

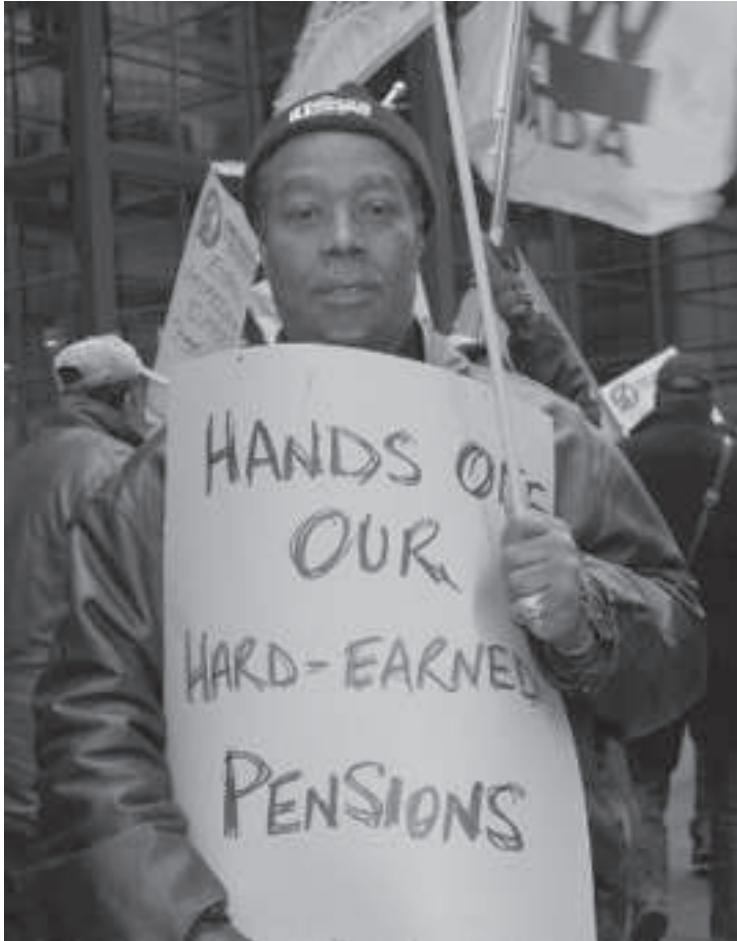
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# people's VOICE

**Alberta election:  
a people's alternative**

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Profits skyrocket**

Corporate profits in Canada are back to pre-crisis levels, soaring past \$250 billion during 2011. Meanwhile, unemployment remains stuck over 7%, leaving millions looking for work.

# Oppal Inquiry "deeply flawed and illegitimate"

## PV Vancouver Bureau

In a powerful Open Letter issued on April 10, fifteen Aboriginal, legal and social justice groups have officially withdrawn from the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry, chaired by Wally Oppal. The move signals dissatisfaction with the "deeply flawed and illegitimate process" which has cost the Commission "all credibility among (the) organizations that work with and are comprised of the very women most affected by the issues this Inquiry is charged with investigating."

When this Inquiry was finally called, the groups expected it to be a "meaningful and inclusive process" that would respect and honour the expertise of women, Aboriginal people, sex workers and other community members with important insight and knowledge to share. However, they have concluded that the Inquiry has repeated the same discrimination and exclusion that it was supposed to uncover.

Women have been going missing for decades (before and after the Pickton serial murders), and Aboriginal women, sex workers, and women living in poverty continue to face extreme violence and profound barriers to reporting their victimization to police. Government funding cuts to support groups like PACE (Providing Alternatives Counselling and Education Society) and PEERS (Prostitutes Empowerment Education Resource Society) may soon force these organizations to shut their doors, following the closure of women's organizations across the province.

The problems with the Oppal Commission have been growing in number.

First, the province set the terms of reference without consulting any of the affected parties. The Commission was restricted to examining the criminal justice system and its handling of the Pickton investigation, but not the systemic issues leading to marginalized women's vulnerability to violence, or the epidemic of missing and murdered women in British Columbia.

No lawyers were provided for organizations and community members who represent crucial perspectives, even though 25 publicly funded lawyers have represented police and government interests.

The lack of protection for vulnerable witnesses has recreated many of the barriers that women face when requiring police protection. Instead, Oppal granted significant protections for people convicted of assaulting the women that the Commission was hoping to hear from.

There have been many examples of delayed and incomplete disclosure of evidence, such as the failure to order the disclosure of an important book written by Lori Shenher, a lead police investigator on the Pickton file.

The provincial government's deadline of June 30, 2012, for the Commissioner's report, says the Open Letter, is an arbitrary timeline which "cannot and will not provide for an appropriately diligent examination of all relevant issues."

Recently there have been shocking allegations of sexism and marginalization of witnesses by former Commission staff, "replicating the exact exclusion and discrimination that led to this Inquiry being called in the first place."

The fifteen organizations say

that the recent resignation of Robyn Gervais, the lawyer hired to represent "Aboriginal interests" at the Inquiry, has reinforced their concerns. Gervais had cited the Commission's unwillingness to give enough time and weight to evidence from Aboriginal witnesses.



"In closing," says the Letter, "we reiterate our disappointment in the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry, which continues to lose relevance and credibility. Ensuring that the Commission proceeds with the maximum amount of evidence and input available is literally a matter of life and death for the marginalized women who continue to experience extremely dangerous situations on a daily basis in the Downtown Eastside and throughout the province, and we are extremely upset that the Commission has not chosen to implement measures to allow for this. We are angry that millions of dollars continue to be spent on the Inquiry, and yet the Province and Commissioner were not able to provide adequate funding for Community Group Participants to participate in an

appropriate manner. Our organizations will continue to support the families of the missing women and will work together going forward to ensure that real change happens for the vulnerable women of the Downtown Eastside."

The Letter was signed by: Aboriginal Front Door Society; Amnesty International Canada; Atira Women's Resource Society; B.C. Civil Liberties Association; Battered Women's Support Services; Downtown Eastside Sex Workers United Against Violence Society; Ending Violence Association of British Columbia; Feb. 14th Women's Memorial March Committee; First Nations Summit; PACE; Pivot Legal Society; Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs; Union Gospel Mission; West Coast LEAF; WISH Drop-in Centre Society. •

## PEOPLE'S VOICE FUND DRIVE: \$50,000

### What do you get for your media dollars?

Most *People's Voice* readers have access to a wide range of media sources, from the daily press to commercial TV and radio, but also alternatives found on the Internet or through local cooperative and non-profit outlets.

Under capitalism, most of this costs money. A one-year subscription to the *Globe and Mail* is now about \$480; for the *Vancouver Sun* the cost is \$260, or \$190 for the *Toronto Star*. There are valid reasons to get the daily press delivered to your door. But for the hefty price, you get a lot of paper - with more corporate advertising than news, and a pro-

business spin on most of the content.

Compare that to *People's Voice*. Twice monthly, and much less paper - with very different content. Looking through our 2011 archives, for example, you can find significant coverage of many key issues and struggles facing working people: solidarity with the workers locked out by US Steel in Hamilton, analysis of the "growing gap" between the rich and poor, the negative impact of corporate tax cuts, the tremendous experience of the Canadian delegation at the World Festival of Youth and Students, the biggest wave of mass strikes in history, left alternatives in the federal election, resistance to the imperialist war against Libya, the Tory spy operation against Aboriginal activists... and much more.

But your one year subscription to *People's Voice* costs just \$30 (less if you are in a low-income bracket). As we explained in our previous issue, that covers printing and mailing, but not much more. To keep reaching out to thousands of progressive activists across the country, we print and circulate bundles of papers for picket lines, rallies, street sales, and many other venues. It all costs money, but it's worth it to help educate and unite working people who are ignored,

abused and divided by the corporate media.

Isn't that worth making a donation to our annual Fund Drive? We urge you to think about how much you spend for other news sources, and then see if you can match that amount with a cheque to *People's Voice*. Your solidarity will help keep us in print and in action for the next 90 years of the working class press in Canada!

As of April 7, when our latest figures were compiled, we have received \$18,321, which brings us to 36.6% of our \$50,000 goal. Leading the way is Ontario, which has now turned in \$8,126, followed by British Columbia with \$5385. Alberta supporters have already turned in \$3030, along with \$500 from Manitoba, \$730 from Quebec, \$120 from the Atlantic region, and \$80 from Saskatchewan. Another \$350 in donations has arrived from generous U.S. friends.

Remember to mark your calendars for our annual Mother's Day Pancake Breakfast held by the Burnaby Club (Sunday, May 12, 10 am-1 pm, 5435 Kincaid St., Burnaby, \$12), and the June 2 Victory Banquet at the Russian Hall in Vancouver.

We're off to a good start with the first five weeks of this year's Fund Drive, but now we need to pick up the pace! •

## Marking 90th anniversary of the working class press



## "People Power" helps block WTO

**PV Commentary**  
For the second time in two years, a key globalization initiative by the world's biggest economic powers and corporations has collapsed. In 1998 the Multilateral Agreement on Investments hit the dust in Paris after lively protests and sharp disagreements among negotiators. Now the attempt to extend the powers of the World Trade Organization (WTO)

and the arrest of nearly 600 people, thousands continued to demonstrate against the WTO. A second factor was its work inside the delayed WTO sessions, where delegates from dozens of countries rejected attempts by the U.S. to dictate terms. One revealing inside report came from Indian MP Biplob Duggopala, a member of that country's Seattle delegation, and a Central Committee member of the Com-



Our series of front pages from the files of the working class press continues with the first issue published during the 21st century. The January 1-15, 2000, issue of *People's Voice* covered the historic demonstration against the World Trade Organization meetings in Seattle. Tens of thousands of environmentalists, trade unionists, Aboriginal peoples, women, students, seniors, and other community activists rallied on Nov. 30, derailing the WTO talks and slowing the drive towards corporate globalization. Many PV readers were at the Seattle protest, handing out thousands of copies of the paper and carrying banners. Other topics reported in this issue included the role of Big Oil in the Chechnya crisis, the Liberal "clarity legislation" attack against Quebec's right of self-determination, and the rising trend of police brutality in Canada. •

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

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# BC teachers struggle enters next stage

By Kimball Cariou

Nearly a year into their struggle to achieve a new collective agreement, 41,000 British Columbia teachers are voting this month on the next stage of their campaign. According to leaked media reports, members of the BC Teachers Federation will consider a package of tactics, from dressing in black and wearing union buttons on the job, up to a full-scale work stoppage.

After limited labour action since last fall, the BCTF held a three-day walkout during March, before legal rulings and new provincial legislation became factors. The Clark

Liberal government's Bill 22, an omnibus piece of legislation which opens the door to massive transformations of the entire public education system, includes draconian fines to the union and its individual members for strike action.

In the meantime, Charles Jago has been appointed a so-called "independent" mediator in the dispute. For his \$2000 per day salary, Jago is to come up with a proposed settlement by the end of June - but the deal cannot go beyond the government's so-called "zero mandate." In effect, teachers can expect neither a long-awaited pay increase, nor

improvements in classroom teaching and learning conditions.

Jago, a former President of the University of Northern British Columbia, has no experience in labour disputes, and little expertise in the K-12 education system. However, he has donated at least \$2000 to the BC Liberals in recent years, for tickets to enter Liberal fundraising golf tournaments. His one apparent qualification for the position was a report he wrote in 2006 for the B.C. Progress Board, in which he condemned the principle of seniority as a factor in school staffing decisions.

BCTF President Susan Lambert

has pointed out that Jago's appointment by Education Minister George Abbott raises a "reasonable apprehension of bias", especially given the news that Jago was consulted in drafting Bill 22. The union has appealed to the Labour Board to overturn the appointment.

Adopted in-camera at the BCTF annual meeting, held in Vancouver in mid-March, the teachers' "Bill 22 Action Plan" includes several components.

During the rest of the 2011-12 school year, teachers will continue to perform their regular work, without participating in any BC Ministry of Education initiatives, and will refrain from all extra-curricular/voluntary activities. They will write a single year-end report card for each student.

The Action Plan, which goes to a vote on April 17-18, includes

advertising, public meetings, and printed materials to educate British Columbians about the impact of Bill 22, and to mobilize opposition around the province. A province-wide vote on a full withdrawal of services will be held on a date determined by the union's Executive Committee.

The union will consider additional votes as necessary, accompanied by legal advice for members, who face penalties of \$450 per day for strike action under Bill 22. A special representative assembly of the union will be held during August to consider further steps for a "Year of Action" leading up to the May 2013 provincial election. The Year of Action is expected to include monthly coordinated activities, and a "commission of inquiry" into the mismanagement of public education in BC. ●

## Ontario voters want new election

A survey conducted for the Ontario Federation of Labour has found voters from every riding in the province are solidly opposed to the unfairness of McGuinty's March 27 budget, and ready to go back to the polls to demand fair taxation.

"This poll bears out what I've been hearing right across political spectrum: that people are jaded, tired and disappointed with the McGuinty Liberals," said OFL President Sid Ryan. "People are appalled by the gross unfairness of a budget that exclusively targets

working families, children, seniors and people on welfare and disability pensions while corporations get a free ride."

An interactive voice response telephone poll of 843 people across the province, conducted by Public Polling Inc. on March 29, found that over two thirds of respondents - 68 percent - would like to see corporations pay their fair share to help reduce the provincial deficit, with 19 percent opposed and 13 percent uncertain. Almost as strongly, 58 percent of Ontarians supported returning corporate tax

rates to 14 percent and 74 percent said they support raising taxes for individuals earning over \$250,000 a year. But perhaps most concerning to the McGuinty Liberals, and most telling for opposition parties, is the fact that 58 percent of Ontarians support taking the issue of fair taxation to a provincial election.

"This is troubling news for the McGuinty Liberals because they have misjudged public opinion and Ontarians' appetite for corporate tax cuts, but it is even more worrisome for Tim Hudak because the Conservatives have been campaigning on making taxation even more unequal. If an election were called tomorrow, the party that with the most to gain is Andrea Horwath and the NDP," said Ryan.

The survey bolsters the OFL's campaign against the devastating recommendations for deep cuts to jobs and public services that were released in the report of the Drummond Commission in mid-February. The next major step in the campaign will be a mass Day of Action at Queen's Park on April 21.

At a time when Ontarians are in desperate need of economic recovery, warns the OFL, "the McGuinty government is planning cuts that will jeopardize every aspect of society: from health care to child care to pensions.

No public service is safe. However, in his reckless plan to balance Ontario's books by putting more people out of work and destroying the social safety net, McGuinty refuses to roll-back corporate tax cuts that are starving the province of billions of dollars."

The President's Report to the April 2 OFL Executive Meeting says the campaign "is designed to be a multi-year, multi-union effort to galvanize public opposition to public spending cuts by crafting a coordinated message to expose the government's 'austerity measures' as a threat to job growth and economic recovery."

The "Ontario Day of Action Against Cuts" has already received nearly 60 endorsements to date from labour and community groups all over the province. Supporters "will mobilize at Queen's Park to send a strong message to Premier McGuinty that he cannot cut his way to economic prosperity and it is time for banks and corporations to pay their fair share."

Affiliates are being asked to mobilize their members to fill buses to Toronto for the 3:00 pm rally. For more information, visit [www.ofl.ca](http://www.ofl.ca).

### Anti-Harper protests keep rolling



Rallies against Tory electoral fraud were held in several cities on March 31, including this protest in Toronto. (Photo: Ed Bil)

## NIAGARA NEWS BULLETIN

People's Voice Niagara Bureau

\* After going back on a negotiated contract recognizing **ESL Teachers**, Brock University has finally ratified the agreement. A public campaign and strike action by CUPE 4207 won support from students, faculty, and community at the picket lines.

\* The Lincoln County **Humane Society** tried to keep two-tier on the table through the backdoor, saying newer workers would have an "opportunity" to make the full wage. But the workers of CUPE 1287 are maintaining their strike until two-tier is completely off the table. Until now management had not even been talking to the union, which struck in February.

\* Over 100 people protested at the local MPP's office in Ft. Erie against the **austerity layoffs** from closing the slots at the race track, which could have a domino effect on the track itself. Meanwhile, the government announced it was also closing the Welcome Centre in Fort Erie on the same day as the slots.

\* Rural west Niagara residents started an online petition as a first step in fighting the province's **cancellation of the reconstruction of the West Lincoln Memorial Hospital** in the austerity budget. The community had already raised almost \$14 million, and Requests For Proposals were issued. Fifteen years ago mobilizations saw thousands in a candle-light vigil protesting similar cuts.

\* The provincially appointed supervisor of the Niagara Health System, who took over after years of protests of closures followed by a wave of hospital-acquired infections, has decided that since the Ontario budget increases home care spending, he will **close hospital beds to move patients home** instead of using the money to treat more patients overall. Meanwhile, the Canada Institute for Health Information released data showing Niagara post-operative patients die at a 50% higher rate than in the rest of the country. A shortage of beds makes infections more prevalent from crowding and lack of cleaning time.

## MAY DAY 2012 GREETING ADS

To mark May Day 2012, 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 20; if PV is preparing the layout, the deadline is April 18. 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
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Three columns x 4 inches.....	\$110
Two columns x 7 inches.....	\$130
Three columns x 7 inches.....	\$180

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

# EDITORIALS

## The process is not the problem

There's no liar like a corrupt Tory. That's one lesson from the F-35 fighter-bomber fiasco unfolding in Ottawa. The Auditor General has confirmed what we all knew - these jets come with a price tag at least \$10 billion higher than claimed by PM Harper and Defence Minister Peter MacKay.

The Harper government and the top military brass have told Canadians utter rubbish about the F-35s. The calls for MacKay's resignation are welcome. In fact, the entire Harper government should resign for its electoral fraud, and call a new election.

But the F-35 scandal is not about improving the procurement process, or finding the "most suitable" jet, or "defending" Canada. The real problem is the concept that Canada needs to purchase new fleets of aircraft and warships.

There is no reason to spend tens of billions of dollars on the military, especially at a time of high unemployment, shredded social programs, environmental crises, and many other critical problems. 21st century fighter jets like the F-35 are not "patrol planes" with search-and-rescue capabilities - they are killing machines with massive arsenals of bombs, rockets, and bullets. They are a key part of the imperialist strategy for global corporate control of raw materials such as hydrocarbon resources, and for NATO's tactics of "regime change" disguised as "humanitarian intervention."

Tragically, no party in the current Parliament has taken a principled stand against the Harper government's "Canada First" strategy to spend some \$500 billion on military expansion over the next two decades. It's time to press all parties - including the NDP, which claims to be a party of peace - to reject the drive to make Canada an integral part of the U.S. war machine. No to the F-35s, no to the warships, and yes to peaceful priorities for Canada!

## Budgets: congealed class warfare

It has been said that government budgets are a form of congealed class war between workers and bosses. In recent years, governments have squeezed working people to pay for an economic crisis worsened by corporate greed. The result in all capitalist countries has been a wider gap between rich and poor, and a devastating attack on labour rights, social programs and pensions.

Canada has been no exception, starting with the Chretien/Martin assault on social spending in the mid-1990s. That round of fiscal "austerity" has been escalated by the Harper Tories in their March 29 federal budget.

The Tories prepared the ground with alarming hints of draconian measures. But the reality presented by Finance Minister Flaherty is far worse than the "moderate" tag given by pro-business media pundits. This budget, the first under a Tory majority, marks a new stage in the right-wing drive to slash jobs and services while expanding the military, police, and prisons.

The claim that the defence budget was cut is a deliberate lie. The smaller Canadian military role in the occupation of Afghanistan does mean a temporary saving, but the Tories remain on track to pour some \$500 billion into the military over the next two decades. A second critical point is that the federal job cuts and the higher pension eligibility age will increase the pool of exploitable labour. That means more downward pressure on wages and working conditions - and higher corporate profits.

Make no mistake - the Flaherty budget is a declaration of war by the bosses against the working class. Mass popular resistance will be needed to turn back this attack. That's why we renew our call on the Canadian Labour Congress to convene an emergency summit of the labour movement and its allies, to unite around a fightback plan and a genuine People's Alternative to Tory austerity.

## PEOPLE'S VOICE

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## LETTERS

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

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## SPEAKING FRANKLY

## Bill C-31: refugee wrongs or refugee rights?

Immigration Minister Jason Kenney recently offered to the press an uncharacteristic opinion about Canada's temporary foreign worker program. He commented that he would like to give temporary foreign workers "a more realistic choice of staying here as permanent residents."

As a group of lawyers, legal workers and law students, this caught us off guard. After all, the Conservative government has actively increased the temporary foreign worker program since it took power, and, along with it, the potential for exploitative and dangerous working conditions. The vast majority of these migrant labourers, hailing from such places as Latin America and the Caribbean, are denied access to permanent residency altogether. It turns out, however, that Minister Kenney was not talking about the average temporary foreign worker. Rather, he was referring to the recent influx of workers from Ireland.

Apparently for these workers, a different standard applies. "If they're doing well in the labour market, if an employer likes them and wants to keep them and they meet our other criteria like speaking English, why would we want to send them back?" asks Minister Kenney.

When discussing this point with a refugee claimant from Ghana with whom we have worked, he commented: "We also speak English. We are also highly educated. We also understand how things work here. But you don't change the immigration system to

let us in. That's 110% discrimination."

Of course, none of this is surprising. Race and country of origin have always been consistent factors in shaping Canadian immigration policy. The Conservative approach is merely the most explicitly xenophobic and exclusionary that we have seen in the recent past.

In fact, as we mark Refugee Rights Day today [April 4], the Conservatives are advancing new legislation that will choke off access to refugee status and, in doing so, will disproportionately shut the door to poor people of colour.

Bill C-31 undemocratically concentrates power in the hands of the Minister, giving rise to a host of injustices. For example, under the bill, many refugees, including those as young as 16, will be detained for a minimum of one year without a hearing. This criminalizes asylum seekers in a way unseen before in Canada.

Furthermore, even if their claims are ultimately successful, refugees will be barred from reuniting with their families for at least an additional five years.

Another example of new ministerial power is the ability for the Minister to unilaterally name so-called "safe" countries. This will create a two-tiered refugee determination process based on nationality. Refugee claimants from "safe" countries will have no right of appeal and will have limited time to access lawyers and prepare for their cases. This is in spite of the reality that a refused claim means

that people will be deported back to the situation from which they fled in the first place.

These changes violate the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, as well as Canada's obligations under international law that require every individual refugee claimant to have their case evaluated on its own merits.

The bill is set against a backdrop of other troubling policies. The Conservatives have reduced the number of live-in caregivers accepted each year, frozen sponsorship of parents and grandparents, increased the temporary foreign worker program which reduces access to permanent residency, and introduced "conditional" permanent residence for spouses based on unsubstantiated allegations of rampant marriage fraud. Taken together, this legislative overhaul has a disproportionately negative effect on poor people of colour from countries in the South.

For the record, it's not that we've got anything against the Irish. We're simply opposed to immigration policy that is based on race. •

The Immigration Legal Committee is a Toronto-based group of law students, legal workers and lawyers. This commentary first appeared on the Rabble website, <http://rabble.ca>.

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Vancouver rally against Bill C-31 (Photo: K. Cariou)

# "A Tory Budget that cuts jobs and services"

## PV Vancouver Bureau

Working people wanted the federal government to lay the basis for "a sustained and broadly shared economic recovery," said the Canadian Labour Congress in its analysis of the 2012 Federal Budget. Instead, "we got a budget that cuts jobs rather than creates jobs; which attacks needed public services and social programs; and undermines rather than enhances retirement security."

While the corporate media praised the Budget as "moderate", the CLC points out that spending cuts rising to over \$5 billion per year from 2014-15 mean a 6.9% cut, with only "very modest" new initiatives.

Each \$1 billion of spending cuts represents about 10,000 lost jobs, says the CLC, divided between

government jobs and private and not-for-profit sector jobs supported by government purchases of goods and services. The overall negative impact of the Budget on jobs will be about 50,000 when the measures are fully implemented.

As well as cutting federal employment by 19,200 jobs over the next three years, the Budget makes a dramatic shift in overall priorities. Total federal spending on programs in 2015-16 will be 12.9% of GDP, compared to 14.1% in 2011-12. Net revenues will be almost unchanged, thanks to more cuts to corporate taxes.

The CLC stresses that Canada has lost 500,000 manufacturing jobs since 2003. "Economic recovery has ground to a halt since last September," with official unemployment rates forecast to

average well over 7% for the next two years. The "real" unemployment rate which includes discouraged job seekers and involuntary part-time workers was 10.6% in 2011, and 19.7% for young workers.

Wages are stagnant, household debts now average more than 150% of income, and inequality is on the rise. Ottawa has allowed foreign companies like Caterpillar to buy Canadian companies only to shut them down, and to get tax breaks while they were doing it.

But the federal government could have explored other options. Canada has one of the lowest net public debt levels of the advanced industrial countries (34% of GDP compared to an average of 63%), the federal deficit is now just over 1% of GDP, and government borrowing costs are at an all-time low.

The CLC calls for a shift to public investments, which create jobs and bring more tax revenues and lower spending on programs like Employment Insurance (EI) and social assistance. Such investments, it says, could be financed by reversing the corporate tax cuts.

Instead, the Conservatives borrow billions of dollars to spend on tax giveaways: "Corporations have used their tax cuts to buy up their own shares, to increase dividends, and to increase their cash holdings. Non-financial corporations are now sitting on close to \$500 billion of surplus cash."

The CLC has urged all levels of government to launch a major, multi-year, public investment program which would create jobs now, promote our environmental goals, and build new "green" industries for the future.

Such a comprehensive plan would include roads, sewers, and

basic municipal infrastructure; health and educational facilities; mass transit; passenger rail; affordable housing; energy conservation through building retrofits; and renewable energy.

The CLC says that government support for all infrastructure and environmental investments should be linked to "Made in Canada" procurement policies, so goods and services inputs are purchased in Canada. Infrastructure should have a mandated training

component to help deal with looming skills shortages.

Other policies supported by the CLC would include a Canada-wide, not-for-profit child care and early learning program, home care as part of the public health care system, and long-term care for the elderly - programs which would create new jobs while promoting social goals.

Instead, the limited investment measures in this Budget are "far

see BUDGET, page 10



PV file photos on this page by Ed Bil

## The Federal Budget is still a war budget, says Peace Alliance

Statement from Canadian Peace Alliance, March 28, 2012

The Federal budget 2012 still shows an increase in military spending to a total of more than \$20 billion for the year 2012. Despite claims that the Harper government will be reducing military spending, the reality is that this reduction is simply a small haircut of \$1.1 billion off of a massive structural budget increase as outlined by the Canada First Defence Strategy which calls for almost a half trillion dollars in spending by 2025.

The costs of the military spending in the social wage for Canadians is staggering and the Conservatives are purblind to those costs. They are still pushing ahead with a plan to buy 65 F-35 fighter jets despite the fact that we still have no idea what these offensive and rather useless jets will cost. According to Parliamentary budget officer Kevin Page the total cost of the F35s may reach more than \$30 billion.

To put that into perspective, the cost of one F35 could pay to hire 1,400 nurses in Canada for a year. A contribution of 1/6th of the cost of the F35s

or 1/5th of the annual defence budget could provide free tuition to all post secondary students across the country for a year. \$2 Billion alone would retrofit all homes in Alberta needing energy efficiency upgrades, lowering emissions, and creating up to 22,000 direct and indirect jobs.

The Harper government will use this budget to attack the people who deliver our public services and slash those federal programs that Canadian need most. Meanwhile the war industries of Canada line up at the trough of plenty to build more bombs and guns.

The Canadian Peace Alliance is calling for Peace and Prosperity, NOT War and Austerity. Stop the Cuts - Redirect military spending.

(www.acp-cpa.ca) ●



## Conservatives drag Canada into age of austerity

All Canadians will pay the price for a federal budget that will result in significant job losses, weaker environmental protection, and unnecessary cuts to cherished public services, said the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives on March 29.

Once the government's three rounds of spending cuts are fully implemented, warned the CCPA, they will result in a total of over 70,000 full-time job cuts (35,000 in the public sector and 37,000 in the private sector) and could raise the unemployment rate to 7.8%.

"This may be a 2012 budget but it's got the 1930s written all over it," said CCPA Senior Economist David Macdonald. "Federal austerity, combined with provincial austerity budgets, will create a fiscal drag on Canada's economy. We are dismantling public programs and peeling back income supports such as Old Age Security without asking profitable corporations and the wealthy among us to do their part. We saw a similar story unfold in the 1930s and it didn't end well. History is repeating itself."

"After six Harper budgets, the corporate share of federal revenue has fallen to 1930s levels,



millionaires are paying taxes at rates last seen in the 1920s, and the top 1% are capturing more of the gains from growth than at any time in history," added CCPA Senior Economist Armine Yalnizyan.

"This budget fails to address the pressures of a middle class losing ground and young people struggling to find work," said Yalnizyan. "It takes us backward in terms of retirement and environmental protection. With the exception of education and water needs for First Nations, it ignores the need to repair our aging infrastructure. The books will be balanced, but we'll all pay the price."

The CCPA is also critical of the

lack of transparency within the budget, saying many planned job and service cuts weren't spelled out.

"Budgets are about making clear your plans to Canadians but, on many fronts, what this government tabled was a hide-and-seek budget," said Macdonald. "This budget raises more questions than it answers. You can't get rid of the deficit this quickly without inflicting a lot of pain on Canadians. Whether it's a hatchet job or death by a thousand tiny cuts, Canadians will pay a steep price - one this government could have avoided." ●

# THE F-35 STEALTH FIGHTER PROGRAM:

## How the War Economy Contributes to Exacerbating the Social Crisis

By Prof. Michel Chossudovsky, Global Research, April 4, 2012, [www.globalresearch.ca](http://www.globalresearch.ca) (abridged)

There is mounting controversy regarding the purchase of the F-35 stealth fighter jet from US defence giant Lockheed Martin. The Pentagon has commissioned the purchase of 2,443 aircraft "to provide the bulk of its tactical airpower for the US Air Force, Marine Corps and Navy over the coming decades". This massive procurement of advanced weapons systems is part of America's "Global War", largely directed against China, Russia, North Korea and Iran.

The overall cost of the program to the US military is estimated at a staggering \$1.51 trillion over the so called life cycle of the program, namely \$618 million per plane. (Shalal-Esa, Andrea. "Government sees lifetime cost of F-35 fighter at \$1.51 trillion." Reuters, 2 April 2012).

Several of America's close allies including the UK, Australia, Italy, Canada, the Netherlands, Norway, Turkey, Israel, and Japan are slated to purchase the F-35 stealth fighter plane.

The economic and social implications of this program are potentially devastating. Apart from the fact that the fighter planes will be used in upcoming US-NATO wars, resulting in inevitable civilian deaths, their procurement - at taxpayers expense - will contribute to exacerbating the ongoing fiscal crisis. Unless they are solely funded by an increase in the public debt (which is highly unlikely), these massive

expenditures on advanced weapons systems will require the adoption of concurrent austerity measures over a period of up to thirty years, at the expense of an entire generation.

The costs of military procurement are always at the expense of social programs, public investment in infrastructure, employment creation in the civilian economy. Conversely, very few jobs will be created by the defence contractors. The cost of creating one job in America's weapons industry (2001) varies between 25 and 66 million dollars per job. (Michel Chossudovsky, *War is Good for Business*, Global Research, September 2001)

In the US and NATO member countries, drastic budgetary measures are currently being applied with a view to financing the "war economy". These economic measures - adopted at the crossroads of a worldwide economic depression - are also contributing to spearheading entire national economies into bankruptcy, with devastating social consequences....

### Austerity Budget

The 2012 Canadian federal budget presented a gruesome scenario of austerity measures requiring massive layoffs of federal government employees, drastic cuts in spending including pension funds and the curtailment of federal provincial transfers. In contrast, the issue of spiralling defense spending resulting from the F-35 fighter program is not acknowledged, as if it has no bearing on the structure of public expenditure.

The government had announced drastic austerity measures, but these budgetary measures apply largely to non-military spending. (The federal budget estimates indicate a modest cut in defence expenditure, which do not include predictable overruns in the cost of weapons procurement).

The crucial question: How does this multibillion dollar F-35 project affect the 2012 federal budget, which is largely predicated on a sizeable curtailment of "civilian" as opposed to "military" expenditures?

The issue of the budget deficit could be resolved overnight by reining in the war economy. But that "solution" would not be in the interest of achieving "World peace" and "global security".

"Guns versus Butter": How does this spiralling defence expenditure allocated to the purchase of advanced weapons systems affect all other categories of civilian government expenditure? How does it affect public investment in the civilian economy?

These questions are of crucial significance for the people of the United States, whose government is spending a staggering \$1.5 trillion on the F-35 program. It has similar implications for the nine countries which decided to purchase these expensive fighter planes, while concurrently implementing "strong economic medicine" to finance the predictable cost overruns of military spending.

"War is good for business" (for the defence contractors) yet at the same it spearheads the civilian economy into bankruptcy.

Nowhere in the Canadian federal budget is the issue of the F-35 program and its staggering overall cost of 30

billion dollars mentioned. That's an average cost of \$461 million dollars per plane, including the "flyaway" purchase plus the so-called sustainment costs (maintenance, operating costs and related investments associated with the F-35 program).

Canada's Welfare State is collapsing, health care is in the process of being privatised, primary and secondary education is under-funded. Universities are in a state of crisis with rising tuition fees. Yet at no point in the debate on the 2012 federal budget has the issue of the war economy been raised.

How does the war economy backlash on people's lives? How does it undermine and destabilize the civilian economy? How does it affect the funding of social programs?

What should be understood is that the austerity measures are in part implemented with a view to financing the war economy.

### Protest Movement

The protest movement against the economic austerity measures must integrated be with the antiwar movement. The abolition of war is a precondition for scrapping the neoliberal economic agenda. War and Globalization are intimately related.

University students in Quebec have recently been involved in mass demonstrations regarding the hike of tuition fees implemented by the provincial government. Yet at no time has the issue of military spending and its impact on social programs been raised.

The purchase of advanced weapons systems will inevitably be at the expense of federal provincial transfers which contribute to the financing of health and education.

Curtailling the F-35 stealth fighter program would immediately make more money available in support of Quebec's university students. In fact the cost associated with one F-35 fighter plane (461 million dollars) would release more than enough resources to finance the hike in tuition fees for years to come.

The protest movement against government austerity measures applied in the US, Canada and the European Union must address the issue of the US-NATO led war.

The F-35 stealth aircraft are not weapons of peace. They are part of the killing machine. They are slated to be used against China, Russia, Iran and North Korea. They are "weapons of mass destruction" to be used in the Pentagon's "long war".

The other side of the coin pertains to "Guns versus Butter", namely the relationship between the "civilian economy" and the "war economy".

War and the neoliberal economic policy agenda are part of an integrated process.

The staggering cost of these advanced weapons is contributing to the demise of what is left of the Welfare State, not to mention the impoverishment - in several NATO member countries - of an entire generation. ●

## F-35 scandal: We need a Canadian Spring now more than ever

By Derrick O'Keefe

The latest bomb has dropped from the F-35 scandal in Ottawa. After appearing before the public accounts committee, Auditor General Michael Ferguson told the media that the Harper government "would have had" information about the real cost of the fighter jets in March 2011 when parliamentary budget officer Kevin

to remember the timeline of events. In July 2010, Harper and Peter MacKay announced - without having held any open bidding process - that the purchase of 65 F-35 jets from Lockheed Martin would cost \$16 billion including maintenance. By October 2010, then Auditor General Sheila Fraser was already predicting the true cost would be much higher. Then on March 20, 2011, Kevin Page released his report estimating

about the cost of the fighter jets, as well as the cost of their crime legislation.

Throughout the election campaign, Harper and his campaign insisted on figures between \$14-16 billion. But, at the highest levels, they must have known it was false.

So they lied. Harper knew, and Harper lied. Harper lied before, during and after the election campaign that saw him win a majority government.

Day after day on the campaign trail to his long sought majority government - not to mention during TV appearances and in the leadership debates - Harper repeatedly lied about the cost of the F-35s. And the fighter jets were no marginal issue; they were arguably the central plank in the election campaign.

This week Harper and his ministers and their spokespeople have pulled a 180, insisting that "no contract was signed" for the F-35s and that they can simply "reset" the bidding process.

I say if there was no contract, and if the cost Harper touted was a lie, then there is no mandate either. Harper's government is illegitimate. We need to "reset" the government, if you will. I think more Canadians than ever see this or at least sense this, but nevertheless I have no illusions that Harper will be toppled in the House of Commons anytime soon. For this to happen, we will need

a mass movement outside Parliament, in order to change the balance of political forces in the country, and to fully denounce not just the form but the content of the corruption of Harper's government. And the real content behind this fighter jets scandal is the militarism and corporate power the government serves.

There would be no F-35 scandal if the Harper government was not determined to pursue an aggressive foreign policy, as part of NATO and its increasingly wide-ranging interventions. To amend a US political cliché: "It's the military-industrial complex, stupid."

The corporate connections to this government's militarism aren't hard to find. In fact, you can find them in the person of Nigel Wright, Stephen Harper's current chief of staff.

It's unfathomable why the information first reported two years ago about Wright's connections to Lockheed Martin has not been raised by the Ottawa press corps this week:

"Prime Minister Stephen Harper's new chief of staff Nigel Wright is already the focus of his links with the largest military procurement in the history of Canada even though he doesn't start until January.

"As the Prime Minister's chief of staff, Mr. Wright has enormous influence over aerospace, defence and energy policy - areas where

he also has an ongoing personal business interest," Liberal treasury board critic Siobhan Coady (St. John's South-Mount Pearl) said. "This could pose a conflict of interest and must be fully investigated.

"Wright is a director of Hawker Beechcraft Inc., a partner with Lockheed Martin, which is selling F-35 stealth fighter to Canada for \$16 billion in an untendered contract. One purchased Hawker Beechcraft for \$3.8 billion."

I know we're talking about stealth bombers here, but I have no clue how Wright and his links to Lockheed Martin have managed to stay under the radar of this scandal.

All this comes on top of the "robocalls" scandal - with Elections Canada investigating incidents in 200 ridings - that points to widespread electoral fraud by people connected to the Conservative Party.

The force needed to defeat this government, and roll back their agenda, will need to be built right across the country - in the streets, in meetings halls and in our public squares.

We have never needed a Canadian Spring more than we need it right now.

(O'Keefe is co-chair of the Stop War peace coalition in Vancouver, and of the Canadian Peace Alliance. This commentary first appeared on the Rabble.ca website.) ●



Page released his report about the increased cost of the F-35s.

In other words, the Auditor General confirmed what any discerning observer had already concluded: Harper and his cabinet ministers must have known that the real cost of the F-35s was at least \$10 billion more than they were telling the public.

To understand the full significance of this, it's important

the price at \$28.5 billion. The Harper government publicly attacked Page's numbers, and insisted on their original estimated cost. And all this helped trigger the last federal election.

On March 25, 2011 Harper's government was brought down after a non-confidence vote and a finding that the Conservatives were in contempt of Parliament for refusing to disclose full information

# Arguments with "deniers" over climate change

By Bob Treasure, from *The Guardian*, weekly of the Communist Party of Australia

It is sometimes tempting to tag our opponents as "climate deniers" or "climate change skeptics", simply because they often deny the evidence of their own senses, and what is happening all around them. Their views, ignorant and dogmatic as they usually are, tend to operate in a cynical and toxic way to undermine action around stopping carbon pollution, or pursuing renewable alternatives. Often, they are merely vehicles of a vested capitalist interest, defending the comfortable exploitation and profit-taking of the past.

Of course, it is frustrating to see certain media outlets overlook the common science and lionize the often irrational, "climate change sceptics". They get coverage way beyond their worth. If a "scientist", like the Cold War defectors of old, wanted instant fame and a market for their views, they need only question "climate change misrepresentation".

It is our task to patiently, positively and rationally, explain the facts and expose the fallacies. Often the answers are simply a Google away, because the information, the data and the answers, are readily available on the Internet.

This is a guide for activists, people engaged in the arguments on a daily basis, or who are confronting the cynical affronts of workmates who simply won't accept reality and therefore, refuse to act.

**1) "It's not really happening. We're just noticing extreme weather events more because of modern media coverage"**

Global warming is certainly happening. Any cursory glance at mean annual temperature graphs since the 1880s (when records began) shows a steady increase in the world's annual temperatures, but there was a noticeable spike in the 1980's which meant two thirds of the 0.8C degrees increase over the past 100 years has happened in the last three decades.

On this trend, 21st century global surface temperature will increase to 2.9C degrees on the lowest carbon emissions scenario and 6.4C degrees on the highest. In other words, we are facing an increase in global warming of at least 3C degrees (because we are not holding to minimal emissions) over the next 90 years, an extraordinary change.

Worst affected are the polar ice caps, especially, at present, the Arctic. Melting of ice into the oceans slows their warming down, but land temperatures continue to grow and impact upon surrounding seas. Oceans rise, currents are being altered, which affects weather patterns.

To use an old metaphor, we are living in a sealed greenhouse within which more and more people are breathing out CO2. The effect is to create denser humidity and more extreme storms, floods, cyclones, winds, heat and cold - yes cold, because increased humidity and cloud cover can

produce extreme hail and snow falls as well.

Insurance premiums against weather events like flood and bushfire have increased by 50-100 percent over the past decade - way beyond the rate of inflation. This is because the number of "classifiable weather or bushfire disasters" in Australia grew from 25 in the 1980s to 54 in the 90s and 60 in the 2000s. Hard-nosed capitalists do not raise prices for nothing: increasing extreme weather events are a reality.

**2) "Global warming is a conspiracy of scientists, seeking to extract more money from government sources."**

Of all "sceptic" claims, this is the most pernicious, illogical and feasibly, dishonest. We already know that fame and fortune are most likely to accrue to "scientists" - often deniers are not scientists but writers, shock jocks and industry commentators having no relevant qualifications - who have "discovered" evidence to contradict global warming.

This is because the general public has an understandable resistance to the idea of human-induced climate change. It confronts comfortable habits of consumption and capitalist precepts of maximal exploitation, and thus job security. The media have a history of inflaming prejudice to inspire rabid reaction and accrue profit. It is they who are most likely to lie or distort, not the 95 percent of scientists world-wide who have devoted their lives to expanding human knowledge.

To suggest that tens of thousands of people from such differing academic communities as China, India, Europe, the USA and Australia, from as widely varied sources as geographers, atmospheric scientists, marine biologists, biogeochemists, physicists, meteorologists and applied mathematicians to name a few, have all joined together in some kind of plot to extract money from their respective governments, beggars belief.

The supposed "proof" of a conspiracy, some hacked e-mails from the University of East Anglia, and jumped upon as "evidence of a cover up" by such noted News Ltd luminaries as Andrew Bolt, have simply been misinterpreted and beat up to try and undermine the overwhelming weight of real evidence.

A 2008 Gallup Poll found that 58 percent of Australians believed that human-induced climate change was real. A survey of 3,146 earth scientists conducted by Doran, found that 82 percent of them held human-induced climate change was real. Of these, furthermore, the specialist "climatologists", that is, those scientists who had specifically published, undergone peer review, and established their detailed knowledge of the science, 97 percent said that human-induced climate change was real. In other words, the more people know, the more detailed their appreciation of the facts, the more certain they are

of global warming.

**3) "Climate change is not new. It has happened many times before in the Earth's history. It is natural"**

While there have been fluctuations in Earth temperature over the past 2,000 years (the so-called "mini Ice Age" of the late medieval period), none of them have been so abrupt or severe as those being experienced in the 20th century and now - we are currently living through the hottest decades in world history.

"Pre-history" is another matter. Over the past 2 billion years the Earth has undergone its own process of development. It began



as a molten mass but its distance from the Sun allowed cooling, which in turn formed an "atmosphere" of various liquids and gases. Once it had established its climate, four major factors continued to naturally influence the future of the planet:

**Variations in the Earth's orbit.** This "tilt of the axis" ranges from 22.5 degrees to 24.5 degrees. Currently the Earth's tilt is 23.5 degrees, exactly midway, but heading for the further lean. When the world's tilt is smaller, the temperatures of the seasons are milder, when it is higher, they become more extreme. The cycle takes 26,000 years overall. That is, in 13,000 years time, our summers will become hotter and our winters colder. The problem is everything is becoming much hotter, NOW.

**Volcanic eruptions.** At one stage in Earth's pre-history, its crust was thinner and volcanic activity was rife. The effect was to produce a greater land mass and to cool the atmosphere for, despite the heat of exploding magma and gas, the sulphur dioxide of volcanoes mixed with the stratosphere to cloud the Earth's surface and limit the impact of the Sun's rays. In turn, when volcanic activity decreased and the clouds cleared, the Earth warmed up. This process took millions of years to happen.

**Variations in solar output.** Periodically sunspots and storms alter the amount of energy coming from the Sun. Climate change

deniers have sometimes argued that such events provide a "natural" explanation of global warming. The problem is, that the overall direction of the Sun's energy is in decline and that the basic impact of more frequent sunspots on the Sun is to reflect cooler temperatures, while the Earth is getting hotter. Generally, the hypothesis of the Sun "naturally" causing global warming has been scientifically debunked.

**Atmospheric carbon dioxide variation.** The volume of carbon dioxide has indeed varied throughout the Earth's prehistory, although evidence suggests that in the distant past, this has been more of a symptom than a cause. When the Earth's temperature has varied due to factors previously mentioned, the oceans stored more CO2 when colder, and released more as temperatures rose. Again,

is a relatively small component of the total atmosphere. However, its role in moderating the world's temperature is crucial. It is one of the few gases that captures heat, and without it, the Earth would have frozen over eons ago. But over the past 100 years, since industrialisation, the relative volume of CO2 has increased from .028% to .039%, an overall increase in CO2's share of 70%.

The "natural" ecosystem deals with 255 billion tonnes of CO2 per year, but industrialisation has added a further 5.5 billion tonnes (and growing) from burning fossil fuels every year, and this has tipped the balance above the capacity of the environment to absorb. Thus extra carbon dioxide is accumulating around us every day.

According to the Garnaut Climate Change Review the average Australian emits 28.1 tonnes of carbon dioxide per year, which is twice the OECD average and four times the global average. This is largely because of our dependence on coal-fired energy sources and a need to consume copious amounts of fossil-fuel power for mining, manufacture, heating, cooling, cooking, lighting, entertainment and transportation.

**5) "Why should Australia stick its neck out? The rest of the world is doing nothing."**

It's true that today, China is the world's biggest manufacturer, and its biggest polluter, producing some 17 percent of the world's carbon dioxide. On the other hand, the Chinese response to issues around climate change has been swift and meaningful. At Copenhagen they tabled plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 40-50 percent and increase forest cover an extra 40 million hectares by 2020. Also, renewable power sources would take up 15 percent of energy generation by the same year (Australia's now is 9 percent).

China once used 37 million barrels of crude oil to manufacture plastic bags - they are now universally banned. They have also committed to the elimination of incandescent light bulbs, and being the producer of 70 percent of the world's light bulbs, this process is virtually guaranteed.

China is also no slouch when it comes to manufacturing green technologies and now produces more solar panels and wind turbines than any other country. China leads the world in voltaic cell research and production. The Chinese government recently committed US\$216 billion in subsidies to further develop the nation's green technology sector. In 2009 China spent twice as much as the US to fund so-called "green markets", which was close to 50 percent of world expenditures overall. China's per capita CO2 emissions, incidentally, are currently 6 tonnes.

Countries such as Cuba, Venezuela, France, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Switzerland, Hungary, Belarus and Britain (among many others) have drastically reduced their per capita

this "natural" process occurred over hundreds of thousands of years ... the situation is different now.

Now, human produced carbon dioxide is driving the heating of the Earth, not the reverse. And it is happening at an ever faster rate, faster than anything in history or pre-history. By warming the oceans and clearing forests, humanity is making the "natural" task of absorbing CO2 difficult, if not impossible.

Climate scientists are not stupid. The natural variations mentioned here, and many others, as many as might rationally be considered to have an effect on the Earth's climate, are factored in to computerised models of present and future climatic projections, such as those produced by NASA. The one constant, irrefutable factor that dominates these projections is the growing presence of human-caused carbon dioxide, accumulating in the Earth's atmosphere. There is no escaping it: it is causing the heating of our globe.

**4) "Carbon dioxide is a weightless gas. It's pointless to try and arrest it."**

This is utterly false. Carbon dioxide is a gas, and relatively light. But it has a weight, and that weight is caught in increasing amounts in the Earth's atmosphere.

CO2, compared to other major gases such as nitrogen and oxygen,



# GLOBAL CLASS STRUGGLE

## Police attack protests in Egypt

Dozens of workers filled the inner halls of Egypt's State Council building on April 3, marking the second day of an open-ended sit-in after clashes broke out between military police forces and workers the previous day.

A court hearing was held on April 2 to examine the appeal presented to the State Council by the government of the former prime minister Essam Sharaf and a number of investors, to reverse the renationalisation of four factories. The factories were renationalised in September 2011 in a landmark victory by workers who lost their jobs as a result of the companies' original privatisation.

The workers from Shibin El-Kom, Nile Cotton Ginning, Omar Effendi and Tanta Flax and Oil staged a sit-in with some of their families after several workers were beaten by the military police and denied entry to the court room. Earlier in the day, the judge called on the army to interfere to bring order to the court room. Labour lawyer and presidential hopeful Khaled Ali, who is defending the workers and presented his arguments in court, joined the workers at their sit-in.

In another recent development, more than 1,500 public bus drivers ended a 10-day strike after reaching an agreement with the government. The retirement bonus was increased to two months for each year in service, while workers with 36 years service will receive 72 months worth of bonuses. The rest of their demands are to be implemented after deducting the LE230 million (\$38 million) in the form of bonuses, incentives and raises which they took starting in September 2011.

The striking bus drivers have been demanding higher wages; independent trade unions; better spare parts for buses; and proper maintenance of the vehicles. They also called for dismissal of corrupt company officials.

## Swazi labour body shut down

Swaziland has closed down its only labour body, which had threatened to lead a protest against Africa's last absolute monarch King Mswati III.

"Yes, we have been deregistered," the secretary general of the Trade Union Congress of Swaziland told AFP on April 5. "We have convened a meeting with the minister (of labour) on the matter."

The TUC had threatened to bring the small mountain kingdom's economy to a standstill during protests planned for the second week of April. The fledgling federation was formed in March when the country's two biggest labour movements joined forces. The Swaziland Federation of Labour and the Swaziland Federation of Trade Unions had deregistered in anticipation of the merger.

The king has faced growing criticism and unprecedented public

protests since last year due to a financial crisis that has pushed the kingdom to the brink of bankruptcy while he is accused of lavish spending.

Pro-democracy activist Wandile Dlodlu said authorities were trying to sabotage labour protests.

"This is a crackdown on the pro-democracy forces as a means to weaken the forces for change in light of the upcoming April 12 protests," said Dlodlu, who coordinates the umbrella Swaziland United Democratic Front (SUDF)



organisation. But the protests would go ahead despite the setbacks, he said. More than 3,000 students took to the streets at the end of March when Mswati cancelled scholarships.

Pro-democracy groups commemorate April 12 since the late King Sobhuza II, Mswati's father, banned political parties on that date in 1973. Mswati is rated by Forbes magazine as among the world's 15 richest monarchs, with a personal fortune of more than \$100 million. He has 13 wives, each with her own palace. But 60% of his subjects live on less than \$2 a day in one of the world's poorest countries.

## Bulgarian miners strike for wages

Workers of the Lead and Zinc Complex in Kardzhali, the leading Bulgarian non-ferrous metals producer, rallied again on April 5 with demands to receive their long-delayed salaries. In the morning, the metalworkers blocked the main local road, connecting the cities of Kardzhali and Haskovo. Later they held a protest rally and a march supported by residents of the cities.

Representatives of the Confederation of Independent Syndicates in Bulgaria, KNSB, say they will protest until the money gets to the workers' bank accounts. If the salaries are not paid soon, the rally and blockades will be moved to the capital Sofia, and to the nearest cross border checkpoint.

The Lead and Zinc Complex is owned by Valentin Zahariev, now the former owner of the Gorbso Madan metal mines. Gorbso Madan miners finally received their overdue wages at the end of March, after staging protests for two weeks.

The country's Economy and Energy Minister says that in Madan and Kardzhali, poor management is to be blamed for the overdue wages of the workers. The Prosecutor's Office has launched a probe against Zahariev.

## AFL-CIO protests Colombia killings

On April 4, the leaders of the AFL-CIO sent a letter to President Barack Obama urging him to maintain pressure on the Colombian government to end rampant violence against union workers. The letter comes one year after the signing of a Labour Action Plan between the two nations, an accord which helped Obama garner votes from congressional Democrats and that enabled the passage of a free-trade agreement with Colombia. The AFL-CIO has long been critical of the trade pact, originally negotiated by former President George W. Bush, on the grounds that the Colombian government does not have the capacity to enforce protections for workers.

"It is premature to declare the Labor Action Plan a success," wrote AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka. "Now is not the time to relieve the pressure on Colombia to uphold the commitments it made in the Labour Action Plan."

Trumka detailed a host of labour disputes, and noted that the Colombian government has prosecuted less than 10 percent of the cases of 3,000 trade unionists who have been murdered since 1989, emphasizing, "None of the 29 labour activists killed in 2011 had their cases resolved by a successful prosecution."

The Labour Action Plan sets no specific benchmarks for reducing violence for the Colombian government to meet to be in compliance. Instead, it requires the nation to establish institutions and programs to protect workers. If those programs are ineffective, the government is still technically in compliance with the plan.

In one recent example, the local government of Jamundi fired 43 municipal workers who began an effort to unionize. One of the activists for the new union, Miguel Mallana, was gunned down in the street on March 25.

Obama was to visit Cartagena, Colombia, April 14-15 for the Summit of the Americas, an international conference of political leaders hosted by the Organization of American States.

## Greek labour protests continue

Opposition to the Greek government's austerity measures continued this month, with plans by ferry crews to hold a two-day strike which will severely disrupt Easter holiday plans. The sailor's federation says that no ferries will sail on April 10-11, during Greek Orthodox Holy Week.

A statement said union members rejected government proposals on ending the impasse. The union opposes benefit and healthcare cuts planned as part of austerity measures adopted by the coalition government in exchange for the latest loans to address the Greek deficit crisis.

The ferry strike comes soon after a March 29 strike over the impact of austerity measures in the health sector. Thousands of workers now lack the

constitutionally guaranteed right to health services by the State. Continued cuts and restrictions on drugs and benefits, reductions in funding and the squeeze on budgets are leading to tragic consequences. Hospitals and health units are being merged and closed to drastically cut costs and meet the requirements of the "Troika" (the European Commission, the International Monetary Fund, and the European Central Bank) and the lenders, without considering the real needs of society for health.

And on April 4, just a few hundred metres from the Greek Parliament, retired pharmacist Dimitris Christoulas shot himself with a handgun, in a protest over the government's draconian policies. The suicide rate in Greece has jumped by an estimated 40% according to health ministry data, as more people feel hopeless amid the worst economic crisis in the country's recent history.

## Auto workers win strike in Russia

Workers at a factory in the city of Kaluga, southwest of Moscow, have ended a strike over a number of issues, with demands for an increase in wages from the 18,000 roubles (\$600) per month they are currently paid. Workers say that the wages are below comparable pay in the region, which houses an industrial hub.

While an official end to the dispute had not been reached as of April 2, the strike stopped after management agreed to raise wages, begin drawing up a new collective agreement, and recognise negotiators from the Interregional

Trade Union of Autoworkers (ITUA).

Management had used strikebreakers to attempt to win the dispute, including university students, office staff, construction workers and "several" autoworkers from Volkswagen, which receives parts supplied from the Benteler factory. Workers had blockaded traffic and scab labour from entering the factory grounds, and parts from leaving.

## Indonesian maids on Saudi death row

Twenty-two Indonesian maids on death row in Saudi Arabia have been exonerated and returned to Indonesia, the Saudi English-language newspaper Arab News reported on April 6. Some 25 maids still face the death penalty in the Kingdom after being found guilty of "either serious criminal offenses or [after being] implicated on baseless grounds," the newspaper said. Another 1,700 Indonesian nationals are currently serving prison terms in Saudi jails.

Jakarta was sending a 14-member presidential task force to the Kingdom to talk to Saudi officials and to intensify efforts to rescue the maids, according to the Indonesian embassy in Riyadh. Six housemaids are on death row in Riyadh province alone, and another 19 female workers have been handed death sentences in the Western region.

Indonesia has banned recruitment agencies from sending maids to work in Saudi Arabia, saying that the nation's legal system does not do enough to protect foreign workers. ●

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

## Send me information on the Communist Party of Canada



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

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# A stunning and political win for Galloway

*Editorial from the Morning Star (UK), March 30, 2012*

George Galloway's stunning by-election victory in Bradford West, with a massive 55.9 per cent of the poll, is unprecedented in its magnitude.

For a representative of one of the three main parliamentary parties to poll over 50 per cent is unusual. For someone outside the mainstream to haul in so many votes is unique.

Galloway's success has met the usual tidal wave of trivialisation by the media and spokespeople for the parties whose candidates he trounced. Voices that ascribed his defeat in the 2010 general election to an appearance in a red catsuit on Big Brother suggest now that voter recognition based on that TV show made him a shoo-in in Bradford.

Politicians pass off the Bradford by-election as a "one-off." Every by-election is a one-off, but none has ever delivered such a tsunami of popular discontent.

Much has been made of Galloway's supposed use of the "race card" or the propensity for Muslim voters to back him. But how can a "blue-eyed white man,"

as he describes himself, play the race card against his principal opponent who is of Pakistani Kashmiri origin, the grandson of Azad Kashmiri Assembly former deputy speaker Chaudhry Azam Pothi and nephew of Pakistani People's Party president Mirpur Zulfikar Azam?

An ethnic breakdown of Bradford West shows 38 per cent of voters as of Pakistani Muslim background, so even if every single person matching this description ticked Galloway - which clearly they didn't - he piled up another 18



George Galloway during a 2010 speaking trip in Canada.

percentage points plus from elsewhere.

What neither the Establishment media nor the Westminster villagers can admit is that the working-class electorate of this constituency, from whatever ethnic or religious background, voted politically. They voted in four successive general elections for Marsha Singh, from a Punjabi Sikh background, who distinguished himself as part of the principled minority of Labour MPs to campaign and vote against Tony Blair's illegal invasion of Iraq.

Far from Galloway's campaign playing identity cards, it was his Labour opponent's team that was reduced, once earlier complacency was punctured on the doorstep, to raising such matters in a desperate scramble for votes. Labour hopeful Imran Hussain was not best served by the cards dealt by his party minders, who ensured that he was on message in backing the military "mission" in Afghanistan and prevented him from speaking at hustings, confirming their lack of confidence in his ability.

New Labour control-freakery remains self-evidently alive and unwell in the party apparatus. Ed

Miliband declared his determination "that we learn the lessons of what happened," although his subsequent comments about local factors, being rooted in every community and showing that "Labour politics can make a difference to people's lives" show no awareness of the scale of political alienation.

It isn't just the plethora of foreign wars from Iraq to Afghanistan, with Syria and Iran on the wish list, that turns off traditional Labour voters. The

curse of New Labour lives on in support for the cuts agenda in response to capitalism's crisis and indifference to working-class calls for a new direction.

Labour may comfort itself with current opinion polls, but they have arisen through coalition own-goals not enthusiastic support for Labour policies.

Bradford West should serve as a warning of further one-offs in the future if Labour fails to heed the clamour for change from a bankers' agenda to a people's agenda. ●

## CPPC alarmed at Muslim stereotypes

The Committee of Progressive Pakistani Canadians (CPPC) says it is alarmed at the findings of a survey commissioned jointly by the Association for Canadian Studies, Montreal, and the Race Relations Foundation, Toronto. The results disclose that "more than half of Canadians mistrust Muslims," and another large proportion believe that discrimination against Muslims is "their own fault."

"There is no doubt that these findings represent what sociologists call stereotypes which are defined as distorted pictures in mind, not based on correct and verifiable information," says the CPPC. "Yet it is disturbing to note that so many Canadians (52% according to the survey) hold negative views of Muslims which can generate hatred and even violence against a minority group identified on the basis of religion..."

"Stereotypes are known to be social constructions that serve the interests of those who create and promote them. As such it is important to know why a particular stereotype was created, by whom and for what purpose? Muslims in North America have been increasingly subjected to such negative stereotyping since 9/11 when the powerful US administration decided to wage its ill-conceived global war on terror. This global war was launched with President George W. Bush declaring famously that 'you're either with us or against us,' thus pre-empting any rational assessment of its objectives and consequences.

"Today, a decade later and untold thousands of lives lost, mostly those of men, women and children in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan who had nothing to do with 9/11, the war has produced little by way of peace or security but a lot of angry and frustrated individuals.

"The most recent example of this anger and frustration is represented by the actions of Frenchman of Algerian origin, Mohamed Merah who is reported to have shot dead a teacher and two students in a French school along with a few soldiers of his own ethnic background, and the American Army Staff Sgt., Robert Bales, who went on a killing rampage earlier on March 11, shooting to death 17 Afghan farmers including several children.

"What is obviously common in the brutal actions of the duo is the malaise of post-9/11 times poisoned deeply by the war on terror. Yet one is astounded by the portrayal of the stories of Roberts and Mohameds of our blighted times in the form of two very different narratives by the world-dominant Western media. Whereas Robert Bale's killing spree is invariably attributed to his possibly suffering from PTSD (Post-traumatic stress disorder) with no reference to his religion or that of his victims, there is rarely a report that fails to identify the religion of Mohamed Merah and four of his Jewish victims. This is stereotyping at its meticulous best aimed at making sure that the connection between the villainous act of Merah and his religion is not lost on anyone.

"We at the CPPC believe that the best way to promote peace and harmony in Canada's multi-ethnic society and to prevent social phobias, including Islamophobia is to abstain from making stereotypical invidious distinctions between people on the basis of religion, colour, class and gender no matter in what situations they are caught."

[www.pakistanicanadians.ca](http://www.pakistanicanadians.ca) ●

## The dirty little secret in Texas

By James Thompson

Here in the state of Texas in the United States there is a dirty little secret that has received little attention. It is a repulsive, anti-democratic relic of the cold war McCarthy years of vicious anti-communism under which many patriotic people of this country suffered.

Some communists were imprisoned and Ethel and Julius Rosenberg were executed during this era. The McCarthy years gave birth to the twin ugly monsters called the Smith Act and McCarran Act. Both have been used to persecute communists and working people fighting for their rights.

The McCarran Act was vetoed by president Harry Truman as "anti-democratic," but his veto was overturned by a Democratic-controlled Congress.

The Smith Act was signed into law by president Franklin Roosevelt during a Congress controlled by the Democratic Party. Both laws targeted immigrants as well as communists, socialists and others.

Many people refer to the US as "the land of the free and the home of the brave," paraphrasing the revolutionary national anthem of this country written during a time when there was a monumental struggle against British colonialism and imperialism.

The word Texas is derived from a Caddo native American language word "teyshas" which means "friends" or "allies." The Texas state motto, accordingly, is "friendship."

However, most people associate Texans with the image of "toughness." It is apt, given the inclement weather and politics inherent in this region of the country located in the deep south.

We have swamps, alligators,

rattlesnakes, fire ants, deserts, mosquitoes the size of butterflies, cockroaches the size of small mammals, hurricanes, some of the worst pollution in the world and some of the nastiest right-wing politicians paid for by the ultra-wealthy.

These extremist politicians and their benefactors have subjected working people to constantly declining wages, benefits and social services. You have to be tough to live in Texas.

At the same time, the state has produced some of the greatest blues artists and has a very progressive organised labour movement with active involvement by both the AFL-CIO and SEIU. The ethnic and racial diversity of the state is one of its greatest assets.

Nevertheless, Texas state government has held on tightly to a repugnant remnant of the cold war era some 60 years later during a time when there is no Soviet Union.

In fact, the last revision of the legislation was passed in 1993, well after the Soviet Union ended.

During an email exchange with a comrade in North Devon, Gerrard Sables, I happened to mention the outrageous anti-democratic and anti-working-class legislation which is still on the books prohibiting communists from holding public office or even holding a state government job in Texas. He expressed outrage at this human rights violation in Texas and encouraged me to fight it.

I had felt for a long time that it needed to be fought, but hesitated because of lack of support. His support was invaluable in spurring me to begin the fight against this atrocity.

The Texas law appears as follows:

Title 5, Subtitle A, Chapter 557, Subchapter A. Sedition and

Subchapter C. Communism." Sec. 557.021 reads "DEFINITIONS. In this subchapter: (1) "Communist" means a person who commits an act reasonably calculated to further the overthrow of the government: (A) by force or violence; or (B) by unlawful or unconstitutional means and replace it with a communist government." Sec. 557.022 reads "RESTRICTIONS. (a) The name of a communist may not be printed on the ballot for any primary or general election in this state or a political subdivision of this state. (b) A person may not hold a nonelected office or position with the state or any political subdivision of this state if: (1) any of the compensation for the office or position comes from public funds of this state or a political subdivision of this state; and (2) the employer or superior of the person has reasonable grounds to believe that the person is a communist.

There is also a provision for enforcement by state agencies and/or personnel.

The wording of this legislation is similar in many regards to the McCarran and Smith Acts which have been largely repudiated or repealed at the federal level. The people of the state of Indiana faced similar legislation and it was brought before the Supreme Court and was overturned.

The legislation is in direct contradiction with the CPUSA constitution. There is nothing in the constitution of the CPUSA about "violent overthrow of the government" except under disciplinary procedures.

Under Article VII, Section 2 (Disciplinary Procedures and Appeals), the CPUSA constitution declares: "Subject to the provisions of this article, any member shall be expelled from the

see TEXAS, page 11



# Communists condemn austerity budget in Ontario

The CPC (Ontario) has condemned the Ontario Budget, delivered March 27, as a massive attack on working people and the poor that will destroy tens of thousands of jobs, drive down wages, pensions, incomes and living standards. Combined with the austerity measures in the federal budget, it could push the province into another deep economic recession.

The Executive of the CPC (Ontario) also warned that the threat of legislated wage controls is a dangerous attack on free collective bargaining and on civil and democratic rights.

"There's not much air between the Liberals and Tories when it comes to bashing workers and the poor, and restricting their rights. They both unerringly deliver the goods to Big Business, the banks and financial sector, and transnational corporations like Vale, US Steel, Caterpillar, Rio Tinto - the source of the crisis in Ontario" said CPC (Ontario) leader Elizabeth Rowley. "Everything that falls in the way of bigger and bigger corporate profits is under acute attack."

"The Tories' push to force an election is not to protect the people of Ontario, but to advance their goal of building Tory majorities at the provincial and federal level, and of using their majority to introduce even more restrictions

on civil, labour and democratic rights, undermining social and equality rights, driving down living standards, stripping the province of its public assets and natural wealth, militarizing the economy, and removing all impediments to unbridled corporate power and profiteering in Ontario.

"Defeating the Liberals to enable the Tories would be akin to jumping out of the frying pan into the fire. Working people must mobilize, organize and unite in mass, independent political action to defeat this budget, and force this minority government to bring in a new budget crafted to address people's needs, not corporate greed.

"Real recovery - a recovery for people of their jobs, wages, incomes, pensions, living standards and purchasing power - requires the government to address the revenue crisis caused by decades of corporate tax cuts, the elimination of progressive taxation and tax policies in Ontario, and massive chronic job losses in industry and manufacturing.

"Doubling corporate income taxes (CIT) to 22%, restoring the capital tax, raising capital gains tax to 100% of gains, introducing wealth and inheritance taxes on estates over \$750,000 are steps that would move Ontario into recovery very quickly. With a US CIT rate of over 44%, Ontario's corporate taxes

would still be lower than in the US, and still be one of the lowest in the industrialized world.

"Putting Ontario to work would reduce the costs of unemployment, increase purchasing power and tax revenues, and move the economy towards productivity, growth and recovery.

"Implemented, full employment policies combined with progressive tax policies based on ability to pay would see the \$16 billion provincial deficit disappear over time as recovery takes hold.

"Instead of austerity, the government supported by the NDP should adopt a budget that will:

- create jobs; and stop mass lay-offs, plant closures and de-industrialization with plant closure legislation and foreign investment legislation with teeth; and an environmentally sustainable, value-added, industrial and manufacturing strategy for Ontario
- raise wages, incomes, pensions and living standards
- increase spending on social programs, health, public and post-secondary education; scrap skyrocketing tuition fees and user fees
- build a provincial system of universally accessible affordable quality public childcare
- build affordable social housing, and properly fund cities
- invest in Aboriginal communities and press for an early and just

settlement of land claims

- support TVO, culture, amateur sports and recreation
- enact public auto insurance
- double corporate income taxes; restore the capital tax; expand capital gains; introduce wealth and inheritance taxes on estates over \$750,000; and enact a progressive tax system based on ability to pay
- protect and expand labour, civil, social and democratic rights

"This is a prescription for a Peoples Recovery in Ontario," said Rowley. "We call on the labour and democratic movements, the youth and

students and all those inside and outside the Legislature opposed to austerity, to unite in action to force this minority Liberal government to withdraw its austerity budget, and bring in a new budget that meets the needs of working people, the unemployed and the youth who have seen their jobs, wages, incomes, pensions, savings, security and futures slashed. There is an alternative, and it's worth fighting for. No more handouts to the 1%. No more tightening the belts of the 99%." ●



## The Fifth of the Month to Free the Five

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

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

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

Phone 1-202-456-1111

Fax 1-202-456-2461

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

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

## Mixed responses to Bedford case legal ruling

Perhaps not surprisingly, the March 26 Ontario Court of Appeal decision on issues related to prostitution and sex work (the *Bedford* case) has been met with a wide range of responses.

In a 3-2 split, the Court found that criminalizing "bawdy houses" is unconstitutional, and modified the laws on "living on the avails of prostitution" (except in cases of exploitation).

This aspect of the ruling was welcomed by the women sex workers who had challenged the law, and by groups which advocate for the legal and social rights of such workers. According to Chez Stella, a Montreal-based group, "It is a victory in and of itself to be able to work legally indoors, alone or in groups and to have the right to have people around to increase security, such as receptionists, drivers, managers, agency owners, etc."

However, as Chez Stella stated: "Most disappointing is that three out of five judges agree to maintain the Criminal Code sanctions around communicating in public for the purpose of prostitution which to us is incomprehensible, because as a result of these laws, people working on the street are subject to the most repression and human rights abuses. To this end, in their dissenting opinion, two judges recognize the unconstitutionality of the communicating law stipulating that it is not working on the street in and of itself that is dangerous but rather the communicating law that contributes to the violence to which sex workers are exposed. Two reports issued by the Department of Justice (1989, 1994) that evaluated the impact of the communicating law concluded that the criminalization of street sex workers and their clients contributes to violence against sex workers."

According to Emilie Laliberté, director of Chez Stella, "We believe it's long overdue that all of the laws criminalizing sex work, indoors and outdoors, be struck down by the Supreme Court. They contravene our fundamental rights: our right to life, liberty and security. Decriminalization saves lives."

Similar views were presented by Maggie's Toronto Sex Workers Action Project, which is Canada's oldest sex worker run organization, "dedicated to assisting sex workers in our right to live and work with safety and dignity."

Keisha Scott, the coordinator of Maggie's, called the "communication" aspect of the ruling "a letdown for the most vulnerable sex workers who are largely street, Indigenous and transgendered sex workers."

Maggie's circulated other opinions along these lines, such as this comment by Emily van der Muelen, Assistant Professor in the Department of Criminal Justice and Criminology, Ryerson University: "The failure to strike down the communication law means that the most vulnerable sex workers will continue to face arrest, police harassment, prosecution and violence."

Kara Gillies, a long time sex worker and activist for legal reforms, added "While striking down the bawdy house law may increase security for some sex workers, on its own, it is simply not enough. The anti-prostitution laws work together to jeopardize sex workers safety. It is not tenable to have a safe place to see a client if you can't screen him first or clearly set out what you offer, your rates and your safe sex requirements."

A different perspective came from the Women's Coalition for the Abolition of Prostitution, which includes groups such as the Canadian

Association of Sexual Assault Centres, Native Women's Association of Canada, Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies, Vancouver Rape Relief and Women's Shelter, and others.

The Coalition expressed "mixed feelings" about the ruling: "We are critical of the upholding of the communication provision with no differentiation between the women in prostitution and the men who are buying sexual services. As interveners we argued to the court that women in prostitution should not be criminalized. We know that the majority of women enter prostitution due to conditions of economic, social and racial inequality... Aboriginal women are over-represented and victimized in the sex industry, which testifies to the link between racism and misogyny in prostitution.

"We are relieved that the court upheld the living off the avails provisions in relation to exploitation but are very troubled by the striking down of the bawdy house provisions. It gives men permission now to buy women in indoor prostitution.

"The Court of Appeal of Ontario has clearly recognized what the Women's Coalition has been arguing: prostitution is inherently dangerous in virtually any circumstances. We concur with the Court, that a modern, comprehensive legislative scheme could reflect the values of dignity and equality."

Hilla Kerner for The Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centers said, "We are calling on the Canadian parliament to follow Sweden and other countries by bringing forward legislation that in one hand prevent men from buying sexual services and on the other hand provide economic security to women to protect them from resorting to prostitution". ●

## Federal Budget cuts jobs and services...

continued from page 5

eclipsed by the scale of spending cuts." For example, spending on the Youth Employment Strategy is boosted by only \$50 million for two years, and an older worker program is increased by just \$6 million over three years. The National Research Council's program to support innovation by small and medium-sized businesses got a \$110 million spending boost, and the Budget announced \$150 million over two years in small community infrastructure projects.

These amounts are dwarfed by the tax breaks which the Harper Tories call "the best way to create jobs." Corporate tax cuts will cost \$13 billion in lost revenues in the fiscal year 2012-13 alone. The CLC wants to raise the federal corporate tax rate from today's 15% to 19.5%, still one of the lowest in the G7 countries. This change would raise about \$10 billion this year.

Another major theme of the CLC's budget response has been the attack on public pensions, which fall well short of replacing the 50 to 70% of pre-retirement income needed to maintain living standards. Only about one in four workers in the private sector now belongs to an employer pension plan, and others rely on RRSPs which generate low and uncertain returns.

Fully one-half of "baby boomer" middle income earners born between 1945 and 1970 will face an income shortfall of at least 25% after retirement, says the CLC. One

in three seniors already qualifies for the Guaranteed Income Supplement to Old Age Security. Effectively, taxpayers are picking up the cost of inadequate employer pensions.

But as expected, the budget will increase the age of eligibility for OAS and GIS from age 65 to 67, phased in between 2023 and 2029. The CLC argues that "the increase in the retirement age seems mainly intended to force mainly lower income workers to stay in the workforce longer."

Raising the retirement age will impact those who would qualify for the GIS supplement, especially older workers who already face very high rates of poverty. Future seniors with low incomes will be compelled to either "save more" (not a realistic option), work longer and more hours (difficult for many in poor health), or live in poverty.

On another critical issue, fewer than 40% of the 1.4 million unemployed workers in Canada receive Employment Insurance benefits today. But the Budget announces that it will "strengthen and clarify what is required of (regular EI) claimants" taking into account their individual claims history. In other words, new job search requirements will further reduce the number of EI claimants.

The CLC's conclusion: "Given that growth is expected to remain modest and unemployment rates are projected to remain high over this period, Budget 2012 can scarcely be described as a jobs and growth budget." ●

## Earth Day Facts

Source - <http://sustainability.und.edu/earthday.html>

\* Earth will travel 1.6 million miles in its annual journey around the

Sun, the 4.6-billionth such round-trip. It will rotate about its axis exactly once.

\* 40,000 acres of land, an area about the size of Boise, Idaho will be converted to desert.

\* 200 million tons of topsoil will be lost through erosion from croplands.

\* 50,000 acres of forest will be eliminated.

\* Between 20 and 500 species will disappear from the planet. Extinctions are occurring 100 to 1,000 times faster than the normal background rate.

\* Burning 3 billion gallons of oil and other fossil fuels will release 70 million tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, nudging the planet's temperature upward.

\* 3 million tons of iron ore, 575 thousand tons of tin, 330 thousand tons of bauxite (for aluminum), and 34 thousand tons of copper will be ripped from the Earth.

\* 800 million people will go to bed hungry.

\* 18,000 children will die from chronic hunger, malnutrition, and related diseases.

\* The world will spend \$3 billion on military expenditures, half by the United States. ●

## People's Voice deadlines

May 1-15 issue: Thursday, April 19

May 16-31 issue: Thursday, May 3

Send submissions to PV Editorial Office,  
706 Clark Drive, Vancouver, V5L 3J1  
<[pvoice@telus.net](mailto:pvoice@telus.net)>

## Climate change debates....

continued from page 7

emissions over the past decade while Australian emissions have continued to increase.

### 6) "So what?"

Some deniers argue that climate change, whether natural or human-induced, will happen anyway. It is unstoppable, so why bother trying. We could all do with less polar ice (the Antarctic will be easier to mine!) and a few less glaciers. With

the changing weather patterns, we might even be able to plant crops in the desert.

Again, a shallow and unscientific analysis. We most certainly will not be able to "cherry-pick" the plethora of changes that will occur with global warming. Many species will not survive the rapid acceleration of heat. It is not just a question of relocating several million people when the oceans rise. If the ocean becomes acidic, most current species dependent on it will die. It is entirely possible

that we will end up with a dead planet in the not-very-distant future.

It is no longer, really, a question of whether global warming is happening, it is a question of how much Planet Earth can stand. Our future, the future of the globe, is too important to allow privateer corporate barons to exploit on a rampaging, cut-throat basis, without regard to the total ecology. Now more than ever, the people of the world, the 99 percent if you will, must grasp the ownership of the Earth's major resources in order to save it!

"Self regulation", whether in the media, advertising or problem gambling, simply does not work. "Carbon trading schemes", taxes and regulation are only half-baked measures designed to make capitalism behave like a good citizen - it never does. The production, use and distribution of energy is too important to be left in the hands of profit-motivated cowboys. It is a "commanding heights" industry!

This is the very worst time for governments to be privatising electricity. Working people must assert and extend their management over such vital resources. The future of Spaceship Earth demands it. ●

## In Memory of TOM BULL

Anna Yanovsky  
East Toronto Club,  
CPC

## Texas fight for democracy....

continued from page 9

party who is a strikebreaker, a provocateur, engaged in espionage, an informer, or who advocates force and violence or terrorism, or who participates in the activities of any group which acts to undermine or overthrow any democratic institutions through which the majority of the American people can express their right to determine their destiny."

Someone recently observed that the definition of "communist" held by the state of Texas excludes all members of the Communist Party USA.

In fact, most CPUSA members would probably support legislation which would prohibit individuals who meet the state definition of a "communist" from holding public office or a state government job as long as the inappropriate label of "communist" is not used to categorise such terrorists.

It is important to remember that communists work to form coalitions of people in an effort to build mass

movements to fight injustice and advance the interests of working people. We must start in our own back yard. If we are unable to effectively fight for our interests as communists, how can we expect working people to fight for their rights and interests?

There needs to be a worldwide campaign to repeal anti-communist legislation in Texas and other states of the US.

Indeed, anti-communist legislation around the world should be fought and defeated once and for all. Such an effort has the potential to force rightwingers into a corner.

If rightwingers oppose

repealing anti-communist legislation, they will be opposing democracy. If rightwingers support repealing anti-communist legislation, they will be voting to support communists.

Perhaps this effort will redefine what "freedom" means in the US.

To raise your objections please write to: Secretary of the Senate Patsy Spaw, The Senate of Texas, PO Box 12068, Austin, TX 78711-2068 or email: [patsy.spaw@senate.state.tx.us](mailto:patsy.spaw@senate.state.tx.us)

Messages of solidarity can be sent to [gerrard.sables@phonecoop.coop](mailto:gerrard.sables@phonecoop.coop) which will be forwarded to Houston communists. ●

## REDS ON THE WEB

[www.comunist-party.ca](http://www.comunist-party.ca)

[www.peoplesvoice.ca](http://www.peoplesvoice.ca)

[www.ycl-ljc.ca](http://www.ycl-ljc.ca)

[www.solidnet.org](http://www.solidnet.org)

## What's Left

### Victoria, BC

**31st Annual Walk for Peace, Earth, and Justice**, Sat., April 21, gather at the Legislature 11:30 am, walk at 12 noon to Centennial Square for speeches, entertainment, info tables. Call 250-888-2588.

### Vancouver, BC

**Earth Day Parade**, Sunday, April 22, 11 am-3 pm, march on Commercial from Broadway Skytrain to Grandview Park celebration, organized by Wilderness Committee and Youth for Climate Justice.

**Solidarity Notes Labour Choir**, concert Sunday, April 22, 7 pm, Unitarian Church (49th & Oak), tickets \$20 from People's Co-op Books.

**Left Film Night**, Sunday, April 29, 7 pm Centre for Socialist Education, 706 Clark Dr. This month: "Class Dismissed", critical documentary on TV portrayals of the working class. Free, call 604-255-2041 for info.

**May Day Rally**, gather 3 pm, Tue., May 1, Art Gallery, march at 4 pm. Organized by Vancouver & District Labour Council, Occupy Vancouver & others.

### Edmonton, AB

**May Day rally**, Tuesday, May 1, gather 5:30 pm Corbett Hall lawn, march down Whyte Ave. to End of Steel Park.

**Cultural Dinner Celebration for Victor Jara Dance Group**, Sat., May 19, 7 pm, Holiday Inn, 4485 Gateway Boulevard (Evergreen Ballroom), to recognize its long artistic history and contributions, donation \$40, tickets from Panaderia Latina in Millwoods 5716-19A Ave., for info 780-462-5295.

### Winnipeg, MB

**Marxism course**, information or to register, contact the Communist Party, phone 586-7824 or send email to [cpc-mb@changetheworldmb.ca](mailto:cpc-mb@changetheworldmb.ca)

### Toronto, ON

**Dinner and Evening in praise of Dave Rigby**, Sat., April 14, doors 6 pm. Ausp: Central Committee, CPC. For tickets and info, call 416-469-2446.

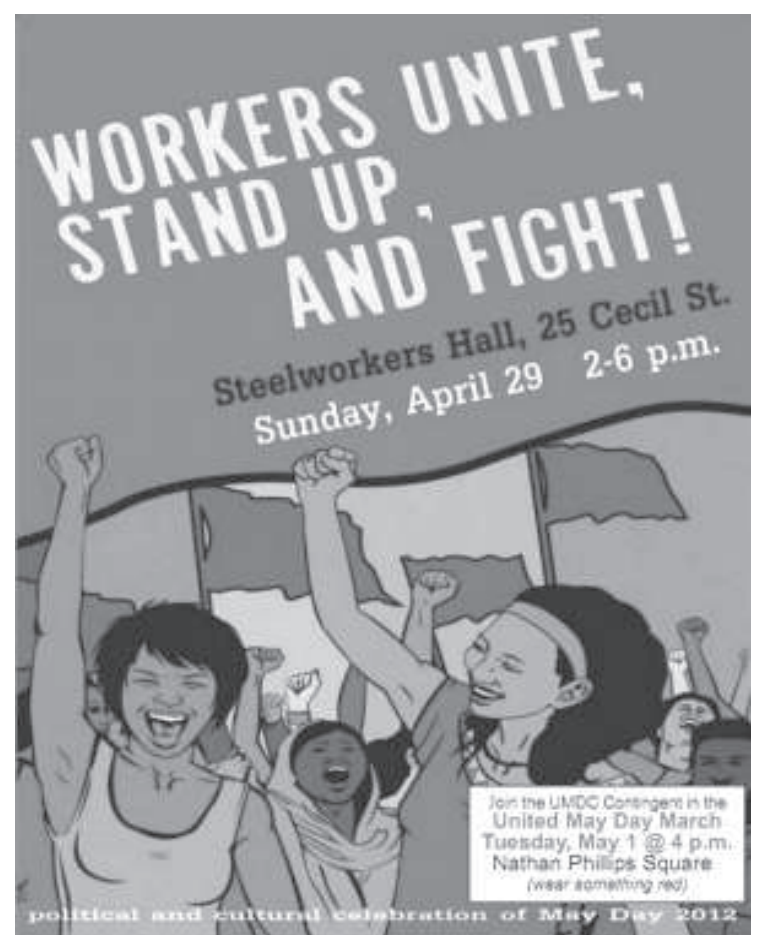
**La Colmenita (The Beehive), the Cuban Children's Theatre Group**, performances April 19 (6:30 pm) and April 21 (7 pm), Royal Theatre, 608 College St., advance tickets \$25 from Soundscapes, 572 College. For more information, call 647-403-7308, or see [www.lacolmenita.cultu.ca](http://www.lacolmenita.cultu.ca).

**Ontario Day of Action: Demand Prosperity, Not Austerity**, Sat., April 21, 3-5 pm, Queen's Park, organized by Ontario Federation of Labour and allies. For info call OFL, 416-571-3087.

**Workers Unite, Stand Up and Fight!**, celebrate May Day, the international worker's day. Performers, speakers, children's program, food & refreshments, free admission. Sunday, April 29, 2-6 pm, Steelworker's Hall, 25 Cecil St. Visit "Mayday Cultural Event" on Facebook for info, or phone 416-469-2446.

### Montreal, QC

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



### SPEAKERS - MUSIC - CULTURAL PERFORMANCES

FREE ADMISSION  
Food & refreshments

Family-friendly event with  
children's program

**Sponsored by United May Day Committee of Toronto**  
Endorsed by dozens of labour, political, community and solidarity organizations

For more information, visit our Facebook event page: "May Day Cultural Event"

# Alberta Communists challenge Big Oil regime

## Special to PV

Alberta has a reputation as a right-wing province, in part due to its political history. From 1935 to 1971, Alberta was governed by Social Credit, which quickly dropped its populist origins to become a mainstream pro-business party. The past 41 years have seen regular majorities for the Conservatives, closely linked to Big Oil and other corporate interests. When voters go to the polls on April 23, the main contenders are the Conservatives led by "moderate" Premier Alison Redford, and Danielle Smith's Wildrose, a more stridently right-wing party.

But Alberta also has a story of progressive politics, in Edmonton, where the NDP has often elected sizable numbers of MLAs, but also in some eastern and northern rural areas, and in coal-mining communities such as Drumheller and Blairmore, where the Communist Party of Canada had a major influence starting in

the 1920s.

Reflecting this history and the urgent issues of the 21st century,



two Communist Party-Alberta candidates are on the ballot for the April 23 election. Ten thousand copies of the party's election flyer are being delivered, featuring the slogan, "We are the 99% who demand: Put People Before Profit!"

Running in Edmonton Mill Creek is the party's provincial leader, Naomi Rankin, a retired computer programmer who has been a political activist in peace, women's and social justice groups since the age of 15.

Joining her in the campaign is Bonnie Devine in the working class riding of Calgary East. A telecommunications worker, Bonnie Devine is the president of her union local and a prominent anti-racist activist.

Despite Alberta's other reputation as a "well-off" province, working people and their families are under sharp attack, says the Communist Party: "Alberta's economy is geared to uncontrolled growth with record profits for energy corporations and financial speculators in the

midst of stagnation elsewhere. Contradictions abound. We are told there are plenty of jobs and a shortage of labour, but unemployment stays high. We are told that our quality of life depends on the success of oil companies, but their profits are not reinvested in us. We are told that Alberta is a land of plenty, yet food bank use soars. The Redford government will be rolling out 'austerity' because the game plan is to discipline the working class and roll back the gains we made in previous decades. The Occupy movement is the most recent dramatic example of confronting this agenda. Keep popular dissent growing by voting Communist."

The Communist election message goes on to describe the situation facing workers in Alberta:

"Longer hours, worsening working conditions, larger debts, higher rents, underfunded reduced quality health care, increasing tuition, over-crowded classrooms, not enough schools, and lack of affordable childcare. Low paid

workers working two, three and four jobs and using food banks. Students who should be studying are working more hours to pay for education. Children are entering the workplace in greater numbers to help with family living costs. All this while big oil companies continue to post record profits!

"And what is the forty-year regime's response? More of the same 'lease, dig and dump.' 'Don't touch the brake' has been dressed up in a new suit - 'sustainable growth' for big engineering, construction and oil companies. While the most vulnerable workers labour without union protection, oil executives and speculators are making out like bandits. Instead of representing all Albertans, Premier Redford is sent by Harper to Washington DC to assure Big Oil that their plans and profits are safe with the Progressive Conservatives in Alberta continuing in power."

This sharp criticism is accompanied by a call to "replace the corporate agenda with a people's agenda!" •

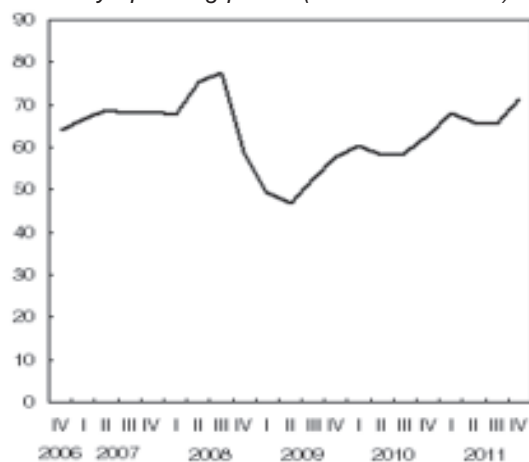
The Communist election message and platform can be downloaded at [www. communistparty-alberta.ca](http://www. communistparty-alberta.ca)

## Profits near record highs, jobless stuck

Official unemployment figures for January and February showed tiny improvements, but 1.4 million Canadians are still out of work nearly four years after the economic shock of 2008. Statistics Canada says that 7.2% of the Canadian workforce are jobless and actively seeking employment, down slightly from the rates from 2011; however, this does not account for hundreds of thousands who have dropped out of the workforce, unable to find employment, or many more stuck working a few hours a week in part-time, casual, low-paid, dead-end jobs.

On the other hand, operating profits at Canadian corporations increased to \$71.4 billion for the fourth quarter of 2011, up 9% from the previous quarter,

Quarterly operating profits (Statistics Canada)



says Statistics Canada. In total, profits for the year 2011 hit \$264.8 billion, recovering to almost the historic peak reached during the pre-recession period.

Corporations in 15 of the 22 industry groups tracked by StatsCan reported higher profits in the fourth quarter of 2011. The profits at financial firms increased 21.8 per cent to \$17.9 billion for the 4th quarter, led by insurance companies which racked up just over \$1.9 billion. Remember that next time you look at the monthly insurance payments on your bank statement.

Profits in manufacturing industries led the profit parade in the non-financial sector in the fourth quarter, increasing 19.9% to \$14.2 billion. During the entire twelve months of 2011, manufacturing corporations raked in \$49.5 billion - just when many people wondered if this sector still exists in Canada!

Looking at the oil and gas sector, the BFFs ("best friends forever") of the Harper Tories, operating profits for 2011 surpassed \$16.1 billion, including a tidy sum of \$4.4 billion during the final three months of the year. Note that "petroleum and coal products manufacturers" are placed in a separate category by StatsCanada, which reports that corporations in this sector took in over \$11 billion for the year.

Summing up, 2011 was a great year for the bosses, whether they own corporations engaged in digging up our natural resources, transforming these into commodities, or keeping track of all the wealth created by workers. But for the vast majority of the population, it was not so great. Just another year of the capitalist rule: the rich get richer, and the poor get poorer. •

**"There is an alternative - where the tremendous wealth created by Alberta workers is used for the people's needs"**

*Excerpts from the April 23 election platform of the Communist Party-Alberta*

### QUALITY OF LIFE AND SOCIAL SERVICES

- \* Reduce the cost of shelter: Fund CMHC insurance costs for first time home buyers; impose rent controls; build 100,000 provincially subsidized housing units; public ownership of utilities to reduce costs to consumers.
- \* Provide quality health care - publicly funded and delivered: End all user fees; expand medicare with dental care, prescriptions, eye care and health promotion; increase staffing, reduce wait times; provide quality public facilities for an aging population - including home-care and institutional care.
- \* Create free child care programs: Fully funded childcare; before and after-school care programs; a nurse in every school.
- \* Fund all public education: More teachers and allied health professionals; no parent fees for school trips, school supplies, sports, cultural programs or text books; reduced hours for teachers; more apprenticeship training; no post-secondary school fees; free public transportation to and from school; free lunch programs in all public schools.

### ECONOMY

- \* Public ownership in energy corporations; increase energy royalties to at least average world rates; stop fuelling the American war machine; diversify sales of energy resources to domestic and foreign customers pledged to peaceful use; use a portion of oil revenues to diversify the economy; end dependence on energy extraction; research and

development in post-carbon technologies; process energy resources in Alberta - keep good jobs here.

### WORKING CONDITIONS

- \* Repeal barriers to unionization; double the minimum wage, indexed to inflation and no exceptions; 32-hour work week with no loss in take-home pay; full rights for foreign workers to unite, not divide workers; end child labour in Alberta.

### ENVIRONMENT

- \* Enforce strict environmental controls; prohibitive fines to polluters; criminal charges for corporate executives. major publicly funded research into alternative energy and non-polluting oil sands extraction, with public ownership of patents; require full environmental clean-up before new oil sands projects; take public ownership in energy projects - up to 100% - to obtain public access to corporate financial secrets and internal reports on environmental matters.

### DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

- \* Labour rights are human rights!
- \* Pay equity legislation
- \* First Nations community rights to self-government, environmental protection, and economic development
- \* Full human rights protection to lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgendered/questioning (LGBTQ) persons
- \* Proportional representation - make every vote count
- \* Public funding of all registered parties

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