimately a threat to the broader Western civilization." In other words, Kenney endorses an "us" vs "them" view of the world, a "clash of civilizations" that pits the Christian "west" against the Muslim "east."

The other half of this duo, Irwin Cotler, is considered an expert on international law and human rights law. He has served on the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and its sub-Committee on Human Rights and International Development, as well as on the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. In 2000, he was appointed special advisor to the

Minister of Foreign Affairs on the International Criminal Court. However, despite this background, he has a long record of supporting

History has shown that the degree to which governments take away peoples' democratic rights and freedoms always depends on the degree to which we allow them to get away with it.

Israel's violations of Palestinian human rights and breaches of international law. Cotler strongly opposed the Goldstone report, and concluded, "if there had been no Hamas war crimes, there would have been no need for an Israeli response."

...The CPCCA emerged from the experience of a delegation of eleven MPs, led by Kenney and Cotler, at the London Conference to Combat Antisemitism in February 2009. The London Conference was itself an off-shoot of the Inter-Parliamentary Committee for Combating Antisemitism (ICCA). Working backward, the ICCA was originally co-founded in 2002 by none other than Irwin Cotler, with Israel's Deputy Foreign Minister Rabbi Michael Melchior and former Deputy prime Minister of Sweden Per Ahlmark. However, this committee apparently was thought to be too closely tied to the State of Israel to be effective, and didn't move forward. Its second incarnation - now distanced from direct Israeli involvement - met in London in February 2009, with funding from the UK government and a British charitable organization. The underlying assumption and key premise of the CPCCA, even prior to hearing any witnesses (in line with both the ICCA & the London Conference), is clear from its website: that we are witnessing an expansion of antisemitism both in Canada and internationally, and its form is being referred to as the "new antisemitism." All three of these groups express an urgent need to combat this new antisemitism, especially in the media and in academia.

Is antisemitism in fact growing in Canada? I am a sociologist, and in the submission I made to the CPCCA in the summer of 2009, I made clear that all the traditional data used to assess the level of prejudice and discrimination toward groups - such as income, discrimination in hiring and housing, educational level, hate crimes etc. - do not indicate that this is the case. Does antisemitism in all its odious forms exist in Canada? Certainly. Is it expanding and intensifying? No. Nonetheless, and without any supportive evidence, the CPCCA website states that "the extent and severity of antisemitism is widely regarded as at its worst level since the end of the second World War" and "recorded incidents of antisemitism have been on the rise both locally and globally."

The CPCCA claims independence from the government of Canada, NGOs, and Jewish community organizations, and that it "will voluntarily disclose all sources of funding." However, no one to date has been able to get any information on their funding

sources. And this is no small organization: listed on the website are seventy individuals who have been or will be brought to Ottawa to appear as "witnesses" at their inquiry. The CPCCA received around 150 written submissions last summer. The hearings have largely been attempts to confirm the positions the CPCCA had from the outset. Many submissions disputed the CPCCA's premises of a "new antisemitism," and pointed out both the deficiencies and the dangers of such an argument.

This hasn't stopped Panel Chair Mario Silva from saying: "The breadth and depth of experience these witnesses have will do a lot to augment our understanding of the present situation and will thoroughly inform our coming recommendations."

To give you a true sense of the Kafka-esque nature of this committee, one of the first speakers to be called was Irwin Cotler, while Jason Kenney is one of the last. Clearly, this Coalition knew where it was headed from the day it sent out its first call for submissions. The rest has been pure window dressing.

It's not hard to see that if one accepts Cotler's premise that Israel is what he calls "the collective Jew," then any criticism of the state of Israel is, de facto, anti-Semitic. There can be little doubt, therefore, that this Coalition will soon be putting forward recommendations to the government that certain criticisms of the State of Israel within Canadian universities and in the media should be defined as a form of antisemitism, and therefore an incitement to hatred. Thus, in the strange Alice-in-Wonderland world we're now in, those who stand up and charge Israel (correctly) with gross violations of both the Geneva Conventions and of international humanitarian law may soon find themselves charged under section 319 of the Canadian Criminal Code and section 13(1) of the Canadian Human Rights Act, or else silenced by judicial warrants of seizure issued under section 320 of the Criminal Code.[9] We can assume that this would include calls for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS), as well as using the term "apartheid" to describe the actions of the Israeli state.

Given Jason Kenney's recent comments in Israel, it is clear that the CPCCA anticipates a very attentive and rapid response from the Canadian government. In his December 16 speech in Jerusalem mentioned earlier, he noted the presence in the audience of Irwin Cotler, as well as Scott Reid and Mario Silva, the Co-Chairs of the CPCCA, and concluded by saying "that we can offer some useful reference points and best practices to share with the rest of the world and parliamentarians who share our concern about the new antisemitism." Put plainly, the CPCCA is a front for what is effectively a done deal, with four federal parties as willing

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Last year, authorities at Carleton University in Ottawa censored this poster for Israeli Apartheid Week.

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