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people's VOICE

**Tax cuts
kill jobs**
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Save the planet... Vote for nature, not for profits

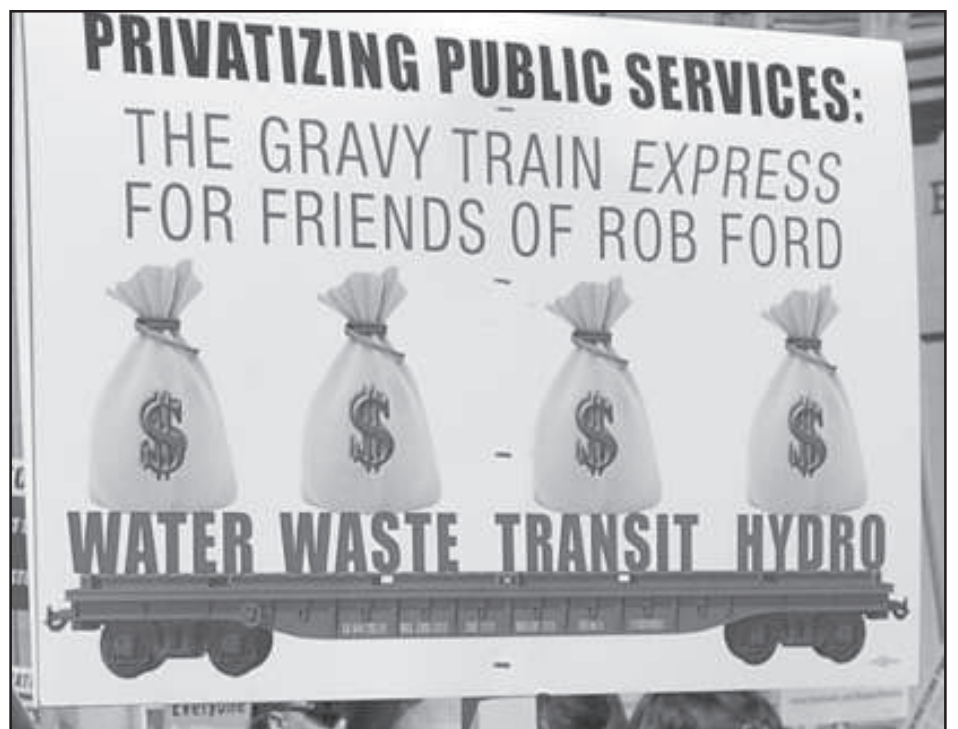


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Communist Party
platform on
environment issues



10,000 march in Toronto: tell Mayor Ford to back off!

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Trade unionists and students in St. John's express their "contempt" for Stephen Harper, and the "Leaders Debate" shows the narrow limits of "electoral democracy" in Canada.

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Looking for reasons to get out and vote on May 2? Check out our collection of stats and information on the consequences of a Tory victory.

12 F-35: the killer jet

While most of the debate around the F-35 fighter jets has been about the ever-rising price tag, less attention has been given to the real purpose of these deadly weapons: to wage war against other countries.

Ontario Liberal budget attacks public sector

By Liz Rowley

Setting the stage for the October 6 provincial election, the Ontario Liberals have crafted a budget intended to scare voters away from the provincial Tories, while wooing Big Business for continued support.

The budget speech announced that recovery is in full swing, but the world is an unstable place and thus "reforms" are necessary. It slams the "choices we reject" - a reference to Tory leader Tim Hudak's agenda, which includes a promise to cut one or more points from the HST's current rate of 13%.

A 1% cut to the HST is a \$3



Ontario Communist leader Liz Rowley

billion cut to health and education, say the Liberals. "The choices we (Liberals) reject" are slashing social assistance (Mike Harris' first act was a 22% cut); slashing infrastructure spending leading to job losses and disrepair in the post-secondary sector; laying off 33,000 teachers, 12,000 doctors, 37,000 nurses, and cutting funding for 80% of long term care beds. Each item is equivalent to about \$3 billion.

But the Liberals are also preparing voters for new attacks on public sector workers and services. Declaring that "we must live within our means", 1500 jobs will be cut in the next two years, on top of the 3400 in the 2009 budget.

A further \$200 million in cuts to major agencies in the next two years will mean a 10% cut to funding for the Ministry of Housing and Municipal Affairs, a \$9 million cut to Children Aid, and a 15-30% increase in child care fees to parents, along with the closure of some child care centres. This is the tip of the iceberg; watch out for what's coming.

The government will also establish the "Commission on Reform of Ontario's Public Services", chaired by TD Bank's

former Chief Economist Don Drummond. This is one to watch. And in an ideological tip of the hat to the far-right, inmates will be moved to new super jails, and there will be a reduction to the gravy in executive office budgets at Ontario hospitals and universities (whether any currently exists or not).

For the election, the government is offering 60,000 new spaces in universities and colleges; many will be filled by international students seen as revenue generators with their extraordinarily high tuition fees.

Full day kindergarten will be extended to cover 200 more schools by September, but it will be 2014 before all schools are covered. For health, there is a paltry \$15 million over three years for breast cancer screening; \$93 million for mental health services aimed at youth; and increased drug coverage for seniors and others covered under the (means-tested) Ontario Drug Benefit Program.

For Big Business, massive provincial tax cuts bring the CIT rates down to 10% in Ontario; much lower than in the Great Lake States which are Ontario's main US competitors. These tax cuts were engineered by the Harris Tories ten years ago, and carried through by the Liberals. Combined with the federal CIT rate, the Marginal Effective Tax in Ontario will be 25% next year - unprecedented in post-war Canadian history.

Then there is also the HST, which the government dares to claim is being passed on in savings to consumers by 91% of businesses in the form of lower prices. The government also claims that the HST has increased purchasing power, though Statistics Canada figures show that personal debt levels are skyrocketing in Ontario. Purchasing power is declining as a result of rising food and home-heating and fuel prices, and more expensive rents and housing.

Not in the budget are the attacks on public sector bargaining rights, and the elimination of the right to strike for municipal transportation workers in Toronto. This is expected to wash across the province, pushed by right-wing civic and provincial governments.

The message to Big Business is clear: there is no need to switch support to the Tories. The Liberals can do the job, and will deliver.

(Next issue: the outlook for the October provincial election in Ontario.)

PV Fund Drive on hold...

Due to the May 2 federal election, the annual People's Voice Fund Drive will be put on hold for the duration of the campaign. As of April 11, a total of almost \$19,000 has already been raised, or 38% of our target, and of course we will continue to receive donations. Thank you for your generous solidarity, and we look forward to a successful completion of the Drive after May Day! •

Protesters flood Toronto streets to demand respect

OFL news release

Over 10,000 people from every corner of the city and all walks of life flooded Toronto's downtown streets on April 10 in a massive rally to demand respect from Toronto City Council. They made their way downtown by bus, car, bicycle and on foot, but when they arrived, the message was the same: "We didn't vote for cuts." The chants that rang out signalled a call to put communities, public services and good jobs ahead of narrowly defined political agendas.

"Cuts to city services hurt the most vulnerable and marginalized, including seniors, the disabled and those living in low-income neighbourhoods," said Winnie Ng, Ryerson University's Gindin Chair of Social Justice and Democracy. "The last thing this city needs is a deeper divide between the haves and the have-nots. We are calling on City Council to work for everyone, not just for those who can afford to live here."

"Mayor Ford may have been elected, but he isn't a czar. When you ignore the interests of the people who live and work in this city and start axing services and slashing jobs, you are thumbing your nose at democracy and the electorate. People from all over the city are angry and they are demanding respect," said Sid Ryan, President of the Ontario Federation of Labour.

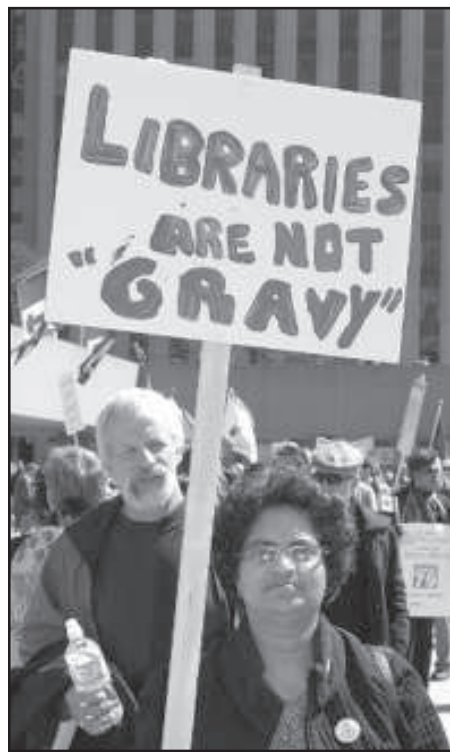
"Each city councillor needs to look past their personal politics and commit to building a Toronto that serves every resident. The proposed cuts to transit will leave many of us stranded. None of us voted for this," said Krisna Sarvanamuttu, President of the York Federation of Students and North York resident.

"In the election, we saw a lot of debate about future plans for the city, but we weren't expecting existing services to be cut and key public assets to be privatized" said John Cartwright, President of the Toronto and York Region Labour Council. "There are many Torontos that make up this city

and it is the city's services, public transit and arts funding that tie us all together."

The Rally for Respect was endorsed by ACORN Canada, Canadian Federation of Students-Ontario, Good Jobs for All Coalition, Greenpeace Canada, Toronto Disaster Relief Committee, Toronto International Women's Day Committee, Toronto Women's City Alliance, Toronto and York Region Labour Council, Ontario Federation of Labour, Canadian Labour Congress, and many other organizations listed on www.facebook.com/RespectToronto.

(Photo: Ed Bil)



Communist Party releases housing platform

"The Communist Party of Canada understands that housing is a basic human right and must be treated as a public utility with units built and provided according to need," says an election statement from the party.

"Across the country, housing is in a state of crisis. A record 1.5 million households (more than 4 million people) are in 'core housing need' and well over 300,000 people suffer from homelessness each year. Housing has shamefully not been a key election issue during the past 20 years, and continues to be neglected by successive governments at both federal and provincial levels.

"Canada sits alone among developed countries, as the only one that does not have a federal housing strategy. The Canadian government has left housing to the private sector, abandoning a basic human right to corporate profiteers.

"The housing crisis demands both emergency and long term action from a federal government that is committed to putting people's needs before profit. We reject right-wing proposals for rent subsidies, which will only line the pockets of landlords and developers, and do nothing to provide safe and affordable housing."

The statement puts forward several demands by the Communist Party of Canada:

* An immediate and massive campaign to build thousands of publicly-owned social, cooperative and non-profit housing units, and to repair and upgrade existing stock. Such a campaign

would provide desperately needed housing and create thousands of jobs - for every unit of housing built, six spin-off jobs are created;

* A Federal Housing Strategy, which would include the establishment of federal-provincial-municipal land banks and real rent controls;

* A ban on evictions, mortgage foreclosures and utility cut-offs due to non-payment that is related to unemployment (including strikes and lockouts);

* Tenant control over housing, through meaningful tenant representation at elected housing boards;

* Federal-provincial-municipal land banks;

* Action by the federal and provincial governments to block mass privatization of social housing like the moves by Mayor

Rob Ford to sell Toronto's public housing stock;

* Direct a minimum of 1% of annual federal and provincial budgets toward the construction of new social, cooperative and non-profit housing.

The Communist Party is also calling for "A new deal for cities", including: (1) giving constitutional status and wealth taxing powers to municipalities; (2) returning 50% of gas and road user taxes to cities to increase core funding for social, cooperative and non-profit housing; (3) reversing "downloading" forcing cities to pay for social programs and (4) re-establishing low-interest loans to cities and towns.

For more information, visit the Party's election website, www.votecommunist.ca. •



MAY DAY 2011 GREETING ADS

To mark May Day 2011, 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 22; if PV is preparing the layout, the deadline is April 20. Please check with us about the format if your ad is being sent electronically.

Ad rates (based on 5 column page):

One column-inch.....	\$15
One column x 2 inches.....	\$25
Two columns x 2 inches.....	\$45
Two columns x 3 inches.....	\$60
Two columns x 5 inches.....	\$90
Three columns x 4 inches.....	\$110
Two columns x 7 inches.....	\$140
Three columns x 7 inches.....	\$180

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

Palestine solidarity movement builds at Carleton

Nick Wasslen, Ottawa

On March 29 a rally and sit-in of approximately 400 students, alumni, support staff and faculty succeeded in cancelling a Board of Governors (BOG) meeting at Carleton University. The rally was organized by the Students Against Israeli Apartheid (SAIA) at Carleton to show the BOG and the university administration how much support there is for SAIA's campaign demanding divestment

from four companies (BAE Systems, Motorola, Northrop Grumman and Tesco supermarkets) which are complicit in and profiting off the illegal Israeli occupation of Palestine.

But the BOG refused to hear the SAIA motion put forward by the Graduate Student Association (GSA). The administration took further measures by locking down the entire 6th floor of Robertson Hall, where the meeting was to take place, thus denying access

to students who were interested in attending this public assembly.

"An extreme action like this really shows how disconnected the Board of Governors is from the student body" said Kimalee Phillip, president of the GSA and a student representative on the BOG.

Given such an aggressive response against their right to be heard, the students were forced to implement an alternative strategy: blocking off the entrances and exits and occupying the main lobby with a peaceful sit-in that included music and dancing. This effectively cut off all access to several of the BOG members.

The result: the cancellation of the BOG meeting. This is perhaps the most important victory for students fighting for a greater say on how their tuition fees are spent and how their campuses are run since March 1987, when the BOG agreed to divest from South African apartheid.

Aidan Macdonald, Carleton student and SAIA organizer later said "If they refuse to put student interests on their agenda, they have no business making decisions about our university."

As the Palestinian movement for boycotts, divestments, and sanctions (BDS) gains momentum around the world, pro-Israeli lobbyists and repressive institutions and administrations are forced to react with more draconian measures, exposing their superficial and contradictory commitment to human rights and democracy. This rejection of meaningful and open dialogue that is truly capable of change delegitimizes these institutions and frames a terrain of resistance that is forced to resort to ever more radical strategies.

The March 29th victory is the culmination of almost two months worth of intense organizing and outreach by SAIA. At the beginning of February, the student group began rallying support from students, student groups and unions on campus in an attempt to win an endorsement for the BDS campaign from the Carleton University Student Association (CUSA). Over 2000 signed letters were delivered to the CUSA executive committee urging them to endorse the campaign. On the day of the meeting, 300 students marched through the halls of Carleton to the CUSA meeting demanding its endorsement of SAIA's divestment campaign.

In the end, CUSA passed a motion asking for a socially responsible investment (SRI) plan for the Carleton University pension plan that didn't specify the four companies from SAIA's divestment campaign or mention Palestine, but did explicitly refer to illegal occupations as a breach of ethical practice. Despite this, it was ultimately seen as a victory for the students demanding greater accountability from the university and the student body in general.

Immediately afterwards, SAIA began organizing for Israeli Apartheid Week (IAW), a yearly event recognized by a growing number of cities around the world.

This year saw over 55 cities participating in the event from March 7-11.

At Carleton and the University of Ottawa, IAW saw four major events of speakers and a movie

grow, the more aggressive the right-wing forces become in denouncing such movements and initiatives. An example is the Ontario Legislature private member's bill passed Feb. 25, 2010, condemning

IAW. This year during IAW, at a separate event at Carleton put on by the campus Conservative and Liberal clubs and the Israeli Awareness Committee, Liberal MP Joe

Volpe

commented on IAW by saying "to say it is apartheid, it is bad, [it] conjures up the images of humanity gone wrong. I don't know how that could be a positive debate." Conservative MP John Baird, at the same event, said "I wish Israeli Apartheid Week wasn't happening".

Most recently, Carleton University president Roseann Runte threatened severe action against any such student activism. In an email sent to the entire Carleton community, she said "In the future, those persons preventing access and egress or refusing to follow guidelines set by security will, at a **minimum** (emphasis added), be charged under the student code for a non-academic offence. Penalties may include suspension of privileges, including access to the campus, a monetary fine or loss of academic status."

Nevertheless, groups like SAIA continue to do vitally important work in the name of human rights, justice and democracy even under growing repressive reactions of the ruling class.

SAIA is a student led, grassroots movement, anti-oppressive, and dedicated to defending human rights in occupied Palestine. Check out: saia.ca. •



BC's minimum wage earners: still the working poor

By Stephen Von Sychowski

Thousands of hard working British Columbian's will get a raise on May 1st. To some, it probably felt like the day would never come. A ten year wage freeze instituted by the Liberal Party under Gordon Campbell has left BC with the lowest minimum wage in the country at \$8 - more than \$3 below the poverty line and less than half of a living wage.

The minimum wage became a topic of shame in British Columbia, particularly given the province's record levels of homelessness and the highest levels of child poverty in Canada. The BC Federation of Labour and the Canadian Federation of Students launched the \$10 NOW campaign in 2007, when \$10 was still above the poverty line. The demands of the campaign included an immediate increase to \$10, a subsequent increase to \$11, the abolition of the hated and ageist "training wage", and indexing the minimum wage to inflation.

Polling by the Federation showed 80% of British Columbian's in favour of an increase as community leaders, faith groups, anti-poverty activists, civic governments, and others, called for a raise. Meanwhile, the young workers movement mobilized against the wage freeze by organizing rallies, information pickets, "freeze's", petitioning blitzes, lobbies, and other actions.

Christy Clark's wage increase should not be mistaken for a change in Liberal policy or direction. The BC Liberals are a party of big business and always will be. This modest increase is merely a public relations move aimed at buoying the sinking Liberal ship left behind by years of disastrous policies including the broadly despised HST. On the other hand, this move would not be necessary if the minimum wage had not been made such a prominent issue in the public eye, the media, and the Legislature. In this respect it is fair to say that the real thanks for the impending increases to the minimum wage belongs in large part to the young workers movement and others who fought for it and made it a public issue that wouldn't go away.

Understandably, minimum wage workers are excited about the impending increase. Any increase is a good increase when full time wages still leave you impoverished, and you are forced perhaps to work

two or three jobs just to get by. But at the risk of sounding stereotypical - it doesn't go far enough.

According to Statistics Canada, a worker in BC would have to make at least \$11.11 working 40 hours a week and 50 weeks a year in order to reach the poverty line. Of course this would have to be more when dealing specifically with cities that have extraordinary costs of living, like Vancouver.

Furthermore, the poverty line is not the same as a living wage. A living wage means that you can cover your bare bones essentials without going in to debt. It does not include luxuries, savings, owning a home, maintaining debt, or taking holidays. In other words, it means just that - you can live... but that's about it. The living wage for Vancouver is currently \$18.81 and for Victoria, \$18.03. Visit livingwageforfamilies.ca for more details.

Meanwhile minimum wage will increase to \$8.75 this May, \$9.50 in November, and finally \$10.25 next May. This means that minimum wage workers will still be making \$0.86 below the poverty line and less than half a living wage. This is without taking into account the inflation which will take place between now and then.

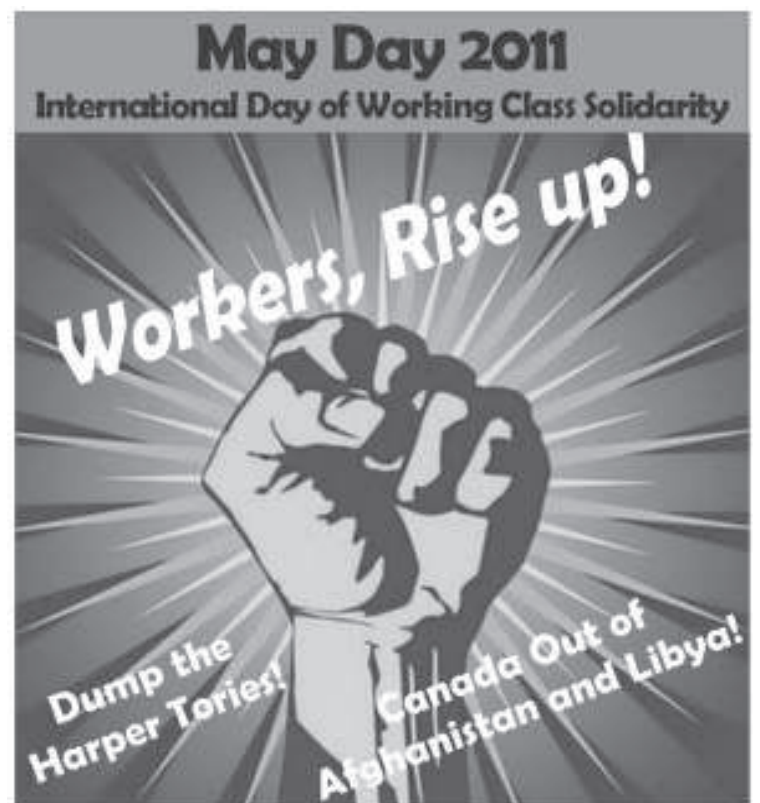
To make matters worse, the Liberal government has instituted a "server wage" which will reach no more than \$9 by next May. Applied to all those who serve liquor on the job, this has been justified with the flimsy suggestion that such workers have their wage subsidized by tips. This ignores that fact that tips are not a guarantee and, even when they are received, they may be stolen by employers or divided amongst the staff as a whole. Moreover, it transfers responsibility for the payment of workers from the employer to the customer.

In other words, the Liberal policy on wages remains aimed at protecting the interest of their corporate masters - those who fund their campaigns and direct their policies. After ten years of no increases, a modest improvement spread over more than a year and three small steps, plus tempered by the implementation of a second wage tier for servers, is hardly justice. The Liberal Party may have changed its leader, but it hasn't and won't change its ways. •

screening, concluding with a cultural night with music and spoken word. The speakers included Nadia Abu-Zahra, who spoke about the effect of identity documentation on the Palestinian people. Clifton Arihwehete Nicholas, a Kanienkehaka (Mohawk) speaker and activist who participated in the 1990 Oka crisis, spoke of the similarities between Canadian and Israeli apartheid. Ali Abunimah, a co-founder of Electronic Intifada, spoke about the one-state solution. The movie was a joint SAIA and Cinema Politica presentation of a Palestinian documentary, *Slingshot Hip Hop*, a story of young Palestinian artists who use Hip Hop music to inspire understanding and resistance to the Israeli occupation.

All three events organized by SAIA were highly successful, attracting hundreds of supporters despite a wave of negative corporate media releases. SAIA has recently been portrayed as a violent fringe group and anti-democratic for the tactics it uses in demanding that Carleton divest from companies involved in the illegal occupation of Palestine.

The more the Palestinian movement and the BDS campaign



Political and Cultural Evening
Sunday, May 1

Steelworkers Hall, 25 Cecil St., Toronto
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Speakers, food & refreshments and a great cultural program including:
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Charles Roach - Salem Yousef - Lisa Makarchuk - Omar Mansour

Free Admission

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EDITORIALS

Vancouver sinks, Harper fiddles?

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has projected that global sea levels will rise at least 28 cm by the year 2100. But according to Dutch researchers, "regional variations" mean that cities such as New York and Vancouver face higher rises. Indeed, many scientists believe the IPCC's figure is a huge underestimate.

The potential flooding of much of Vancouver (including the suburb of Richmond and the city's airport) is just one negative consequence of global warming. A new Environment Canada report, published in *Geophysical Research Letters*, warns that Stephen Harper has done little to prevent "dangerous" climate change. The study suggests global greenhouse gas emissions "must ramp down to zero immediately" to avoid a 2 C rise in the planetary temperature. Allowing temperatures to climb more than 2 C could wipe out thousands of species, melt Arctic ice and trigger a rise in sea level of several metres.

Environment Canada scientists were not available for interviews - not surprising, since their boss treats such news as a firing offence. But the hypocrisy of the Harper government is obvious. While the Conservatives agree at international meetings to help keep warming below the 2 C threshold, they promote expanded use and exports of oil and coal that drive up emissions.

As University of Victoria climatologist Andrew Weaver says, "We have to start transforming our energy systems now. Not yesterday, not tomorrow, now. We should be weaning ourselves from our dependency on oil, not trying to expand it as fast as possible."

Any other course of action will likely result in the deaths of millions of our children and grandchildren. Conservative candidates should be warned that their "family friendly" party already has the blood of future generations on their hands.

Another Tory scandal explodes

The Conservative strategy of appearing as champions of "law and order", careful spending and open government took a direct hit on April 11, with the release of a "bombshell" confidential report from Auditor-General Sheila Fraser about "pork-barrel largesse, dubious spending and misinforming Parliament." Whether the pro-Tory corporate media will use this news to spank "Bubble Boy" Stephen Harper is highly doubtful, but the contents are stunning.

According to the *Globe and Mail*, the draft report says the government misinformed Parliament to win approval for a \$50 million G8 slush fund that lavished money on questionable projects in Industry Minister Tony Clement's riding. The minister, the mayor of Huntsville, and the general manager of Deerhurst Resort which hosted the summit, chose 32 projects to fund, ranging from \$100,000 on a gazebo, to \$1.1 million for sidewalk and tree upgrades, and \$194,000 for a park, all an hour's drive distant from the summit. Add to this the earlier revelations that hundreds of millions of dollars were poured into "security preparations" which amounted to mind-boggling violations of civil liberties in Toronto, and a clear picture emerges.

If ever a Canadian government could be fairly accused of corruption, enormous waste, arrogant contempt for taxpayers and Parliament, utter disregard for the rule of law, and obsessive secrecy, this is it. Little wonder that opinion surveys show that nearly three-quarters of voters who don't favour the Tories are deeply frightened by the possibility of a Harper majority. As the saying goes, Canadians should be "be afraid... be very afraid." Then they should get out and vote to dump Mr. Harper on May 2.

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LETTERS

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CRIME IN CANADA IS DOWN -
SO HARPER HAS ROOM FOR REFUGEES

S. MOGENSEN union-art.com



SPEAKING FRANKLY

Corporate tax cuts do not create jobs

PV Commentary

One of the most enduring myths of modern capitalism is that corporations invest the savings from tax cuts back into their operations, thus creating jobs, expanding the economy, and generating even bigger revenues for governments.

From this perspective, governments should keep slashing corporate taxes, presumably right down to zero. If the tax cuts of recent years continue, that state of nirvana will be reached in twenty years.

An exaggeration? Hardly. In 2000, the combined federal-provincial tax rate was just over 42%. A decade later, this figure has fallen to 28%, and Stephen Harper would cut it to 25% by fiscal 2013. Do the math yourself.

Of course, zero taxes on corporate profits would ultimately raise (cue sounds of calculators beeping)... ZERO dollars in government revenues. That leaves Jo Average, the working class taxpayer, footing the entire bill, on top of generating the profits created for the bosses through the exploitation of her labour. There's obviously something wrong with this picture, unless you happen to be one of our corporate masters.

But you don't have to be a Marxist to poke holes in the corporate tax cut swindle. Even the *Globe and Mail* recently reported that "Canadian companies have added tens of billions of dollars to their stockpiles of cash at a time when tax cuts are supposed to be encouraging them to plow more money into their businesses."

Analyzing Statistics Canada figures, the *Globe and Mail* found that "the rate of investment in machinery and equipment has declined in lockstep with falling corporate tax rates over the past decade. At the same time, businesses have added \$83 billion to their cash reserves since the onset of the recession in 2008."

During some periods of history,

capitalists do invest in expansion of their business operations. As the *Globe and Mail* argues, "from 1960 until the early 1990s, corporations invested almost every penny of their after-tax cash flow back into the business."

This argument omits reference to the resulting growth of the "reserve army of the unemployed." In their competition for higher profits, capitalists drive up the rate of exploitation of their workforce. Their main tactic is increase the proportion of corporate spending on machinery and equipment, to reduce labour costs. Not surprisingly, the average level of unemployment among Canadian workers rose dramatically during these "golden years."

Now, the *Globe and Mail* reports, "investment in equipment and machinery has fallen to 5.5% in 2010 as a share of Canada's total economic output from 6.8% in 2005 and 7.7% in 2000."

In other words, tax breaks and handouts to big corporations have failed to live up to the predictions of neoliberal economists and right-wing politicians. The gap between the rich and the working class is at record levels, over 1.5 million Canadians remain unemployed (according to understated official figures), funding for social programs, health and education is under constant attack, and corporate CEOs and shareholders are laughing all the way to the bank.

Need more proof? Another study, released on April 6 by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, shows that "after a decade of corporate tax cuts, the benefits to Canada's largest corporations are clear but the job creation payoff for Canadians hasn't materialized."

The study tracked 198 companies on the S&P/TSX composite index from 2000 through 2009. Those 198 companies are making 50% more profit and paying 20% less tax than they did a decade ago. But in terms of job creation,

"they did not keep up with the average growth of employment in the economy as a whole. From 2005 to 2010, the number of employed Canadians rose 6% while the number of jobs created by the companies in the study grew by only 5%." (Note: the total population rose 5.5% during those years, so employment gains were minimal, and largely part-time.)

If those 198 companies paid the same tax rate as in 2000, federal and provincial governments would have collected an additional \$12 billion in revenue in 2009.

The CCPA's conclusion: "Canadian governments are losing \$12 billion a year to 198 of Canada's biggest companies, who are making 50% more profit and paying 20% less in income tax while creating fewer jobs than the average."

Our conclusion: the well-being of working people is too important to leave in the hands of profit-hungry corporations. Restoring the federal corporate tax rate 30% - about the levels of a decade ago - would be a good first step to provide governments with the revenue needed to tackle urgent social problems in Canada. ●

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Harper in St. John's: don't forget your ABCs

By Sean Burton

Prime Minister Stephen Harper visited Newfoundland and Labrador on March 31, presiding over a Conservative rally at the Delta Hotel in downtown St. John's. Perhaps the 31st of March was considered an auspicious day for a rally, being as it is the anniversary of Newfoundland joining Canada. Indeed, Newfoundland and Labrador's relationship with the federal government in recent years was a driving factor for Harper to show his face.

Relations between St. John's and Ottawa have been rather cold while Danny Williams was premier. Williams, the former leader of the provincial Progressive Conservatives, became enormously popular for attempting to barter better deals both from Ottawa and the oil industry which is currently booming in Newfoundland. Mixed with an independent attitude and appealing to a long-suppressed

Newfoundland nationalism, many people rallied to support Williams.

The Williams who showed contempt to striking workers in his first year in office was quickly forgotten when Canadian flags came down for a short period when the federal government of Paul Martin attempted to revise the Atlantic Accord, intended to manage the province's offshore oil and gas resources.

Williams later attacked Harper over equalization payments, essentially claiming that the federal government was demonstrating contempt for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and deliberately giving the province a raw deal. That led Williams to promote the Anything But Conservative (ABC) campaign during the 2008 federal election. The Conservatives failed to gain a single seat in the province.

But Williams has since retired from politics, and the new Progressive Conservative leadership seems much keener to reconnect with their federal

compatriots. Conservative candidates in Newfoundland and Labrador are hoping for a rebound now that the "red Tory" Williams is out of the picture, so it certainly was a fine opportunity for a rally in St. John's.

The hastily-organized Conservative rally was attended by about 300 people. Aside from calling the election "unnecessary" and condemning any sort of coalition government, Harper also made a vague promise to provide a

loan guarantee "or equivalent" for the development of hydro-electric facilities on the lower Churchill River in Labrador.

While that drew applause from Conservative stalwarts in the hotel, Harper's presence was not welcomed by all. On short notice, the Newfoundland Federation of Labour and students from Memorial University responded with an anti-Harper demonstration that attracted over 130 people. Lana Payne, the federation president,

accused Harper of continuing federal contempt for Newfoundland, women's equality, and working people, and of being increasingly anti-democratic. Demonstrators held aloft placards that read out "CONTEMPT", referring to the contempt of parliament motion that brought down the government in March.

The fact that over a hundred people were organized in a matter of hours to demonstrate against Harper is proof that distrust toward the Conservative Party is still very much alive and strong in Newfoundland. Current premier Kathy Dunderdale may be willing to stand with Harper, but many others have not forgotten the ABC campaign. The apparent break between Williams and his former team has left many scratching their heads and wondering what direction the provincial government will go. Whatever the case may be, the Conservatives will have to fight years of distrust to win any seat in Newfoundland and Labrador. ●



Anti-Harper protesters spell out their message in St. John's.

Debacle over Leaders' debate raises larger issues

The Communist Party has condemned the Broadcast Consortium's decision to limit the leaders' debate to four parties, and is calling for legislation to remove control of such debates from the Consortium.

"Leaders' debates are not semi-private or P3 events; they are essential instruments informing the Canadian public so that electors can cast an informed vote," Communist Party leader Miguel Figueroa said on April 4. "To allow private actors like the Broadcast Consortium to arbitrarily determine which party leaders the Canadian people will hear debate the issues of the day, and which party leaders will be shut out and silenced - this is a serious violation of the constitutional and democratic rights of all Canadian voters."

"That Elections Canada has no authority or control over the Broadcast Consortium and the seminal leaders' debates during a federal election makes a mockery of democratic elections in Canada," Figueroa added. "The Consortium is a club of mostly private corporations which clearly support one and possibly two of the main parties currently contesting for votes. These media giants have a direct interest in limiting the public's access to all other political parties, their leaders, policies and perspectives."

"Furthermore, as Canada's



Illustrated version of the democratic process in Canadian elections....

public broadcaster, the CBC is required to be impartial in covering the elections. Its involvement in the consortium's decision to limit debate has betrayed the public trust, and exceeded its authority as a publicly-owned crown corporation.

"The Consortium's decision to limit debate to some parties and not others is an infringement of Canadians right to cast an informed vote, without the Consortium or anyone else pre-screening what choices are acceptable and what are not. Electors must be completely free and unfettered to make their own choices."

"The deliberate blackout of some parties from the airwaves,

including the leaders' debates, constitutes a huge disadvantage to those candidates and parties who are blacked out, and conversely is a huge benefit - a huge financial benefit - to those who are included in the 'leaders debate'. Those participating will have received a financial contribution - and an illegal one at that - from the corporations organizing the debate.

"All election debates - organized by media or by electors - should be brought under the umbrella of the Canada Elections Act, and should as a matter of democracy and electoral law, be organized to include all candidates."

"The debacle surrounding the leaders' debates is only one of many structural flaws in the electoral process in Canada. The Communist Party is also campaigning for a number of other democratic reforms, including the introduction of a proportional representation system, much lower campaign spending limits which are strictly enforced, the elimination of the \$2 per vote subsidy which is currently given only to the largest parties, and removal of the ban against trade unions making contributions to parties and candidates," Miguel Figueroa said. ●



Racist Tory record slammed by NOII

The refugee rights and migrant justice group No One Is Illegal is outraged at a xenophobic ad campaign launched by the Conservatives. The 30 second TV ad features photos of the *MV Sun Sea* carrying 492 Tamil refugees in August 2010 and refers to the asylum seekers as "criminals... abusing Canadian generosity."

According to Magin Payet of No One Is Illegal, "The Conservatives are relying on fear mongering and racist stereotypes to vilify refugees and asylum seekers. Over the past two years, the Conservative government and Jason Kenney have consistently and deliberately tried to create an atmosphere of paranoia to justify their growing trend of anti-refugee policies, including the widely condemned and defeated Bill C49, and the prolonged detention of almost 600 Tamil refugees aboard *Ocean Lady* and *MV Sun Sea*."

"While Kenney courts the immigrant vote by watching cricket and eating in ethnic restaurants, his anti-immigrant record speaks for itself," states Sozan Savehilaghi, another member of No One Is Illegal. "Kenney has drastically expanded slave-like temporary worker programs, under which migrant workers are exploited as cheap labour without basic rights. Meanwhile, the number of accepted refugees and permanent residents has plummeted."

According to Citizenship and Immigration Canada's annual report, the number of refugees who had their asylum claims approved has dropped by 56% over the past four years. Since 2008 the number of temporary foreign workers (250,000 people) in Canada now exceeds the number of permanent residents. The number of family class immigrants accepted into Canada has dropped by 10,000 and the number of skilled worker visas has decreased by 20% since the Conservatives took power.

"The Conservatives' recent proposal to make spousal sponsorships for permanent residence conditional for two years is yet another attack on immigrant families. Under the guise of cracking down on marriage fraud, this proposed regulation will ensure that sponsored partners are living with precarious status. This makes women in particular will be extremely vulnerable to domestic and gender violence," says NOII activist Harsha Walia. "The immigration system is structurally flawed and oppressive... We assert that no human being is illegal and that everyone has the right to sustenance and livelihood. All politicians should be aware that immigrant communities will not easily be persuaded by any empty election promises given the bleak history of human rights and justice for immigrant communities in Canada." ●



21 reasons to dump the Tories...

As the May 2 federal election campaign heats up, Canadians are seeing the true face of the Conservatives. By their standards, anyone who isn't on the "Harper Team" is a potential enemy, subject to being dragged away in handcuffs by the RCMP. Here are 21 more good reasons to vote Stephen Harper out of office...

1) The real G20 criminals

Chaos, brutality and waste marked the brutal repression during the G20 Summit last June in Toronto. Over 1100 people were arrested, for the "crime" of peacefully demonstrating for affordable housing, workers' rights, an end to war and occupation, and environmental justice. This "security" operation cost taxpayers nearly \$1 billion. Nearly all charges were dropped, and many police officers have been accused of violent assaults. The federal and Ontario governments refuse to call an independent inquiry into this massive and illegal attack on democratic rights.



2) Child care produces benefits

Public spending on child care and early education services in Canada is below one per cent of GDP, compared to nearly 2% in the United States and 5-6% in the Scandinavian countries. A 2009 report by economist Robert Fairholm found that every dollar the government invests in child care has the potential to return \$2.54 in long-term net benefits such as lower social costs and improved access to education and employment.

3) Equal opportunity a Tory target

The Harper Conservatives want to repeal the federal Employment Equity Act, starting with a review of employment equity policies and practices. Federal legislation already requires that all hiring be based on merit and qualifications. Less than two per cent of job competitions in the federal public service are designated for equity group members, in sectors showing large gaps in workforce representation.

4) Canada abstains on water rights

The United Nations General Assembly has declared "safe and clean drinking water and sanitation" to be a human right. The resolution had 122 countries in favour, while 41 countries (including Canada) abstained. Nearly two billion people live in water-stressed areas of the world and three billion have no

running water within a kilometre of home. In Canada, over 100 First Nations reserves and other Aboriginal communities lacked access to safe drinking water and adequate sanitation.

5) Tar Sands equal cancer

For decades, Aboriginal people in northern Alberta have warned about the impacts of oil sands development on health, water and air quality, and wildlife populations. The Assembly of First Nations (AFN), representing over 630 First Nation communities across Canada, has raised concerns about the high rates of cancer. The Alberta Cancer Board has released a study finding find the overall cancer rate is about 30% higher than expected in the community of Fort Chipewyan.

6) The deadly, expensive war in Afghanistan

Canada has spent some \$20 billion on the war in Afghanistan, at a cost of 153 Canadian lives. But this imperialist war has also caused about 1.2 million violent deaths and another 3.7 million deaths from the effects of deprivation during the occupation. Afghan refugees total 3.2 million in Iran and Pakistan.

7) Living payday to payday

Six in ten Canadians survive from paycheque to paycheque. A survey last summer by the Canadian Payroll Association

found that 59% of employees would be in financial trouble if their paycheque were delayed by just one week. Among younger workers, this figure rises to 66%, and for single parents, it hits 75 per cent.

8) Turning Parliament into a rubber-stamp

Signs that the Harper Tories are undermining the authority of the House of Commons over the Prime Minister's office: the anti-democratic prorogations in 2008 and 2009; the constant criticism of any form of coalition government; the refusal to allow Parliamentary Committees to see uncensored documents; attacks on the Chief Electoral Officer, the Access to Information Commissioner, and the Parliamentary Budget Officer; the tendency to announce economic and budgetary statements outside parliament; and the refusal to allow political staffers to appear before parliamentary committees.

9) Student debt tops \$15 billion

More than 90 per cent of university students paid higher tuition fees during 2010-11, according to Statistics Canada. Total federal student debt will soon surpass \$15 billion. Tuition fees average \$5,138, the single largest expense for most students.

10) The truth about health care

Medicare was set up to remove the financial barrier for access to health care. Despite propaganda to the contrary, medicare is neither in crisis nor unsustainable. Since 1975 the cost of public health care has remained relatively stable at between four and five per cent of the GDP. Medicare spending comprises the same proportion of provincial revenues 20 years ago, but tax cuts have eaten away public budgets.

11) Scientists muzzled by Harper

Climate scientists in Environment Canada have been prevented from sharing their work at conferences or giving interviews. Under the Harper Tories, federal scientists must get approval from their

minister's office before speaking to journalists. The process requires drafting questions and answers which are scrutinized by as many as seven people, before a scientist can be given approval for an interview.

12) Conservatives shrug off poverty plan

The Harper government has ignored a comprehensive Senate program aimed at dealing with poverty and homelessness. The report *In From the Margins*, initiated by a Senate sub-committee, offered 74 recommendations, including the establishment of a core poverty eradication goal, an increase to the National Child Benefit, a boost to the Working Income Tax Benefit and a federal minimum wage increase to \$10/hour. The Conservative government only offered to take the recommendations "under advisement."

13) Canadians want climate action

An Environics survey last November found that 87% of Canadians agree that economic growth and consumerism are a root cause of climate change, and 85% think that industrialized (i.e. major capitalist) countries bear the most responsibility for reducing emissions. Over 70% agreed that "the money spent on wars and the military would all be better spent on efforts that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and the impacts of climate change." 83% want the government to invest in "green jobs" and transition programs for workers and communities negatively affected by a shift away from fossil fuels.

14) Hunger stalks Canadians

Despite the "economic recovery," the HungerCount 2010 report, based on surveys of food banks across Canada, showed a huge jump in food bank visits, with nearly half of all users either children or pensioners. In March 2010, 80,150 people accessed a food bank for the first time. During that month, 867,948 individuals were assisted by a food bank, an increase of 28% over March 2008. The number of food banks users who identify as First Nations, Métis, or Inuit rose from 10.8% of the total in 2008, to 12% in 2010. The number of low-income people in Canada has not dropped below 2.7 million in many years.

15) Jobless benefits denied for majority

Less than half of Canada's 1.5 million unemployed workers can collect EI benefits. Special EI measures introduced as part of the 2009 Budget, notably an extra five weeks of benefits for all claimants, expired last fall. While overall employment numbers have returned to pre-recession levels, full-time jobs remain below the former peak, and the number of part-time workers has grown.

16) Militarist foreign policy

The Canada First Defence Strategy (CFDS) is the Harper government's blueprint for military and foreign policy. According to the Canadian

Peace Congress, "CFDS is the manifesto of the most aggressive circles of Canadian finance capital seeking a bigger military budget to strengthen its influence at the round tables in Washington and Brussels... CFDS is profoundly undemocratic and was implemented without seeking Parliamentary approval and commits \$492 billion over 20 years... all to guarantee the profits of defence contractors and investors."

17) CEOs are "recession-proof"

Canada's highest-paid 100 CEOs took home an average of \$6.6 million during 2009, 155 times higher than the average Canadian income of \$42,988. These elite CEOs are also sitting on \$1.3 billion of stock options, which are taxed at a lower rate when cashed in. One-third of all income growth in Canada in the past 20 years went to the richest 1% of Canadians.

18) Sinking deeper in debt

While corporate profits recover from the economic crash to climb past the \$250 billion level, most Canadians keep sinking deeper into debt. Household debt in Canada reached \$1.41 trillion in December 2009, an average of \$41,740 per individual, 2.5 times greater than in 1989. The debt-to-income ratio in Canada reached a record of 144.4% at the end of 2009. Bankruptcies have skyrocketed from 20.5 per 10,000 adults in 1990 to 39.0 in 2007, and then higher during the economic crash.

19) \$187 billion revenue gap

Net corporate profits in Canada in 2003 reached an all-time record of \$102 billion. This figure jumped to \$168 billion in 2006, and past \$250 billion in 2008. If corporate profits held at this level over the next five years, the 30% tax rate advocated by the Communist Party would bring in \$375 billion in total revenue. The 15% rate set to take effect next year would mean just \$188 billion. That's a gap of \$187 billion over the lifetime of one government - enough to lift millions of Canadians out of poverty, build homes for all, dramatically upgrade transit systems, cut greenhouse gas emissions, and make post-secondary education and apprenticeship programs free for young Canadians.

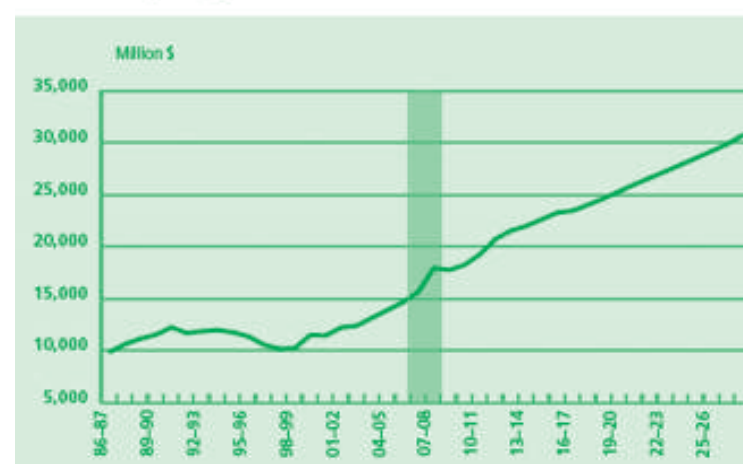
20) The rich get richer....

Corporate profits before taxes were 4.7% of GDP in 1992. By 2006, they hit 13.9% of GDP. Wages in 1992 were 55.2% of GDP. By 2005, they had fallen to only 50.2%. That difference represented a decline of \$71.3 billion in the share of GDP represented by wages.

21) Gender gap remains

Canada lags behind Sri Lanka, Lesotho and Latvia at No. 20 in a global ranking of gender equality, according to a World Economic Forum study. Canada lags when it comes to the earning gap between men and women, placing 33rd overall. On average, the estimated earned income for Canadian women is \$28,315 compared with \$40,000 for men. ●

Defence program FYs 1986-87 to 2027-28



Canadian military spending under Harper is expected to hit \$35 billion/year by 2025

Profit Pathology and Disposable Planet

By Michael Parenti,
February 2011

Some years ago in New England, a group of environmentalists asked a corporate executive how his company (a paper mill) could justify dumping its raw industrial effluent into a nearby river. The river - which had taken Mother Nature centuries to create - was used for drinking water, fishing, boating, and swimming. In just a few years, the paper mill had turned it into a highly toxic open sewer.

The executive shrugged and said that river dumping was the most cost-effective way of removing the mill's wastes. If the company had to absorb the additional expense of having to clean up after itself, it might not be able to maintain its competitive edge and would then have to go out of business or move to a cheaper labor market, resulting in a loss of jobs for the local economy.

Free Market Uber Alles

It was a familiar argument: the company had no choice. It was compelled to act that way in a competitive market. The mill was not in the business of protecting the environment but in the business of making a profit, the highest possible profit at the highest possible rate of return. Profit is the name of the game, as business leaders make clear when pressed on the point. The overriding purpose of business is capital accumulation.

To justify its single-minded profiteering, Corporate America promotes the classic laissez-faire theory which claims that the free market - a congestion of unregulated and unbridled enterprises all selfishly pursuing their own ends - is governed by a benign "invisible hand" that miraculously produces optimal outputs for everybody.

The free marketeers have a deep all-abiding faith in laissez-faire for it is a faith that serves them well. It means no government oversight, no being held accountable for the environmental disasters they perpetrate. Like greedy spoiled brats, they repeatedly get bailed out by the government (some free market!) so that they can continue to take irresponsible risks, plunder the land, poison the seas, sicken whole communities, lay waste to entire regions, and pocket obscene profits.

This corporate system of capital accumulation treats the Earth's life-sustaining resources (arable land, groundwater, wetlands, foliage, forests, fisheries, ocean beds, bays, rivers, air quality) as disposable ingredients presumed to be of limitless supply, to be consumed or toxicified at will. As BP has demonstrated so well in the Gulf-of-Mexico catastrophe, considerations of cost weigh so much more heavily than considerations of safety. As one Congressional inquiry concluded: "Time after time, it appears that BP made decisions that increased the risk of a blowout to save the company time or expense."

Indeed, the function of the transnational corporation is not to promote a healthy ecology but to

extract as much marketable value out of the natural world as possible even if it means treating the environment like a septic tank. An ever-expanding corporate capitalism and a fragile finite ecology are on a calamitous collision course, so much so that the support systems of the entire ecosphere - the Earth's thin skin of fresh air, water, and topsoil - are at risk.

It is not true that the ruling politico-economic interests are in a state of denial about all this. Far worse than denial, they have shown outright antagonism toward those who think our planet is more important than their profits. So they defame environmentalists as "ecoterrorists," "EPA gestapo," "Earth day alarmists," "tree huggers," and purveyors of "Green hysteria."

In an enormous departure from free-market ideology, most of the diseconomies of big business are foisted upon the general populace, including the costs of cleaning up toxic wastes, the cost of monitoring production, the cost of disposing of industrial effluence (which composes 40 to 60 percent of the loads treated by taxpayer-supported municipal sewer plants), the cost of developing new water sources (while industry and agribusiness consume 80 percent of the nation's daily water supply), and the costs of attending to the sickness and disease caused by all the toxicity created. With many of these diseconomies regularly passed on to the government, the private sector then boasts of its superior cost-efficiency over the public sector.

The Super-Rich are different from us

Isn't ecological disaster a threat to the health and survival of corporate plutocrats just as it is to us ordinary citizens? We can

understand why the corporate rich might want to destroy public housing, public education, Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid. Such cutbacks would bring us closer to a free market society devoid of the publicly-funded "socialistic" human services that the ideological reactionaries detest. And such cuts would not deprive the superrich and their families of anything. The superrich have more than sufficient private wealth to procure whatever services and protections they need for themselves.

But the environment is a different story, is it not? Don't wealthy reactionaries and their corporate lobbyists inhabit the same polluted planet as everyone else, eat the same chemicalized food, and breathe the same toxicified air? In fact, they do not live exactly as everyone else. They experience a different class reality, often residing in places where the air is markedly better than in low and middle income areas. They have access to food that is organically raised and specially transported and prepared.

The nation's toxic dumps and freeways usually are not situated in or near their swanky neighbourhoods. In fact, the superrich do not live in neighbourhoods as such. They usually reside on landed estates with plenty of wooded areas, streams, meadows, and only a few well-monitored access roads. Pesticide sprays are not poured over their trees and gardens. Clear cutting does not desolate their ranches, estates, family forests, lakes, and prime vacation spots.

Still, should they not fear the threat of an ecological apocalypse brought on by global warming? Do

they want to see life on Earth, including their own lives, destroyed? In the long run they indeed will be sealing their own doom along with everyone else's. However, like us all, they live not in the long run but in the here and now. What is now at stake for them is something more proximate and



more urgent than global ecology; it is global profits. The fate of the biosphere seems like a remote abstraction compared to the fate of one's immediate - and enormous - investments.

With their eye on the bottom line, big business leaders know that every dollar a company spends on oddball things like environmental protection is one less dollar in earnings. Moving away from fossil fuels and toward solar, wind, and tidal energy could help avert ecological disaster, but six of the world's ten top industrial corporations are involved primarily in the production of oil, gasoline, and motor vehicles. Fossil fuel pollution brings billions of dollars in returns. Ecologically sustainable forms of production threaten to compromise such profits, the big producers are convinced.

Immediate gain for oneself is a far more compelling consideration

than a future loss shared by the general public. Everytime you drive your car, you are putting your immediate need to get somewhere ahead of the collective need to avoid poisoning the air we all breathe. So with the big players: the social cost of turning a forest into a wasteland weighs little against

the immense and immediate profit that comes from harvesting the timber and walking away with a neat bundle of cash. And it can always be rationalized away: there are lots of other forests for people to visit, they don't need this one; society needs the timber; lumberjacks need the jobs, and so on.

The future is now

Some of the very same scientists and environmentalists who see the ecology crisis as urgent rather annoyingly warn us of a catastrophic climate crisis by "the end of this century." But that's some ninety years away when all of us and most of our kids will be dead - which makes global warming a much less urgent issue.

There are other scientists who manage to be even more irritating by warning us of an impending ecological crisis then putting it even further into the future: "We'll have to stop thinking in terms of eons and start thinking in terms of centuries," one scientific sage was quoted in the *New York Times* in 2006. This is supposed to put us on alert? If a global catastrophe is a century or several centuries away, who is going to make the terribly difficult and costly decisions today whose effects will be felt far in the future?

see PATHOLOGY, p. 11

Communists demand "environment, not profits"

In this election, the Communist Party of Canada has advanced a wide-ranging set of proposals designed to protect the environment. The major opposition parties and the Greens base their policies on "market-based" tinkering with the "real costs" of human economic activities. But the Communist Party argues that capitalism itself, a system based on the extraction of maximum profits, is inherently a threat to human survival. The goal of the Communist Party is public ownership of key industries and resources, which would allow for democratic control and economic planning to protect the interests of working people and the environment.

In recent years, the corporate-backed Harper Tories have made Canada a key opponent of serious measures to tackle the deepening global climate crisis. The Communist Party demands emergency action on this issue, as well as support for reparations to countries affected by capitalist-driven climate change. The Communist platform calls

for legislation to slash greenhouse gas emissions, including a phase-out of coal-fired plants. Rejecting the claim that such measures will "kill jobs," the Communist platform urges investments to create jobs through renewable energy and conservation programs. This would include more stringent vehicle emission controls, expanded urban mass transit, and the elimination of fares by subsidizing fare collections. The Communists call for funding high-speed rail lines, and the development of a fuel-efficient Canadian car.

Radical change is advocated in the Communist platform, aiming to remove the private profit motive as the driving force behind economic decision-making. The platform renews the Party's call to adopt a People's Energy Plan, including public ownership and democratic control of all energy and natural resource extraction, production and distribution.

In the short term, the Communists call for a 100% tax on the windfall profits of the oil monopolies, and to "stop and reverse the privatization,

deregulation and break-up of public energy utilities."

The Communists urge a freeze and reduction of energy exports to the U.S., and instead propose to expand shared power flows among provinces through an East-West power grid. The Party opposes any new development of the Alberta tar sands, and calls to close these operations within five years. Jobs should be guaranteed for workers in more sustainable industries at equivalent wages, and compensation provided for Aboriginal peoples and communities affected by the tar sands. The Party opposes the Enbridge and Mackenzie Valley pipelines, and oil and gas exploration and shipping on the west coast. It calls for a moratorium on the development of shale gas resources in Quebec.

To protect working people hard-hit by declining incomes, the Communist Party supports

restoration of the "two price" system, with higher prices for energy exports, and lower prices for domestic uses, especially home heating.

On other environmental issues, the Communist platform includes a ban on "biofuels" derived from feed grains; heavy fines and jail terms against polluters and destructive corporate practices, such as clear-cutting, in-ocean fish farming, and deep-sea draggers; and no industrial development in parks.

The Communist Party also calls for action such as income supports to defend family farms and protect Canada's food sovereignty. The Party's platform urges stronger action to support organic farming; reduce the use of antibiotics, fertilizers, and pesticides, a ban on "terminator" seeds, and mandatory labelling of genetically-modified food products. ●



For more information on the
Communist campaign, visit
www.votecommunist.ca



GLOBAL CLASS STRUGGLE

Mexican bill weakens unions

On March 10, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), backed by the National Action Party (PAN), put forward a bill radically undermining Mexico's labour laws. The bill was drawn up without consulting the labour and social movements and proposes sweeping changes that seriously curtail workers' rights and heighten job insecurity.

The bill drafted by the PRI does not include the proposal made by Mexican trade unions to eradicate the "protection contracts" which make it virtually impossible for workers to form free and democratic unions that represent their interests. Proposed amendments to establish a 40-hour week as well as improvements to seniority bonuses and the holiday system were also rejected. Instead, the so-called "reforms" facilitate the profit-driven corporate strategies of labour outsourcing, precarious contracts and unfair dismissals.

Honduran teachers ordered back to work

Union leaders in Honduras say more than 40,000 teachers returned to classes in early April since the government declared their month-long strike illegal at the end of March. Lorenzo Sanchez of the Union of Professional Teachers said the remaining 32,000 teachers would likely return to work within a few days. The teachers have decided to begin a dialogue with the government over their claim that 6,000 teachers are owed unpaid salaries.

The government insists salary payments are up to date. Honduran President Porfirio Lobo has suspended 5,000 teachers for three months for not showing up to work, and says he could suspend or fire more if they are not back in classes soon.

Energy workers win wage increase

Thousands of workers threatening to halt production at Algeria's largest oil and natural-gas facilities ended a protest on April 6 after state-run Sonatrach agreed to boost their wages, said an official at the oil workers' union. The Algiers-based company will increase the salaries of workers in places including Hassi R'Mel and Gassi Touil by 80 percent retroactively from July 1, 2008, according to Beldjerdi Sid Ali, secretary-general of the union. Algeria, a member of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, pumped 1.26 million barrels of crude per day in March.

Steelworkers hit Colombia FTA

The United Steelworkers (USW) has expressed "disappointment and outrage" that the Obama Administration has

apparently reached an agreement with Colombia over a Free Trade Agreement (FTA). The USW has opposed the FTA with Colombia ever since President Bush signed it with Colombian President Alvaro Uribe back in 2007.

Another 52 unionists were killed in Colombia last year. Since 1986,



only five percent of more than 2,800 union killings have been prosecuted. This year alone, six unionists have been killed in Colombia, even as the U.S. and Colombia were finalizing the FTA. Two recent victims, Hector Orozco and Gildardo Garcia of the agricultural union known as Association of Peasant Workers of Tolima, were killed in a heavily militarized zone and were in fact threatened by the official Colombian army just before their killing.

USW President Leo W. Gerard says "These most recent killings put into grave doubt whether the Colombian government and its military are truly prepared to reform as the Administration presumes. The fact is, despite the newly negotiated 'Action Plan,' the situation in Colombia has not changed, and therefore, should not be rewarded with a Free Trade Agreement."

The USW has vowed to continue its fight to help improve conditions for workers in Colombia. Gerard emphasizes, "We do so in solidarity with our brothers and sisters in the Colombian labor movement who are taking to the streets to show their continued opposition to the FTA."

The Confederation of Workers (CUT), Colombia's largest labor federation, is also protesting the FTA deal, focusing on the continued killing of unionists. The Human Rights leader of the CUT, Luis Venegas, said: "We do not understand how you can talk about a plan to approve the FTA with the United States when these conditions persist."

According to the USW, the rate of unionized workers in Colombia is 3.5 percent and collective bargaining benefits just 70,000 people out of a workforce of 20 million - one of the lowest rates in the world.

Egypt reversing right-wing policies

A recent article in the Wall Street Journal reports that "millions of Egyptians who demanded President Hosni Mubarak's downfall last month were drawn not only by opposition to his authoritarian rule; many were also furious about his free-market

reforms." The article notes that such diverse forces as the current military government, the Muslim Brotherhood, and the leaders of the Tahrir Square protests oppose the economic liberalization which built up anger against the Mubarak regime.

"The problem is that the Egyptian people did not benefit from all that growth," says Ashraf Badreldin, head of the Muslim Brotherhood's economic department. "It was only to the advantage of the small elite of the rich."

Telecommunications magnate Naguib Sawiris, the country's wealthiest man who, warns about an escalating "witch hunt" against Egypt's business community. "Being rich is a crime now," says Sawiris.

Egypt started rolling back limited economic and labour protections after Mubarak appointed a slate of neoliberal cabinet ministers in 2004. That government instituted a flat 20% income tax, down from as much as 42%. Revamped labor laws made it easier to fire workers. In the World Bank's "ease of doing business" rankings, Egypt leapt ahead of countries such as Brazil, Greece and India to No. 94 in the 2011 survey.

But at the same time, rising prices for food and other important products hit the country's poor the hardest, and fed public anger at businessmen - many of whom doubled as politicians in the ruling party and profited from a pervasive system of kickbacks and sweetheart deals. Prosecutors have opened investigations into hundreds of prominent business leaders, freezing the assets of some and putting several on trial. Deposed tycoons have appeared in court sitting in a metal cage and wearing white prison overalls. Newspapers print splashing exposés detailing the alleged crimes of yesterday's rich and powerful.

"We will not leave anyone who is corrupt. Their turn will come and the change will reach them. Just give us time," Maj. Gen. Mohammed al Assar, one of the senior members of the ruling Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, said last month on a popular television talk show.

Most of the groups vying for power say they want to raise taxes, boost social spending and increase wages. Egypt's military rulers, trying to stem labour unrest, are pressuring private companies to raise salaries, following the introduction of a 15% increase in public-sector wages. One such intervention occurred in the port city of Suez, where commanders summoned labour activists and owners of some 30 companies to the local military base. The army began by telling labour activists, "We are on your side," says Ahmed Salah al Din Ibrahim, a union organizer at one company, bathroom-tile maker Ceramica Cleopatra. Over the following seven hours, senior army officers shuttled between executives and worker representatives to negotiate separate agreements for every company.

Ceramica Cleopatra's general manager Ezzat Essawy recalls that Gen. Mahdi told him that day: "You have to agree with 100% of the employee demands." Cleopatra, which employs 20,000 workers,

agreed to a 35% rise in payroll costs, effective from April.

"The owners are no longer able to rule over their factories, and the workers are asking for more, more and more," complains the company's owner, Mohamed Abu Elenein, a former ruling-party stalwart in parliament. Essawy calls the military's pro-worker policy "a socialist decision."

Wage law no excuse to cut pay, HK bosses told

Hong Kong employers have been warned not to use the minimum wage as an excuse to cut workers' pay. Secretary for Labour and Welfare Matthew Cheung Kin-chun said on April 6 that companies are obliged to keep paying staff for meal breaks and days off if these terms are currently written in their contracts. Employment rules state that employers should not unilaterally vary the employment terms and conditions for staff, and those who are deprived of their rights may seek help from the Labour Department.

Cheung urged employers and workers to reach a consensus on "lawful, sensible and reasonable grounds" if existing employment terms are unclear, or if firms have genuine financial problems.

"Employees are an enterprise's valuable asset. We appeal to employers to treat their employees well so as to maintain harmonious labor relations and avoid affecting staff morale," he said. "Employers should not reduce their employees' existing remuneration when implementing the statutory minimum wage and they should not pay them monthly wages that are lower than what they were getting before the legislation was implemented."

Meanwhile, trade unionists stepped up pressure on government bodies to take the lead by ensuring their contractors pay for meal breaks and days off.

Workers protested inside Hong Kong International Airport and called on the Airport Authority to retain meal breaks and paid leave for cleaners when implementing the minimum wage on May 1.

Johannesburg refuse collectors on strike

Johannesburg's refuse collectors, employed by waste-management agency Pikitup, began a full-blown strike on April 7. Tahir Sema of the South African Municipal Workers' Union (Samwu) said about 2,000 workers gathered for a meeting in Joubert Park on the first day of the strike.

Pikitup received the strike notice earlier in the week after workers embarked on a go-slow in certain areas. The workers have accused Pikitup of being "riddled with corruption", and of refusing to address workers' legitimate concerns.

"Workers are concerned about the department and would want for Pikitup to be free from corruption and nepotism," Sema said. Other disputes were around wage disparities and the intimidation of union members. Most Pikitup employees are Samwu members.

Pikitup spokespersons claim that the company has tried everything in its power to reach an agreement with Samwu. But Sema said Samwu had repeatedly made calls for an urgent meeting with Pikitup, to no avail. "Management has refused to meet with us," he said.



Send me information on the Communist Party of Canada



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

Central Committee CPC

290A Danforth Ave, Toronto, ON, M4K 1N6

416-469-2446 <info@cpc-pcc.ca> www.comunist-party.ca

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Tel/fax: 902-542-7981

Terror campaign against Bahrain trade unions

PV Vancouver Bureau

Bahraini firms have fired hundreds of mostly Shi'ite workers who went on strike to support pro-democracy protesters, say opposition groups. The General Federation of Bahrain Trade Unions (GBFTU) said on April 6 that 373 Bahrainis have so far been fired for allegedly not reporting to work during the unrest during February and March. Bahrain's unions called a general strike on March 13 to support protesters who for weeks occupied the Pearl Roundabout square in the capital until security forces moved in on March 16. The strike was called off on March 22, with a promise to GBFTU by authorities that strikers would not suffer repercussions.

Estimates suggest over 1,000 workers will be fired during the crackdown, including at employers Aluminium Bahrain BSC, Bahrain Telecommunications Company, Gulf Air, Bahrain Airport Services

and APM Terminals Bahrain at the Khalifa Sea Port. All sackings were due to worker absence during the strike.

The president of the union at Bahrain Petroleum (BAPCO), Abdul Ghaffar Abdul Hussain, has been fired for his absence during the strike and also for "inciting workers to strike". The company says it will also begin legal prosecution of Hussain, who was central in the creation of the GBFTU. All employees at BAPCO are now fearful of losing their jobs. Absenteeism of BAPCO employees on 16-17 March was 60%.

Security forces have closed down the GBFTU headquarters and are expected to call the organisation's president, Salman Mahfooz, in for questioning. Roads leading to the union office were blocked, the GBFTU website has been closed, and Bahrain's Parliament is calling on the government to refer union leaders involved in the strike to the public

prosecution office. All members of the GBFTU executive have been suspended from work pending investigations.

At least 20 protesters were killed after taking to the streets in February, inspired by popular uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt.

The violent suppression has been facilitated with armed forces from neighbouring Saudi Arabia.

Meanwhile, Bahrain's health ministry has sacked 30 doctors and nurses who were allegedly involved in incidents targeting the Salmaniya Medical Complex, the

country's largest health facility. The Bahrain Teachers Society was dissolved hours after the arrest of its president Mahdi Abu Deeb, who is accused of inciting hatred towards the political regime and calling for civil disobedience. Most public schools remained shut in March when protests peaked, with students regularly staging demonstrations in front of the education ministry.

The University of Bahrain said that a college dean, seven teachers and 25 administrators have been sacked for their alleged role in acts of vandalism at the Sakhr campus. The university also dropped 62 students and suspended eight more for one academic year while cancelling state scholarships for five PhD students. According to statements from sports clubs, 12 players and three officials have been expelled by their teams for allegedly taking part in the protests at the Pearl Roundabout, the epicentre of the demonstrations. ●



Bahraini protesters now face severe repression.

Workers' rights are under threat across the world

By Keith Ewing

As we stand in solidarity with brothers and sisters in Wisconsin, we do so in the knowledge that theirs is not a struggle confined to a single US state. Nor - as the neoliberal strategy of Governor Scott Walker stretches to other states - is it a uniquely US problem. It is a global problem, demanding a global response.

European workers too are seeing the erosion of hard-won collective bargaining rights, also as a result of the greed of the bankers, who have emerged from the financial crisis unscathed. In the UK the erosion of bargaining rights is taking place by stealth.

Although collective bargaining machinery still exists in local government for example, friends in public service unions tell me it is a

long time since they had a collective agreement on pay or on other terms and conditions of employment.

Public sector unions are finding themselves on the sharp end of "section 188 notices", in which employers issue notices of mass dismissal (of thousands of employees at a time), and offer to re-employ the workers concerned on inferior terms. These new terms are imposed without the agreement

of the trade union or the workers, who have no choice but to accept. Sometimes it involves a repudiation of a collective agreement, which the union is powerless to defend. Collective agreements in this country are not legally binding, and the only sanction open to workers and their unions - industrial action - is so fraught with legal dangers as to often be beyond use.

All this is being done under cover of an EU directive that was designed to protect workers facing redundancy by requiring the employer to give as much advance notice as possible and to consult with the union to find alternatives, to reduce numbers to be made redundant, and to ameliorate the consequences. Protective legislation is used as a licence by employers to undermine collective agreements and terms and conditions of employment.

But it is not only in the UK where the bankers are calling the shots. In Greece, workers and trade unions have been told by the European Commission that their labour laws are to be made more flexible, which means their collective agreements must become more decentralised, which means in turn that fewer people are to be protected by collective bargaining.

This marks a global assault on the human rights of workers everywhere. Claims about violations of human rights are not to be made lightly, for fear of devaluing a fragile currency. But workers' rights are human rights, and the right to bargain collectively is recognised by international law as an essential aspect of the right to freedom of association.

At international level the right to bargain collectively is expressly

recognised by the two core conventions of the ILO, the UN agency of which 183 countries are members, all bound by a constitutional principle to promote freedom of association. Conventions fleshing out that principle impose duties on member states, which include a duty to promote collective bargaining.

That principle is embedded not only in international standards, but in regional treaties as well, including the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights of 2000. But although there is now recognition at EU level of the right to bargain collectively, the European Commission is also promoting a "competitiveness pact" designed to reduce employment conditions and eliminate collective bargaining.

These attacks at EU level - undermining the post-80s Social Europe settlement - have attracted little publicity, though they have been strongly condemned. Even the traditionally mild-mannered and consensual ETUC has adopted an uncharacteristically strident position, condemning the EU "competitiveness pact" as an "attack on collective bargaining" leading Europe to a "dead end".

...The case for collective bargaining is not simply an economic one. It is about social justice. It is about repudiating the idea that labour is a commodity, competing in a Darwinian "labour market". Above all, it is about ensuring that everyone is treated with equal respect, and paid a fair day's wage for a fair day's work.

(The author is a Professor of Public Law at King's College, London. This is a shortened version of an April 4 article from *The Independent newspaper*.) ●

Paramilitaries alive and well in Colombia

By W.T. Whitney, People's World

Paramilitaries killed Bernardo Rios on March 23 in Uraba, Colombia, just like they killed 200 other peace activists in San Jose de Apartado. In Medellin the day after Rios's murder, someone killed 70-year-old David de Jesus Goetz. He had testified against land takeovers. Reports proliferated that month of death threats against women, children and men.

Paramilitary forces have displaced over four million rural people from 16 million acres of land. Drug traffickers, paramilitary chieftains, big farm operators and mining and oil corporations have moved in. The death toll has ascended into the tens of thousands. Urged on by Washington, the government of President Alvaro Uribe took steps to deescalate the violence.

Under his 2005 Law of Justice and Peace, paramilitary leaders confessed to crimes and demobilized troops. In return, they received light sentences and guarantees they could keep stolen land. They and their underlings would be protected from future prosecution. But recent reports say 12,000 of the 30,000 supposedly retiring paramilitaries were unemployed men recruited for brief periods and given guns. And paramilitary killings continue.

In late 2010, Colombia's Congress gave initial approval to the "Law of Victims and Land Restitution." Critics object to its relieving the Attorney General and judiciary of responsibilities to investigate and prosecute crimes attributed to "groups outside the law." They protest executive branch assumption of judicial powers.

The proposed law contains only nebulous provisions for the return of stolen land, but current President Juan Manuel Santos has promised that some 880,000 acres would be given back.

The practice of land restitution has so far fallen short. The Incode land reform agency, for example, returned 37 parcels in Magdalena stolen by paramilitaries under the command of "Jorge 40." Over just two months in 2003, that agency revoked peasant ownership of 134 tracts appropriated by paramilitaries in 13 municipalities. New owners, most of them colleagues of "Jorge 40," were given new titles. An online report claims direct local government negotiations with paramilitaries led to land transfers.

New verbiage hints at backing off from paramilitary demobilization. It crops up in the Attorney General's most recent annual report. The introduction to the section on the Law of Justice and Peace says, "With the

economic and logistic support of the U.S. Embassy's legal group, we are moving ahead with the special task force for inquiry into and investigation of punishable behavior presumably committed by emerging groups or bands through their members or with collaboration of or participation by other persons. The purpose of this tool of struggle [relates] to proliferation of a series of criminal bands emerging in some parts of the country ...especially where illegal armed groups were demobilized." Paramilitaries became "criminal bands" in a statement that acknowledges U.S. overview. Roundabout language suggests irresolution.

Ivan Cepeda heads the Movement of Victims of State Crimes, or MOVICE, and represents the leftist Alternative Democratic Pole in Congress. Debating on March 23, Cepeda declared, "In Colombia the horrible night of paramilitarism has not ended. Its structures remain intact." He adds that "the Santos government wants to make it appear that criminal bands" are causing population displacement, when in fact "recycled paramilitary groups" are responsible.

At its national meeting March 10-12, MOVICE blamed the Santos government for "serious crimes

see COLOMBIA, page 11

REDS ON THE WEB

www.comunist-party.ca

www.peoplesvoice.ca

www.ycl-ljc.ca

www.solidnet.org

A closer look at "Humanitarian Intervention"

The bombing of Libya by NATO countries, including Canada, has sparked debates in the anti-war movement. While most anti-war groups and activists condemn the imperialist military intervention, a few have tried to justify the war on "humanitarian" grounds. These arguments have had some impact in the wider public, especially since Libyan opposition forces made the initial calls for a "no-fly zone" against Gaddafi's government.

One expression of these differences was seen at the Vancouver April 9 rally against the war in Afghanistan, organized by the broad-based StopWar coalition. StopWar speakers and a statement condemned the NATO war against Libya, warning that this attack has serious potential consequences.

But Libyan speakers at the rally argued that Gaddafi's forces are committing serious crimes against the people of Libya. While these speakers argued against any foreign military presence "on the ground" in Libya (and opposed the NATO occupation of Afghanistan), they supported the NATO bombing campaign. Vigorous arguments broke out, and most Libyan-Canadians at the rally declined to take part in the anti-war march which followed the speakers.

A devastating criticism of the "humanitarian war" position has been written by U.S. commentator Edward S. Herman, responding to an essay by Lebanese activist Gilbert Achcar, arguing that "general anti-war principles" may require "exceptions".

"This kind of argument," writes Herman, "brings to mind analogous special case positions in defense of torture (of the prisoner who may have information on the ticking bomb); and it reminds me of the claim of a set of defenders of the military attack on Yugoslavia that this was 'illegal but legitimate.' His ultimate position, of defending the attack on Libya, but urging constructive criticism, calls to mind Randolph Bourne's remark on the war-supportive intellectuals of World War I: 'If we responsibly approve, we then retain our power for guiding. We will be listened to as responsible thinkers, while those who obstructed the coming of war have committed intellectual suicide and shall be cast

into outer darkness.' This was, of course, nonsense, and the responsible liberal thinkers of that bloody era merely contributed to justifying war..."

Herman then takes on Achcar's argument that imperialist intervention would have been warranted in the case of Rwanda.

"Achcar clearly swallows the standard narrative on the Rwanda 'genocide,' in which the imperialist powers just 'stood by'... But in fact the Western powers didn't just stand by; they actively intervened throughout, but not to contain the killing: Paul Kagame, the primary actor before, during and after the mass killings, was trained at Ft. Leavenworth; his Rwanda Patriotic Front's 1990 invasion of Rwanda from Uganda was not punished by the Security Council; his subsequent infiltration and subversion of Rwanda was actively supported by the United States, UK, Belgium,

Canada and therefore the UN; his forces shot down the plane carrying Rwanda president Juvenal

Habyarimana back to Kigali on April 6, 1994, generally acknowledged to have been the 'triggering event' in the mass killings; and Kagame's well-prepared military forces were in action within an hour or two of the shoot-down..."

"Achcar misreads history in suggesting that Western intervention was missing in Rwanda and that if the imperial powers had intervened they might have prevented 500,000-1 million casualties. The imperial powers were there and contributed positively to those deaths..."

"Achcar's pro-intervention policy stance here rests heavily on a threatened Gaddafi bloodbath, that 'Western governments and everybody else' anticipate. This is a classic imperialist response that goes hand-in-hand with demonization and frequently inflated claims of target villain violence. Gaddafi, like Saddam Hussein in the 1980s, has moved quickly from a quasi-friend and ally to 'another Hitler.' One of the durable justifications for the Vietnam war was the likelihood of a bloodbath by the evil forces of communism if the United States were to exit without victory, although the real bloodbath (maybe 3 million civilians) was inflicted by the United States..."

Arab League seeks Gaza no-fly zone

In a move which could expose the hypocrisy of the NATO powers, the Arab League said on April 10 it would ask the United Nations to protect Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip against Israeli air strikes. After an emergency meeting of the pan-Arab organization at its Cairo headquarters, the AL said it would ask the UN Security Council to convene an emergency meeting to discuss the Israeli aggression over Gaza, to lift the siege, and impose a no-fly zone against the Israeli military to protect civilians.

The statement rejected the double standard towards the Palestinian case, urging the UN Security Council and the Quartet committee to bear all responsibilities for halting the subsequent massacres and provide international protection for unarmed citizens. The AL also called upon the international community to take all necessary measures to deter Israel from continuing committing war crimes against humanity.

The AL meeting was held upon a request from Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas to discuss the latest Israeli attacks in Gaza. Since April 7, Israeli artillery and helicopters have been shelling locations across the Gaza strip, killing about 19 Palestinians and injuring 62 others within the first three days. ●



StopWar co-chair Derrick O'Keefe speaks at the April 9 rally in Vancouver, condemning the NATO occupation of Afghanistan and the bombing of Libya. (Photo: K. Cariou)

"While focusing heavily on the 'nature of Gaddafi's regime,' Achcar doesn't discuss the nature of the imperial West's regimes, their now systematic power projection by force, and their treatment of civilians in countries they attack. He doesn't ask how their concern for Libyan civilians can be genuine when simultaneously they support the crackdown on Bahraini civilians and the invasion of Bahrain by Saudi Arabia. Assuredly he doesn't refer to Madeleine Albright's 1996 statement that the U.S. policy-caused death of 500,000 Iraqi children was 'worth it' as indicative of U.S. concern over foreign civilian well-being. Or the

significance of the almost daily reports of civilians killed in Afghanistan and Pakistan by U.S. drone attacks, and the many thousands of 'collateral damage' deaths in these countries and Iraq. Weapons evolution with drones and cluster bombs has tended to enlarge civilian casualties. Shouldn't this be mentioned in evaluating claims that a military response featuring air-power will serve to protect civilians?...

"Perhaps most amazing is Achcar's acceptance of the imperial powers as the 'good cops' who can properly bring law and order through violence to the citizens needing protection. Is it reasonable to give the power to

straighten things out by force to imperialist powers that have been most guilty of using force in violation of both law and moral principles? The United States is daily killing civilians in Afghanistan and Pakistan, among other places, has an ongoing torture gulag, and has engaged in a steady stream of wars in violation of the UN Charter. It is the bedrock of support for Israeli aggressions and ethnic cleansings. Shouldn't that rule out approving it as an instrument of supposed justice in protecting Libyan civilians?...

"Achcar tells us that this intervention to protect civilians in Libya will prove 'embarrassing' to the imperial powers, as the next time Israel bombs Gaza or Lebanon the world will demand a no-fly zone and picket for the same, and Achcar himself 'definitely' will join the picket line. But why wasn't there a demand for a no-fly zone with Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 2006 and attack on Gaza? And why isn't Achcar picketing today against the killing of Bahraini civilians with the aid of a Saudi invasion force and the drone attacks on Afghanistan and Pakistan that take a heavy civilian toll right now? Perhaps he is too busy worrying about civilians in the latest U.S.-targeted state."

(Read Herman's full essay at www.zcommunications.org) ●

Climate change "sceptics" refuted by research

PV Vancouver Bureau

In another clear vindication for science over corporate misinformation, the claims of "climate change deniers" have been repudiated by the Berkeley Earth Surface Temperature project.

The conclusion by physicists and statisticians based at the University of California-Berkeley is significant because their team had set out to challenge the scientific consensus on global warming. Instead, they produced results nearly identical to those underlying the prevailing view.

The project was launched by physics professor Richard Muller, a so-called "climate change sceptic". Muller unexpectedly told a U.S. congressional hearing that the work of the three principal groups that have analyzed temperature trends underlying climate science is "excellent. ... We see a global warming trend that is very similar to that previously reported by the other groups."

The Congressional hearing was called by Republican leaders of the House Science and Technology committee, corporate-backed politicians who have expressed doubts about the integrity of climate science.

The Berkeley project's biggest private backer, at \$150,000, is the Charles G. Koch Charitable Foundation. Oil billionaires Charles and David Koch are prominent funders of efforts to prevent curbs on the burning of fossil fuels, the largest

contributor to greenhouse gas emissions.

Muller's group was surprised by its findings, but he cautioned that the initial assessment is based on only two per cent of the 1.6 billion measurements that will eventually be examined. However, this sampling represents over 30 million measurements, a huge base of information.

Ken Caldeira, an atmospheric scientist at the Carnegie Institution for Science, which contributed some funding to the Berkeley effort, said Muller's statement to Congress was "honourable" in recognizing that "previous temperature reconstructions basically got it right... Willingness to revise views in the face of empirical data is the hallmark of the good scientific process."

Until now, Muller has supported efforts to show that weather station data in official studies are "untrustworthy" because of the urban heat island effect, which boosts temperature readings in

cities and suburbs. The Berkeley analysis confirms the position of climatologists that previous studies have accounted for this effect, Muller acknowledged.

Temperature data are gathered from tens of thousands of weather stations around the globe, many of which have incomplete records. Over the last two decades, three independent groups have used different combinations of stations and varying statistical methods and yet arrived at nearly identical conclusions: The planet's surface, on average, has warmed about 0.75 C since the beginning of the 20th century.

Temperature data were the focus of the so-called 2009 Climategate controversy, in which energy industry backers alleged that leaked emails from a British laboratory showed manipulation of weather station records. Five different U.S. and British government and university investigations have refuted these charges. ●



Communist Party candidates in the May 2 federal election

British Columbia

Vancouver Kingsway
Kimball Cariou
Newton-North Delta
Sam Hammond
Burnaby-Douglas
George Gidora

Alberta

Edmonton-Mill Woods-Beaumont
Naomi Rankin
Calgary East Jason Devine

Manitoba

Winnipeg Centre Darrell Rankin
Winnipeg North
Frank Komarniski

Ontario

Ottawa Centre Stuart Ryan
Guelph Drew Garvie
Kitchener Centre Marty Suter
Hamilton East-Stoney Creek
Bob Mann
St. Catharines
Saleh Waziruddin
Brampton-Springdale
Elizabeth Rowley
Davenport Miguel Figueroa
Toronto Centre
Cathy Holliday
Don Valley West
Dimitrios (Jim) Kabitsis

Quebec

Outremont Johan Boyden
Hochelaga
Marianne Breton Fontaine
Laurier-Ste-Marie
Sylvain Archambault
Westmount-Ville-Marie
Bill Sloan

For more information,
visit our website:
www.votecommunist.ca

NIAGARA NEWS BULLETIN

People's Voice Niagara Bureau

* A Henniges Automotive worker in Welland, laid off with 324 others after union concessions and 12+% profits, is picketing to **protest the lack of attention to layoffs** this election. PM Harper was campaigning locally on the long gun registry.

* Brock University's **Feminist Action Collective** joined the "slutwalk" protest in Toronto after a police officer excused rape saying women should "avoid dressing like sluts." Organizer Jenn Quirk asks, "what does 'dressing like a slut' even mean?"

- **Racists spray-painted swastikas** and anti-Semitic slogans on the garage of an East Asian family and elsewhere in rural Niagara.

- **BUILT** (Building Up Individuals Through Learning and Training), a Niagara-based Canada-wide program that's found work for 821 mental health patients, is **shut down because of federal funding cuts** as Conservatives plan more prisons.

- Mayors and councilors met with Ontario's health minister to ask her to investigate why **emergency rooms were closed in favour of a P3** hospital a half hour away. One mayor said wait times and delays have worsened, while the Minister said the system is going in the "right" direction (they could both be correct!)

- Lack of federal and provincial funding for services means Wainfleet is skipping water and sewage for the Lakeshore area where **residents use leaking septic tanks**. The individual solution of enforcing repairs will cost residents more than providing a basic public service.

- The last Niagara Falls resident **evicted from a trailer park** killed herself after protesting that she had no place to go. Many had lived there for more than 40 years, so trailers were no longer moveable.

- Even though so-called essential public services don't have the legal right to strike, some Niagara municipalities object even to arbitration and are **pressuring the province to drag down workers wages**. A former Conservative candidate called for workers to stand "shoulder to shoulder" by taking cuts, instead of having municipalities stand "shoulder to shoulder" with workers to get adequate funding. Two municipalities raised taxes 6-8% to keep services funded, one councilor saying she felt like a scrooge.

- The province's new budget ignored the 30,000+ postcards of the **Put Food on the Table Campaign** for a \$100 welfare supplement. A poverty organizer said the government is "building up a huge social deficit and future health costs through their financial neglect."

- An MPP's inquiry revealed unpublished Cancer Care Ontario data showing Niagara has the 3rd highest **cancer mortality rate** in Ontario. A researcher said the probe into the use of Agent Orange by ministries and Hydro to clear brush needs to look at more related chemicals. Monsanto and Dow, which made these chemicals, fund projects at the university where the probe's chair works.

Profit Pathology and Disposable Planet...

continued from page 7

Often we are told to think of our dear grandchildren who will be fully victimized by it all (an appeal usually made in a beseeching tone). But most of the young people I address on college campuses have a hard time imagining the world that their nonexistent grandchildren will be experiencing thirty or forty years hence.

Such appeals should be put to rest. We do not have centuries or generations or even many decades before disaster is upon us. Ecological crisis is not some distant urgency. Most of us alive today probably will not have the luxury of saying "Après moi, le déluge" because we will still be around to experience the catastrophe ourselves. We know this to be true because the ecological crisis is already acting upon us with an accelerated and compounded effect that may soon prove irreversible.

Sad to say, the environment cannot defend itself. It is up to us to protect it - or what's left of it. But all the superrich want is to keep transforming living nature into commodities and commodities into dead capital. Impending ecological disasters are of no great moment to the corporate plunderers. Of living nature they have no measure.

Wealth becomes addictive. Fortune whets the appetite for still more fortune. There is no end to the amount of money one might wish to accumulate, driven onward by the *auri sacra fames*, the cursed hunger

for gold. So the money addicts grab more and more for themselves, more than can be spent in a thousand lifetimes of limitless indulgence, driven by what begins to resemble an obsessional pathology, a monomania that blots out every other human consideration.

They are more wedded to their wealth than to the Earth upon which they live, more concerned about the fate of their fortunes than the fate of humanity, so possessed by their pursuit of profit as to not see the disaster looming ahead. There was a New Yorker cartoon showing a corporate executive standing at a lectern addressing a business meeting with these words: "And so, while the end-of-the-world scenario will be rife with unimaginable horrors, we believe that the pre-end period will be filled with unprecedented opportunities for profit."

Not such a joke. Years ago I remarked that those who denied the existence of global warming would not change their opinion until the North Pole itself started melting. (I never expected it to actually start dissolving in my lifetime.) Today we are facing an Arctic meltdown that carries horrendous implications for the oceanic gulf streams, coastal water levels, the planet's entire temperate zone, and world agricultural output.

So how are the captains of industry and finance responding? As we might expect: like monomaniacal profiteers. They hear the music: ca-ching, ca-ching. First, the Arctic melting will open a

direct northwest passage between the two great oceans, a dream older than Lewis and Clark. This will make for shorter and more accessible and inexpensive global trade routes. No more having to plod through the Panama Canal or around Cape Horn. Lower transportation costs means more trade and higher profits.

Second, they joyfully note that the melting is opening up vast new oil reserves to drilling. They will be able to drill-baby-drill for more of the same fossil fuel that is causing the very calamity descending upon us. More meltdown means more oil and more profits; such is the mantra of the free marketeers who think the world belongs only to them.

Imagine now that we are all inside one big bus hurtling down a road that is headed for a fatal plunge into a deep ravine. What are our profit addicts doing? They are hustling up and down the aisle, selling us crash cushions and seat belts at exorbitant prices. They planned ahead for this sales opportunity. We have to get up from our seats, quickly place them under adult supervision, rush the front of the bus, yank the driver away, grab hold of the wheel, slow the bus down, and turn it around. Not easy but maybe still possible. With me it's a recurrent dream.

Michael Parenti's recent books include *God and His Demons* (Prometheus 2010), *Contrary Notions: The Michael Parenti Reader* (City Lights, 2007); and *The Face of Imperialism* (Paradigm, 2011). ●

What's Left

Nanaimo, BC

Peace Mom Cindy Sheehan, Sunday, April 17, 2 pm, PPWC Hall, 596 Albert St. Organized by Mid-Islanders for Justice and Peace in the Middle East.

May Day March & Potluck, Sunday, May 1, meet in front of downtown library for march at 1 pm, followed by potluck at Maffeo Sutton Park Pavilion.

Victoria, BC

Peace Mom Cindy Sheehan, Sat., April 16, 7 pm, at David Lam Auditorium, A144 MacLaurin Hall, University of Victoria, by donation. Sponsored by Peace Action Initiative-UVic Social Justice Studies, endorsed by Earth Walk, Friends of Cuba, Raging Grannies, Victorial Peace Coalition, Coalition Against Israeli Apartheid.

Vancouver, BC

Third Friday Reading, Apr. 15, 8 pm, at People's Co-op Books, 1391 Commercial Drive, with local author Justin Lukyn.

Left Film Night, 7 pm, Sunday, April 24, Centre for Socialist Education, 706 Clark Drive. "Inside Job", documentary on the 2008 financial crisis. For info, call 604-255-2041.

May Day Social, Sat., April 30, 6 pm, at the CSE, 706 Clark Drive. Food, music, film, and solidarity, call 604-254-9836 for details.

May Day March, 1 pm, Sunday, May 1, from Clark Park (14th and Commercial), to McSpadden Park (5th & Victoria). Bring your banners!

Historic Bus Tour, Sunday, May 29, 10 am, visit sites linked to Vancouver's working class & Communist history. Leaves from 706 Clark Drive, call 604-255-2041 for tickets (\$20, includes lunch) & details.

Winnipeg, MB

7th Generation Walk for Mother Earth, Sat, Apr 23, starts 1:30 pm at Central Park ending at the Odena Circle (the Forks). Indigenous People's Solidarity Movement.

Brampton, ON

Election Rally, meet Brampton-Springdale Communist candidate Liz Rowley, Sat., April 23, 3 pm, Brampton Soccer Centre Community Room 2, 1495 Sandalwood Pkwy. East. Call 416-469-2446 for info.

Toronto, ON

Communist Party Election Rally, Thur., April 21, 7 pm, GCDO Hall, 290 Danforth Ave. Hear Miguel Figueroa and Toronto/GTA candidates, food, cash bar, entertainment. Call 416-469-2446 for details.

International Worker's Day march, Sunday, May 1, 1 pm, Christie Pits Park (Bloor & Christie), organized by May First Movement, will join with "Status for All" rally, 4 pm at Dufferin Grove Park.

Status For All, Day of Action, Sunday, May 1, starts 1 pm at Queen St. & Jameson (near Parkdale Collegiate), followed by march to Dufferin Grove Park, organized by No One Is Illegal.

May Day 2011 Political & Cultural Evening, Sunday, May 1, Steelworkers Hall, 25 Cecil St., doors open 6 pm. Speakers, food, refreshments, cultural program including Voces Poeticas, Maneli Jamal, Charles Roach, Lisa Makarchuk, and many more. Free, sponsored by May Day Committee.

Montreal, QC

Palestinians And Jews United, boycott/disinvestment/sanctions picket, every Saturday, 1-3 pm, outside Le marcheur, at Duluth & St. Denis.

People's Voice deadlines

MAY 1-15 issue: Thursday, April 21

May 16-31 issue: Thursday, May 5

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

Colombia paramilitaries....

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against humanity, such as forced displacement, extrajudicial executions, torture, forced disappearance, and sexual violence. A MOVICE declaration points out that paramilitaries are most active "in regions of the country where great economic interests prevail - agro-industry [and] development of megaprojects for extracting natural resources."

A spokesperson protested that victims were not consulted in framing the Law of Victims, that the legislation fails to recognize state responsibility for paramilitary crimes and that it offers no guarantee that land returned to small farmers will not "again end up in the hands of

big landowners or transnational corporations." He rejected "designation of paramilitary structures as criminal bands," maintaining, "State crime and common criminality are not alike."

Ex-paramilitary head Pablo Hernan Sierra, interviewed in late March, reported government officials were participating in meetings aimed at settling turf battles between paramilitaries, accommodating drug traffickers, and providing legal cover for land seizures. Sierra regards the supposed disarming of paramilitaries as a fiction. He sees President Santos as continuing and extending paramilitary impunity enshrined in the Law of Justice and Peace. ●

Escalating fighter jet price tag is a huge election issue

By Kimball Cariou

Last June, I wrote an article for the *Georgia Straight* online website about the skyrocketing costs of purchasing new F-35 Joint Strike Fighter jets from U.S. munitions giant Lockheed Martin. At the time, the news had just broken that the price tag had jumped from \$3.8 billion for 80 F-35s when the deal was first proposed back in 2008, up to \$9 billion for just 65 jets, plus another \$7 billion on "ancillary costs" such as future parts and maintenance. The total price tag had more than quadrupled within just two years! Now we understand from Pentagon figures that the total cost of this purchase over a thirty-year period is expected to hit \$29 billion, a staggering sum for a country with serious social and economic problems.

Just three years ago, the individual jets were priced at \$47.4 million each. Now the price for each jet, plus parts and maintenance, has jumped over \$400 million, at a time when the Harper Conservatives are slashing social program spending. And it gets worse. The original plan by the Conservatives was to replace the Canadian Forces' current fleet of CF-18 fighter jets. Since then, \$2.6 billion has been spent to upgrade the CF-18s.

A Commons committee has investigated the purchase of the new fighters, including the price tag and whether Canada actually needs these weapons. Eyebrows were quickly raised over the news that there would be no other bids for the contract. Another controversy has focused on the fact that the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter is a single-engine aircraft, unsuitable to patrol the Canadian Arctic. (The CF-18s have two engines, which many pilots consider an important safety feature.)

But the NATO war against Libya has raised even more serious issues over this massive boondoggle. With its payload of heavy armament, the F-35s are useful for

only one purpose: to engage in modern warfare, bombing "enemy" nations.

A year ago, a survey conducted by Leger Marketing asked "With Canada's military role ending in Afghanistan next year, what should the focus be on the government's military spending?" Almost 60 percent agreed with this answer: "Canada should take a peace dividend and cut back on military spending to focus on other more pressing social issues at home." Only 28 percent of respondents wanted to "sustain or increase spending on the military because security in a post-9/11 world is of the highest priority".

Yet according to the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, "the Canada First Defence Strategy, unveiled by the Harper government in 2008, promises that Canada's military spending will continue to grow by an average of 0.6% in real terms (adjusted for inflation) and an average of 2.7% in nominal terms (not adjusted for inflation) per year from FY 2007-08 to 2027-28".

Total spending over the 20-year life of this plan would likely be in the \$415-440 billion range (2009 dollars), or about \$13,000 per Canadian, surely enough to cause us to rethink the quaint notion that this country's military spending is negligible.

Imagine what could be done with the \$29 billion in savings by scrapping the F-35 deal! To give just a few examples, the public transportation systems of Canadian cities could be provided with 10,000 fuel-efficient new buses for just \$5 billion. We could restore the start-up cost of the cancelled national child-care program, for another \$5 billion. To build 30,000 social housing units, at a cost of \$200,000 each, would take another \$6 billion - an investment which would immediately save millions spent by provinces and municipalities on emergency services for homeless people. The federal government could provide free post-secondary tuition for 50,000 students annually, for a total of

about \$8 billion over three decades. That would still leave another \$5 billion for urgent needs such as providing clean drinking water to indigenous communities, or emergency aid to countries hit by natural disasters. These initiatives would create jobs, lower greenhouse-gas emissions, and reduce provincial government spending.

But Canada is governed today by a party which opposes these urgent priorities. The Harper Conservatives deny the environmental crisis, reject the concept of public childcare, and refuse to fund social housing.

In effect, Canada is ruled by a minority regime which places top priority on war-making at the expense of the people. When we



From \$9 billion, then to \$16 billion, and now \$29 billion - the costs for the F-35 fighters have already tripled before a single one rolls off the production line.

go to the polls on May 2, Canadians should send the message to all parties in Parliament that the shocking fighter-jet purchase plan is a scandal and must be scrapped immediately.

(This article originally appeared on the *Rabble* website. Kimball Cariou is the Communist Party of Canada federal election candidate in Vancouver Kingsway.) ●

F-35 jets: expensive killing machines

The Harper government clings to the claim that Canada can purchase F-35 fighter jets for \$75 million each. But defence analysts agree that this number is bogus, and does not include the cost of parts, weaponry, and decades of maintenance.

When the F-35 purchase plan was announced in 2008, the Harper government said the total price tag for 80 jets was in the \$9 billion range. By last year, that jumped to \$16 billion for 65 jets. More recently, Pentagon experts have estimated that the total costs of the program could hit \$29 billion over 30 years.

Speaking on April 5, Winslow Wheeler, of the Centre for Defence Information in Washington, told a press conference on Parliament Hill that "nobody on this earth" is going to end up paying \$75 million per jet. The cost will be more like \$148 million, he said.

"This airplane is nothing to write home about," Wheeler told an event organized by the Rideau Institute. Even if the F-35s end up performing "as advertised", he warned, the model is still "a

gigantic performance disappointment.... You're getting an underperforming airplane for a huge amount of money."

The planes are still being manufactured and tested, and will have to go back to the factory for upgrades and fixes that will add to the final cost, said Wheeler, who worked for more than thirty years for Republican and Democratic senators and for the U.S. General Accounting Office.

While the opposition parties argue that the purchase should involve an open bidding process, their position ignores the real problem: the fighter jets have only one purpose. Built by the U.S. transnational McDonnell-Douglas, these are not "defensive" weapons, and they are completely unsuited for search and rescue operations.

With its large payload capability, the F-35 can carry far more weapons than the C-18 fighters they will replace. According to a Wikipedia article, the F-35 comes with a wide range of deadly armament: the GAU-22/A four-barrel 25mm cannon (400 rounds); up to two air-to-air missiles and two air-to-air or air-to-ground weapons; two 1,000 lb. bombs; a maximum of eight Small Diameter Bombs; Brimstone anti-armor missiles; and cluster bombs. At the expense of the fighter becoming more detectable by radar, many more missiles, bombs and fuel tanks can be attached on four wing pylons and two near wingtip positions. Solid-state lasers are being developed as optional weapons for the F-35. ●

Millions of Americans think "communism is superior"

Despite decades of fierce anti-communist propaganda campaigns, millions of Americans agree that "communism is morally superior to the U.S. system of politics and economics."

According to a Rasmussen Reports phone survey of 1,000 likely U.S. voters, conducted March 12-13, 11% support this viewpoint. This percentage represents nearly 20 million U.S. adults. Not surprisingly, 77% disagreed, saying the "U.S. system" is morally superior. Another thirteen percent were not sure, indicating that about one-quarter of Americans apparently have serious doubts about their country's system.

Turning to more detailed questions, while 80% of voters say the "U.S. system of politics and economics is better for middle class workers than communism", a sizable minority of ten percent say communism is a better option, and another 10% are undecided. While 73% of respondents said that communism was a "failed ideology," 12% disagreed, and 15% were not sure.

Perhaps the most interesting finding was that young voters aged 18 to 29 were much less critical of communism as an ideology than their elders.

In an earlier Rasmussen survey, conducted in April 2009, following the Wall Street meltdown, only 53% of adults agreed with the statement that "capitalism is better than socialism." That survey also found that many U.S. voters think that "government economic control helps big businesses at the expense of small ones." Such a viewpoint may be understandable in the context of the massive government "bailout" funding for the major banks and big corporations. In reality, this bailout of capitalist failures was the opposite of genuine socialism, which orients on public ownership of productive wealth, and economic policies to benefit working people, not big capital. ●



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