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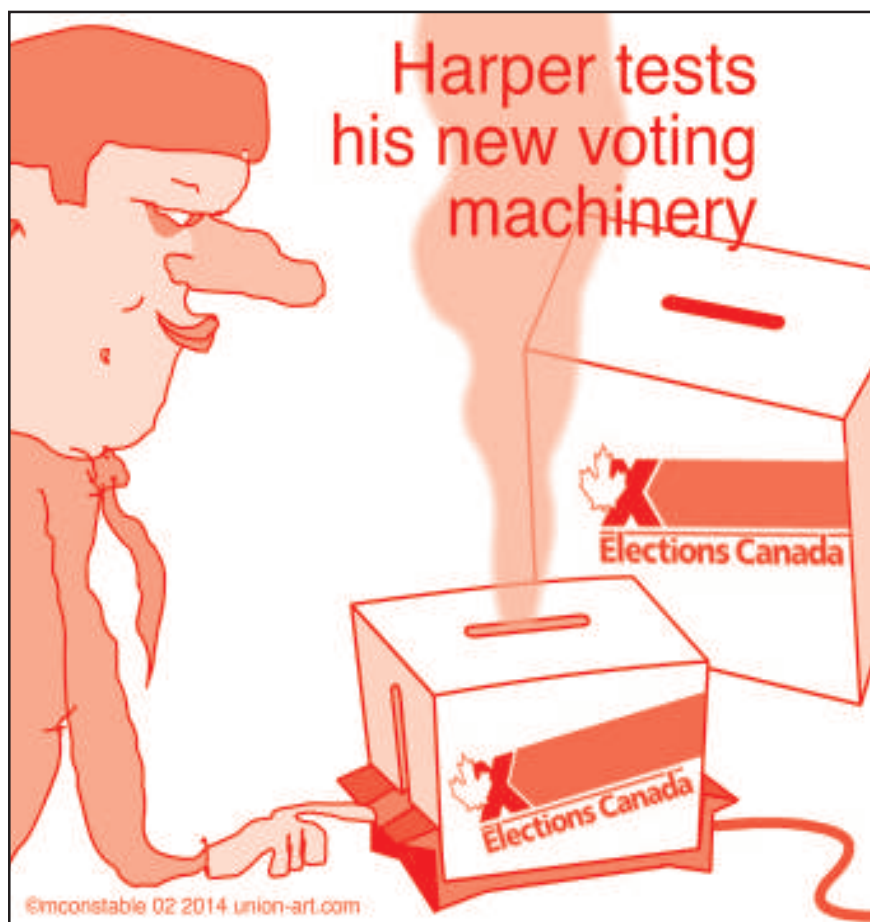
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# people's VOICE

**ONTARIO**  
The campaign for a  
People's Recovery

*See page 2*

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## Undermining democratic election rules

*international experts  
speak out against  
Harper's Bill C-23*

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## Canada's shameful role in the Ukraine crisis...

Analysis on  
page 6



This AFP photo taken on April 28, 2013, shows Ukrainian ultra-nationalists saluting as they march in the center of Lviv to mark the 70th anniversary of the 14th SS-Volunteer Division, a World War II German military formation formed by volunteers from the region of Galicia with a Ukrainian ethnic background. A year later, neo-Nazis are part of the new government of Ukraine, backed by Canada's Harper Conservative government and the opposition parties in Parliament.

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### Alberta pension fight

Public sector workers and their allies are taking to the streets to protest the province's attack on pension rights. The fightback is one factor in the resignation of Conservative Premier Alison Redford.

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### Pete Seeger

The second installment of our music columnist's look at the life and contributions of Pete Seeger, the great US folk singer/songwriter.

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### Québec election

We invite readers to practice your French language skills, with our special feature article on the contending parties and the issues at stake in the April 7 election taking place in Québec.

# Ontario Communists prepare for spring election

## PV Ontario Bureau

The Provincial Committee of the Communist Party of Canada (Ontario) met on March 15-16, to discuss the situation in the province and prepare for a widely anticipated spring election. The minority Liberal government of premier Kathleen Wynne is expected to table a budget in April, and most indications are that the opposition parties will vote it down.

The CPC(O) meeting was held against a backdrop of the highest provincial unemployment rate in Canada outside the Atlantic region, and youth unemployment as the highest in the country. The deepening jobs crisis has been exacerbated by several recent announcements of plant closures. Among the high profile closures are Heinz (740 jobs), Kellogg's (500 jobs), automotive supplier Faurecia SA (650 jobs), and US Steel.

As CPC (Ontario) leader, Liz Rowley noted, "All of these jobs have been lost, all of these operations closed, because Canadian plants are being moved outside of the country, or because the parent companies are consolidating their enormous wealth and capital. Faurecia, for example, is the world's sixth largest automotive supplier, employing 94,000 people in 34 countries. Its sales in 2012 were \$22.5 billion, with \$6 billion in North America. There is no reason, apart from unbridled corporate greed, that this company and others have closed their Ontario plants and ruined hundreds of working people's lives and communities. It's shameful that the Ontario government has sat on its hands and watched this happen, time and time again."

As in other parts of Canada, and throughout the capitalist world, the provincial government has continued to inflict drastic austerity measures on the working class, while ensuring that corporations have all the assistance needed to enjoy a "jobless recovery." Alongside attacks on wages, pensions and benefits, the working class in Ontario faces huge increases in household debt, costs of utilities and services, tuition fees, and housing costs.

Right in step with the profit interests of their corporate masters, the provincial government is driving to privatize healthcare, sell off public assets such as public school lands and buildings, and contract out public services and social programs.

The CPC(O) noted that the working class currently has no champion in the Ontario legislature. The Liberals are proving that they can deliver the "create a crisis" strategy, initially proposed by the Mike Harris Conservatives, for privatization of everything from health care to government services to public education. The NDP, once regarded as the conscience of the legislature, is now widely seen as unwilling to strike hard as it continues to shed its ties to labour and adopt a pro-austerity, pro-business government-in-waiting stance. It speaks volumes that NDP leader Andrea Horwath was not only unwilling to support the \$14 minimum wage campaign, but actually linked her pathetic \$11.50 minimum wage proposal to a 30% cut in business taxes.

The Tim Hudak Conservatives continue to be the main danger to the working class in Ontario, with an aggressive platform based on

massive privatization, deep tax cuts, and drastic attacks on wages, pensions, labour and democratic rights. The Tories are framing their reactionary, "right-to-work" policies in the language of right-wing populism, in an effort to appeal to severely marginalized and alienated sectors of the population; this coagulation of discontent on the right has all the makings of something much more sinister.

The absence of a strong progressive block, including Communists, in the legislature means the absence of voices who will challenge corruption and the attacks on the working class. It means the absence of voices who will advance policies to address people's needs and curb corporate power. It means the absence of voices that can expose the systemic nature of the economic crisis, and project a socialist alternative.

Ontario Communists are preparing to confront this problem directly, by looking to run more candidates, in more areas of the province, than in the previous election.

The platform will be based on the party's "10-Point Prescription for a People's Recovery", a program of concrete, progressive reforms to confront corporate power, reverse the austerity attacks, and open the door to further progressive reforms in Ontario. Campaign demands will include a full-employment plan, massive housing and infrastructure construction, and progressive tax reform that puts the burden on corporations and the very rich. Communists will also campaign for increased public transportation, public auto insurance legislation, free post-secondary education, and expansions to public healthcare,

education and childcare programs. "We are heading into a campaign," said Rowley, "where widespread insecurity and deep anger exist right across the province. Working people have seen their lives destroyed so easily, and so quickly, by the privileged

and powerful. These are some of the people we've been talking to, along with all those who are fighting back against austerity. Our message of real and progressive change, as an urgent priority, has to ring out in this election campaign!" •

## People's Voice Victory Banquet

Great dinner, music, door prizes, refreshments & more!

**Saturday, May 31**  
doors open 6 pm

**Russian Hall, 600 Campbell Ave., Vancouver**

Tickets \$20 (unwaged \$10), from  
People's Voice, 604-255-2041 email  
<newlabourpress1@gmail.com>

## NIAGARA NEWS BULLETIN

\* After a month's delay in the ballot count, a majority of 219 **taxi drivers in St. Catharines's** Central Taxi voted to join Teamsters 879 as part of a wave of organizing the Ottawa-based company's fleets around the province.

\* The city of Port Colborne is officially backing the **Stop the Great Lakes Nuclear Dump** group's petition of over 50,000 signatures against Ontario Power Generation's plans to store nuclear waste one kilometer from one of the Great Lakes. Meanwhile residents described a creek whose waters eventually end in another Great Lake as the "worst ever seen", discoloured with unknown crud coming from the Marineland amusement park, which has been the target of animal rights protesters.

\* A 77-year old man was **discharged with no notice from a P3 hospital** into a blizzard with no shoes or winter clothes. He had asked to stay one night longer so his friends could pick him up as they were snowed in around the rural area where he lives. He was discharged as soon as he could walk with a cane, although with pain, on his birthday.

\* A Niagara Regional **cop who had beaten up a photographer** filming the police ejection of a man from a restaurant two years ago was in the end docked barely a week's pay. The photographer, who had broken bones and was initially charged with assault despite being the victim, said he can't believe the police force is still employing an officer convicted of a serious crime.

\* Over 175 people gathered for a rally in St. Catharines calling for an **inquiry into murdered and missing Aboriginal women**, but the local Conservative MP refused to attend, touting tough "law and order" legislation as an excuse not to hold the inquiry.

## Another boost for PV Fund Drive

Donations keep arriving for the 2014 People's Voice Fund Drive, bringing us \$5790 closer to our goal of \$50,000 since the report in our previous issue. We are now at \$12,590, or 25 percent of our target, a good number after the first three weeks of the campaign.

Ontario continues to lead so far, with \$7240 turned in, exactly one-third of their target of \$21,600. We have received another \$4015 from British Columbia readers (just over 20% of their target), followed by \$670 from Alberta, \$300 from Manitoba, \$240 from Saskatchewan, \$35 from Quebec, and \$90 from Atlantic Canada.

As we stressed in our mail appeal, People's Voice can't stay in print without your support, since rising costs continue to impact all publications in Canada. The issue in your hands is the last one going out at the former Canada Post mailing rates for publications in our category; starting with the April 16-30 issue, our mailing costs will rise as part of the Canada Post "restructuring" plan, adding to our expenses. For this calendar year, PV subscription rates will stay at the current levels, but we absolutely must achieve our \$50,000 target to stay afloat.

More supporters have joined our "\$300 Club" project, made

possible by a generous supporter who will contribute a further \$100, for each donation of at least \$300 received by March 31. For example, if we get forty such donations by March 31, our benefactor will write a cheque for another \$4000. This extra amount is not part of our provincial quotas, but it will be used to purchase a badly-needed new computer, and to help expand our web and social media presence. During the first three weeks of the Fund Drive, we have received twenty donations of \$300 or more. Thank you so much for this amazing solidarity!

Two fundraising events are on the horizon for British Columbia readers. The Vancouver East Club's Pasta Dinner will take place on Sunday, April 27, as part of the regular Left Film Night at the Centre for Socialist Education, 706 Clark Drive, Vancouver. The Dinner is at 6 pm, including vegetarian or non-vegetarian pasta options, salad and garlic bread, for just \$15. Call 604-255-2041 for more information, including details of the film at 7 pm.

Mark your calendars for the 22nd annual People's Voice Victory Banquet, Saturday, May 31 (doors open 6 pm), at the Russian Hall, 600 Campbell Ave. in the historic Strathcona neighbourhood. Call 604-254-9836 for tickets and other details.

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

Enclosed please find my donation of \$\_\_\_\_\_ to the 2013 People's Voice Press Fund Drive.

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Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/town \_\_\_\_\_

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Send your contribution to:

People's Voice, 706 Clark Drive, Vancouver, BC, V5L 3J1

## MAY DAY 2014 GREETING ADS

To mark May Day 2014, 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 will be April 18; if PV is preparing the layout, the deadline is April 16. Please check with us about the format if your ad is being sent electronically.

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

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| One column-inch.....          | \$15  |
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| Two columns x 2 inches.....   | \$45  |
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| Three columns x 4 inches..... | \$110 |
| Two columns x 7 inches.....   | \$130 |
| Three columns x 7 inches..... | \$180 |

Send greetings to People's Voice at:  
706 Clark Drive, Vancouver, V5L 3J1  
E-mail: pvoice@telus.net

# Challenger emerges for CLC president race

## PV Vancouver Bureau

For the first time since 2005, there will be a contest for the presidency when the Canadian Labour Congress meets May 5-9 in Montreal. Ken Georgetti, who has led the 3 million member federation for 15 years, will be challenged by Hassan Husseini, a negotiator for the Public Service Alliance of Canada and a member of Unifor local 2025.

A long-time labour activist, Husseini has launched a campaign to "Take Back the CLC." A statement on his campaign website says, "As workers and unions, we are facing a massive and unprecedented right wing attack. Labour and employment standards, collective bargaining rights, and the right of workers to organize and be politically active, are all targets of right wing governments at the federal and provincial levels. The labour movement is in a fight for survival as a force for progressive social change in Canadian society.

"In recent years, grassroots activism has won real gains. There is much we can learn from these successful struggles such as that of the Quebec students, Idle No More, the Toronto Library workers, the Chicago teachers and others. As CLC President I will

empower and support that kind of local activism. I will help build the local leadership it takes to challenge someone like Stephen Harper, and his corporate backers....

"I will give the CLC back to the workers, because there is nothing that bosses and this federal government fear more than an organized, united and worker-driven labour movement. We need, quite simply, a bottom-up, grassroots movement."

Expanding on this theme, Husseini says, "Our fight isn't simply a battle for 'fairness' that can be solved through clever appeals to politicians or a glitzy branding exercise. We must be willing to listen to our own members - and place their experiences at the heart of our campaigns. We must empower our members to fight the battles that lie ahead.

"We must also be honest about what we're up against. We are facing an aggressive form of capitalism that has put a target on the back of every unionized and non-unionized worker, and anyone else standing in the way of corporate profits. Nothing is sacred, and no one's job is safe. Our opponents will stop at nothing to strip away hard-won gains, and sacrifice them at the altar of

corporate greed."

His platform includes the following points:

- Support provincial federations and labour councils and enable them to regain their role as centres of political action and mobilization at the provincial and local levels.
- Build solidarity and not walls between our affiliates and bring us all back to the table. Work with affiliate unions to organize meaningful strike support for unions on strike.
- Bring affiliates together to coordinate our organizing strategies.
- Work with affiliates to ensure all locals are affiliated and active in their labour councils.
- Engage the membership at the grassroots level in identifying and articulating an independent political vision, one premised on the potential and ability of workers



Hassan Husseini

to make social change at all levels of our society.

- Transform the public debate on the basis of a new vision and a progressive alternative. We need to shift from continuously fighting defensive battles and be prepared to fight to win new victories that our children and future generations deserve.
- Build worker-to-worker solidarity across borders. Encourage a new era of concrete solidarity with fellow workers around the world. Global solidarity would not be restricted to resolutions and infrequent conferences.
- Engage in the electoral process on the basis of a clear labour agenda. We can best support our allies in Parliament, by mobilizing our members to defend our rights every day of the year.
- Develop an organizing strategy



Ken Georgetti

that engages the members, activists and the community.

- Build a broad-based movement that can effectively challenge the austerity agenda. Launch a pan-Canadian campaign to improve public services including healthcare, education, public transit, Canada Post and others.
- Empower the rank and file of our movement and give real voice to young workers, marginalized workers, activists and workers from equity seeking groups.

Husseini has more than two decades of activism in the student, labour, social justice, community and international solidarity movements. He has served as a union local president, human rights vice-president, health and safety representative, negotiating team member, and labour council delegate.

In the mid 1990s, he was an organizer for the Ottawa-Carleton CUPE District Council, playing a lead role in mobilizing for the Ontario Days of Action. He also coordinated Ottawa's walk for peace, the environment and social justice.

Born in Beirut, Lebanon to a large working class family of ten siblings, Hassan Husseini immigrated to Canada in the mid-1980s. He holds a Masters degree in legal studies from Carleton University. ●

## Redford resigns, but business as usual

By Naomi Rankin

Alberta premiers come and go as the reigning Progressive Conservatives require more and more spin to maintain credibility with the voters. But the only question that matters - whether the public or the multinationals own and control the oil and gas sector of the Alberta economy - will not be up for debate as the Tories choose their next "leader".

The previous premier, Ed Stelmach, never the choice of the Calgary/oil sector of the party, was forced out after five years when Tory support dipped along with an economic downturn. The mutiny breathed life into the even more reactionary Wildrose Party.

Now a relatively brisk internal power struggle, including the defection of two MLAs and the rumoured meeting of ten to sixteen others to debate following suit, plus the truly comical spectacle of the party leadership putting the premier on a "work plan", has forced Alison Redford to resign with only four days notice after less than three years.

Tories complained of Redford's high-handedness, and public criticism focussed on her lavish travel expenses. In fact, a coup in a capitalist party is always about the expected ineffectuality of the current leader in the next provincial election. In Redford's case it arises from her harsh treatment of public employees, and cuts to social spending - not because the Conservatives don't agree with these policies, but because such extreme right-wing measures reduced the possibility of once again spooking the majority of urban voters into voting Conservative to avoid the more terrifying possibility of a Wildrose government.

Through the period of the Tory dynasty in Alberta the two major cities, Edmonton and Calgary, have not only increased in population, but have become more cosmopolitan through immigration and through the weakening of social and ideological ties to Alberta's agricultural roots. This is reflected in the relative strength of Liberal support in corporate headquarter Calgary, and NDP support in the somewhat more industrial Edmonton.

The Tories have been able to command large majorities for decades from a combination of the social conservatism of rural Alberta and the lop-sided economic development arising from the energy sector. Alberta is essentially a one-industry province controlled by large multi-nationals, with very little local industrial base to generate either competing capitalist interests or any offsetting strength in the union movement.

But the source of their majorities could also become the source of their decline, as the Wildrose Party challenges for dominance in the rural areas and their capacity to seduce working class voters is limited by their corporate allegiances.

"I will never apologize for selling Alberta to the world, going where we needed to find new customers and get fairer prices for our products," were Redford's almost final words as premier of Alberta.

After all, it's really hard to get anybody to buy oil and gas. And the price varies so much with nuances of styling. ●

## Rallies protest cuts to Alberta public sector pensions

By Doug Meggison with files from Naomi Rankin and Corinne Benson

The first day of spring roared in like a lion all over Alberta, but frontline public employees braved the cold to protest cuts to provincial public pension plans.

The abrupt resignation of the Progressive Conservative premier, Alison Redford, will likely not affect the basic outline of the austerity agenda the neoliberal government is trying to implement.

Hundreds of workers gathered with union flags outside workplaces like the University of Alberta Hospital, Edmonton City Hall and Alberta Children's

Hospital in Calgary. Demonstrations took place in about 30 locations.

The Alberta Federation of Labour has brought together a dozen unions under the Alberta Labour Coalition on Pensions, and has produced dynamic campaign materials including a website, FaceBook page and their own actuarial study to counter the unsupported pronouncements coming from the provincial government.

Three main changes are in store for the public pension plans. Government is moving to increase the "85 factor" to 90 years of service plus age for unreduced pension. The penalty for earlier

retirement than age 65 or reaching the 90 factor will be increased from about 3% a year to 5% a year of early retirement. Indexing to inflation will remain at 60% but keeping up at this rate will not be guaranteed.

The Coalition on Pensions has had electronic town hall meetings and a 2,000 attendance outdoor demonstration on a frigid March 2.

"Nobody voted on these cuts," Alberta Federation of Labour President Gil McGowan said on behalf of the Coalition. "By breaking the promise it made to frontline public employees, the Redford Government is sending the message that no one can trust the agreements it makes." ●



Alberta trade unionists rally on March 20.

# EDITORIALS

## Solidarity with Vancouver truckers

The corporate sector and the BC Liberal government have some big ideas. Their economic strategy is based on investing billions of dollars into massive expansion of highways, bridges, pipelines, and tankers. Of course, none of this is to create value-added economic growth within Canada. The aim is constant acceleration of raw materials extraction and exports, part of the decades-long transformation of Canada into a supplier of resources for other imperialist powers, at the expense of secondary industry and jobs for Canadian workers.

But the big dreams of the BC ruling class do not extend to a living wage for the workers who are critical to this expansion agenda. As we go to press, the Liberals are forcing unionized truckers back to work, and encouraging the employers to fire non-union members of the United Truckers Association who started job action in late February. This is the third major struggle by these drivers over the past decade and a half, seeking compensation for long unpaid hours while they wait to deliver goods. This time, the Liberals blatantly sabotaged negotiations by encouraging the employers to simply wait for back to work legislation.

The message is clear. BC's so-called world class economy will continue to be built on poverty-line wages for workers who generate huge profits for the employers. If this strike is costing the economy \$125 million every day, as the provincial and federal governments say, the employers can afford to pay truckers for their waiting time, and to implement standardized rates for this crucial section of the workforce.

This struggle could become a turning point for the working class in British Columbia. If the truckers refuse to surrender, all-out solidarity by the labour movement and community allies will be needed to help them beat back the government/employer attack.

## We are still losing the war

Amidst smug back-patting by pro-war politicians and pundits, the flag has been lowered on Canada's direct military involvement in the US-led occupation of Afghanistan.

An estimated 50,000 people have died as a direct result of the war, most of them Afghan civilians or insurgents, and about 3,400 occupation soldiers, including 158 Canadians.

The cost of this tragedy has been about \$22 billion for Canadian taxpayers, and still rising. More veterans have committed suicide in recent weeks, victims of post-traumatic stress disorder related to their experiences in uniform. Yet these casualties are not counted among the "official" Canadian deaths.

Violence in Afghanistan is growing. On average, over 100 Afghan troops and police are killed every week, and another 300 wounded. Two Canadian aid workers were killed in a March 27 attack against foreigners at a luxury hotel, one of the "safest" places in Kabul. This attack came just hours after a Taliban assault killed eleven police officers in Jalalabad.

Western leaders claim that life expectancy for Afghans has improved over the past decade, but the CIA's own figures appear to contradict those proclamations. Recent polls indicate that Afghans favour the Taliban over NATO forces and their own "elected" government. In his recent book about the Afghan war, former *Globe and Mail* correspondent Graeme Smith writes, "We lost the war in southern Afghanistan and it broke my heart... We're leaving behind a great big mess."

Mr. Harper, put a lid on your shameful "patriotic" nonsense. Simply put, Canada and our NATO allies lost this war by any measure that really counts. The time has come to end Canada's role as a "partner" of the Pentagon, and to adopt an independent Canadian foreign policy based on peace and disarmament.

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## LETTERS

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## Solidarity with South Korea's Political Prisoners

By Sean Burton

The term political prisoner or prisoner of conscience as applied to the Korean peninsula is often depicted in the mainstream media as a phenomena that only occurs in the north, in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). We are often told that a miserable fate awaits any who defy the northern government or who face trumped up accusations.

Few people stop to think about the other side of the fence. South Korea is rarely criticized in any fashion. If anything, it is praised as one of the "Asian Tigers" for its global economic success. But since North and South are still technically at war, there are bound to be distortions on both sides. In South Korea's case, despite a period of democratization after the fall of the military regime, the political/economic boundaries are still largely being set by the same people and defended by the same law, the National Security Law.

The National Security Law basically prohibits contact with and

travel to the DPRK, or promoting the DPRK's system. This predictably narrows the range of politically accepted dialogue in the South. There are people charged with small things, like a recent case where a man shared a DPRK twitter statement. Other times, there are people who want to travel north to see for themselves or who meet north Koreans abroad. Ridiculous though it may be, these actions have led to charges of spying on the North's behalf.

According to my human rights activist contacts, there are currently about 45 such cases, and most of these have sentences of several years. I have recently become involved with one of those cases, which I will share here.

Lee Byeong-jin was a professor of political science at Osan University and Kyunghee University. In the early 1990s, Prof. Lee was studying in India's capital, New Delhi. During that time he made friends with North Koreans studying there and made a number of trips to the DPRK. Lee was arrested in 2009, charged with espionage, and given a 10-year prison sentence, since reduced to eight years.

Such a charge carries with it a heavy blow to one's reputation in any country, let alone one where the realities of conflict are still close to home. For Lee's wife, it was too much to bear. She abandoned him, along with their children.

Those of us in activist circles who had heard of his situation formed a support group and journeyed to the prison in Jeonju city to speak to Lee directly. We were given 30 minutes. On entering the small room, Lee instantly brightened up and expressed his

tremendous gratitude that anyone still cared for his well-being. Prof. Lee stated that for a man of his background, it was only natural that he should desire political openness. He emphasized that he was not a communist or socialist, or for that matter a spy. He simply desires that one should be able to discuss any and all political and social issues in Korea as a whole without fear of harm to life or liberty. His personal life and career have been destroyed over nothing.

Lee made a special request: that people all over the world open their eyes to cases like his in South Korea. He is trying to make his case clear in a new trial, and is awaiting another hearing in April. Committees in support of his release have already been established in Korea, but the information must be more widely publicized. I encourage all readers to lend their support and spread this news as much as they can.

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# International scholars slam "Unfair Elections Act"

*This commentary was first published in the National Post newspaper*

We, the undersigned, international scholars and political scientists, are concerned that Canada's international reputation as one of the world's guardians of democracy and human rights is threatened by passage of the proposed Fair Elections Act.

We believe that this Act would prove [to] be deeply damaging for electoral integrity within Canada, as well as providing an example which, if emulated elsewhere, may potentially harm international standards of electoral rights around the world.

In particular, the governing party in Canada has proposed a set of wide-ranging changes, which if enacted, would, we believe,

undermine the integrity of the Canadian electoral process, diminish the effectiveness of Elections Canada, reduce voting rights, expand the role of money in politics, and foster partisan bias in election administration.

The bill seeks to rewrite many major laws and regulations governing elections in Canada. These major changes would reduce electoral integrity, as follows:

**Elections Canada:** The proposed Act significantly diminishes the effectiveness of Elections Canada, a non-partisan agency, in the fair administration of elections and the investigation of electoral infractions by:

- Severely limiting the ability of the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) to communicate with the public, thereby preventing the CEO from encouraging voting and civic

participation, and publishing research reports

- Removing the enforcement arm of the agency, the Commissioner of Elections, from Elections Canada, and placing it in the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP), a government department
- Prohibiting the Commissioner from communicating with the public about the details of any investigation

- Preventing any details about the Commissioner's investigations from being included in the DPP's annual report on the Commissioner's activities - a report that the DPP provides to the Attorney General (AG), and which the AG forwards to Parliament

- Failing to provide the Commissioner with the power to compel witness testimony (a significant obstacle in a recent investigation of electoral fraud)

**Right to Vote:** The proposed Act diminishes the ability of citizens to vote in elections by:

- Prohibiting the use of vouching to establish a citizen's eligibility to vote
- Prohibiting the use of Voter Information Cards to establish a citizen's identity or residency

The prohibition against vouching is ostensibly to reduce voter fraud yet there is no evidence, as affirmed by the Neufeld Report on Compliance Review, that vouching results in voter fraud. These changes to the voter eligibility rules will disproportionately impact seniors, students, the economically disadvantaged, and First Nations citizens, leading to an estimated disenfranchisement of over 120,000 citizens.

**Money in Politics:** The proposed Act expands the role of money in elections by:

- Exempting "fundraising expenses" from the spending limits for political parties, thereby creating a potential loophole and weakening enforcement
- Failing to require political parties to provide supporting documentation for their expenses, even

though the parties are reimbursed over \$30 million after every election

- Increasing the caps on individual donations from \$1200 to \$1500 per calendar year

- Increasing the caps on candidates'

supervisors, thereby politicizing the electoral process and introducing the possibility of partisan bias

- By exempting "fundraising expenses" (communications with electors who have previously donated over \$20 to a party) from "campaign spending," creating a bias in favour of parties with longer lists of donors above this threshold - currently, the governing party

The substance of the Fair Elections Act raises significant concerns with respect to the future of electoral integrity in Canada. The process by which the proposed Act is being rushed into law in Parliament has also sparked considerable concern. The governing political party has used its majority power to cut off debate and discussion in an effort to enact the bill as soon as possible. By contrast, the conventional approach to reforming the electoral apparatus in Canada has always involved widespread consultation with Elections Canada, the opposition parties and the citizens at large, as well as with the international community.

In conclusion, we, the undersigned, ask that the proposed legislation should be revised so that contests in Canada continue to meet the highest international standards of electoral integrity. ●



contributions to their own campaigns from \$1200 to \$5000 per election for candidates and \$25,000 per election for leadership contestants

- Creating a gap between the allowable campaign contributions of ordinary citizens and the contributions of candidates to their own campaigns, and thus increasing the influence of personal wealth in elections

**Partisan Bias:** The proposed Act fosters partisan bias and politicization by:

- Enabling the winning political party to recommend names for poll

**SIGNATORIES:** Professor Shaun Bowler, University of California, Riverside, US; Professor Brian Costar, Swinburne University, Melbourne, Australia; Professor Ivor Crewe, University College, Oxford, UK; Professor Jorgen Elklit, Aarhus University, Denmark; Professor David Farrell, University College, Dublin, Ireland; Professor Andrew Geddis, University of Otago, New Zealand; Professor Lisa Hill, University of Adelaide, Australia; Professor Ronald Inglehart, University of Michigan, US; Professor Judith Kelley, Duke University, US; Professor Alexander Keyssar, Harvard University, US; Dr. Ron Levy, Australian National University, Australia; Professor Richard Matland, University of Illinois, US; Professor Dan Meagher, Deakin University, Australia; Dr. Jenni Newton-Farrelly, Swinburne University, Melbourne, Australia; Professor Pippa Norris, Harvard and Sydney Universities, US/Australia; Professor Graeme Orr, University of Queensland, Australia; Professor Andrew Reynolds, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, US; Professor Ken Sherrill, Hunter College, City University of New York, US; Professor Daniel Tokaji, The Ohio State University, US.



People's Voice file photo: K. Cariou

## The myths and facts about Canada Post

*By and Doug Nesbitt, for the Support Postal Workers website, <http://supportpostalworkers.wordpress.com/>*

**Myth #1: Canada Post service cuts and cost increases are necessary.**

Fact: On Dec. 11, 2013 Canada Post's management announced, without warning either the public or the Canadian Union of Postal Workers, that home delivery for five million Canadians would be cut, there would be at least 8,000 layoffs, and letter costs would increase from 63 cents to a dollar. As many have pointed out, Canada Post's reasons for worse service at a higher cost are bogus, based around half-truths and flat out fabrications.

**Myth #2: Canada Post says it is no longer profitable.**

Fact: Since the mid-1990s Canada Post has been profitable every single year - except in 2011 when the company locked out 50,000 of its workers in an effort to weaken the union and its contract. In that time, Canada Post has fed over a billion dollars into the public purse.

**Myth #3: Letter traffic is decreasing so much that a profitability crisis is inevitable; according to Canada Post the Internet is to blame.**

Fact: Since 1989, before the advent of the Internet, the volume of mail has actually increased. Parcel delivery has increased as letter volume has decreased. Private for-profit couriers make money delivering parcels, not letters.

**Myth #4: The \$6.5 billion shortfall in the Canada Post pension plan is a time bomb that can destroy the company.**

Fact: The Canada Post pension plan is in decent shape. Unlike private-sector pensions, the Canadian government requires Canada Post to fund the pension plan at a higher level than the private sector. The current underfunding only means that if all Canada Post employees retired at once, they wouldn't get the entire pension they're due. Under Harper, the Canadian government gave Canada Post a four-year reprieve from paying into the pension plan. With the money they saved, they

invested \$2 billion into new letter-sorting machines, even though letter volume is declining - and is now being cited as a reason to cut Canada Post services! If money has been wasted, it was management's fault. There is no pension crisis.

**Myth #5: Canada Post has to end home delivery - there are no other options.**

Fact: If Canada Post introduced postal banking it could become even more financially sound and offer even better services to the public, especially in rural areas where home delivery often doesn't exist. Many national postal services offer postal banking which helps them stay afloat and even profitable. In fact, postal banking is exactly what the Canadian Union of Postal Workers is proposing for Canada Post.

**Myth #6: Service cuts and increased costs are about saving Canada Post.**

Fact: The service cuts and increased costs are about making the public upset with lack of services. The layoffs are about

weakening the union. Cuts and layoffs are about preparing Canada Post's retail network of post offices and outlets - the largest and most extensive retail network in the country - and its unparalleled

delivery services for privatization. Canada Post is being prepared for privatization precisely because it is highly profitable.

see CANADA POST, p. 11



Toronto rally against the Canada Post cuts. (Photo: Ed Bil)

# On the Dangerous Developments in Ukraine

**Statement by the Central Executive, Communist Party of Canada, March 13, 2014**

The deepening political crisis in Ukraine and the threat of regional conflict, possibly an even wider war erupting over the fate of Crimea, is extremely alarming. The "war of words" emanating from Washington and Brussels is inflaming international tensions and could in turn provoke a global catastrophe. This crisis has been stoked by the ongoing imperialist strategy of the U.S. and NATO to encircle Russia, as seen in the installation of anti-missile systems in Poland, and the integration of Georgia into the NATO alliance. Their goal is to isolate Russia and China, neutralizing potential obstacles to the drive by transnational capital based in the NATO countries to exploit the resources and labour power of the entire planet.

It is appalling that the Harper Conservative government has been playing an active role in this dangerous escalation, and that the mainstream media continue to whip up lies and distortions around recent developments in Ukraine. The claim by right-wing forces that the March 16 referendum on the status of the Crimean Autonomous Republic is equivalent to the 1936 Nazi occupation of Sudetenland is particularly odious. The unchecked expansion of Hitler fascism led to World War Two, which killed some 60 million people, including over 27 million citizens of the USSR. As an autonomous republic, Crimea has the legal right to determine its status, free from all foreign interference.

The current impasse in the region was precipitated by an orchestrated campaign of right-wing opposition and neo-fascist forces inside Ukraine - with the financial backing and strategic guidance of the U.S. and other Western imperialist powers - to overthrow the elected government of President Yanukovich, and replace it with the current illegitimate "coalition government" in Kiev. Far from being a popular, pro-democracy "people's uprising" in Maidan Square, it is now clear that this coup d'État was a highly organized operation, carried out with military precision, and masterminded by the U.S. and EU powers. The intention was to complete the unfinished business after the break-

up of the former Soviet Union, and later the so-called "Orange Revolution" of 2004, and bring Ukraine entirely under the influence and domination of the Western imperialist powers. This longstanding imperialist objective would not only bring Ukraine's natural and labour resources under its control, but would also further weaken the Russian Federation economically and politically, and give US/NATO another firm foothold along Russia's sensitive Southern flank, strengthening the military/strategic encirclement of this rival power.

The now-infamous leaked telephone conversation in early February between US Assistant Secretary of State Victoria Nuland and US Ambassador to Ukraine Geoffrey Pyatt, makes it abundantly clear that Washington - both directly and through its shady network of NGOs and the National Endowment for Democracy - was pulling all the strings and

**We urge all peace-loving Canadians to reject the barrage of imperialist propaganda justifying this orchestrated coup and the NATO drive to impose sanctions against Russia. Urgent peace actions by the labour and democratic movements are needed to help block the growing threat of military confrontations and war.**

considered itself arrogantly in charge of the future government to be installed after the coup in Kiev. That U.S. and other Western governments can now denounce the "foreign interference" of Russia in Ukraine's internal affairs, and demand respect for Ukraine's independence, reeks of hypocrisy of the highest order.

## Western corporate press - lapdog of imperialism

Despite growing evidence to the contrary, the mainstream corporate press in Canada and internationally continues to portray the orchestrated regime change in Kiev as a "grassroots", popular uprising of the majority of the Ukrainian people, striving for "freedom" and "justice". Any revelation which contradicts this script is conveniently downplayed or blacked out entirely.

Well-known neo-Nazi and fascist groups had a major presence among the street fighters in Maidan Square. Of these, the largest



Ultra-rightists burning communist flags in Kiev.

include the Svoboda ("Freedom") Party, Pravi Sektor (Right Sector), and the UNA-UNSO (Ukrainian National Army - Ukrainian National Self Defense). All of these organizations are documented as having pro-fascist, racist and anti-Semitic policies and ideologies.

When they seized and occupied the Ukrainian Parliament building, they adorned it with fascist and Nazi symbols and banners. Even the Huffington Post was forced to concede: "Groups such as the ultra-nationalist Svoboda party, with its ominous talk of a 'Muscovite-Jewish mafia', are now playing a key role in the new interim government - Svoboda controls three government ministries and the prosecutor-general's office." Several government positions are occupied by Svoboda leaders, including Ihor Tenyukh, Defense Minister; Andriy Parubiy, National Security Council chief; and Serhiy Kvit, Education Minister. Dmytro Yarosh, the co-founder of the Pravi Sektor, has been named deputy head of the National Security Council, responsible for Intelligence.

The U.S., Canadian and other NATO governments are whitewashing these disturbing facts, and the mainstream press are largely failing to report this "news" to the international community, because such exposure would undercut the credibility and legitimacy of this motley group of conspirators and reactionaries.

An even more damning revelation has now surfaced concerning the events which took place on the critical night of February 20 in Maidan Square, when some 80-plus street fighters and police were killed by sniper fire. That tragedy was predictably blamed on Yanukovich and his security forces, and helped to sweep him from power. But a private telephone conversation between Estonian Foreign Minister Urmas Paet and EU Foreign Affairs Chief Catherine Ashton tells a very different story. In the conversation (since authenticated by the Estonian government), Paet states: "All evidence shows that the people who were killed by snipers - both policemen and people in the streets - that it was the same snipers killing people from both sides. Same handwriting, same type of bullets, and it's really disturbing that now

the new coalition doesn't want to investigate what actually happened. So there is now a stronger and stronger understanding that behind the snipers was not Yanukovich, but somebody from the new coalition."

## Canada's deplorable role in the crisis

Recent statements by PM Stephen Harper and foreign Minister John Baird uphold the (il)legitimacy of the newly installed government in Kiev, offering it economic, technical and political support. By attacking the Russian Federation for "interference" and attempting to violate the "territorial integrity" of Ukraine - even going so far as to threaten Russia's expulsion from the G-8 - they are piling more kindling on a spreading fire. For Canada and other Western imperialist government to criticize Russia for foreign interference and violations of territorial integrity displays an incredible amount of hubris, given the repeated instances of imperialist interference and outright aggression - often in violation of the UN Charter - in Iraq, Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Haiti, Venezuela, Libya, Pakistan, and many other countries.

Equally deplorable has been the opportunistic posturing of the other "opposition" parties in Parliament around this issue. Both the Liberals and New Democrats have congratulated the coup leaders in Kiev, waxing rhetorical in their condemnation of "Russian aggression". On this, as on other critical questions, they all seem to essentially "sing from the same songbook", notwithstanding any nuanced differences between them.

The Communist Party of Canada, on the other hand, denounces the criminal imperialist conspiracy to impose "regime change" on Ukraine and its people.

As the Joint Declaration which our Party and some 40 other communist and workers' parties signed recently states: "We denounce the USA and the EU regarding their blatant involvement in the internal affairs of Ukraine, regarding the direct support they provided and are providing to the armed fascist groups, supporting historical revanchism against the outcome of the 2nd World War, transforming anti-communism into their official policy, as well as beautifying the fascist groups, their criminal ideology and activity, promoting the division of the people of Ukraine with planned persecutions at the expense of the Russian-speakers of Ukraine."

We urge all peace-loving Canadians to reject the barrage of imperialist propaganda justifying this orchestrated coup and the NATO drive to impose sanctions against Russia. Urgent peace actions by the labour and democratic movements are needed to help block the growing threat of military confrontations and war. The Harper government should be told immediately to end its support for the far-right forces which seized power in Ukraine, to restore full diplomatic relations with Russia, and to oppose the calls for sanctions and other threats and brinkmanship targeted against Russia. ●

**More info: <http://solidnet.org>**

## Fascists in the streets of Lviv



Activists in the western Ukrainian city of Lviv wearing uniforms of the former Ukrainian Insurgent Army (known as UPA, from its Ukrainian language initials), photographed marching on Oct. 16, 2011. This was one of several events celebrating the 69th anniversary of the founding of the UPA on Oct. 14, 1942. Sponsored by the far right party 'Svoboda' and the city council of Lviv, a concert and live performances were held. Groups of openly fascist movements marched through the city starting at the Stepan Bandera monument. The UPA was deeply involved in killings of Poles and Jews during WW2. (Photo by Frank Brendle, <http://defendinghistory.com/24818/24818>)



Fascists during the struggle in Kiev's Maidan Square.

# El Salvador: from civil war, to peace accords and elections

By Larry Wasslen, Ottawa

Throughout the 1960s and '70s the working class, peasantry, and students continued to organize in El Salvador. Much of the work on the left was done within broadly based coalitions in attempts to create some democratic space. This was complemented by work in trade unions, and within peasant and student movements.

Electoral fraud accompanied military governments as Generals and Colonels replaced each other in the presidential office. Repression was a constant theme of everyday life.

It was at precisely this time that the left became fractured. Some members of the Communist Party of El Salvador left to develop the Fuerzas Populares de Liberación-Farabundo Martí (FPL-1970) and carried out their first battle in 1972.

The left wing of the Partido Democrata Cristiano followed a similar course and founded the Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo (ERP-1972), which in turn split to form the Fuerzas Armadas de Resistencia Nacional (FARN-1975).

In the same year the Partido Revolucionario de Trabajadores Centroamericanos formed its guerrilla organization: Ejército Revolucionario de Trabajadores Centroamericanos.

The Communist Party of El Salvador, after several attempts to work with other parties to find a path to democracy, created the Fuerzas Armadas de Liberación (FAL) on 24 March 1980, the same day that Archbishop Oscar Romero was murdered.

Mass demonstrations, strikes, land and embassy occupations and kidnappings of prominent members of the ruling class or foreign business leaders continued. Military and police actions against the working class were proving less effective in stemming the mobilization of the masses, so certain sections of the oligarchy decided to re-invigorate death squads, a more direct form of repression.

This was not a completely novel development for the oligarchy, which had organized vigilante groups as far back as the 1930s. In the 1960s the ruling class responded to an upsurge in trade union and peasant organization by establishing the Organización Democrática Nacionalista, infamously known by its acronym ORDEN. The founder of this organization was General Jose Alberto Medrano.

In exchange for petty favours, jobs, and immunity from repression, 50,000 to 100,000 joined this organization and became the eyes and ears of the military regimes in the villages, towns, universities and cities. In addition, they made up vigilante groups and acted as paid assassins. Roque Dalton, the famous Salvadorian poet, identified this group as "a key element in the rise of a fascist tendency within certain military and oligarchic circles".

The business group Asociación Nacional de Empresas Privadas (ANEP), and landowners from the eastern part of the country (the Frente de Agricultores de la Región Oriental, FARO), organized the first paramilitary death squad, known as Fuerzas

Armadas de Liberación Nacional-Guerra de Exterminación (FALANGE) in 1975. Their objective was to exterminate all known communists and their collaborators. A collaborator could be any union member, any student or peasant who spoke out in favour of even the mildest of reforms. In one week in October 1975 thirty-eight people were executed. In 1976 FALANGE changed its name to Unión Guerrera Blanca (UGB) but its function remained unchanged.

Within the left there were significant differences in terms of strategy and tactics. Some organizations sought to develop a prolonged people's war combined with the construction of support within the working class, peasantry, and students. Others wanted to rely more on a general uprising and paid little attention to mass organizations. By the late 1970s it was apparent that a divided left would not be able to win this undeclared civil war.

Examples from Cuba and Nicaragua were important. In Nicaragua, the Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional united three factions into one command in March 1979, prior to its final offensive against the hated Somoza regime in the same year. Fidel Castro strongly encouraged unification, which had been achieved in Cuba in the late 1950s.

The Salvadorian left began to work towards unification. To optimize military action the FPL, PCS, and RN formed the Coordinadora Política Militar in December 1979. In January-February of 1980 the Coordinadora Revolucionaria de Masas (CRM) was created to unite the many mass organizations of the popular movements. By May 1980, the various guerrilla forces united, and the Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (FMLN) was established. Coordinated guerrilla action resulted in 41 ambushes of army convoys and 122 army casualties.

The forces of repression responded by a joint action of regular army, National Guard and ORDEN units in a "mopping up" operation against the villages of San Jacinto and Las Aradas near the Sumpul River on the border with Honduras. The villagers fled across the river, which was in full flow, only to be met by Honduran troops who forced everyone back into the river. Hundreds drowned, and those who managed to get back to El Salvador were machine-gunned. Over 600 people were massacred.

The FMLN launched its first coordinated military action on January 10, 1981; this is considered the official start of the civil war. The first offensive of the revolutionaries secured control over the departments of Morazan and Chalatenango. Over a period of several years, the FMLN used basic guerrilla tactics to ambush military convoys and attack outposts around the country. Interspersed with this approach were major offensives such as the attack on the Llopango Air Base, destroying fourteen Bell UH1 Iroquois helicopters, five Dassault Ouragan planes, and three C47s.

Early in the conflict the USA began to give material and financial support to the regime. When military advisers proved

insufficient to hold back the revolution, some 1,500 soldiers were sent for direct training in the infamous School of the Americas. Among those were the brutal Atlacatl Battalion, which was responsible for the El Mozote and Cabanas massacres, in which hundreds of innocent civilians were raped and murdered.

Initial attempts by the FMLN to achieve a negotiated end to the

war began as early as 1984. But it was not until the major FMLN offensive in 1989 that the USA finally realized they could not defeat the rebel army and agreed to support the peace process.

By the time the Acuerdos de Paz de Chapultepec (Mexico) was signed in January 1992, the 11 year conflict had cost 70,000 lives. Another 8,000 were "disappeared," mostly civilians

killed by military or police units, or by the death squads. In addition US imperialism had "invested" \$4.2 billion in the savage war.

The final agreement brought important changes to the constitution of El Salvador. The armed forces came under civilian control. Several organs used to attack the people were disbanded, including the National Guard, National Police, Hacienda Police, military intelligence (a civilian intelligence service was established), some military battalions, and paramilitary death squads. More than 10,000 members of these organs were demobilized, reducing the military from 130,000 to 16,000 today. Judicial and electoral reforms made it harder for the right wing to commit fraud during elections. Significant land and labour reforms were also won. The FMLN became an official political party and began to compete in elections.

Since the peace accords, the FMLN has participated in nine elections. From 1994 through 2014, the popular vote won by the Frente increased from about 30% to greater than 50% in 2009, when, for the first time, a party from the left won the presidential election. In 2014 the FMLN won re-election in the second round with 50.11% of the popular vote. ●



Salvador Sanchez Ceren, candidate of the FMLN, has officially been declared the winner of the March 9 presidential elections. The final total was 1,495,815 (50.1%) for Ceren, to 1,489,451 for ARENA's Norman Quijano (49.9%). El Salvador's Human Rights ombudsman and various international observer organizations reported that the elections were free and fair, despite Quijano's call for protests to overturn the democratic results.

## Exciting program for 2014 Che Brigade

The Canadian Network on Cuba (CNC) will have the 22nd annual Che Guevara Volunteer Work Brigade to Cuba at the end of April. The 2014 program offers a very exciting trip, with a great mix of activities for all who attend. From April 28 to May 18, the Brigade will travel through the cities of Havana, Trinidad, Santa Clara, and Sacti Spiritus, as well as the rural areas around the Escambray mountains. There are three parts to the trip: volunteer work, educationals, and free time!

Through a partnership with the Canadian Friendship Institute (ICAP in Spanish), the Che

Brigade provides Canadians with a unique perspective on Cuban society through a well-planned itinerary involving many organizations covering all aspects of Cuban life, including health and education, housing, women's and workers' rights, community organizations, LGBTQ rights, lessons on the economy, cultural activities, and more. There will also be opportunities to meet family members of the Cuban 5.

Our volunteer work will be on a co-operative farm, where we will help tend the crops and learn about the Cuban agricultural system.

Brigadistas will enjoy May Day

celebrations in Revolution Square, and a visit to the Che Monument in the lovely city of Santa Clara. The small town of Trinidad, with its photogenic, pastel-coloured Spanish colonial architecture and nearby beach, will be a well enjoyed part of the trip.

Accommodation for the first week is at the Camp Internacional Julio Antonio Mella (CIJAM) near Havana. Named after the founder of the Cuban Communist Party, the camp is in a rural setting with many murals, a soccer field, a bar, cafeteria, and educational rooms. Following the camp, we will stay at hotels in the cities we visit.

Two main themes of the Brigade are volunteer work and internationalism. Che sought to build a new attitude towards work, from a compulsory obligation to a social duty. It is also educating, as Che stated that volunteer work is a "school that creates socialist consciousness". This work builds solidarity between Canadians and Cubans and allows one to learn from another through the struggle to build a better society. At the end of the trip, Canadians will leave with a much stronger understanding of Cuba, along with memories for a lifetime!

If you are interested in more information or want to sign up for the 2014 trip, please email me at [chevolbrigade@gmail.com](mailto:chevolbrigade@gmail.com). The cost is about \$1150 plus flight. Flights from Toronto vary from \$600-\$800. Registrations are still being accepted!

The Brigade website is a great resource, at [www.canadiannetworkoncuba.ca/brigade](http://www.canadiannetworkoncuba.ca/brigade) and includes the 2014 Brigade program and other promotional material. ●

In Solidarity, Alvand Mohtashami, Coordinator



# GLOBAL CLASS STRUGGLE

## Mexico black-listed migrants

The BC Labour Relations Board (BCLRB) has ruled that Mexican government and consular officials blacklisted Mexican seasonal migrant workers suspected of being union sympathizers. The board found that Mexico had altered documents to cover up its union-busting activities, including efforts to prevent union workers from returning to jobs in Canada. The evidence had been presented by UFCW Canada Local 1518, the union representing migrant workers at Sidhu & Sons Nursery in the BC Lower Mainland.

The March 18 ruling followed three years of legal wrangling over the charges, which had originally been brought to the BCLRB in 2011. The hearings were temporarily suspended after Mexico petitioned to the BC Supreme Court, on the grounds of sovereign immunity, to quash evidence including leaked government documents, as well as testimony from former consular officials that corroborated the blacklisting activity. The BC Supreme Court ruled against Mexico's petition.

"Mexico reached across our borders to blacklist and break the human and labour rights of workers in our country," says Paul Meinema, the national president of UFCW Canada. "Mexican President Pena Nieto is well aware of what happened here, despite the denials of his bureaucrats and consular officials. The time for pretending is over. Now it is time to respect the laws of Canada."

## ILO lists "low compliance" factories

Garment factories in Cambodia that fail to meet basic standards for working conditions are being publicly named by the International Labour Organization (ILO).

The ILO's Better Factories Cambodia program (BFC) reports that ten factories were placed in the "lowest compliance" category, while 30 factories were found to have met all of BFC's 21 "Critical Issues."

The factories in the lowest category failed to address fundamental compliance issues, such as providing emergency exits and properly paying workers' bonuses and allowances, after at least two evaluations from BFC and a two-month notice period.

BFC received scathing criticism last year from researchers at Stanford University, who released a report arguing that the lack of transparency in BFC's monitoring of garment factories was allowing working standards in Cambodia to fall behind conditions in other major garment producing countries.

The last time that the BFC publicly released reports on non-compliant garment factories was in 2005, shortly after the expiration of a preferential trade agreement with the U.S. designed to kick-start Cambodia's garment industry.

The garment industry, which recorded more than \$5 billion in

exports last year, supplies many of the world's major garment brands, including H&M, Levi's, Gap, Walmart, Target, Puma and Zara.

## Troika targets Greek unions

Greece's international lenders say the country's trade unions are too powerful and want their powers reduced, including the right to strike.

The government of Prime Minister Antonis Samaras, which has been subject to a series of strikes and protests over austerity measures he administered on orders of the troika of the EU-IMF-European Bank, has reportedly consented, although it was reported the Labour Ministry will seek the consent of the General Confederation of Greek Labour on the larger issues.



The troika wants to end the practice of unions being allowed to grant workers days off for union activities, claiming that many use this to keep second jobs. Another measure being considered is making strikes illegal unless they have been approved by at least 50% of each union's total number of registered members. Employers will also regain the right to stage lockouts, which they lost in 1982. Lockouts are legal in many other countries in Europe.

## Opera Garnier occupation

Union members occupied the Opera Garnier in Paris on March 21 in a protest over proposed changes to labor rules for theater workers. The opera house had warned spectators on its website earlier of possible disruptions because of a threatened strike.

The Coordination des intermittents occupied the building to demand the government and employers pay more heed to union proposals as they negotiate new labor rules for performing industry workers. Employers lobby Medef has proposed abolishing special unemployment benefits that the workers currently enjoy as seasonal employees.

## Spring Labour Offensive in Japan

The 2014 yearly wage bargaining Spring Labour Offensive by Japanese metalworkers achieved "reasonable results", according to their unions. Over 50 unions representing workers of large

companies in automotive, electrical & electronics, machinery, steel and shipbuilding industries affiliated to the Japan Council of Metalworkers' Unions (JCM) coordinated the collective bargaining campaign. They won the biggest pay rise for workers in the last 15 years, when the Japanese economy has been suffering from deflation.

JCM reports that all trade unions managed to secure regular pay raises of about 2 percent as part of the wage structure, and 49 out of 52 unions succeeded to negotiate additional increases. 88 percent of the unions managed to bargain an increase in their annual bonus payments, and nineteen unions won an additional increase to the minimum wage at the company level.

In the statement on the Spring Labour Offensive 2014, JCM declared, "We would like to make the results known throughout Japan, and to promote activation of the economy by investing in people through higher monthly wages and better working conditions."

## Iran workers fall behind inflation

Crippling US-led sanctions, coupled with domestic policies, have left about 12 million Iranian workers, feeding a total population of 30 million, in desperate conditions, according to researcher Alireza Ramezani.

Workers earning a few hundred dollars a month have fought skyrocketing inflation in recent years with empty hands, says Ramzerani. The weakness of independent labour unions has left these workers with no leverage to bargain with the government and private employers over their wages and work conditions.

In mid-March, the Supreme Labour Council agreed to raise Iran's monthly minimum wage to 6.1 million rials (nearly \$248) from 4.9 million rials (nearly \$195), starting March 21. The 25% increase is too little, according to labor activists.

The Labour Council consists of the minister of cooperatives, labor and social affairs; the minister of industry, mine and trade; the minister of economic affairs and finance; and representatives of employers and workers. The structure leaves little room for workers to operate. Workers' representatives had called for a 35-40% raise in the minimum wage, since the inflation rate is around 37%. But employers' representatives rejected the demand, arguing that such an increase would cause huge damage to production activities.

Last year, the administration of former President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad raised the minimum wage by 25%, while inflation was at 30.5%. Soon after, a group of labour activists filed a lawsuit demanding the difference between the two rates.

Workers, who largely supported Rouhani in the June 2013 election, wanted him to meet the pledge he made during his campaign to raise the minimum wage "in accordance with the law." But this has not yet

been done, even though Article 41 of Iran's Labour Law stipulates that each year the minimum wage should be set "according to the rate of inflation in the country and the cost of living for a family of four."

Given the poverty line of 18 million rials (\$720) for a family of four, Iranian workers would earn only one-third of that figure, even if they get the announced raise.

The Free Union of Iranian Workers, consisting mainly of the unemployed and fired workers from across the country, has angrily reacted to what the "very little" increase in the minimum wage. The union accused the Rouhani administration of trying to "protect and guarantee the astronomical profits of a minority and the government, as the country's largest employee." The statement called on authorities to increase the minimum wage according to Article 41 of the Labour Law or face street protests in the near future.

## HK dockers win raise

Eight months ago, dock workers at Hong Kong's Kwai Chung terminal went on a historic 40-day strike. Faced with declining wages since 1995 and difficult working conditions, the Hong Kong Dock Workers Union (HKDWU) shut down the world's third largest container port. They eventually won important wage gains.

"Stevedore work in Hong Kong is traditionally coolie work. This means it is casualized with no job security," said Wong Loy, an organizer with the HKCTU.

Stevedore work involves the loading and unloading of ships that enter into the ports. Other

forms of labor at the docks include crane operators and truck drivers, as well as checkers who check the container box number on board.

"Even though the ports are very modernized and automated, the people working there are hired on a daily and casualized basis," said Wong.

Stephen Chan, a former president of the HKDWU, told the media, "We get called on daily. There are no set schedules. You can get a call tonight saying you have a 24-hour shift tomorrow. We cannot plan our days."

During the 24-hour shifts, there are no mandated rest periods, so workers arrange with each other to take break times.

Unlike many ports around the world which are owned by local governments, the Hong Kong port is completely privatized. The British colonial government did not invest in the port infrastructure. Hong Kong International Terminal (HIT) is the majority shareholder in the largest terminal. HIT is owned by Li Ka Shing, the richest man in Asia, whose net worth is USD \$32 billion.

But dockers wages have gone down since 1995, when they earned HK \$1560 (USD \$200) for a 24-hour shift. Since then, they have been hit with huge pay cuts, down to about HKD \$1,320 (USD \$170) before the strike.

The strike was significant for the huge level of support it received from the Hong Kong public. The strike fund of the HKDWU was built through public and international donations, including support from maritime unions in Australia and the United States.

At the end of the 40-day strike, the HKDWU achieved a 9.8 percent raise for all workers on the docks. Their membership also doubled to 700 members.

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

## Join the Communist Party of Canada



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

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Box 68112, 70 Bonnie Doon PO  
Edmonton, AB, T6C 4N6  
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5421 - 8th Ave. SE  
Calgary, AB, T2A 4L7 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, MB, 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, L8H 2K3  
Tel: 905-548-9586

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



# The far right are more dangerous than you think

By Steven Walker, the Morning Star (UK)

The UK Independence Party (Ukip, led by Nigel Farage) might be portrayed as a gang of clowns, but the party and its continental equivalents are poised to clean up in the Euro polls.

And while the mainstream media might call Nigel Farage and Ukip "loonies and fruitcakes," portraying Ukip members as a fringe minority of eccentric and open misogynists and racists as caricatures, the truth is far more sinister. According to YouGov, as many as 38 per cent say they plan to vote Ukip in May's European elections, while other far-right political parties across mainland Europe are expected to make significant gains, ensuring a sizeable bloc within the European Parliament.

The warnings from anti-fascist groups and parties in recent years are proving prescient, with the added problem that the spread of social media is enabling fascist organisations to organise huge numbers of supporters from a generation of young people disillusioned with the failure of capitalist economics and Establishment political parties failing to provide jobs, affordable housing and reliable public services.

A new generation is following far-right organisations and swapping ideas online.

In 2011 the political think tank Demos conducted compelling research into the increased online popularity of neonazi and openly

fascist political parties. Facebook's advertising tool let Demos crunch data from almost 450,000 supporters of 14 far-right organisations. Almost two-thirds were under 30, against half of Facebook users overall. Some 75 per cent were male and they were more likely than average to be unemployed.

Jamie Bartlett, the principal author of the report, says it is vital to track the spread of such attitudes among the new generation of online activists, who are far more numerous than the formal membership of such parties.

"There are hundreds of thousands of them across Europe," says Bartlett. "They are disillusioned with mainstream politics and European political institutions and worried about the erosion of their cultural and national identity, and are turning to populist movements who they feel speak to these concerns. These activists are largely out of sight of mainstream politicians, but they are motivated, active and growing in size. Politicians across the continent need to sit up, listen and respond."

Parties touting anti-immigrant and Islamophobic ideas have spread beyond established strongholds in France, Italy and Austria to the traditionally liberal Netherlands and Scandinavia and now have significant parliamentary blocs in eight countries. Other nations have seen the rise of nationalist street movements

similar to the EDL.

Two years ago, a number of such groups came together in Denmark's second city Aarhus in an event billed as a "European counter-jihad meeting." They were looking at the EDL model and seeking to mimic successful right-

wing political parties in eastern Europe, some of which have made it to government.

Unite Against Fascism spokesman Weyman Bennett says this was the first meaningful meeting of such groups. "The Euro-leagues are a new danger.

We should not forget that it was the Norwegian Defence League that gave us Anders Breivik [the young man who committed mass murder against a Workers Youth League gathering].

The growth of a Euro-league in a time of economic crisis threatens to resurrect fascist street armies such as those that destroyed European democracies in the 1930s.

The development of this network allows fascists and right-wing populists to share ideas, finance and experience in a way that should worry us all."

These groups have exploited the economic crisis and eurozone financial meltdown as a way to pull in new members, particularly from the middle classes and unemployed youth. This has all the classic hallmarks of Hitler's rise to power on the back of resentment over the reparations Germany paid for World War I, the 1929 global capitalist crisis and the scapegoating of a vulnerable group - the Jews.

The nazis' anti-semitic rhetoric struck a chord of deep cultural hatred for Jewish people. Nowadays it is Muslims and overt Islamophobia.



## Indian Communists issue election manifesto

The Communist Party of India (Marxist) has pledged to reverse weakened restrictions on foreign capital. The CPI(M) manifesto for the coming general election was released on March 20.

The CPI(M) renewed its call for transnational supermarkets to be booted out of the retail sector, just as Tesco announced its entry to the country. The British-based supermarket giant said it will invest \$150 million to take a 50 per cent share of Tata-owned Trent Hypermarket Ltd, which operates a chain of 12 stores across southern and western India.

Fears that foreign firms will take over India's shopping scene, putting 40 million jobs at risk and spurring a flow of profits out of the country, have been rife

since the neoliberal Congress Party-led government relaxed ownership controls in 2012.

Speaking in New Delhi as the programme was unveiled, party leaders slammed the government's record of soaring food prices and letting capitalist companies "loot the natural resources of the country, whether it be land, minerals or gas."

General Secretary Prakash Karat attacked "unprecedented" corruption at the heart of India's establishment, noting that the main opposition Hindu chauvinist BJP party was just as mired in scandal as Congress.

"The country needs to be rescued from the politics of Congress and the BJP," Karat said.

The CPI(M) also called for a "universal public distribution

system" to provide subsidised food for the poor, higher taxation on the rich and on corporate profits and more spending on health and education.

It urged allocating a third of seats in all state and national parliaments to women and abolishing the death penalty.

The CPI(M) also came out in favour of scrapping Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, which criminalizes consensual same-sex sexual relations. While some prominent Congress leaders have spoken against the Delhi High Court which upheld the criminalization of homosexuality, the CPI(M) is the only party in favour of gay rights in their manifesto.

## IWD celebrated in Surrey

The Fraser Valley Peace Council celebrated International Women's Day on March 8, with support from like-minded organizations. Held at the City Centre Library in Surrey, the successful family event included women and men from different ages and ethnic backgrounds. It was a unique experience of women narrating their experiences of discrimination and oppression at the hands of male chauvinism. While women all over the world have achieved a lot during recent years, the speakers said they still have to go a long way to realize their goal of equal status.

The event was chaired by Minakshi Sidhu, a founding member of the Fraser Valley Peace Council, with an introduction by Peace Council organizer Shahzad Nazir Khan, about the importance of IWD.

The first speaker was Aboriginal woman activist Carol Martin, a victim services worker from Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. She talked about the Aboriginal community and women in general, and Canada's official policies of genocide, including the loss of languages. Carol Martin appealed for solidarity among all groups to raise their voices in support of women in the Downtown Eastside.

Parminder Swaich from Rational Society of BC (Taraksheel Sabha) shared her views about the struggle of women everywhere, emphasizing the separate but important roles of men and women in society. She denounced the obscene exposure of women as a result of exploitation by greedy profiteers. She termed such trends as a false notion of "feminist liberation" and stressed promoting native cultures.

After that a documentary on the 1912 "singing strike" of the Lawrence millworkers was shown. A women activist from Nicaragua shared her experiences in Spanish, while her daughter translated.

Prominent community activist and another founding member of the Fraser Valley Peace Council, Didi Shahnaz, joined with Linda Chobotuck to sing "Bread and Roses". She presented the song a second time, translated from English to Urdu by renowned local poet Nadeem Parmar.

A well-known poet and prominent leftist Punjabi author shared his wonderful poem about womanhood.

To conclude, life-long peace activist and president of the Fraser Valley Peace Council, Nazir Rizvi, spoke on the need to understand the root causes of inequality between men and women. The Peace Council will continue supporting the cause of women whenever possible, he said, and will uphold the tradition of celebrating IWD every year in Surrey.

The successful program was one of the first of its kind in Surrey, with representation from First Nations, and Canadians from Spanish, Indian, Pakistani, and Iranian backgrounds.

## Call to World Meeting in Solidarity with Cuba

This October, friends and supporters of Socialist Cuba from around the world will once again gather in Havana for the 3rd World Meeting in Solidarity with Cuba. First held in 1994 and then again in 2000, the previous world meetings drew 3-4000 delegates from over 100 countries around the globe. This year's conference is expected to be even larger, and more than 200 participants from across Canada are anticipated.

In the Call to the 3rd World Meeting, the sponsoring Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP) notes that the conference will aim at countering the "constant aggression, media disinformation... and unaltered imperialist attempts internationally to isolate our Revolution. Our people will remain united, building and improving our socialism, and contributing our modest experiences to the integration processes being carried out in the Latin American region, offering viable alternatives for the best in the future of our children, and against the overwhelming failure of the neoliberal capitalism."

The Meeting will focus on the social and economic updating of socialism currently underway in Cuba, as well as important developments in Latin American

integration to offset the economic domination of the continent by U.S. imperialism. The continuing struggle to liberate the remaining imprisoned members of the Cuban Five will also feature prominently in the proceedings, which will begin on October 27 and span three days of meetings, discussions rallies and cultural performances.

A major effort, spearheaded by the Canadian Network on Cuba

(CNC) and La Table de concertation de solidarité Québec Cuba is already underway to build Canadian participation in this important event.

More information is available at [www.canadiannetworkoncuba.ca/](http://www.canadiannetworkoncuba.ca/), or from local Cuba friendship and solidarity groups across the country. Further reports will also appear in the pages of People's Voice.



### The Fifth of the Month to Free the Five

Join in the worldwide action on the 5th day of each month! Write to President Obama and demand that he Free the Cuban Five:

E-mail: [president@whitehouse.gov](mailto:president@whitehouse.gov)

On the web: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/contact>

Phone 1-202-456-1111 Fax 1-202-456-2461

Telegram: President Barack Obama, The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, Washington, DC 2500, USA

For more information, see <http://thecuban5.org> or [www.canadiannetworkoncuba.ca](http://www.canadiannetworkoncuba.ca)



# MUSIC NOTES

By Wally Brooker

## Remembering Pete Seeger... part two

(The first part of this article was in our March 1-15 issue.)

In 1955, when Pete Seeger took his stand against McCarthyism, refusing to "name names", and pleading the First Amendment at congressional hearings, he was blacklisted from concert halls and broadcast media. Ironically, his very persecutors were the ones who set him on the path to becoming the torchbearer of the popular front legacy to a younger generation seeking to move beyond Cold War repression and cultural conformism.

Pete had always been dedicated to a grassroots concept of culture. To the grassroots he returned, performing at summer camps, union halls (that were still open to him) and college campuses, where he found students and younger faculty receptive to his message. Backing him was a small but stalwart network of progressive folk music institutions, like *Sing Out!* magazine (which he had co-founded in 1950), and Folkways Records, founded in 1948 by friend and supporter Moses Asch.

During these years Seeger recorded many albums of American folk music and songs of struggle - sometimes as many as five per year. The heavy vinyl records in thick cardboard sleeves were produced in small quantities, becoming treasured items as interest in folk music picked up in the late fifties. Pete added teaching to his repertoire, and soon his instruction book "How to Play the 5-String Banjo" could be found wherever young folk musicians and aficionados gathered.

The blacklisting of progressive entertainers by the House Committee on Un-American Activities began in 1947, lasting well into the sixties. It was still going strong when Pete was subpoenaed, but in retrospect, the beginning of the turnaround might have been in December 1955, when The Weavers came out of their enforced retirement for a triumphal sold-out concert at Carnegie Hall. Their album "The Weavers at Carnegie Hall", and subsequent recordings, exerted a powerful influence on the folk music explosion of the sixties. While the band carried on until 1964, Pete left the group in 1958 because of a disagreement - the others had decided to record a cigarette commercial!

As a solo artist, Seeger recorded frequently, toured, wrote a regular



Toshi and Pete Seeger

column for *Sing Out!*, helped out a new folk magazine called *Broadside* (which featured young songwriters like Bob Dylan and Phil Ochs), and composed memorable songs including "Where Have All the Flowers Gone?" and "Turn, Turn, Turn". He played a key role in adapting and popularizing "We Shall Overcome", the African-American spiritual that was embraced as the anthem of the civil rights movement. He also adapted a Cuban song called "Guantanamera", based on a poem by José Martí, and sang it in solidarity with the Cuban revolution during the missile crisis of October 1962. Pete's version was adapted by The Sandpipers and became a hit.

In 1959 Pete and Toshi helped to found the Newport Folk Festival, which became a national showcase for roots-oriented music, featuring young artists like Bob Dylan and Joan Baez, African-American artists like Odetta, Muddy Waters, and Mississippi John Hurt, and activist musicians like the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee's Freedom Singers. While Pete may be remembered by some veterans of the sixties as the older guy who pulled the plug on Bob Dylan when the singer went electric at Newport in 1965, in the end most of this cohort came to respect and even love him. It is testimony to his ultimate openness to musical styles and forms, that Seeger would later attract the company of progressive (and loud) rock stars like Bruce Springsteen and Tom Morello.

As the political climate evolved, more opportunities to challenge the blacklist presented themselves. In 1965-66 Seeger hosted "Rainbow Quest", a local New York City TV show that featured him talking and jamming with guests like Buffy Sainte-Marie, Johnny Cash, June Carter, Bernice Johnson Reagon, and Malvina

Reynolds. In 1968 he made a national TV breakthrough when he appeared on the popular CBS show, The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour, and sang his powerful anti-war song "Waist Deep in the Big Muddy".

After the sixties, the main cause in Pete Seeger's life undoubtedly became the environment. Influenced by Rachel Carson's important 1962 book *Silent Spring*, he and Toshi decided to undertake a daunting task: cleaning up the PCB-polluted Hudson River, which ran by their home in upstate New York. In 1966 the two co-founded the Hudson River Sloop Clearwater and its related musical offshoot The Great Hudson River Revival (a.k.a. The Clearwater Festival).

In 1969 the foundation's dream, The Clearwater, a replica of a 19th century sloop, began to sail the river. Pete, Toshi, and other activists combined popular education with music, and invited community participation. Their cleanup campaigns played a key role in the passage of the Clean Water Act (1972) and the eventual clampdown by the EPA on Hudson River polluters.

Despite his turn to the environment, Pete never strayed far from working class struggles, the women's movement, the rights of migrant workers, and the fight against racism. He also continued to speak out against war and imperialism. Pete braved public condemnation by travelling to North Vietnam in 1972, while the American war on that country still raged. Shortly after the 1973 U.S.-backed coup that overthrew the Popular Unity government in Chile, he joined Bob Dylan and Phil Ochs at a New York benefit concert for Chilean refugees. In 1983 he attended the Nueva Cancion song festival in Nicaragua, while the Reagan Administration was fomenting terrorist attacks against the country's Sandinista revolution. The list could go on and on.

In his last years, as tributes poured in, Pete Seeger was recognized by sectors of the establishment. In January 2009 he was invited to sing with Bruce Springsteen at President Obama's inauguration. At Pete's suggestion, they sang Woody Guthrie's anthem "This Land is Your Land". They made sure to sing the two verses that are usually left out - the ones that take a dig at private property and speak of lines of hard-hit people standing outside relief offices.

In October 2011 Pete could be seen, hands gripping his walker, at the head of a procession from his

just-completed Symphony Hall concert, down thirty Manhattan blocks to Occupy New York's Columbus Circle encampment. There, accompanied by grandson Tao, and Arlo Guthrie, he led a new generation in a singalong of "We Shall Overcome".

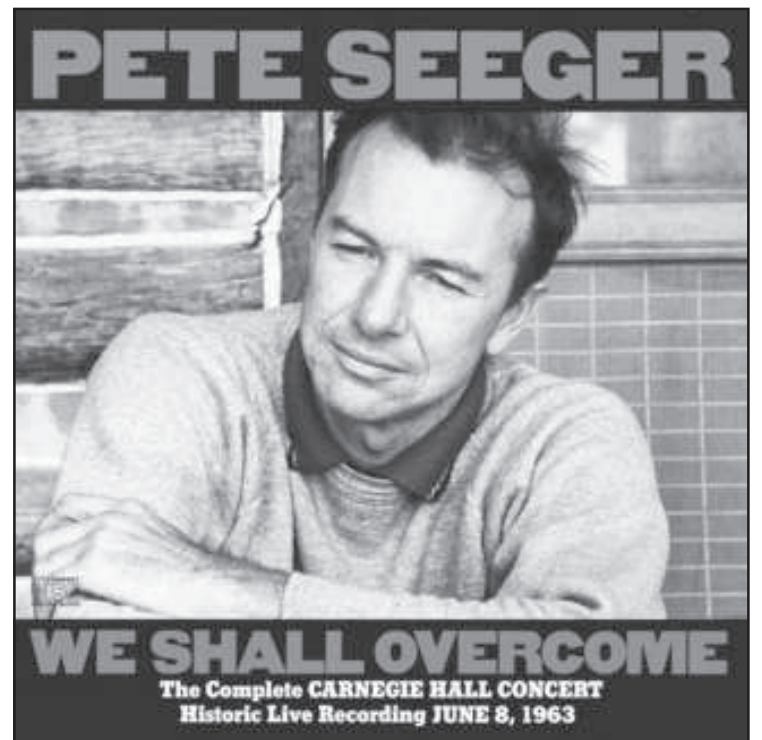
After his death on January 27th, much of the mainstream media was lavish in its praise. President Obama called him "America's tuning fork" and hailed him for defending worker's rights, civil rights, world peace and the environment. Although the obituaries often mentioned his early membership in the CPUSA, what was missing was any examination of the underlying philosophy that formed the basis of his remarkably consistent worldview.

However, a few left-wing publications suggested that it might have something to do with his essential communism. Seeger

himself, in several interviews declared that he was still a communist (as in "small-c"). A tribute on the CPUSA's website declared that Pete Seeger "never wavered from his communist beliefs even after leaving the Communist Party, and in fact remained a friend of the party and reader and supporter of People's World until his death". ("Pete Seeger and American Communism", People's World, Feb. 13, 2014).

Similarly, in a January 29th tribute, *Jacobin* editor Bhaskar Sunkara wrote: "It's not that Pete Seeger did a lot of good despite his longtime ties to the Communist Party; he did a lot of good because he was a communist." Now that's something to talk about.

For a good documentary on Seeger's life, check out *Pete Seeger: The Power of Song* (PBS, 2007). ●



### REDS ON THE WEB

[www.communist-party.ca](http://www.communist-party.ca)  
[www.peoplesvoice.ca](http://www.peoplesvoice.ca)  
[www.ycl-ljc.ca](http://www.ycl-ljc.ca)  
[rebelyouth-magazine.blogspot.com](http://rebelyouth-magazine.blogspot.com)  
<http://solidnet.org>



## "Never Again War"

People's Voice 2014 Calendar

To order a copy of the People's Voice 2014 Anti-First World War Calendar, send \$15 (includes postage and handling) to People's Voice, 706 Clark Drive, Vancouver, BC, V5L 3J1. Contact us at 604-255-2041 or [pvoice@telus.net](mailto:pvoice@telus.net) for bulk order prices.

### La Trova Nuestra

Friday, April 25, 8 pm  
 "La Peña Nuestra"  
 Centre For Socialist Education, Vancouver  
 706 Clark Drive (Clark and Georgia st)  
 \$10 Entry

About Vancouver's "La Trova Nuestra"  
 La Trova Nuestra is composed of 20 individual trovadores who originate from across Latin America and now reside in Vancouver. These trovadores are the keepers of a musical tradition which began with pioneers of the vernacular song La Trova Nuestra incorporates this tradition interplaying music and poetry. At its foundation is the essence of a popular culture interpreting daily expression: an expression with origins deep within La Raza Mestiza (mixed roots) of Latin America - an expression of the explosive changes within the continent of Latin America today. La Trova Nuestra could be defined as "The encounter between a man, a guitar and poetry - voices pledging for a better world."

## Canada Post: myths and facts....

continued from page 5

### Myth #7: Community super-boxes, which are to replace door-to-door delivery in urban areas, are safe and accessible.

Fact: Community super-boxes are not safe and accessible. A CBC report has revealed that there were 4,880 incidents of vandalism, arson and theft from these super-boxes between 2008 and 2013. There is also no guarantee that these super-boxes will be accessible for thousands who have mobility issues, seniors or the disabled. And Canada Post has no plans to consult us on where the community boxes are placed.

### Myth #8: Canada Post must have done consultations before deciding to cut services and raise postage rates.

Fact: Canada Post management kept both its workers and the public in the dark. They announced the cuts and service cost increases the day after Parliament retired for the holidays. They have provided no evidence that any real consultation with Canadians was ever attempted.

### Myth #9: Seniors are telling Deepak Chopra that they want more exercise and being forced to pick up mail at community super-boxes in all seasons is good for their health.

Fact: Seniors have not expressed that they think being forced to walk to community mailboxes will be good for their health. This is an outrageous lie that Deepak Chopra told when he was being questioned about the proposed changes at an emergency parliamentary committee meeting. He provided no evidence for his claim. This shameful response highlights just how heartless these service cuts are.

### Myth #10: There is no privatization agenda at Canada Post.

Fact: Canada Post management

has a privatization agenda. CEO Deepak Chopra sits on the board of the Conference Board of Canada, a policy think-tank that writes papers proposing policies for governments to turn into legislation. The Conference Board wrote a paper that favoured wholesale privatization of Canada Post. The paper even used faulty arguments and figures to justify privatization. In other words, sound and careful gathering of facts was dispensed in favour of ideologically-driven ideas. ●

### Winner of Bethune Dinner draw

People's Voice was once again the media sponsor of the annual Dr. Norman Bethune Day dinner, held Feb. 22 at the GCDO Hall on Toronto's Danforth Avenue. Labour activist Helen Kennedy spoke on the life of Annie Buller, one of Bethune's comrades during the working class struggles of the 1930s. The winner of the door prize at the dinner was Karen Pullen, of Whitby, Ontario, who purchased her ticket from Bob Mann of Hamilton. The prize is a one-week trip for two to Cuba. ●

## People's Voice deadlines

April 16-30 issue: Thursday, April 3

May 1-15 issue: Thursday, April 17

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

## La lutte électorale au Québec...

suite de la page 12

niveau de faible revenu, en accordant pour toutes et tous des congés, des journées-maladie payées et des vacances améliorées, en créant un régime de retraite public et universel, et en instituant un revenu minimum garanti pour toute personne adulte de 12 600\$ par année.

QS créerait des dizaines de milliers d'emplois en créant 50 000 logements sociaux durant 5 ans, et en investissant 23 milliards \$ dans le développement de transports collectifs et la rénovation éco-énergétique de façon à restreindre au maximum l'utilisation d'énergie fossile.

En ce qui concerne la Charte des valeurs du PQ, QS se prononce pour une société inclusive et est donc opposé à l'interdiction de signes religieux pour les employé(e)s du secteur public, sauf pour les personnes en autorité comme les juges, les policières et policiers, etc.

Par rapport à la question nationale québécoise, QS propose dès son arrivée au pouvoir de lancer une démarche d'assemblée constituante, représentative, indépendante et élue au suffrage universel, qui mènera une vaste consultation populaire pour élaborer un projet de constitution qui sera soumis au peuple par référendum. Le projet de constitution proposera un statut politique pour le Québec. Durant la démarche de consultation, QS quant à lui défendra l'idée de faire du Québec un pays indépendant.

En même temps, QS admet que les peuples autochtones n'ont jamais renoncé à leur souveraineté et entend faire adopter et mettre en application la Déclaration de l'ONU pour les droits des peuples autochtones, et négocier une entente pour tout projet de



développement sur les territoires autochtones. L'Assemblée des Premières Nations du Québec et du Labrador quant à elle a tenu a rappelé tous les partis à l'ordre en cas de mouvement vers la souveraineté du Québec, soulignant que les peuples autochtones ne sont pas québécois et disposent de leur plein droit à l'autodétermination sur leurs territoires.

Le Parti communiste du Québec (section du PC du Canada), bien qu'il ait contribué à la création de QS dans le but d'unifier les forces de gauche au Québec face à la droite au néolibérale, a toujours réservé son opinion concernant la question de la souveraineté du Québec, et, tout en reconnaissant son droit à l'autodétermination, place les intérêts de la classe ouvrière et la lutte pour le socialisme au premier plan, et il défend par conséquent l'unité

nécessaire de la classe ouvrière à travers tout le Canada pour atteindre cet objectif. Durant la démarche de consultation de l'assemblée constituante, le PCQ défendra quant à lui cette idée.

En 2012, les circonstances avaient forcé le PQ à faire campagne à gauche et il a pu gagner l'élection grâce à la division du vote de droite entre le PLQ et la CAQ. En essayant de prendre la place de la CAQ cette fois-ci, le PQ contribue à polariser le débat sur l'axe souveraineté-fédéralisme, abandonnant la gauche totalement à QS qui bien sûr a peu de chance de l'emporter. Si le PQ est élu, il ne lui sera plus nécessaire de trahir ses promesses, puisqu'il gouvernera sur l'essentiel à peu près comme le PLQ le ferait si c'était plutôt lui qui l'emportait. Seul le vote qu'obtiendra QS permettra de mesurer les avancées politiques de la classe ouvrière. ●

## What's Left

### Vancouver, BC

**Picket the JNFI**, protest the theft of Palestinian land at the annual "Negev Gala Dinner," Sunday, April 6, 5 pm, Four Seasons Hotel (W. Georgia and Howe). Organized by Canada Palestine Association.

**La Trova Nuestra**, evening of Latin American music, admission \$10, 8 pm, Friday, April 25, Centre for Socialist Education, 706 Clark Drive.

**Spring Bazaar (Yard Sale)**, Sat., April 26, 11 am-2 pm, Russian Hall, 600 Campbell Ave. (Strathcona). 604-254-9932 or 604-526-5160. Refreshments available.

**Left Film Night**, and the annual Pasta Dinner for the PV Fund Drive, Sunday, April 27, dinner 6 pm (\$15), film at 7 pm, at the CSE, 706 Clark Drive. For film details and more information, call 604-255-2041.

**People's Voice Victory Banquet**, Sat., May 31, doors open 6 pm, Russian Hall, 600 Campbell Ave. For tickets, ph. 604-254-9836.

### Montreal, QC

**Palestinians And Jews United**, boycott/disinvestment/sanctions picket, every Saturday, 1-3 pm, outside Israeli shoe store "NAOT", 3941 St-Denis Street.

### Canadian Network on Cuba: Solidarity Tour with Gerardo Alfonso and Sandra Ramirez

**HAMILTON** - Tues., April 1, 6:30 pm, Byran-Prince Books, \$10 adm., 1060 King Street West, Hamilton Friendship Association with Cuba, info@cubacanada.org

**NIAGARA FALLS** - Thurs., April 3, 7 pm, \$15 or PWYC, Falls View Hose Brigade Hall, 5786 Dunn St., CCFANiagara, 905-304-0700

**WINDSOR** - Friday, April 4, cultural exchange with local artists; April 5, information meeting for III World Meeting in Solidarity with Cuba, CCFAN Windsor

**VANCOUVER** - Mon., April 7, 7 pm, \$10, Mt. Pleasant Neighbourhood House, 800 East Broadway, details from 778-882-5223

**VICTORIA** - Tue., April 8, 7 pm, 2994 Douglas St. BCGEU Hall

**EDMONTON** - Thur., April 10, 7 pm, Edmonton House Concert by invitation, sponsored by Cuba-Edmonton Solidarity Committee.

**WINNIPEG** - Fri., April 11, 7:30 pm, \$10, Broadway Disciples United Church, Manitoba-Cuba Solidarity Ctee., 204-783-9380

## Gordon Schwartz

The Ontario Committee, CPC extends deepest sympathy to Michael, Bernie, and Carol Schwartz, the children of veteran Communist Gordon Schwartz, who died peacefully in Toronto Jan. 21, at the age of 96. Gordon joined the Communist Party in August 1939 at the age of 21, and died with his membership card in his pocket as his daughter Carol said, 75 years later. Through thick and thin he stuck with the Party, the working class, and the cause of socialism, participating in innumerable protests, strikes and demonstrations. "You can't sit on both sides of the fence!" he said in a 1999 interview about his life as a Communist.

By turns an accountant, a cutter and a clothing manufacturer, he was adept at business and contributed generously to many progressive causes and to the CPC. Gordon sat on the editorial board of the Canadian Jewish People's Outlook for many years. He had great confidence in young people whom he thought would play an important role in the struggle for social change. Asked if he had any advice, his written response was THINK! READ! ACT! Timely advice for working people of all ages. Gordon will be greatly missed by his comrades and friends.

### VDLC backs minimum wage fight

By Peter Marcus, Vancouver

The Vancouver and District Labour Council opened its March 18 meeting with two presentations. Seth Klein of the Canadian Center for Policy Alternatives presented a request for funds, resulting from a financial crunch due in part to the expulsion from their organization of the B.C. Nurses Union for raiding the Hospital Employees' Union. Derrick O'Keefe and Nadia Santoro spoke on the People's Social Forum, taking place in Ottawa from August 21-24, to be preceded by an "On to Ottawa" replay.

The meeting passed a proposal to support the B.C. Federation of Labour's efforts to raise the minimum wage to \$13 an hour with cost of living adjustments. It also supported a survey on the impact of domestic violence on workers and workplaces. Another proposal was endorsed to donate to the B.C. and Canadian Health Coalition to counter the Dr. Day case, and to support the March 31 Day of Action for a renewed and enhanced Health Accord Canada.

It was reported that the IKEA workers in Richmond, who are still locked out after 10 months, were given a boost by the VDLC with a rally on March 16. A strike by Unifor container truck drivers at the waterfront was into its second week after rejecting an employer proposal.

Kent Wong, who helped organize Justice for Janitors in Los Angeles, will speak at the VDLC's annual fundraiser for the Queen Alexandra School free store on April 11. This year's May Day march and rally will start at 5 pm on May 1, from 14th and Commercial, ending up at Grandview Park (1200 block of Commercial). ●



Par Robert Luxley

Désireuse de profiter de l'avance que sa charte des valeurs avait procurée à son parti dans les sondages, la première ministre Pauline Marois a déclenché des élections générales qui se tiendront le 7 avril prochain. Ce faisant le Parti Québécois transgressait sa propre loi qu'il venait pourtant de faire adopter quelques mois plus tôt pour que les élections soient désormais tenues à tous les quatre ans à date fixe, afin de soustraire, disait le ministre responsable, Bernard Drainville, le moment de déclencher une élection aux « petits calculs » opportunistes et électoralistes et ainsi "réparer le lien de confiance" entre la population et les politiciens.

De toute façon, il semble bien que ce "lien" exigeait des réparations plus laborieuses, puisque depuis qu'il est au pouvoir, le PQ n'a pas cessé de l'éprouver en trahissant une derrière l'autre les promesses qu'il avait faites au peuple pour se faire élire 18 mois plus tôt. Notamment, il a reculé sur l'abolition de la taxe-santé et sur sa promesse d'établir une fiscalité plus progressive et plus équitable; il a trompé les étudiantes et les étudiants en augmentant les droits de scolarité et en réduisant le crédit d'impôt auquel ils donnent droit; il a non seulement reculé sur le gel des tarifs d'électricité mais les a fortement augmentés; il s'est attaqué aux prestations d'aide sociale des personnes parmi les plus démunies.

Obsédé par l'atteinte du déficit zéro dans les finances publiques, le gouvernement péquiste a accru encore plus les coupes budgétaires que faisaient les Libéraux avant lui dans les services publics, notamment en santé et en éducation. Pourtant, malgré ces mesures d'austérité, le gouvernement s'est refusé de mettre un terme aux onéreux contrats en PPP des deux super-hôpitaux de Montréal où sont inutilement gaspillés des centaines de millions de dollars au profit

d'entrepreneurs, et ce, en dépit des preuves de corruption et de collusion entourant l'attribution des contrats. Pire, le gouvernement a même favorisé la privatisation de services publics, par exemple ceux d'approvisionnement des médicaments et des fournitures médicales au bénéfice de la multinationale américaine Cardinal Health, pourtant officiellement accusée et



convaincue de corruption et de collusion au États-Unis.

Sur le plan de l'environnement et des ressources naturelles, le bilan du PQ est pitoyable. Il a reculé sur la question des redevances minières qu'il devait augmenter et a appuyé le renversement du flux de pétrole dans l'oléoduc d'Embridge. Pire, il a permis l'exploration pétrolière sur l'île d'Anticosti, un joyau de la nature, à grand renfort de subventions de fonds publics (115 millions \$) pour les pétrolières.

Bref, depuis qu'il est au pouvoir, le PQ pratique résolument une politique néolibérale et de droite. Cela s'est d'ailleurs confirmé avec le dépôt quelques jours avant le déclenchement des élections d'un budget très austère impliquant des coupes dans tous les ministères. Entre autres, le gouvernement a décidé de faire passer les frais de garderie de 7 à 9 dollars par jour par enfant.

Finalement, la preuve ultime des cette orientation droitière est apparue lorsque Pauline Marois a

présenté son candidat dans la circonscription de Saint-Jérôme, le propriétaire milliardaire de l'empire Québecor, Pierre-Karl Péladeau (PKP). Ce dernier, considéré comme un des pires employeurs au Québec, s'est rendu coupable de 14 lockout ces dernières années durant lesquels il avait utilisé allègrement des briseurs de grève pour écraser les syndicats. Or quelques jours plus tôt, le PQ venait de retirer de sa plate-forme électorale une proposition de modernisation de la loi anti-briseurs de grève qui visait justement à empêcher les tactiques que Péladeau avait utilisées pour contourner l'esprit de la loi.

### Bousculade du côté droit

Avec ce virage à droite, le PQ laisse tomber son masque soi-disant social-démocrate et montre sa nature profonde et sa volonté de récupérer les électrices et les électeurs plus à droite de la Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ).

En même temps durant les derniers mois, le PQ a pu voiler quelque peu son virage grâce à sa charte des valeurs soi-disant québécoises. En s'appuyant sur des préjugés et en moussant la crainte d'une « menace étrangère » imaginaire qui pèserait sur la culture occidentale (et catholique) de la majorité des Québécoises et des Québécois, le PQ a réussi ainsi à diviser profondément la population et à polariser le débat politique.

Une majorité des francophones soutenant sa charte, le PQ pouvait envisager gagner une majorité parlementaire. La charte vise clairement à s'emparer du vote de l'ex-ADQ fondue au sein de la CAQ et qui avait fait de ces questions identitaires son fonds de commerce. La table est mise et c'est la CAQ qui est au menu. Libéraux et péquistes s'apprentent à se disputer férocement la carcasse.

Le PLQ et la CAQ soutiennent

que les politiques du gouvernement ne sont pas suffisamment austères. Les Libéraux entendent pour leur part faire d'importantes compressions dans les dépenses publiques et des coupes dans le personnel administratif dans le but d'atteindre l'équilibre budgétaire et réduire la dette et tout en diminuant les impôts. Leur plan s'appuie sur une croissance économique très hypothétique pour augmenter les revenus de l'État, croissance qu'ils stimuleraient entre autres, par une relance du "plan Nord".

Dans le même ordre d'idée, la CAQ tente une fuite "à droite toute" pour éviter de se faire dévorer tout rond. Non seulement réitère-t-elle son programme de 2012 avec des mesures telles que l'abolition des commissions scolaires et des agences de santé, ainsi que la réduction du personnel des services publics, mais elle prend carrément à son compte le programme anti-syndical de Stephen Harper, tel que d'obliger la tenue d'un vote secret pour reconnaître une accréditation syndicale ou limiter l'utilisation des cotisations syndicales aux strictes relations de travail, etc.

Contrairement à 2012, Québec Solidaire se retrouve donc seul parmi les partis présents à l'Assemblée Nationale à briguer les suffrages du côté gauche.

### La question nationale s'invite

Tant le PLQ que la CAQ accuse le PQ de ne pas se préoccuper des soucis quotidiens des ménages (qu'ils appellent les "vraies affaires") et d'avoir plutôt un agenda caché pour tenir un référendum sur la souveraineté du Québec s'il parvenait à obtenir une majorité parlementaire. Puisque que plus de 60% des électrices et des électeurs sont présentement opposés à la souveraineté du Québec, ils agitent la tenue d'un référendum comme un épouvantail pour rameuter le vote fédéraliste. Évidemment, le PQ se défend bien de pareille chose, jurant la main sur le cœur que l'élection n'a rien à voir avec un tel référendum et qu'il souhaite uniquement former un "bon gouvernement" majoritaire.

Au contraire, Québec Solidaire a affirmé très fortement sa position souverainiste dès le départ de la campagne électorale dans le but très clair de rallier les souverainistes déçus des tergiversations du PQ. Cependant, l'arrivée dans la campagne électorale d'un grand capitaliste comme PKP faisant sa profession de foi pour la souveraineté du Québec a conféré un caractère référendaire à la campagne, la polarisant entre le PLQ fédéraliste et le PQ souverainiste. Jusqu'à présent les sondages révèlent que la CAQ fait les frais de cette polarisation au profit du PLQ qui a pris les devants. En même temps, l'arrivée de PKP clarifie une fois pour toute pour plusieurs souverainistes progressistes la véritable nature de classe du PQ. Plusieurs ont été scandalisés que le PQ puisse s'accoquiner avec pareil individu, capable de symboliser à lui seul toute la laideur du capitalisme. On a alors vu plusieurs interventions

de ténors de la gauche péquiste et souverainiste, dont plusieurs anciennes dirigeantes et dirigeants syndicaux qui, afin de soutenir la candidature de Péladeau, ont par la même occasion clarifié leur approche de la question nationale. L'ancien président de la CSN, Marc Lavolette, a bien résumé leur vision commune lorsqu'il a déclaré que la souveraineté du Québec ne pouvait "se faire qu'à droite". En fait, selon elles et eux, la souveraineté est une première étape dont la réalisation exige un front uni des classes de la société québécoise, front uni qui ne peut donc se réaliser qu'en assurant le statu quo des rapports que ces classes ont entre elles. Le progrès social, selon elles et eux, ne peut survenir que par la suite, dans un deuxième temps, une fois la souveraineté réalisée, et résultant de la lutte des classes alors rendue possible.

Selon ces gens, le seul véhicule valable pour accomplir cette démarche est le PQ, même s'ils peuvent à l'occasion déplorer ses positions trop à droite. C'est aussi pour cela qu'ils attaquent avec hargne QS qui refuse de "collaborer" en dépit de sa position souverainiste. Selon eux, à ne vouloir trop représenter que les intérêts des travailleuses et des travailleurs et des couches populaires, QS divise les forces souverainistes et joue le jeu des fédéralistes. En réalité, QS est tout simplement convaincu que les travailleuses et les travailleurs qui composent la majorité du peuple ne soutiendront jamais la souveraineté si elles et ils n'y retrouvent pas leurs intérêts, et pour cette raison ne dissocie pas le progrès social de la souveraineté.



### QS, seul choix possible pour les progressistes

La plateforme électorale de QS vise à établir une plus grande justice sociale et à sauvegarder l'environnement. Soulignons entre autres que:

QS propose une réforme de la fiscalité en ajoutant des paliers d'imposition de façon à faire payer davantage les mieux nantis et les profits des entreprises. Il restaurerait la taxe sur le capital des sociétés financières.

QS créerait une assurance-médicament publique et universelle.

Contrairement aux autres partis, QS se propose de renforcer les droits syndicaux, notamment en permettant l'accréditation multipatronale, en interdisant les lockout et tout recours même indirect aux briseurs de grève, ainsi que le recours aux injonctions contre le piquetage.

QS veut lutter contre la précarité en améliorant les normes du travail en haussant le salaire minimum au

voir La Lutte, p. 11

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