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people's VOICE

Communists in Convention...

See pages 5

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GLOBAL WARMING



HOT EARTH:

What's the cause?

Is there an alternative?

- See page 7 -

"The global crisis is far from over, and the drumbeats of war grow louder with each passing day"

The solution? Put people and nature before profit! See page 6



3 BC election

B.C. voters go to the polls on May 14, and the Liberals may be on the way out. Three Communist candidates in the race have a platform for real change, not just a new face in the Premier's office.

INSIDE

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Drone war pushback

The U.S. and its allies claim that drone warfare is cheap and "effective". Now, anti-war groups are saying "put the drones down."

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Millionaire's tax?

The Workers' Party of Belgium has made big political gains over the last few years. Today they are campaigning for a "millionaire's tax" to help reverse years of attacks on social programs.

Review could affect Temporary Foreign Workers Program

www.bcfederationist.com

BC's Building Trades unions say a Federal Court review of Temporary Foreign Worker permits granted to HD Mining to bring 201 Chinese miners to BC could result in significant changes to the TFW Program in Canada.

The judicial review is the result of two BC Building Trades unions objecting to HD Mining obtaining Temporary Foreign Worker permits for coal mine development near Tumbler Ridge through a Federal Court action started last fall.

"This judicial review of the HD Mining permits will be the most comprehensive examination of Canada's Temporary Foreign

Worker Program ever conducted," says Brian Cochrane, Business Manager of the International Union of Operating Engineers Local 115, one of two unions granted the judicial review.

"We know that there are over

Other voices...

300,000 Temporary Foreign Workers employed in Canada today and 70,000 of those in BC but we've never seen the internal workings of how the federal government makes decisions on

granting work permits to companies requesting them," Cochrane said.

"HD Mining's work permits were granted despite 300 Canadians applying for those jobs and many of them with years of mining experience," Cochrane said. "Something is fundamentally wrong with the Temporary Foreign Worker Program and this judicial review will help get to the bottom of it."

Mark Olsen, Business Manager for the Construction and Specialized Workers Union [Labourers' Union] Local 1611 - the other Building Trades union in the case - says Canadian workers want to know why Mandarin language was marked as a

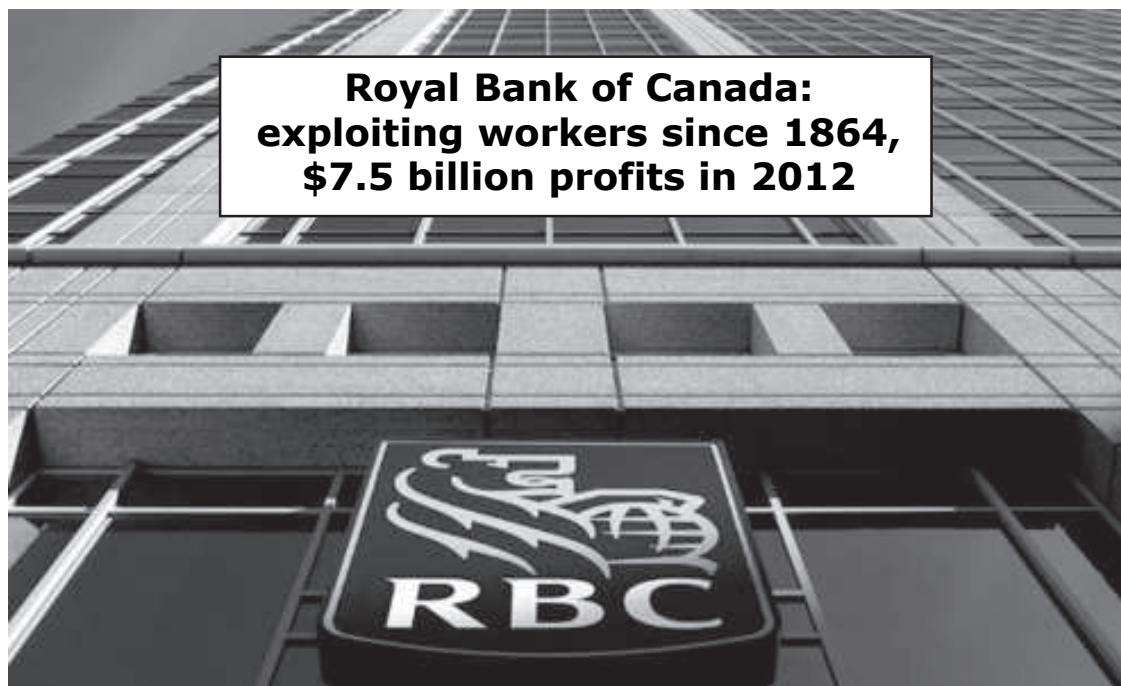
requirement in an HD Mining application to Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, the federal ministry responsible for Temporary Foreign Workers.

"The documents we have already obtained through our court action clearly show the Temporary Foreign Worker Program is not working for Canadians," Olsen said. "I suspect that other documents being disclosed for the first time in court this week - likely on [April 10] when we make our arguments - will provide even more evidence that our concerns are just the tip of the proverbial iceberg."

BC Building Trades Council President Lee Loftus said the unions took on the costly legal

action because they have increasingly seen Temporary Foreign Workers being used by employers to save money, not because there are no Canadian workers available for the jobs.

"The Temporary Foreign Worker Program is only supposed to exist to fill positions that no Canadians are qualified to take - not to be a source of cheap labour," Loftus said. "We find it astonishing that the number of Temporary Foreign Workers in BC has gone from 19,000 in 2002 to 70,000 in 2011. That shows a clear failure by the provincial and federal government at the very least to ensure adequate skills training and education programs for BC workers," Loftus said. ●



Royal Bank of Canada: exploiting workers since 1864, \$7.5 billion profits in 2012

PV Fund Drive nears 40% of target

In this issue of People's Voice, readers can find many reasons to support Canada's working class press. For one example, PV is responding quickly to the latest revelations about corporate abuses of the Temporary Foreign Workers Program. While the right-wing tries to fan the flames of racism, People's Voice is calling for unity, helping to build understanding that the TFWP is an employer strategy to drive down wages of all working people in Canada.

This issue will be distributed at many Earth Day events, so we made sure to include content on the urgent topic of climate change. Unlike the "go green" drivel in the mainstream media,

we accuse the real culprits destroying the planet - transnational corporations pushing relentlessly for maximum profits.

Since our previous issue, most of the People's Voice crew have been immersed in the Communist Party's convention held April 5-7 in Toronto (see page 5). About \$3,000 was raised at the convention, and another \$2,000 in other recent donations. This means that five weeks into the 2013 Fund Drive, we are close to the 40% mark of our annual campaign to raise \$50,000. A total of nearly \$19,000 has been turned in, including about \$10,300 from Ontario, which leads the race.

Another welcome development is that friends from outside Canada have now contributed close to \$2,000, a marvellous sign of international working class solidarity.

More details will have to wait for our next issue, after the dust settles from our recent travels.

But we do remind readers that comrade Liz Payne, a frequent contributor to our sister publication, the *Morning Star*, will be the featured guest at People's Voice events this spring, speaking on the impact of the British Conservative government's attacks against women in the UK. In Vancouver, she will headline our Victory Banquet marking the 20th anniversary of People's Voice, Saturday, June 8, at the Russian Hall, 600 Campbell Avenue. A few days later, she will speak at a PV event in Toronto. Liz Payne is the vice-chair of the Communist Party of Britain, and the women's organizer of the CPB. She is also a long-time activist for solidarity with the Iranian people, and we are delighted to host her visit to Canada.

Questions about the Fund Drive? Feel free to call editor Kimball Cariou at 604-255-2041, or our business manager Gabriel Au, 604-254-9836. We'll be glad to hear your ideas and satisfy your curiosity about the paper!

UFCW hits Tories on RBC scandal

UFCW Canada, the country's largest private-sector union, has condemned the Harper government's latest failure to protect workers, while further victimizing Canada's most precarious workforce.

"This shameful deceit is just another example of how the temporary foreign worker programs were designed to benefit a handful of wealthy companies and Harper's super-rich corporate friends," says Wayne Hanley, the national president of the United Food and Commercial Workers Union (UFCW Canada).

"For RBC to claim that this was a supplier's decision displays their lack of corporate governance and is the same kind of toxic, anti-worker environment the Harper government constantly holds up as their formula for a 'successful' Canada. In this Conservative scheme everyone is victimized."

"Given what we know now, the RBC case is more than just a case of migrant workers being hired to do the work of Canadians," says Hanley. "The workers couldn't have been hired without the employer proving they didn't have Canadians to do the job. That is the case in some sectors,

but clearly not here. Either the government turned a blind eye, or the job search data supplied by the employer to show it couldn't find qualified Canadians was bogus. Which is it?"

"...The system has been broken for decades," says Naveen Mehta, UFCW Canada's director of human rights. "The RBC case is just the latest example of a shameless system without controls, where corporations only do what is right for them."

In 2012, the number of temporary foreign workers in Canada exceeded the number of landed immigrants. "In some sectors, there may be shortages of Canadian workers able to fill positions but typically, unless they are working in a union environment, the workers brought in to do the work are grossly exploited and often treated like indentured servants," says Mehta. "Any talk by Harper and his government to fix this has been just talk. The reality is they have engineered a program that leads to a low wage economy, where the rights of both domestic and foreign workers are trashed to bolster the corporate bottom line." ●

Here's my contribution to the PV Fund Drive!

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

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*Send your contribution to:
People's Voice, 706 Clark Drive, Vancouver, BC, V5L 3J1*

MAY DAY 2013 GREETING ADS

To mark May Day 2013, 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 19; if PV is preparing the layout, the deadline is April 17. Please check with us about the format if your ad is being sent electronically.

Ad rates (based on 5 column page):

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

Dump the B.C. Liberals, fight for real change! Vote Communist on May 14

Commentary from the Communist Party of BC

The May 14 B.C. election campaign comes at a time of capitalist crisis and "austerity" across the planet. Corporate profits are breaking records, while wages and pensions are slashed. The gap between the ultra-rich and working people keeps getting wider. Social and equality gains won by decades of struggle are being rolled back. Billions suffer poverty, hunger and disease, while the U.S. and its NATO allies waste a trillion dollars a year on militarism and war. Climate change is devastating the environment, while governments block serious action to cut greenhouse gas emissions.

Here in British Columbia - the "best place on earth" which was

stolen from Indigenous peoples and then looted in the mad rush to exploit workers for corporate profits - the story is the same.

Gordon Campbell's tax cuts shifted billions from the public treasury, into the bank accounts of the wealthy. After spending \$6 billion to host the Olympics, B.C. still has the second-highest child poverty in Canada. More than 200,000 workers are jobless, schools and day cares keep closing, housing costs are astronomical, and thousands remain homeless. The salmon fishery is in crisis, raw log exports have skyrocketed, and "fracking", tar sands pipelines and tankers pose grave environmental dangers. In short, the Liberals have been a three-term disaster.

Working people in B.C. face a crucial choice: keep waging

defensive battles, or unite and fight back! Our collective resistance against capitalism, militarism, racism and environmental destruction continues every day, in workplaces, schools and neighbourhoods, from the big cities to island communities, the interior and the north. On May 14, we have another chance to resist, this time at the ballot box. We can't let the Liberals and their corporate friends back into office again.

Many voters see the NDP as the only vehicle to change British Columbia, since Adrian Dix has taken up some important issues and demands. But the NDP deliberately plays down popular expectations, warning us not to demand big changes.

Electing an NDP government is not enough to reverse the right-

wing policies imposed by Campbell and Clark - and it won't stop the capitalist assault on workers, Indigenous peoples, women, students, seniors and the environment. We need to build a much broader struggle for a "People's Alternative" to corporate greed.

A vote for a Communist candidate is not "wasted" - it's the most powerful statement you can make on Election Day. Electing even one Communist would give all working people a strong voice in the Legislature. A larger Communist vote will help set the stage for bigger popular struggles no matter which party governs in Victoria. The Communist Party fights for human and planetary survival against the threat of capitalist destruction. We call for socialism, a society in which the economy is owned and democratically controlled by the people, not by private capitalists, in a world where exploitation, hunger, injustice and war have been replaced by human freedom, equality, peace, and genuine environmental sustainability.

In this election, candidates for the Communist Party of BC are campaigning on a platform for radical change, including:

- * restore pre-2001 tax rates on the wealthy and the corporations, which would add \$2 billion annually to provincial revenues.
- * adopt Labour Code amendments to protect and enhance the rights to organize, bargain collectively, and strike.
- * block "fracking" and tar sands pipelines.
- * end raw log exports.
- * purchase 1000 new transit buses and institute a \$1 single zone fare for the Lower Mainland.
- * halt the "Run of the Rivers" giveaway to private interests.
- * stop P3 projects and privatization in the health, education and transportation sectors.
- * scrap the "Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement", and demand Canada's withdrawal from the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement with the European Union (CETA), the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), NAFTA and other globalization agreements.
- * build 5000 new social housing units annually.
- * restore \$250 million annually to the public school system across B.C.
- * raise social assistance rates by 50%.
- * increase the minimum wage to \$18/hour.
- * roll back post-secondary tuition fees, and expand apprenticeship programs.
- * abolish MSP premiums and other health care user fees.
- * legislate full recognition of Aboriginal title to unceded territories.
- * enact a democratic "mixed-member" proportional representation electoral system.
- * guarantee full Labour Code protections for agricultural labourers, migrant workers, and temporary foreign workers.
- * direct all School Boards to adopt policies to protect LGBTQ students and staff.

Candidates for the Communist Party of BC include:

Peter Marcus (Vancouver-Mount Pleasant)

George Gidora (Delta North)

Kimball Cariou (North Vancouver-Lonsdale)

For information, contact the CPBC, 604-254-9836, or cpinfo.bc@gmail.com



KIMBALL CARIU
North Vancouver-Lonsdale



GEORGE GIDORA
Delta North



PETER MARCUS
Vancouver-Mount Pleasant

Don't believe the hype! RBC layoffs not about foreigners vs. Canadians

By Chris Ramsaroop Syed Hussan, Rabble.ca

Once again the temporary foreign worker program has erupted in controversy where it is being used to pit workers against each other.

News reports point out that the Royal Bank of Canada has decided to move its information technology department abroad. To do so, it has brought in temporary workers from India that will wear the ropes from their Canadian counterparts.

Following this training, the Canadian workers will be laid off, and the Indian workers will transition the IT department to India and return there.

This is not a story of so-called "foreign" workers coming to replace "Canadians". It is a story of broken immigration laws where workers can be brought in to do short-term dirty work that no one else wants to do and can then be removed at the whim of the employers.

Many facts are yet unknown: how much are the migrant workers being paid? Did they have to pay fees to get these jobs? Were they promised citizenship? Will they be able to get basic services while here? All this needs to be determined.

What we do know is that 45 bank workers are being laid off to be replaced temporarily by migrant workers. This sort of ruthless denial of work to everyday people is deplorable and not surprising. The Canada Centre for Policy Alternatives believes that

Federal government layoffs of public servants will result in nearly 70,000 job losses by 2014-15. This past March, Canada lost over 54,000 net jobs because of Conservative policies. Getting rid of workers is what the Tories do best.

At the same time, Employment Insurance has been cut so that people are forced to go back to work sooner, at lower wages, and further away from their homes. Add to this mix a free-for-all season

on migrant workers whose labour and immigration rights are being trampled upon and we have the perfect recipe for the downward spiral of wages.

Responding to any one of these concerns will result in incorrect solutions. The answer cannot be banning migrant workers from entering Canada.

We must emphasize an expansive, robust and inclusive immigration framework with full citizenship rights and benefits for migrants coming to work in this country. This must be done with corresponding labour reforms that protect the rights of all workers - migrants and Canadians. Doing so will mean an upward push on wages, and the ability for more people to safely fight and organize against the Harper agenda.

In a global climate where temporary work programs are all the rage, demanding an end to them simply replicates the debates of the past. Instead we have to look at the bigger picture and expose the hypocrisies where - through trade agreements - money and corporations can move freely but the movement of people is increasingly restricted. "Managed migration," "guest workers" and "temporary foreign workers" are really code words to deny certain communities and benefits and entitlements we all should enjoy.

We need to caution if we continue down the same path of blaming migrant workers for stealing Canadian jobs, and if we do not heed the lessons of the past, we will fan the fires of xenophobia and racism.

This is the time for a national conversation on immigration, unemployment, work and access to benefits and entitlements. A conversation that aims to ensure that all people are able to live with dignity rather than being pitted against each other.

All workers want a better future to build our communities and to provide for our families. Let us not be divided.

(Syed Hussan and Chris Ramsaroop are migrant justice organizers based in Toronto.)

UNITY!

NIAGARA NEWS BULLETIN

People's Voice Niagara Bureau

* Laid off without notice or severance, **Vertis printing plant workers** are owed an average of \$30,000 each. With community allies, they took their plant picket to Lowe's for informational leafletting, when they found out Lowe's was providing crates to move equipment out. The bankrupt company transferred the equipment (the workers' only leverage) to another company which then escaped liability for what's owed to the workers who created the wealth.

* **Brock University** backed off from disciplining (ranging from fines to expulsions) two students from an unofficial campus animal rights group, after they took their case public through local newspapers. The students had protested animal testing and screened a political documentary in the cafeteria.

* In addition to losing already scheduled maternity, pediatric, and mental health services at the Niagara Falls and Welland hospitals in favour of a P3 half an hour away, the **two hospitals are also now losing all or part of their chaplain services** to the P3. With help from city council, sixty Welland protesters went to the provincial capitol in Toronto to meet with the health minister, who still wouldn't budge on the cuts.

News for people, not for profits!



EDITORIALS

Reject "worker-vs.-worker" divisions

The latest example of employer abuse of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program give new reason to abolish the TFWP. The situation is under official review, but it seems that either RBC Investor Services in Toronto, and/or the iGATE Corp. transnational, have violated the terms of the TFWP, which bans the replacement of already-employed Canadian workers. An estimated 45 employees, many at a point in their careers where it would be difficult to find other work, may lose their jobs.

Workers need to focus on the key issue here. The Royal Bank raked in an astounding \$7.5 billion in profits last year. But never satisfied, capitalists relentlessly maximize profits, squeezing every possible dollar out of employees and customers. For RBC, the chance to dump a few dozen well-paid employees by offshoring this work was too tempting to resist.

The story of capitalist expansion in North America is a catalog of similar strategies. For some 200 years, industrial and financial bosses have sought new ways to pit workers against each other, fanning the flames of racism and sexism to create artificial divisions. The aim is to expand what Marx termed "the reserve army of labour," unemployed or under-employed workers forced by hunger and debt to seek employment for lower wages.

It must always be stressed that new sections of the working class are also exploited in this process. Workers from every corner of the world have the human right to seek a better life, including in imperialist countries such as Canada. The labour movement is correct to demand that corporations stop flouting the law in their drive to push down wages, and also to help integrate new migrant and immigrant workers into the trade union movement. The RBC case is proof that all-in unity must be an urgent priority for the labour movement, in order to head off the emergence of racist, fascist, anti-immigrant forces which have badly weakened the working class struggle in some European countries.

Solidarity with Raymond Robinson

Although Aboriginal grand elder Raymond Robinson has ended his fast, the issues he raises remain unresolved. Robinson is from Cross Lake in northern Manitoba, where his people were "transferred" by the Conservative government of Prime Minister John A. MacDonald more than a century ago, far from their homeland. Such "transfers" were part of the overall colonisation of indigenous territories in the Americas, for the benefit of transnational corporations involved in resource extraction and profiteering.

Here in Canada, Aboriginal peoples continue to live in conditions of colonial inequality and poverty, in homes filled with mold and lacking clean water, the targets of police, courts and prisons, their national equality rights still denied by the racist Canadian state. Raymond Robinson began his fast to protest arbitrary Conservative funding cuts for Aboriginal programs, calling for a "nation-tonation" meeting between AFN Chief Shawn Atleo and Prime Minister Stephen Harper, to address these urgent problems.

Instead, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Minister Bernard Valcourt offered only to visit Cross Lake if Robinson ended his hunger strike. Valcourt laughed at the proposal for a Harper-Atleo meeting, telling Robinson "that will never happen."

As bitter enemies of Aboriginal rights since the time of Confederation, the Conservatives can always be expected to stick to a hardline stance. Only a powerful alliance of the working class of all nations in Canada can begin to reverse this racist position and lay the groundwork for a genuinely new, equal and voluntary relationship. For his fearless stand against national oppression, we send our full solidarity to elder Raymond Robinson.

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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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Truth in advertising

The woman who tore Britain apart

From the Morning Star (UK)

Margaret Thatcher, the most hated British prime minister of the 20th century, died today (April 8). Victims of her vicious 1980s onslaught against the working class refused to show any sorrow over the final demise of the frail 87-year-old after a stroke. Spontaneous exultation broke out across Britain as news of her death spread like wildfire.

The strongest waves of satisfaction were in former mining and industrial communities ravaged by Thatcher, and among labour movement activists throughout the land. Following vocal protests, No 10 shelved plans for a state funeral, announcing that she will receive a ceremonial funeral at St Paul's Cathedral.

Thatcher blighted Britain during her ruthless rule from 1979 to 1990. She once regarded herself as the indestructible goddess of rapacious capitalism, often deploying the royal "We" during her arrogant diatribes.

Overseas she was a friend to tyranny who attacked Nelson

Mandela and the ANC as terrorists but praised mass-murdering Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet for "bringing democracy to Chile."

Communist Party general secretary Robert Griffiths said: "The Thatcher governments inflicted enormous damage on the fabric of British society. Many working-class communities were

Guest Editorial

torn apart by mass unemployment, poverty, drugs and alcohol abuse as the result of Tory policies. She and her regime waged war against organised labour at home, privatised valuable utilities, locked Britain into the European Union and revived the readiness to engage in imperialist wars abroad."

Thatcher once branded coalminers striking for their livelihood the real "enemy within" - but Griffiths said she was the "enemy within who faithfully represented the interests of financial big business. She leaves a challenge to the labour movement to rebuild

productive industry, restore social justice and regain trade union and other democratic rights."

Spontaneous celebrations took place in Yorkshire, where 50 mining communities were destroyed by Thatcher and her allies after the strike.

Mick Appleyard was a miner and elected National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) official at Sharlston, near Wakefield, a typical Yorkshire mining village whose economy was totally dependent on the pit - and which was wrecked by its closure after the historic 1984-5 strike.

"She killed my village," he said. "Sharlston is now a low-wage, menial wage economy, for those who are lucky enough to find jobs. Our young people are on the streets. There's nothing for them. They turn to drugs and drink because there's nothing else."

And NUM general secretary Chris Kitchen, who was a young miner during the strike, said: "She deserves no respect from the NUM, or any of the working people she put on the dole. It's a shame her policies have not died with her - the ones Cameron is continuing. She will never be forgiven for the disaster she inflicted on the mining industry, on our communities, and on the miners."

Email networks were swamped with the announcement of celebrations, including events in central Leeds, Sheffield and Manchester. •



While Thatcher posed as the "Iron Lady," women supporters of striking coal miners were being arrested (below).



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Communists hold 37th Central Convention

Special to PV

Canada's third-oldest political party gathered at the Steelworkers Hall in Toronto over the April 5-7 weekend, amid important signs of growth and renewal. Formed in 1921, the Communist Party of Canada has kept its "eyes on the prize" of socialism for over nine decades, despite periods of intense ruling class repression.

The 37th Central Convention of the CPC came after two years of a majority Conservative



Javier Domokos Ruiz, the Consul General of Cuba in Toronto, brought greetings to the 37th Central Convention

government in Ottawa, but also in the wake of new upsurges of popular opposition to right-wing attacks. Delegates from across the country spoke about the fightback in their own areas, particularly the Occupy actions against economic inequality, the Quebec student strike of 2012, the Ontario Common Front, and most recently, the Idle No More movement which has put the racist character of the Canadian state front and centre.

Many of the nearly fifty delegates and alternates at the 37th Convention have been deeply involved in these movements, at the front line of resistance against the corporate agenda. A survey of the delegates found that just over fifty percent were trade union members, helping to bring the organized working class into the centre of the fightback. A wide range of delegates were participants in many other movements, including Aboriginal people, women, students, youth, civic reform groups, seniors, racialized communities, civil rights, anti-war, LGBTQ, and more.

Elected during March at

provincial nominating meetings, the delegates came to debate a Main Political Resolution which was the focus of intensive membership study over the past three months. These discussions resulted in over 140 amendments to the Resolution, which became the subject of lively debates on the floor of the Convention. The proceedings were interpreted by a team of professionals and volunteers, to allow delegates to listen and speak in both French and English.

The amended Resolution, which confirms the CPC as a revolutionary political party based on the ideas of Marxism-Leninism, was adopted unanimously. Over fifty messages of greetings were received from Communist and Workers' parties in other countries, reflecting international recognition of the Canadian party's proud history and revolutionary traditions.

Delegates also adopted special resolutions on a wide range of topics, and a Plan of Work for building the Communist Party over the next three-year period.

The final day of the Convention



Scene from the cultural presentation of "Raising the Workers' Flag". (Convention photos by Ed Bil.)

saw the election of a new Central Committee, which will lead the work of the CPC until the 38th Convention in 2016. With 22 members from Nova Scotia to Vancouver Island, the incoming CC includes veteran Communists with decades in the revolutionary movement, as well as nearly one-third first-time members, bringing valuable new experiences and perceptions.

Miguel Figueroa was re-elected as leader of the CPC, a post he has held since the successful battle in the early 1990s against the attempt by a former leadership group to liquidate the party. The new Central Executive includes Ontario leader Liz Rowley, Quebec leader Pierre Fontaine, People's Voice editor Kimball Cariou, Hamilton trade unionist Sam Hammond, and Jane Bouey, a long-time activist in movements to defend public education, and for LGBTQ and women's equality rights.

It wasn't all work for the delegates, of course. A Saturday evening banquet drew a packed house of Party members and friends for a delicious meal

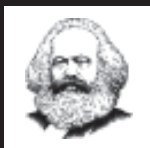
prepared by the Belogiannis Club of the CPC. Miguel Figueroa gave a toast to the CPC, and musical performers included Toronto's Wally Brooker and Zach Morgenstern, and Victor Pardo from Vancouver. On the final day of the Convention, there was a powerful cultural presentation by author Stephen Endicott, with friends and family members, on his new book, "Raising the Workers' Flag", a groundbreaking study of the communist-led Workers' Unity League of the 1930s.

Wrapping up on Sunday afternoon, delegates dispersed back to their home provinces. As Miguel Figueroa stressed in his concluding remarks, the Communist Party is united and growing, and ready to tackle the huge challenges facing the working class of Canada in the next three years.

The Main Political Resolution and other documents of the 37th Central Convention will be posted on the party's website when editing is finalized, at www.comunist-party.ca. •



Performers at the Saturday banquet, including Wally Brooker (left) and Victor Pardo (centre).



Marxist Theory

Marx is still alive and changing the world

By Manuel E. Yepe, www.walterlippmann.com/docs3747.html, CubaNews translation, edited by Walter Lippmann

"Karl Marx was supposed to be dead and buried. With the collapse of the Soviet Union and China's Great Leap Forward into Capitalism, the class conflict that Marx believed determined the course of history seemed to melt away in a prosperous era of free trade and free enterprise."

This simple idea was the world scenario according to the assumptions and descriptions of U.S. corporate media, but the stubborn reality has forced other analyses like the one made by Michael Schuman, published in TIME magazine on March 27, which begins with the paragraph above.

What the article calls China's Great Leap Forward into Capitalism is in fact the economic

miracle through which the Asian giant has achieved the highest record of poverty reduction in human history, based on a development strategy in its socialist project that makes use - with a wider scope and intensity than in the past - of the tools of the market, individual initiative and foreign investment, as well as the possibilities and long reach provided by globalization.

The article in TIME says that although Marx's theory on the "dictatorship of the proletariat" didn't quite work out as planned, one would have to accept that, in the light of today's widening inequalities, what Marx had predicted is just, and class struggle is back all over the world.

TIME acknowledges that in the U.S. the rich are getting richer while the middle class and the poor are paying the price. It warns that with the global economy in a protracted crisis, and workers around the world burdened by

joblessness, debt and stagnant incomes, Marx's biting critique of capitalism - that the system is inherently unjust and self-destructive - cannot be so easily dismissed. The future points to a heightened conflict between the rich and the working classes, suggests the U.S. corporate magazine.

"Workers of the world are growing angrier and demanding their fair share of the global economy. From the floor of the U.S. Congress to the streets of Athens to the assembly lines of southern China, political and economic events are being shaped by escalating tensions between capital and labor to a degree unseen since the communist revolutions of the 20th century."

"Tensions between economic classes in the U.S. are clearly on the rise. Society has been perceived as split between the "99%" (the regular folk, struggling to get by) and the "1%" (the connected

and privileged superrich getting richer every day)," the U.S. publication states.

In a Pew Research Center poll released last year, two-thirds of the respondents believed the U.S. suffered from "strong" or "very strong" conflict between rich and poor, a significant 19-percentage-point increase from 2009, ranking it as the No. 1 division in society.

The article in TIME warns that the class conflict has dominated American politics and believes that "the partisan battle over how to fix the nation's budget deficit has been, to a great degree, a class struggle. Whenever President Barack Obama talks of raising taxes on the wealthiest Americans to close the budget gap, conservatives scream he is launching a "class war" against the affluent."

It also supports its statements with the fact that Obama based a big part of his re-election campaign on characterizing the Republicans

as insensitive to the working classes.

There are signs that the world's labourers are increasingly impatient with their feeble prospects. Tens of thousands have taken to the streets of cities such as Madrid and Athens, protesting stratospheric unemployment and the austerity measures that are making matters even worse.

The article in TIME reminds us that the U.S. and European political left was dragged rightward since the free-market onslaught of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan, but points out that it is beginning to devise a credible alternative course.

The essay concludes by saying that Marx not only diagnosed capitalism's flaws but also the consequences of those flaws. "If policymakers don't discover new methods of ensuring fair economic opportunity, the workers of the world may just unite. Marx may yet have his revenge." •

"The global crisis is far from abating"

A central focus of our Political Resolution deals with the deepening crisis of global capitalism, and with the working class and people's fightback against the consequences of that

the Cypriot banks are but the very small tip of the iceberg. According to the Tax Justice Network, the total value of such organized "tax avoidance" has now reached as much as \$32 trillion dollars

From the Keynote Address to the 37th Central Convention of the Communist Party of Canada, presented by party leader Miguel Figueroa.

crisis in Canada and around the world. We have been reminded once again that this crisis is far from abating by the recent events in Cyprus over the past several weeks, threatening to plunge the European banking system into yet another round of crisis. Even the *Financial Times* was forced to admit that the "risks for Europe are significant... The prescription of universal [sic] austerity combined with kid-gloves treatment of big investors in banks is increasingly toxic to European voters. Leaders have just added fuel to the fire."

The Cypriot crisis also brings a much larger issue into focus - the stupendous amounts of "buried treasure" which international finance capital has ferreted away in so-called tax havens to avoid paying taxes on wealth, of which

worldwide. Bearing in mind that global GDP is around \$78 trillion, this suggests that the super-rich are hoarding the equivalent of up to 40% of the world's annual output - yet further proof that "austerity" is all about protecting monopoly interests and increasing the accumulation of capital, while making the working class and the people pay for the crisis.

The other fundamental aspect of the general crisis of capitalism is, as we know, increasing militarization and the drive to war, the drumbeats of which grow ever louder with each passing day. While the imperialist war machine has already rumbled through many countries over the recent past - from Yugoslavia and Afghanistan to Iraq, Libya and most recently in Mali - fresh wars are brewing against both Syria and the DPRK.

Indeed a foreign-sponsored covert war on Syria has been raging for more than two years. Now, both Britain and France, under the "socialist" government of Francois Hollande, are raising the stakes, pressing for overt military assistance to the Free Syrian Army and other armed groups fighting to overthrow the Syrian government.

Meanwhile, tensions have sharply escalated on the Korean peninsula, as the South Korean regime, Japan, the U.S. and the other imperialist powers including Canada are working overtime to provoke a military conflict with the North. It is naive not to see this dangerous escalation as a consequence of U.S. imperialism's recent strategic "pivot to Asia", the main objective of which is to encircle and "contain" the People's Republic of China. In both cases of Syria and the DPRK, groundless claims are being advanced that these countries have and are preparing to use Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs), and that under the doctrine of "responsibility to protect", direct imperialist intervention "may be required".

Needless to say, imperialist war in either of these strategic regions could quickly escalate into wider conflicts and possibly more generalized war, with horrific consequences for humanity. We express our solidarity with the peoples and governments of both Syria and the DPRK at this critical moment, and condemn the imperialist campaign to impose sanctions, hatch conspiracies and foment war against these countries. With this in mind, we should resolve to increase our anti-war efforts, especially within the labour and other people's movements, against any further imperialist aggression - whether it be against Syria, the DPRK, Iran or elsewhere around the globe.

Let us now turn to the situation within our own country. The Political Resolution - which will be strengthened during the course of our deliberations this weekend - gives a rather comprehensive picture of the crisis as it reflects itself in Canada today, of the austerity agenda being imposed by governments at every level, and of the socio-economic and political consequences this capitalist offensive is having on the working class, Aboriginal peoples, women, youth and students, farmers, seniors, and so on.

The recent federal budget shows that there is no let-up in the intensity of that offensive, despite the hype in the corporate media downplaying its pro-corporate and anti-people content. Setting aside the window-dressing about cheaper baby clothes, hockey skates and hospital parking, the guts of this budget are very clear: (1) a further \$4 billion cut from program spending which will eliminate more jobs in the public sector (adding to the 2 million unemployed across Canada) and further erode programs and services for the people; (2) billions more in giveaways and tax incentives for corporate Canada; and (3) an accelerated drive to impose the pro-corporate CETA trade & investment treaty

with the European Union, and to press forward with privatization.

These austerity policies - which are being applied at the provincial and municipal levels as well - have already proven themselves patently incapable of creating jobs for the unemployed, raising living standards, reducing social disparities and securing the future for working people; on the contrary, they are laying the foundation for an even greater recession and, depending on the

Party and our class, and where we should focus our debate and action. How can the working class - and particularly its organized section, the trade union movement - mount a concerted fightback in the face of this brutal and all-sided capitalist offensive? We must rivet our attention on answering this central question.

Certainly part of the answer is the need to expose and defeat the current of business unionism and class collaboration which remains prevalent within the right-wing, social democratic leadership of the labour movement. This in itself is no simple task, but will most certainly require the building of left-centre unity to isolate the most right, opportunist elements within labour's ranks. We know from recent experience that workers across Canada - when given the chance to do so - are willing and able to mount the most militant and heroic resistance. Too often however, they are sold down the river by their own collaborationist leadership.

But there is another side to this problem. Even the most militant, struggle-oriented leadership still has to contend with the adverse objective conditions which complicate labour's ability to fight and win - the combined might of the employers and of the capitalist state (armed with back-to-work legislation, injunctions, crippling fines, etc.), not to mention the corrosive ideological power of a hostile mainstream corporate-controlled media.

These are not easy challenges to overcome, nor do we Communists claim to have all the ready-made answers to do so. But we are convinced that there is no other way forward except through the development of strategies and tactics based on class struggle, on building the maximum unity possible - first within the ranks of labour itself, and together with allies in the broader democratic movements: with Aboriginal peoples, the unemployed and unorganized, women, farmers, within immigrant communities and among migrant workers, with youth and students, environmentalists, the LGBTQ communities and other social forces. And we are further convinced that opposition to the Conservative/corporate austerity agenda, in itself, is not sufficient; it must be combined with a far-reaching and comprehensive alternative that breaks with the logic of neoliberalism - one that puts people and nature before profit. ●



CPC leader Miguel Figueroa

impact of the deepening crisis in the global capitalist economy, a full-blown depression. Indeed, Canada's growth rate - measured in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) - has slowed to 0.2% in each of the last two quarters. This amounts to an annualized growth rate under 1% - essentially zero growth. So much for the Tories' Economic Action Plan!

Why then do right-wing bourgeois governments stubbornly persist on this austerity course? Because from their class perspective, such policies actually serve the immediate interests of the big banks and monopolies. Crippling the trade union movement, swelling the ranks of the unemployed, privatizing programs and services, and increasing social insecurity - all these act to drive down the cost of labour-power and correspondingly increase the rate of profit and the accumulation of capital.

Only a powerful and united struggle of the workers and their social allies can create a political crisis which will force the ruling class to retreat, and create conditions for the labour and people's forces to go onto the counter-offensive, to change the balance of class forces in the country, to curb corporate power and open the door to a revolutionary advance to socialism.

That is why the state of the resistance movement is the most decisive challenge confronting our



Above and bottom right: angry Cypriots protest the attack on their country's sovereignty by European finance capital.

1,426 billionaires vs. 80% of global population living on \$10 a day!

World Federation of Trade Unions Secretariat

The 1,426 billionaires of the world are celebrating their rankings at the Forbes Magazine's 2013 List of Billionaires, having gathered a total net worth of \$5.4 trillion, an actual \$800 billion increase since last year.

Let us remind ourselves that these riches could not have been accumulated without the most vital means of production: the labour force. No brilliant idea could have been implemented, no new product could have been produced, no machine could have been built, no means of transport could have moved without the workers. Without the sweat and blood of the workers in the ships, the mines, in the construction sites and the industries nothing would happen.

These billionaires are only appropriating the product of the social work and exploiting the natural resources that belong to the people.

However, while these billionaires are celebrating in their jets and swimming pools, 80% of the population live with under \$10 a day, and actually 50% of the population live with \$2.50! Many millions of them live in slums, are still illiterate, lack sufficient access to clean water and adequate medical services.

These billionaires and many more millionaires are fighting their part in the class struggle: with their hard efforts to control the governments, the IMF, the World Bank, by organizing wars, by trying to corrupt and manipulate the trade union movement.

Let us fight our part with more determination, strengthen the class oriented trade union movement and grow our struggles for the satisfaction of the contemporary needs of the workers and the popular strata.

www.wftu.org



HOT EARTH: is there an alternative?

Excerpts from HOT EARTH, published by the Communist Party of Australia. For the full pamphlet, go to www.cpa.org.au

Scientific and technological progress under capitalism is used to make profits by exploiting people and nature. This has been the major contributor to the environmental and global economic crises we now face.

In capitalism today, the future does not amount to much. Profits come increasingly from financial manipulation and corporate profits are geared towards short-term profit making.

Capitalism has brought humankind to the edge of catastrophe. It is an unsustainable system.

Every environmental struggle - on the job or in communities - comes up against corporations that own the factory or mine the mineral deposits. This ownership and the vast wealth of these corporations give them the power to oppose changes to protect the environment.

The power of corporations is defended by governments which support corporate interests. This is often done behind declarations that environmental protection measures will not be allowed to damage the economic interests of the country - meaning, of course, the economic interests of the capitalist ruling class.

It is sometimes suggested that the environmental crisis is so serious that it transcends class. It has been called "a common crisis" which affects everyone equally, and requires social divisions to be set aside for the "common good".

Nothing could be farther from the truth. The crisis is certainly common to all who live on earth, but it does not affect all equally, nor can it be solved by "common action" for two simple reasons - those whose actions have caused the crisis possess political power and show little inclination to change their present course towards disaster.

The majority of the human population who oppose the dangers are not politically powerful enough yet to take the necessary actions.

The need for a sustainable environment is overpowering. However, within the capitalist system it is impossible. The continual growth demanded by capitalism undermines policies aimed at reducing carbon emissions.

Government support for market based policies has stifled almost all voices that question this policy and effectively ruled out the planning, regulation and legislation which are essential to ensure a sustainable future.

However, environmental struggle within the system is necessary. Measures to keep the situation from worsening are urgent. What we cannot afford to do is to go down the wrong path.

Climate change cannot be stopped by doing five per cent or even 25 per cent of what is necessary. If we trigger tipping points, the heating process will gather its own momentum and there will be nothing we can do to stop it. Doing too little to avoid those tipping points is equivalent

to doing nothing.

Difficult political and social choices will have to be made. Who will make those choices, and how? Will working people be the victims of change or will we fight and win changes which will benefit us and our children?

Fundamental change is needed to meet the global environmental threats. Fundamental change means economic and social change, and a new politics built on the new economic base.

We have only ten to 15 years to address the crisis of climate change and to prevent catastrophe. What humanity does now will determine the future of planet Earth.

What is global warming?

The overwhelming scientific consensus is that global warming and climate change are caused by human activities that emit "greenhouse gases" such as carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide and others into the atmosphere.

The Union of Concerned Scientists put it this way: Think of a blanket, covering the Earth. When carbon dioxide and other gasses are released into the atmosphere, they act like a blanket, holding heat in our atmosphere and warming the planet.

The rising concentration of these gasses, primarily as a result of capitalist forms of production, has driven an unprecedented increase in average global temperatures in recent years.

Corporations are pouring carbon dioxide into the atmosphere much faster than plants and oceans can absorb it. These gases persist in the atmosphere for years, meaning that even if emissions were eliminated today, it would not immediately stop global warming or climate change.

Earth has experienced warming and cooling cycles roughly every hundred thousand years. However, these changes have occurred over the span of several centuries. Today's changes have taken place over the last 100 years or less.

Every country emits greenhouse gases. The level of responsibility to reduce emissions should not be assessed on total emissions, but rather on the per capita emission

rate and level of development of each country.

What causes global warming?

In February 2007 the 300-member Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released a report, based on the work of some 2,500 scientists in more than 130 countries, which concluded that humans have caused all or most of the current planetary warming.

The primary cause of global warming is human activity, most significantly the burning of fossil fuels to drive cars, generate electricity, and operate our homes and businesses.

Most greenhouse gas emissions come from the burning of fossil



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fuels for energy. When oil, gas or coal burns, carbon contained within it combines with oxygen in the air to create carbon dioxide.

Many industrial processes such as aluminium, cement and liquid natural gas production and coal mining produce greenhouse gases.

Deforestation (land clearance and logging) is another major contributor. Plants take up carbon dioxide from the air during photosynthesis. When land is cleared, the stored carbon is converted back to carbon dioxide. Denuding land of trees also causes erosion and flooding.

When forests are burned, they release huge amounts of carbon into the atmosphere. When the forests are gone, they can no longer absorb CO₂.

In 1987 alone 8 million hectares of the Amazon Basin were denuded of forest. The devastating floods in Bangladesh were partly the result of forest being stripped away

from the foothills of the Himalayas.

Animals, particularly sheep and cattle, produce large amounts of methane. Some fertilisers also release nitrous oxide, which is another greenhouse gas.

Carbon dioxide and methane are released during the decay of food, vegetation and paper dumped in landfills. The same thing occurs when sewage wastes break down.

Is global warming a real threat?

Changing climatic conditions have already contributed to an alarming rise in extinction of species and extreme weather events.

Overloading our atmosphere with carbon has far-reaching effects for people all around the world - more extreme storms, more severe droughts, deadly heat waves, rising sea levels, extreme bushfires and more acidic oceans, all of which affect the food chain.

An April 2007 IPCC report warned that global warming could lead to large-scale food and water shortages and have catastrophic effects on wildlife.

* Recent studies show that sea levels could rise by half a metre or more. Rises of just 10 centimeters could flood many South Seas islands and swamp large parts of Southeast Asia.

* Some hundred million people live within one meter of mean sea level, and much of the world's population is concentrated in vulnerable coastal cities.

* Glaciers around the world could melt, causing sea levels to rise while creating water shortages in regions dependent on runoff for fresh water.

* Strong hurricanes, droughts, heat waves, wildfires, and other natural disasters may become common in many parts of the world.

* The growth of deserts may cause food shortages.

* More than a million species face extinction from disappearing habitat, changing ecosystems, and acidifying oceans. The loss of forests and other wild lands extinguishes species of plants and animals and drastically reduces the genetic diversity of the world's ecosystems. This process robs present and future generations of genetic material with which to improve crop varieties, to make them less vulnerable to weather stress, pest attacks and disease.

The loss of species, many not yet studied by science, deprives us of important potential sources of medicines and industrial chemicals. It removes forever creatures of beauty and parts of our cultural heritage, and triggers further losses of plant and animal species as finely balanced ecological systems are broken up.

Current evidence suggests that the Arctic Ocean could become ice free in summer as soon as 2013. With the Arctic summer sea ice melting, the disintegration of the Greenland ice sheets becomes largely unavoidable, threatening to raise the sea level by five metres or more within this century.

About half the world's 50 largest cities would be at risk and hundreds of millions of people would become environmental

refugees.

With the disappearance of the Arctic summer sea ice, the Arctic Ocean will absorb more heat, threatening global warming of 2.7 degrees. This would take our world dangerously close to the 30 degree threshold which would amount to a global collective suicide by humanity, driven not by the people but by capitalist corporations

What can be done?

Burning fossil fuels has fired the engines of capitalism's exponential growth. The inescapable drive of capitalism for economic growth, accumulation and profit means the system is unable to comprehensively deal with the climate crisis. Capitalism has always failed to provide hundreds of millions of people with food, education and health care. With the climate crisis, it will eventually fail all humanity.

However, the power of the corporations, their immense wealth and political power, can be constrained. With a massive mobilisation of working people we can begin to take steps towards environmental sustainability and towards the social transformation necessary to complete this process. We have perhaps two decades to achieve this in order to save our planet and humanity.

A new approach

Solving the climate crisis means changing how, how much and what humans produce and consume.

Sustainable development must be based on renewable energy sources. The sun, wind and tides can create clean, safe power that will never run out. Renewable energy means new investment, new industry and many new jobs.

Sustainable development requires policies that replace privatisation, deregulation and market mechanisms with regulation, controls on monopolies, planning and an expanded public sector.

This requires a new kind of government, one which is made up of representatives of the people, a government prepared to challenge the power of the monopolies in the interests of the people and the environment.

A planned transition from fossil fuels to sustainable energy requires public control of energy infrastructure. Public ownership, democratic control and planned development are essential.

The rights of local communities to democratically determine the sustainable use of their food, water and energy use based on sufficiency and equity must be secured.

Destruction of the environment is a crime which threatens the future of humanity.

The struggle for sustainable development is in essence a struggle to restrain and restrict capitalist corporations and to compel an end to environmentally damaging production processes. It is a struggle to fulfil human needs through more creative, democratic and ecologically respectful practices. The contrast with uncontrollable capitalist growth is stark. ●





GLOBAL CLASS STRUGGLE

Momentum for UK general strike

British unions are discussing a strategy of "generalised strike action" to warn the Conservative-led government that workers are not prepared to accept more cuts to pay, jobs and pensions in the public sector.

After months of speculation, PCS union leader Mark Serwotka has confirmed to Sky News that "what the Government is doing is getting so increasingly unpopular that even a 24-hour strike involving millions of people across the economy will be an incredibly important moment." He said the April 8 strike action by tens of thousands of tax officials would be followed by further action over the next two months.

Unite, Britain's biggest union, is understood to be leading calls for a "super-strike" against the government cuts. A document drawn up by the 1.5 million-member Unite described a general strike as "desirable", according to the Financial Times. The newspaper reported that Unite believes: "It would be a landmark in our movement's recovery of its morale, strength and capacity to play a leading part in a society crying out for credible and honourable leadership."

The idea of a general strike was proposed at the Trades Union Congress last year by the Prison Officers Association. Unite, Unison and the GMB all backed a motion to consider the "practicalities" of a general strike, involving both the public and private sector. Unison, which has 1.3 million members, says it would back the proposal as long as a general strike was the end, not the beginning, of a protest campaign. News reports indicate that talks about strike strategy may be held at the Trades Union Congress HQ on April 24.

The last general strike in Britain was May 1926, after wage cuts and longer working hours were imposed on coal miners. In that historic struggle, the TUC called on its 1.7 million members to walk out in solidarity, with participants including railway workers, dockers and steel workers. The strike was called off after nine days, although the miners continued their action alone until November. The Trade Disputes Act of 1927 made future general strikes illegal.

There were widespread strikes

in Britain from 1978 to 1979, where public sector workers walked out during the so-called Winter of Discontent in protest against government pay cuts.

2nd anniversary of Mahdi jailing

April 6th marked the second anniversary of the imprisonment of Bahrain Teachers' Association leader Mahdi Abu Dheeb, who



was jailed in 2011 when popular protests began in Bahrain. Detained in Jaw Prison under difficult conditions, he is denied medical treatment required by his doctor. The BTA leader has been detained on charges under laws that repress basic human and trade union rights.

Mahdi was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment by Bahrain's National Safety Court, after participating in peaceful protests. The government says that charges related to freedom of expression were dropped and only criminal charges were retained for Mahdi's appeal hearings.

Last October 21, the appeal court upheld the guilty verdict against the Mahdi, but reduced his prison sentences to five years. He will have his last chance of appeal before the highest Court in Bahrain, the Cassation Court, but dates have not yet been set. Allegations of abuse against Mahdi put forward by his lawyers have still not been investigated by the authorities.

The Education International (EI) umbrella federation of teachers' unions says it remains "extremely concerned about the very repressive climate faced by teacher trade union activists and students in the country. EI is also committed to support teacher's rights in Bahrain which are crucial to ensure young people access to quality education. Hundreds of teachers have suffered harassment, dismissal, salaries cuts and suspension from their work and studies since the protests began in 2011."

EI calls on the Bahraini authorities to end harassment against teacher unionists, and to comply with the international human rights standards ratified by the Kingdom of Bahrain.

Chile port strike may end

A deal has been reached to end much of the three-week port strike that has stopped exports from Chile, the world's top copper metal producer. Workers at the

ports of Angamos, Antofagasta and Iquique in the mineral-rich north returned to work on April 6, said Richard Orellana, head of the Angamos port union. However, the Angamos dockers will walk off their jobs if two other ports don't reach a deal, he added. Unions at the central ports of Valparaiso and San Antonio were still negotiating a deal, amid worry there could be retaliation for the stoppage, which has also halted exports of forestry products and fruit.

Angamos workers launched the strike to seek a 30-minute lunch break and other benefits. Some observers say that poor management of a simple, specific worker issue then ballooned into a serious confrontation affecting the export-dependent Chilean economy. Around 9,000 tonnes of copper were unable to leave Chilean ports every day due to the strike, the government said. The dispute was costing \$200 million a day, according to the country's business chamber. Mining industry sources say it will take weeks to return to normal shipping operations because of the congestion in ports.

Drivers' strike hits Egypt railways

A strike by 4,000 train drivers paralysed Egypt's rail traffic on all major lines starting on April 7, as negotiations failed to reach a solution. The strike began after train drivers refused a 10 percent pay raise beginning in May, offered by Minister of Transportation Hatem Abdel-Latif during an April 6 meeting with the railway workers union. The drivers are demanding an addition of LE300 (\$45 Cdn.) to their monthly salaries, and the dismissal of Hussein Zakaria, head of the Railway Authority. Minor lines were operating on the routes of Ain Shams-Suez, Cairo-Manfalout, and Fayoum-Wasty, according to a press statement from the Railway Authority.

Amazon workers may walk out

Workers at an Amazon logistics center in the eastern German city of Leipzig have said they're willing to go on strike for a pay hike, and staff at two other centers in the country may join the action.

The German trade union Verdi said on April 5 that employees of a big warehouse in Leipzig were planning to strike, but did not specify when the work stoppages would begin. It only hinted that the action might last several days.

This would be the first strike ever at a logistics center of the US online merchant across Germany, Verdi added. The announcement followed a vote in which 97 percent of union members in Leipzig supported industrial action in a bid to secure higher wages. Amazon's Leipzig facility has 520 Verdi members and a total workforce of 1,200 permanent staff, plus 800 employees on temporary contracts.

Amazon, which employs some 9,000 people across Germany,

claims that its staff at logistics centers in Germany are paid in the upper range of the industry, and that workers receive bonuses and shares after two years of employment.

Amazon last made headlines in Germany in February over allegations that security guards linked to the company had been intimidating temporary foreign workers at several distribution centers.

Fast food strike in New York

Hundreds of New York City fast food workers walked off the job on April 4, the second strike in their ongoing Fast Food Forward campaign for higher wages and union recognition. The day culminated in a march with supporters in Harlem, where many strikers carried signs that read "I Am A Woman". New York Communities for Change, the group spearheading the "Fast Food Forward" campaign, picked the date because it is the anniversary of Martin Luther King's assassination in 1968, during a visit to Memphis in support of striking sanitation workers.

The fast food workers are making a stand for the right to join a union and for fairness, by walking off the job to protest the growing inequality between their pay and the profits of employers like McDonalds, Wendy's, Taco Bell, KFC, and Pizza Hut - a \$200-billion industry.

"We walked off the job to demand higher wages and the right to join the union without intimidation. By standing together for our families and our communities, we can lift the entire

economy and rebuild the middle class," says the Fast Food Workers Organizing Committee.

The campaign reports that many U.S. fast food workers rely on food stamps and some live in homeless shelters, despite working for some of the largest and richest corporations in the world. Last November, fast food workers in New York City took part in a historic strike to demand \$15 an hour and the right to join the union without intimidation. Since then, the movement's numbers have grown and the resolve of the workers has strengthened.

"We're on strike today because we can't survive on poverty wages. A living wage will help us raise our families with dignity, and will also help lift our entire economy. More money in the hands of workers means more money spent in local shops and a boost for our community," adds the committee.

Workers behind the counters of fast-food restaurants are facing "a climate that is, in some ways, pre-1968 with regards to worker rights," according to civil rights historian Michael Honey.

A central demand is to make a living wage. The workers are asking for \$15 an hour, up from the minimum wage of \$7.25 an hour. According to a 2010 report by the Women's Center for Education and Career Advancement, the 'self-sufficiency standard' - how much it costs to live without relying on government subsidies - for a single adult living in the Bronx (New York's cheapest borough) was \$12.56 an hour; for an adult with one child, that number jumps to \$23.39 an hour. Compounding the problem, wages have been trending downward across the U.S. since the 2008 economic crisis began.

Many items in our "Global Class Struggle" column are from the Labour Start website, www.labourstart.org

Send me information on the Communist Party of Canada



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

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News for people, not for profits!



Korean Peninsula - who is being "bellicose" and "provocative"?

From The Guardian, weekly of the Communist Party of Australia, April 10, 2013

"Bellicose" and "provocative" - those are the words used over and over by the capitalist media to describe the actions the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and statements by its leadership in recent times. Scarcely any context is given to explain developments in the strained relationship between the DPRK, its South Korean neighbour and the USA. What little that is provided amounts to speculation about what might be in the mind of the new leader of the country, Kim

Jong-un. "Maybe the young leader is trying to assert his authority in the eyes of the military." "Maybe he wants to distract the population from the economic problems of the DPRK," and so on, and so forth without any reference to facts.

The corporate media can always be relied on to stoke the fires of hatred. Items carrying unconvincing claims of camps containing hundreds of thousands of starved and tortured political prisoners are being published again. Reports about parents eating their children in a supposedly ongoing famine have resurfaced. The notion that Communists eat babies was first trotted out at the

time of the Russian Revolution and has never completely been retired. And, of course, the country is "isolated", "paranoid" and "Stalinist" in the eyes of an increasing tabloid-style corporate media.

Imperialism's media/industrial complex has no interest in informing the public to allow it to make considered judgements. It is partisan; its objective is to tarnish any alternative to capitalism in the eyes of exploited people and to justify the crushing of any successful attempt to break free of imperialism's grip. Invasions have been planned and tried but, short of military attack, socialist countries have always been subject to punishing trade and diplomatic restrictions. In some cases, such as Cuba and the DPRK, they have been extreme and deadly. The reaction to this aggression against these usually small states is then provided as evidence of "isolation" and "paranoia".

The history of the DPRK is the classic example of a US-led campaign to stand truth on its head. Despite the presence of tens of thousands of US troops on its borders with terrifying military equipment including nuclear weapons, despite regular, provocative joint military

exercises with its South Korean client state, despite the vivid memory of the carpet bombing, napalming and germ warfare against the DPRK during the war of 1950-1953 and the loss of five million lives, the leadership of the country has consistently called for:

- * A peace treaty to formally end the war
- * Reunification of the country divided by the US in 1945
- * An end to the US occupation of the south and the annual, month-long joint military exercises
- * Bilateral talks to ease tensions between the US and the DPRK

These calls for peace have been persistently rejected. Fraught six-party talks aimed at removing the DPRK's nuclear deterrent were imposed instead. The US/South Korean "war games" have become more and more threatening since the passing of late leader Kim Jong-il.

The change of posture also coincides with US President Obama's announcement of a military "pivot" towards Asia with its ultimate military objective of China. The latest manoeuvres included scenarios for the "pre-emptive" invasion of the DPRK. Nuclear weapons capable B-52s and the B-2 stealth bombers have dropped inert bombs less than 30 kilometres away from the North/

South border in mock bombing runs on the DPRK.

This is the context of the DPRK's decision to deploy missiles, mobilise its troops, call for foreign diplomats to leave the country for their own safety and to cut communications with the South Korean government of President Park Geun-hye, who just so happens to be daughter of General Park Chung-hee, the late, ruthless dictator of South Korea. The defiant statements emanating from Pyongyang are being portrayed by many as the utterly unprovoked taunts of a "rogue" regime.

It is worthwhile asking what the response would be if the situation were reversed - if a socialist country moved state of the art military equipment close to the borders of the US. The last time that happened - during the Cuban missile crisis - the US moved the planet as close to a nuclear winter as it has ever come. So, when the government of the DPRK issues strongly worded statements in response to the mobilisation of masses of troops and huge quantities of war-fighting materiel right up to its border, it's worthwhile asking, who is really being "bellicose" and "provocative"? Who is really engaging in "sabre rattling"? ●



President Barack Obama with US and South Korean troops.

Say no to the drone wars: UK peace activists

Anti-war activists in many countries are increasingly speaking out against "drone wars". Chris Cole from Drone Wars UK outlines why the peace movement must confront the rise of the drones.

The rise in the use of armed unmanned drones of the past few years has been incredible. Between 2004 and 2007 there were just nine drone strikes in the world. Three years later there were at least 110 drone strikes in Pakistan alone, and recently released USAF figures show there have now been more than 1,000 US drone strikes in Afghanistan, with those numbers set to rise dramatically.

The UK too has been operating armed Reaper drones in Afghanistan and has launched at least 350 drone strikes there, while Israel too have been using drones to launch strikes in Gaza and Egypt.

Drones have become the latest way to wage war. While supporters claim that drone strikes are "risk free", "precise" or "pin-point accurate", the reality is that

thousands of people have been killed in these strikes.

In Pakistan, due to the presence of local media we have some idea about the impact of drones. Reliable figures compiled by the Bureau of Investigative Journalism show that between 2,500 and 3,500 people have been killed in drone strikes in Pakistan since 2004. While the US claims that few of these are civilians, the Bureau reports that at least 450-900 of these are identified civilians, including around 200 children. It is likely that many more are in fact civilians.

In Afghanistan, where British and US drones operate, it is not publicly known how many people have been killed. The UK claims that only four civilians have been killed in all their 360 drone strikes, while insisting they do not actually know how many people have died in total.

A recent Human Rights Watch report found that Israeli drones had killed Palestinian civilians and violated the laws of war.

Why are drones so dangerous? Armed drones are operated by

remote control often from thousands of miles away. Pilots sit in air-conditioned trailers and operate drones in the skies above Afghanistan or Yemen for example, via satellite links. Using hi-tech cameras and other sensors young men and women engage in eight-hour shifts of warfare, looking for "suspicious activity" before launching Hellfire missiles or 500 pound bombs on unsuspecting targets far below. With their shift over, the pilots head home, perhaps picking up the kids up from school on the way, before settling down to play the latest Xbox war game. War is truly becoming like a video game.

While supporters of drones argue they are no different to other aircraft, the reality is that drones lower the threshold when it comes to warfare. Firstly, as there is no risk to "our boys" political leaders will be able to launch military intervention at little or no political cost. Although we are early in the drone war era, the US for instance has already used armed drones in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia, and Libya. There have also been airstrikes in Mali and the Philippines that have the hallmarks of US drone strikes but these have not been confirmed.

But drones also turn the whole world into a battlefield where nowhere is safe. Far away from any front the US uses drones to assassinate those it sees as threats to its security and interests, choosing to ignore international law and international condemnation. But drones are also expanding the battlefield even within conflict zones, as politicians and military commanders have such faith in the perceived accuracy of these unmanned systems that

they are much more willing to use them in civilian areas. In short drone are "normalising" war and simply making war more likely.

Currently RAF pilots operate Britain's armed drones over Afghanistan from a US base just outside Las Vegas in Nevada. From this Spring however, push-button warfare will have a new home as the UK will begin controlling their armed Reaper drones from RAF Waddington in Lincolnshire.

To protest this latest step in the drone wars, Stop the War, CND, War and Want and the Drone Campaign Network are calling on people to march on RAF Waddington on April 27. We want to raise our voices to say a loud and clear "No to the Drone Wars". We will gather at Lincoln Train Station at Noon and march to the base for a rally at 2 pm. Please do come and urge others to come too. Now is the time to stop the rise of the drone - before it's too late. ●

US Top Gun 2013

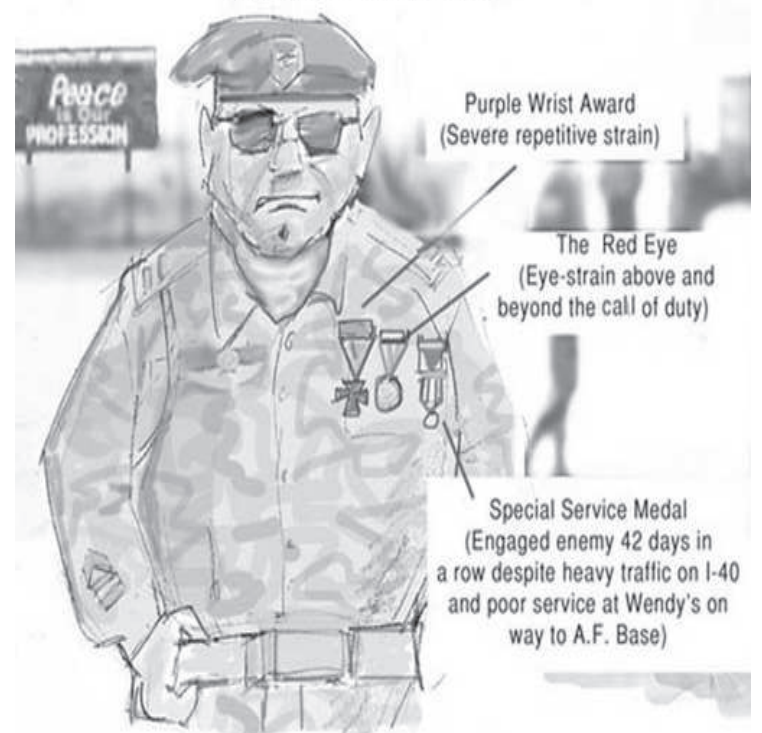
Ernest "Sureshot" Freem

Ace Drone Pilot

Offutt Air Force Base, Koff, Oklahoma.

72 Afghan kills confirmed

(many of them enemies)



kempkes union-art.com 2013

A response to Militarism and Sports

An organizing meeting for progressive fans and athletes concerned with the increasing ties between the military and sports will be held on April 24, 7 pm, at Toronto's OISE Room 5-150, 252 Bloor St. West. The group says they "have determined to start building the capacity to challenge the pro-military line around the sports and the teams that we love... Engaging in the world of sport should not include being disciplined to pay homage to the 'courage' of militaries that are, literally, killing children in our name... All are encouraged to join the discussion!" For information, search for "Militarism and Sports: A Response" on Facebook.

Australian Labor's descent into chaos

From the Guardian, newspaper of the Communist Party of Australia

The schemers plotting the demise of Julia Gillard in the Labor Party leadership spill could not have done her more damage if they had tried.

Though a new (or recycled) leadership did not step forward and nominate for the position of Prime Minister or Deputy Prime Minister, the surviving PM was not reinforced in the top job. She was left looking like a "lame duck" incumbent, heading a "shambolic" government whose days are being counted down. The cabinet reshuffle has worsened the impression of desperation.

The real intentions of the Rudd forces in the farce can only be guessed at, but the former PM's reference to a "commitment" to the Australian public not to run can safely be discounted. It is far more likely that ambitious players in the parliamentary Labor Party would prefer to watch Gillard go down with the ship and for them to appear later as the "saviours" of the Labor brand after the likely defeat at

the September 14 federal election.

The thinking is cynical and disloyal but it is realistic. The Rudd/Gillard government's record has alienated the ALP's traditional base in the working class. The list of disappointments is long. Despite the hopes built up prior to Rudd's election in 2007, Labor has:

- worsened the plight of refugees to the country
- maintained a rebadged anti-union construction industry task force
- left mining industry profits untouched by any super-profits tax
- introduced a pointless "carbon tax" that protects the worst polluters
- advanced the privatising agenda in health, education, aged care and disability support in spite of funding "reform" propaganda
- attacked welfare recipients, including single parents forced onto the dole
- overseen the expansion of the uranium industry
- maintained the Northern Territory "intervention" and the ongoing dispossession of Aboriginal people
- left the question of flows along the Murray/Darling unresolved
- watched as Australian manufacturing shrivels

- sat on its hands as employers exploit guest workers under the 457 visa scheme

- kept us at war alongside the US and NATO, wasted fortunes on military equipment and signed up for more US bases

Voters aren't listening to the excuses any more. They realise that the insulation working people have had from the more extreme forms of austerity suffered elsewhere has been due to the resilience of the economy of the People's Republic of China. People have concluded that the main pillars of the agenda under Howard have been kept under Rudd and Gillard.

With the Australian political scene continuing to be dominated by the two big parties of capital, voters unfortunately will probably vote the Coalition into office because they don't see any realistic, coherent alternative. The ruling class, the people who direct overall policy for their servants in parliaments to implement, are presented with another, classic "win/win" situation.

Not everybody is resigned to such a bleak future. Small but growing numbers of political activists are considering

alternatives. Some trade unionists are talking about running candidates and building an extended Your Rights at Work-style organisation. Others are thinking more short-term with an "anti-Abbott" alliance. The ideas are raw and progress with these efforts will probably be too slow to have a major impact at the 2013 federal election.

The Communist Party of Australia supports the concept of an alliance of left and progressive forces leading to the formation of a government of a new type - one

that will mobilise the community and begin to challenge the dominance of the monopolies. A strong Communist party is key to the success of such a process.

Efforts for unity in the interests of the working class and other exploited should be wholeheartedly supported. Ultimately, the sort of consciously anti-monopoly alliance envisaged by the CPA program will bring about real, lasting change and progress towards socialism. These are the ideas that need to be injected into plans for new alliances. ●

"Millionaires Tax" demanded by Workers' Party...

continued from page 12

Against that accumulation of capital, the PTB proposes a millionaire's tax. Is that the miracle solution?

Peter Mertens: No. We have our vision of the future society, but you also need political levers to go in that direction. Bruno Tobback (chair of the Flemish social-democratic party) said: "Mister Mertens wants to introduce the millionaire's tax in order to solve the crisis." Well, nothing is farther from the truth. The millionaire's tax will not solve the

crisis, but the millionaire's tax is needed more than ever for other reasons, in order to lower a bit the over-enrichment of the 200 richest families in our country. Their fortune grew by a third over the last two years. On families as de Spoelberch (InBev) or Frere (financial and industrial capital), which control our country and take the lion's share of the wealth, we can impose a kind of refunding tax.

The millionaire's tax yields 9 billion euros a year, with which you can create new jobs. Necessary projects which are not carried out

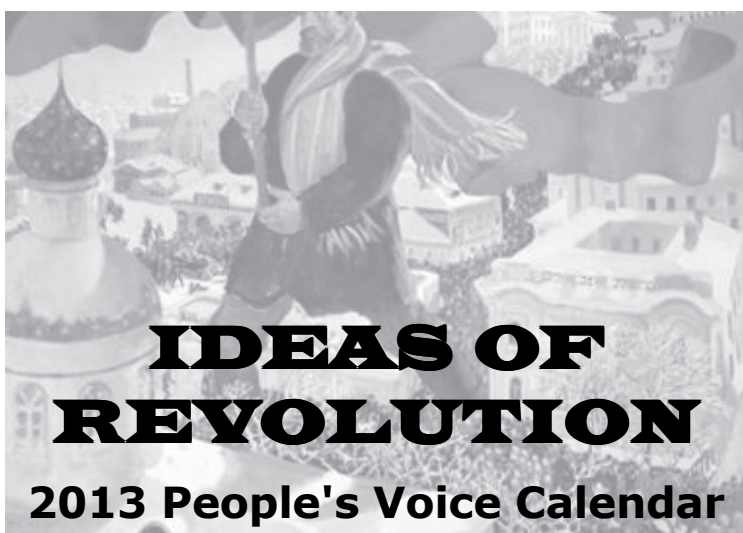
now, such as the construction of schools, the employment of new teachers and nurses, the development of public transport... With that 9 billion euros, 100,000 new stable jobs could be created. So the standard would be stable jobs, instead of underpaid hyperflexible mini-jobs, as in Germany. Those 200 richest families would not even miss anything. Therefore it is no exaggerated measure. The alternative is that the ordinary working people - working, unemployed and undocumented people - will have to bring in everything to pay for the crisis.

The reactions from other parties are unanimous: the millionaire's tax is unrealistic.

Peter Mertens: Here we see two visions clashing: the realism of one side is not the realism of the other side. We consider as unrealistic the fact that people who have worked their whole life have to manage now with a tiny pension. We deem it unrealistic that people who are fired by Opel, Crown Cork, Ford, ArcelorMittal or elsewhere are pushed under the poverty threshold. We consider as unrealistic a wage freeze, while the multinationals' profits are skyrocketing...

Every poll concerning this question shows that between 75 and 80 percent of the Belgian population supports the idea of a millionaire's tax. So there is a large support base, but it is not to be found in parliament. But that does not matter. For the ban on child labour there was no support base in parliament either. And yet it has become reality. Why? Support did exist among the working population, putting enormous pressure from below. So we will have to act this way again for the millionaire's tax.

(We will publish further excerpts from this interview in our next issue.) ●



The People's Voice Calendar for 2013 - "Ideas of Revolution" - is now on sale. Dedicated to the struggles of the international working class for peace, liberation, equality and socialism, this year's calendar features quotations by a wide range of revolutionaries, artists, and writers, such as Nelson Mandela, Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, V.I. Lenin, Tim Buck, Soong Ching Ling, Germaine Greer, Evo Morales, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, Claudia Jones, Fidel Castro, Jose Saramago, and Frida Kahlo. The 14-month calendar (Jan. 2013-Feb. 2014) also includes notable dates from the history of the people's movements, and statutory holidays and celebrations for the year.

"Ideas of Revolution" can be ordered by mail for \$10 in Canada, or \$15 in the United States (price includes mailing costs). Send a cheque to People's Voice, 706 Clark Drive, Vancouver, BC, V5L 3J1. For information on bulk orders of five or more calendars, contact our Vancouver Editorial Office: <pvoice@telus.net>, tel. 604-255-2041.

Residents of Ontario can order directly from the Ontario Bureau of People's Voice, 290A Danforth Ave., Toronto, M4K 1N6, ph. 416-469-2446. The Calendar will be on sale at our Manitoba Bureau (387 Selkirk Ave., Winnipeg), and our Quebec Bureau (5359 Ave. du Parc, Montreal).

There's a lot that the BBC gets wrong, and even something as trifling as a movie review gets forced through whatever ideological strainer constitutes their editorial board.

In 2003, a fun, comedic romp about East Germany arrived. It was bright, joyful, creatively directed with a style not far removed from the French film *Amelie*. *Goodbye Lenin* represented an alternative to the prevailing view that everyone in the GDR was either a member or a victim of the Stasi. The BBC hated it, as did other mainstream news sources, preferring the grim tones of *The Lives of Others* and its portrayal of an East German police state.

Goodbye Lenin tells the tale of a mother (Katrin SaB) who, abandoned by her husband when he fled to West Germany, threw herself into activities during the GDR's final years. She ran local communist youth groups and after school projects, and acted like a den mother for the young East Germans of the 1980s. When the Berlin Wall fell, her son (Daniel Bruhl) witnessed her collapse into a coma. As Germany was unified and East Germany clumsily embraced capitalism, SaB sleeps on. When she finally comes out of the coma, Bruhl is advised to distract her from any surprises that may cause another stroke. At that point, Bruhl and his friends and sister go to great lengths to convince SaB that the GDR that she loved so much still exists.

It can be argued that the film reaches silly heights, as Bruhl and company scramble to carry out an illusion for the benefit of a bed-ridden Communist. A certain amount of disbelief has to be suspended, but the same could be said of any magical realist film of the early 2000s. This is at heart a genuinely entertaining movie, despite a serious undercurrent when the previously unavailable father appears out of nowhere. And naturally the subtext of a seriously ill woman casts a pall.

But the surroundings remain wonderfully engaging. The newly unified Berlin of 1990 was a playground for the young, as squatters broke into abandoned buildings and created living spaces for art and habitation.

Tonally the movie resembles something close to a Germanic Wes Anderson, with a playful taste for timing and utterly ridiculous situations. It's a reminder of the history and culture of Germany. There is life there, and this film captures that spark. ●

The New Yorker corrects errors on Venezuela

By Keane Bhatt, NACLA, from <http://venezuelanalysis.com>

Thanks to readers' responses to *The New Yorker*, the magazine has amended two errors in two separate articles.

The first correction involves an online piece that Jon Lee Anderson wrote on the eve of Venezuela's elections in October of last year. As was pointed out almost immediately, he had incorrectly claimed that "Venezuela leads Latin America in homicides" in his "The End of Chavez?" (the headline was changed to "Chavez the Survivor" after the late Venezuelan president handily won

his reelection).

Actually, it is Honduras that leads Latin America - and indeed the entire world - in per capita homicides: 92 per 100,000 people are killed annually there, while Venezuela's figure stands at 45.1, according to the most recently available United Nations data. And unlike the Venezuelan government, the Honduran government contributes to this body count by regularly murdering its own civilians through its military and police, both of which receive tens of millions of dollars from U.S. taxpayers. (*The New Yorker* hasn't published a single article referring to Honduras's current post-coup regime, headed

by Porfirio Lobo, who came to power in January of 2010.)

Reacting to readers' complaints, the magazine's editors issued an addendum to Anderson's October 7 piece, which reads:

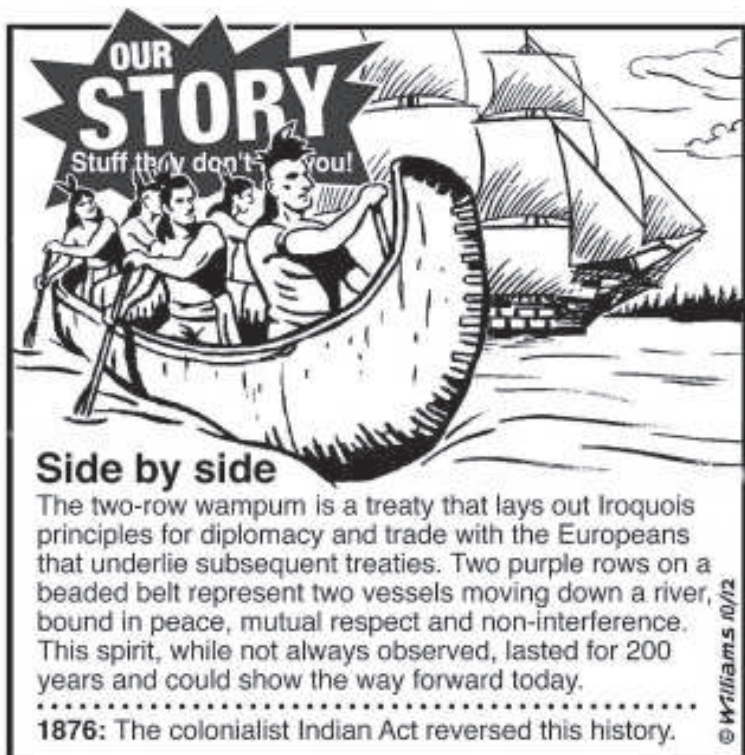
"An earlier version of this post said that Venezuela led Latin America in homicides; globally, it was in fourth place, but third in Latin America (behind Honduras and El Salvador), according to U.N. statistics on intentional homicides for 2010-11."

Another Anderson article - "Slumlord: What has Hugo Chavez wrought in Venezuela?" - also misled readers by giving the impression that Chavez's presidential tenure was predicated on a coup d'etat rather than his victories in over a dozen internationally vetted elections. *The New Yorker* released a correction for the inaccuracy in its April 1 issue, two months after the original piece had been published:

In "Slumlord," by Jon Lee Anderson (January 28th), Hugo Chavez is described as having been concerned with "preventing a coup like the one that put him in office." In fact, Chavez's coup attempt, in 1992, failed; he was elected to office in 1998.

For Jon Lee Anderson's most recent factual error, unfortunately, *The New Yorker* has thus far refused to issue a clarification or retraction. One month ago - the day Chavez died - Anderson wrote a third piece, for *New Yorker.com*, claiming: "What [Chavez] has left is a country that, in some ways, will never be the same, and which, in other ways, is the same Venezuela as ever: one of the world's most oil-rich but socially unequal countries..."

As I pointed out in "Anderson Fails at Arithmetic," this allegation misleads the reader in two ways. Inequality has been reduced enormously under Chavez, using its standard measure, the Gini coefficient. So one can hardly say that in this aspect, Venezuela remains the "same as ever." Making Anderson's contention even worse is the fact that Venezuela is the most equal country in Latin America, according to the United Nations. Anderson's readers come away with exactly the opposite impression.... •



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Sunday, April 28th

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Free Admission

Organized by the United May Day Committee

Come to the Rally Wednesday May 1st

What's Left

Victoria, BC

Annual Earth Walk, Saturday, April 20, gather 12 noon at Centennial "Spirit" Square, City Hall, for march and rally.

Vancouver, BC

What's Next for Omar Khadr?, now jailed for 11 years, with lawyer Dennis Edney Q.C., Tue., April 16, 7 pm, Room 1900, SFU Harbour Centre, 515 W. Hastings, Hosted by "Vancouver Free Omar Khadr Now Committee".

Earth Day Parade, Sat., April 20, 11 am from Broadway Skytrain to Grandview Park (1200 Commercial).

Left Film Night, Sunday, April 28, 7 pm, Centre for Socialist Education, 706 Clark Drive. For film details, call 604-245-2041 for info.

May Day Rally, 5:30 pm, Wed., May 1, march from Clark Park (Commercial & 14th) to Grandview Park (1200 block Commercial), called by Vancouver & District Labour Council.

White Rock, BC

Social Justice Film Festival, Friday nights, 7 pm, at First United, 15385 Semiahmoo: *War Made Easy*, April 26; *ReGENERATION*, May 31. Sponsored by White Rock Social Justice Film Society.

Winnipeg, MB

Marxism Course, contact the Manitoba Committee CPC to join up, 586-7824 or cpc-mb@changetheworldmb.ca.

PV 2013 Fund Drive for \$50,000

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Toronto, ON

Militarism and Sports, organizing meeting for fans and athletes concerned with the increasing ties between the military and sports, Wed., April 24, 7 pm, OISE Room 5-150, 252 Bloor St. West. Search for "Militarism and Sports: A Response" on Facebook.

May Day Celebration, political and cultural event, Sunday, April 28, Steelworkers Hall, 25 Cecil St., doors 4:30 pm, program starts 5 pm, speakers, live music, poetry & dance, food & refreshments. Free, organized by United May Day Committee.

May Day of Action, Wednesday, May 1, 5:30 pm, Nathan Phillips Square.

Ottawa, ON

Mass gathering for all First Peoples, at Parliament Hill, Friday, June 21, to raise awareness about Indigenous sovereignty and treaty rights. Idle No More says: "This will be a peaceful protest, a day for prayer, ceremony, community and enlightenment. Please share this with all your friends across Turtle Island and let's come together as one for the first Million First People's March on Turtle Island! Idle No More!"

Montreal, QC

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

April 28 is the Day of Mourning for Workers Killed and Injured on the Job.
Contact your nearest Labour Council about events in your area.

People's Voice deadlines

May 1-15 issue: Thursday, April 18

May 16-31 issue: Thursday, May 2

Send submissions to PV Editorial Office,
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"We do not accept that a minority keeps getting richer"



Excerpts from an interview by *Solidaire*, with Peter Mertens, chair of the Workers' Party of Belgium (PTB)

The PTB made important gains in municipal elections held in October 2012. What is the membership of the PTB?

Peter Mertens: We have now reached 6,811 members. In 2012 more than two thousand members

takes measures to further decrease social protection, social security and public services, at a moment when more and more people need them because of the crisis.

This means there is a task for the PTB here.

Peter Mertens: Yes, in 2013 we want to strengthen the social struggle movement with all our sections. The crisis is used by the establishment to drive back the

from below to steer society in another direction.

Other parties sometimes say: with the crisis, it is not difficult for the PTB to attract so many new members. Is this a valid argument?

Peter Mertens: I am not so sure about this. Take a look at Germany. The German model of low wages and hyper-flexible jobs is not automatically pushing the whole working class to the Left, is it? Whether the Left will grow stronger as a result of the disagreement about neoliberal policies, depends on the activity of the Marxist party. Is it working well? Is it succeeding in informing and organizing the people? That is the most important issue.

Well yes, a lot of people see that the SP.A and PS (Flemish and Walloon social-democratic parties) in the present government are taking measures against the workers' movement. Less people still feel themselves at ease with these parties. When prime minister Di Rupo is promoting (extra tax reductions for enterprises) at the World Economic Forum in Davos, while one of the biggest profiteers of that system, ArcelorMittal, is planning to shut down in Liege part of a modern steel plant, this does not need much further explanation.

Also more and more volunteers and members of the large Christian workers' movement are turning to us. They observe that participation in the capitalist logic of the big banks has eaten away their cooperative savings...

The party is growing, more members are joining. Is the PTB able to immediately give all these new forces a place?

Peter Mertens: This growth is absolutely necessary for us. If we want to go against the increasing turn to the Right, then we need a strong force, a well-based party. The party had to innovate and look for renewed sources, no one can deny this. We have the duty to be not a bystander but an actor in society, a living party that can exercise influence on what is

happening.

But OK, the people now joining the PTB do not automatically know our party program or vision, let alone that all of them would have a profound knowledge of today's Marxism. For this reason we will take the necessary time in 2013 to strengthen the education at all levels, to reinforce the backbone of our party. You can be tactical and flexible, but you need a backbone. Or else your flexibility will be that of a rag doll. We continue with the enlargement of the PTB, but on the other hand we want to give much time to the guidance and education of new members who want to further develop as active members of the PTB.

In the media the success of the PTB is sometimes compared to foreign examples: the SP in the Netherlands, Syriza in Greece, Melanchon in France. Is any comparison possible?

Peter Mertens: It seems logical to me that in this time of crisis, there is some space created to the left of social democracy, for social democracy in Europe has totally sold itself to capitalism and has no longer any ambition to build a socialist society. That is already the case for quite a long time. Now this space can be filled by many different ways. Naturally, our way of organizing the opposition and our vision of society is closer to, say, the Communist Party of Portugal than to certain other parties. That is a fact. But that does not mean that there are no

the pressure of the multinationals, corporate taxes are being reduced. Luc Bertrand, CEO of Ackermans & van Haaren, is allowed to say that we have a "Marxist government" in our country, but his enterprise only pays 0.02 percent in taxes. And even that is considered too much. Each year, the government loses billions of euros as a result of this neoliberal fiscal revolution, money that gets saved from public services. Social houses are no longer renovated, bus lines are abolished, the waiting lists for care are getting longer.

We are facing a systemic problem, a problem of capitalism itself. The mechanism of competition requires ever higher productivity, and a greater share of the market, which leads to an attack on wages and on labour conditions, and causes a decrease of the people's purchasing power.

So what is the purpose of those symbolic measures capitalists want to carry out?

Peter Mertens: In government circles it is clearly said: we are forced to take a number of symbolic measures to keep the population satisfied. Many economists have said in financial papers that they do not understand why the population remains so calm under such draconian measures. There is a real fear of social unrest on a large scale. And with reason, when you look at what is happening in Europe. After five years of economic crisis, in 2013 we will once again go into a



PTB president Peter Mertens: We do not accept that a minority keeps getting richer."

joined, the largest increase in our history. Also many new branches were started. This has led to unbelievably much more energy and experience in the party. We have an enormous challenge to give everyone a place within the party, to keep the party active, to keep the party Marxist, but also to cope with the challenges of the crisis.

Since the government has already adjusted its planning to a growth figure of almost zero. It is expected that the closure of Ford Genk and ArcelorMittal Liege is only the beginning of a new wave of layoffs and restructurings. (NOTE: Since the interview, Caterpillar Gosselies has fired another 1400 Belgian workers). At the same time, the government

working class: socially, economically, democratically, but also morally. We have to build new power relations. And that means that we work everywhere to have debate and discussion. That means that we also help people to organize, from within small subcontractors up to big enterprises and offices, from abandoned neighbourhoods to the bustling city life.

People should have the courage to say "no", that is the first act of opposition. "No" to cutbacks of post offices, social housing, neighbourhood libraries or public space. "No" to the attack on purchasing power, to wage freezes, hyper-flexibility and underpaid jobs. We need a large counter-movement which exerts pressure



The Workers' Party of Belgium uses these colourful "soap boxes" to promote its campaign for a Millionaires Tax.

areas in which we can cooperate with them, or learn from them.

At the World Economic Forum, CEOs, bankers and heads of government said the huge gap between rich and poor has grown "problematic". The OECD states that multinationals evade too many taxes. Are these signs that capitalists are coming to the understanding that matters cannot continue the way they do?

Peter Mertens: No. Naming a problem does not mean that you want to solve it. I think they have been forced to name it because by now they are about the very last on earth to recognize the problem.

They declare they want to reduce this contrast, then they take a number of symbolic measures, but in the meantime they strengthen all fundamental mechanisms leading to this gigantic gap. Take for instance fiscal measures. All around the world the highest tax rates are being lowered, and under

recession. 26 million people in the European Union are now jobless. Entire population groups are condemned to poverty. One out of four young people has no job. And for those with a job, conditions are often not much better. 8.7 percent of Europeans with a job cannot make ends meet. Those are working poor. In Germany this number even reaches 22 percent, one out of five!

On the other side you have an awesome accumulation of wealth in the hands of a few people. Someone like Bernard Arnault (the richest man of Europe) was able to add \$8.1 billion to his account last year. He has a personal fortune of \$28.8 billion. This situation, where a minority of a minority is allowed to enrich themselves, causing huge damage to the common interest, is not democratic. That is no democracy, but an oligarchy, where wealth means power.

see MILLIONAIRES, p. 10

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