

DEC. 1-31,
2012
VOL. 20
#20
\$1.50

people's VOICE

Child poverty in B.C.

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Printed in Canada by union labour
on recycled paper  118-M
Publications Mail Agreement #40011632



General strikes say "NO" to European austerity

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Thousands still face housing crisis after deliberate flooding in Manitoba

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(Photo: Indigenous Peoples Solidarity Movement-Winnipeg)

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Good riddance to Ford

Rob Ford has been removed from office as Mayor of Toronto, a development welcomed by Ontario Communists. But much needs to be accomplished to keep Ford and his allies from making a comeback.

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Beirut Declaration

Delegates from sixty Communist and Workers' Parties met in Beirut last month. Here's the Final Declaration and a first-hand report.

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S. Korea goes to polls

South Koreans will elect a new president this month. But the most significant struggles are in the streets and workplaces, as Korean workers resist austerity policies and look for peace.

Sinclair re-elected as B.C. Federation President

PV Vancouver Bureau

In an unusual development, there was a contest for the top elected positions at this year's B.C. Federation of Labour convention, held Nov. 26-30 in Vancouver. But few observers were surprised when Jim Sinclair and former BC Teachers Federation president Irene Lanzinger were re-elected as President and Secretary-Treasurer, defeating Michele Laurie (an electrician and president of IBEW Local 282), and CUPE activist Trevor Davies. Sinclair took 1382 votes against 599 for Laurie, a winning margin of 70%. The second race was a bit closer, but the margin gave a strong mandate to the incumbents over

the next two years.

There were various interpretations for the first such race in many years at the B.C. Fed. But the Laurie-Davies team was strongly backed by CUPE-BC, which walked out of the Fed convention two years ago in a protest against the Sinclair leadership.

That action was related to complex wider disputes over raiding, leading many to conclude that it was not a division over fundamental policies. Instead, the differences reflect internal dynamics in a federation which requires strong consensus among major affiliates and executive members to move forward.

This year, the leadership of CUPE-BC, including its president

Barry O'Neill, backed the challengers and tried to impose caucus solidarity for the vote. A major component of CUPE-BC, the Hospital Employees Union, took a different view and endorsed Sinclair and Lanzinger. In the end, CUPE-BC and IBEW were unable to convince many other delegates to back Laurie.

The incumbents were supported by Action Caucus members and others on the left of the labour movement in British Columbia. While many trade union activists with a militant outlook have raised criticisms of the BC Fed leadership over the years, there is an understanding that Sinclair's options are sometimes limited by the strength of some "business

union" oriented affiliates.

The overarching consideration for many of the convention debates was the impending B.C. provincial election, set for May 13, 2013. After nearly 12 years of rabidly pro-corporate, anti-working class rule under Gordon Campbell and now Christy Clark, the B.C. labour movement is desperate to dump the Liberals. Opinion polls for the last year have consistently given a lead of about 20% to Adrian Dix's NDP, and delegates were eager for the campaign to begin.

Dix got a far better reception than his predecessor Carole James, whose tepid pro-business approach barely got delegates out of their seats two years ago, shortly before a caucus revolt pushed her out of the job. Likewise, federal NDP leader Thomas Mulcair got a standing ovation, and many hope that he can defeat the Harper Tories in 2015.

But Adrian Dix is being cautious. He has already pledged to reverse some of Gordon Campbell's tax cuts to the wealthy and the banks, but as he hinted to the BC Fed delegates, there will be no major move to shift the provincial tax burden back onto the corporate sector. He pledged to treat labour with respect, but also to consult closely with business interests. In other words, those who hope for a sharp swing to the left under the NDP should lower their expectations. There are even strong indications that a Dix government would not make significant pro-labour changes to the B.C. labour code, leaving that reform to a second term in office, i.e. 2019, after another six years of corporate attacks on working class rights.

The sharpest debate at the convention came on a composite resolution about the proposed

Enbridge Northern Gateway pipeline. Seeking unity, the resolutions committee limited the wording to this particular controversial project, and to exports of diluted bitumen from the Alberta tar sands. Labour would only support the pipeline, the resolution stated, if various conditions were met, including support from First Nations and an environmental assessment giving definitive approval.

Judging by the reaction to speakers, it appeared that a solid majority of delegates were opposed to Northern Gateway and to dilbit exports. Since the "conditions" set out in the compromise are very unlikely to be met, adoption would have meant in reality that labour opposes tar sands exports.

But the resolution drew angry opposition from the building trades unions, whose members hope for jobs building the pipeline. More significant for the final result, a number of delegates also spoke against, saying that it watered down opposition to any new oil pipelines. In the end, the supporters of the project and some of its sharpest critics joined to defeat the resolution, much to the dismay of many delegates.

The vote leaves B.C. trade unions in disarray, with some intending to keep up their involvement in campaigns against Northern Gateway and other pipelines, and others supporting these projects. The decision is clearly a setback for efforts to strengthen unity among labour, First Nations and environmentalists around energy issues, such as the big Oct. 22 anti-pipeline rally at the Legislature in Victoria. ●

"Defend Democratic and Economic Rights in Ontario"

Statement from the Ontario Federation of Labour website

The Ontario government has been shut down while workers' rights are under threat and cuts to jobs and services are hurting every community.

The 2012 Ontario Budget slashed funding and threatened thousands of jobs that are essential to the delivery of vital public services that support every community. Meanwhile the Ontario Liberal government maintained corporate tax cuts that continue to bleed \$15 billion from the province every year. This fall, McGuinty's Liberals, with the backing of Tim Hudak's Progressive Conservatives, passed Bill 115 - an unprecedented law stripping educational workers of their most basic democratic rights. By cheating teachers and educational support staff of the right to strike and the right to bargain collectively with their employer, the Liberals and Conservatives have established a precedent that threatens the rights of every worker in Ontario.

Now the Ontario Legislature has been prorogued while public services and workers' rights are continue to hang in limbo. However, with a provincial

election on the horizon, workers and community members across the province can demand new priorities for Ontario that put people ahead of corporate profit.

The Ontario Federation of Labour and community allies have launched a campaign to defend the democratic and economic rights of everyone. The campaign will bring the fight for rights and democracy directly to the doorstep of every Member of Provincial Parliament

in the lead up to the Ontario Election. It has started with regional town hall community meetings across the province and it will culminate in a mass rally at the Ontario Liberal Leadership Convention in Toronto on January 26.

Get involved in the campaign! Help build labour-community coalitions in every community! Mobilize for January 26 to defend the democratic and economic rights of everyone! ●

www.ofl.ca/index.php/campaigns/DemocraticRights

Facebook: www.facebook.com/events/489963847693178

Twitter Hashtag: #J26Rally



Worse than Harris: Ontario's new social assistance cuts

By Jean Kenyon

When Premier Mike Harris slashed welfare and froze disability benefits in 1995, he subsequently mitigated some of the worst impacts by introducing two new benefits in 1997. One was the Community Start-Up and Maintenance Benefit (CSUMB), which a recipient could access once every two years for special housing needs, such as first and last month's rent or getting disconnected utilities turned back on. The second was a Discretionary Benefit for welfare recipients, by which the municipality could dole out small amounts for adult dental work or food hampers.

Well, Grinch McGuinty has

decided these small graces are too rich for Ontarians to sustain. As of Dec. 31 the CSUMB will be gone and the Discretionary Benefit capped. It means the municipalities will get less than half of the money the province used to provide through both benefits. They will have to either slash benefits to the poorest people or jack up regressive property taxes, because municipalities aren't allowed to run a deficit.

But the people of Ontario aren't taking it lying down. Town halls have been held around Ontario with speakers from Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (OCAP) and CUPE. Occupations of Liberal MPPs' offices have taken place from Sudbury to Kitchener -

especially at the office of Social Services minister John Milloy, whom activists have dubbed the Minister of Misery. Many more actions are planned throughout December.

Meanwhile a long-awaited review of social assistance was completed in October. Before the ink was even dry, Minister Milloy told the media that Ontario couldn't afford the recommended meagre \$100/month increase.

Alliances are now forming between poverty activists and the labour movement, stinging from McGuinty's assaults on public sector bargaining rights and wages. Watch for much new militancy in Ontario's streets in the new year. ●

Saskatchewan Women's Forum 2013 in Saskatoon

If you are interested in women's rights, in connecting with individuals and organizations who have been working on women's issues recently and through the decades, and in spending a weekend learning, having fun, and moving a women's agenda forward in our province, then please set aside Friday, January 18 (evening) and Saturday, January 19, 2013!

We are a coalition of women and organizations who have come together to plan a Saskatchewan Women's Forum taking place at the Bessborough Hotel in Saskatoon. For too long, we have been having conversations in isolation from each other about the current context that women and women's organizations find themselves in. So we are creating this opportunity to collectively develop how we can move forward on the issues that we care about.

We are currently finalizing our program, which will be centered on women's stories and respectful of intergenerational, intercultural and diverse experiences. If you are interested in attending, please respond back to us <michelle.beveridge@oxfam.ca>, tel. 306.242.4097, and we will ensure you receive the program and registration package by mid-December.

In the meantime, please save the date! And get in touch with us if you would like to be part of the planning, to volunteer at the forum in any number of capacities, or have other ideas for us.

Registration is \$50/person. (Please let us know if you are in a situation where you would only be able to attend with a reduced rate, or conversely, if you are able and willing to donate money to assist in covering a portion of registration for others.)

Sincerely, Michelle Beveridge and Katelyn Jones, Oxfam Canada, Saskatoon; Sue Delaney, Elizabeth Fry Society, Saskatoon; Diane Fletcher, Vadis Group, Saskatoon; Lori Hanson, U of S, Community Health and Epidemiology, Saskatoon; Laura Hopkins, Saskatoon Women's Community Coalition; Lori Johb, Saskatchewan Federation of Labour; Audra Krueger, U of S, Centre for the Study of Co-ops, Saskatoon; Darla Leard, Canadian Labour Congress, Saskatoon; Barb Macpherson, YWCA Saskatoon; Adriane Paavo, Prairie Lily Feminist Society, Regina; Priscilla Settee, U of S, Native Studies, Saskatoon; Lenore Swystun and Samantha Mark, Prairie Wild Consulting, Saskatoon; Laura Westman, Saskatoon; Bernadette Wagner, Regina. ●

Still no solution to Aboriginal housing crisis in Manitoba after deliberate flooding

By Darrell Rankin

For one and a half years, more than 2,000 members of the Lake St. Martin First Nation have been without homes and split up. The life of an entire nation is forever damaged by imposed provincial flood control and federal government/corporate-caused climate change. This is genocide in Manitoba today.

Hundreds of children will "celebrate" their second Christmas without a real home, in hotels or essentially in a foreign land.

The federal and provincial governments have failed to respond in a meaningful way, although the scale of the disaster is monumental. To put this in perspective, the Lake St. Martin First Nation represents 1 out of 604 people in Manitoba, or about 1 of 272 Manitobans living outside of Winnipeg.

It is another stark example of the inequality of Aboriginal peoples in Canada. Rather than respect the treaty signed with the Lake St. Martin First Nation, pro-

porate governments are rejecting this nation's choice of location to establish a new reserve.

The Manitoba NDP government is making unilateral decisions where the First Nation must live "temporarily." The government even secretly bought some neighbouring land, a location rejected as unsuitable by the First Nation.

Deliberate flooding since 1961 has made the First Nation's land uninhabitable, ending with the forced, emergency transfer of people in 2011. Roughly the same number of people are still displaced from other First Nations after the historic 2011 Manitoba flood.

Stephen Harper, Greg Selinger and their corporate backers are responsible for the gross injustice. Instead, the Harper government is accusing members of the Lake St. Martin First Nation of "fraud" and dropping people from evacuation lists to cover up its racist inaction.

The federal government also cut its meagre evacuation allowances on November 1. "Before, each adult evacuee received \$23.40 a day and



Lake St. Martin Chief Adrian Sinclair speaking at a Nov. 26 rally at the Legislature. (Photo: Indigenous Peoples Solidarity Movement-Winnipeg)

each child \$18.70 a day. Now, Ottawa will pay rent or hotel charges, as well as \$3.20 a day in living allowances for children and \$4 a day for adults." (*Winnipeg Free Press*, November 21, 2012). Try to eat on that!

Evacuee costs for Aboriginal

people make up about 7 per cent of the total spent to recover from the flood. Yet the federal government cut the allowances because it says the nation is in "recovery." There is no recovery, because no solution is in sight!

A town of 2,000 non-Aboriginal people would be relocated and rebuilt by now. Last year's Slave Lake, Alberta fire displaced 700 people. Three-quarters of private homes are rebuilt; all apartments will be completed within another year. When 100,000 people lost their homes to the 1871 Chicago fire, the large majority had new homes in two years and the city doubled in size by 1880. Ontario supplied forests of lumber.

What is the hold-up now in Manitoba?

The 2011 flood never directly touched most people in Manitoba, yet governments are "warehousing" the unresolved problem of displaced Aboriginal peoples. Compared to Hurricane Sandy in

the eastern U.S., this was a major climate catastrophe for our small province of 1.2 million people.

The City of Winnipeg, other communities and farmers downstream owe a great debt to the Lake St. Martin First Nation, yet public gratitude by these communities is lacking. One Winnipeg City Councillor is hesitating to express thanks and a wish for a solution because it might create a "legal or financial obligation" to the First Nation!

This is plain cruelty and ingratitude to people who sacrificed their homes and ancestral homeland. The labour movement and every group that supports justice for Aboriginal peoples clearly needs to step forward and demand a solution to this national housing crisis, and soon.

Enough is enough. Justice delayed is justice denied.

(Darrell Rankin is the Manitoba leader of the Communist Party of Canada.) ●

Child poverty still high in B.C.

PV Vancouver Bureau

With the May 2013 provincial election looming, one of British Columbia's leading anti-poverty groups has issued a stinging "Child Poverty Report Card". Released by First Call, the BC partner in Campaign 2000, the report shows that British Columbia remains near the bottom in most measurements of poverty. It also shows a growing gap between families at the top and the bottom of the income scale.

While BC's child poverty rate dropped to 14.3 percent in 2010, only Manitoba had a worse record. The Canadian average was 13.7 percent, according to the latest figures from Statistics Canada.

The number of poor children was 119,000, or about one of every seven BC children. About two-thirds, or 80,000, of these children lived in the Greater Vancouver region.

BC also had the most unequal distribution of income among rich and poor families with children. The ratio of the average incomes of the richest ten percent compared to the poorest ten percent was the worst of any province at 13.8 to one.

"Poverty robs children of their potential, and increases ill health. High rates of income inequality are known to produce higher levels of infant mortality, crime, mental illness, addictions, obesity, and lower levels of education and social mobility and trust. This is a recipe for a very sick society, unless we turn this around," said Dr. John Millar of the Public Health Association of BC.

First Call is asking all provincial parties to adopt platforms including policies to reduce British Columbia's high

poverty rate.

"We want the parties to heed the overwhelming evidence that high poverty rates are already costing us more in health care, the criminal justice system, remedial education and lost productivity than it would to close the poverty gap in BC," said First Call chairperson Cheryl Mixon.

Key findings in the report include:

- * BC had an overall poverty rate of 15.5 percent in 2010, the worst rate of any province in Canada using the before-tax low income cut-offs of Statistics Canada as the measure of poverty.

- * BC had the worst poverty rate at 11.6 percent of any province for children living in two-parent families.

- * In 2010, 43 percent of the poor children in BC lived in families with at least one adult working full-time, full-year, exposing the problem of low-wage jobs.

- * Most poor families with children live many thousands of dollars below the poverty line. Poor two-parent families had incomes \$13,800 below the poverty line on average.

The Report Card makes 15 policy recommendations, including: increasing and indexing the minimum wage, welfare rates and child tax benefits; enhancing Employment Insurance benefits and eligibility; universal access to high-quality, affordable child care; and improving the affordability of post-secondary education.

The Campaign 2000 network marks the anniversary every November of the 1989 pledge by the House of Commons to work to end child poverty by the year 2000.

For more information, visit www.firstcallbc.org. ●

Ontario Communists welcome Rob Ford's removal

The Communist Party of Canada (Ontario) welcomes the Ontario Superior Court's order for Rob Ford to vacate the mayoralty of Toronto because of his failure to excuse himself on conflict-of-interest grounds from a council debate, triggered by his abuse of office to benefit a charity named after himself. The Party supports a by-election to replace Ford, and calls for the movement fighting the right-wing policies and forces behind Rob Ford to keep mobilizing, otherwise his agenda could continue under a different face.

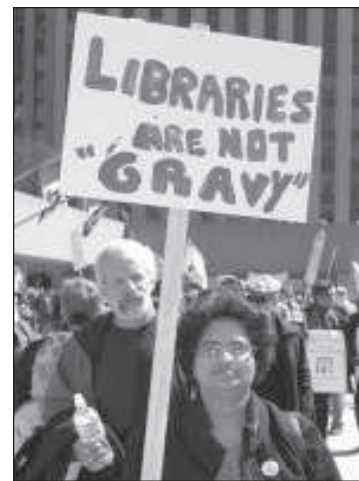
Party Leader Liz Rowley explained that "Rob Ford had campaigned on ending 'the gravy train', but when he took office Torontonians saw that in reality this meant lay-offs, contracting out, cutting services, and charging steep fees for services the public needs and wants. It's the corporations who backed Ford who are on a 'gravy train' of enjoying record profits, record low taxes, and municipal services at the expense of ratepayers and tenants who are paying more and more, and getting less and less. They're also salivating at the prospects of more privatization of city services and assets under the right-wing majority at City Hall.

"Ford's own exploitation of his office for his family's benefit and his personal causes, as well as his contempt for democracy, for the public and the public interest, and for the high office of Mayor of the sixth largest government in the country, by being absent during Council meetings to coach football games amongst many other transgressions, shows he was making a new Gravy Train all by himself and has no respect for the people of Toronto.

"Congratulations are in order to the Stop Cuts Coalition and others who have had success in stopping his agenda, such as the 'lifeboat' motion to moderate some of the

cuts in January. But we need to keep up the mobilization because the right-wing majority on Council and the corporate interests who bankrolled Ford's election won't rest. They could find someone else to do their bidding, with more grace and less Gravy."

Rowley had characterized the Ford administration as one where "the public is not welcome" when she was removed from City Hall for merely suggesting budget



PV photo by Ed Bil

committee hearings be extended by one day to allow for all 348 registered deputants to have their democratic say.

As she said, "Rob Ford and the right-wing agenda he represents were going after our libraries, recreation centres, seniors' homes, HIV/AIDS programs, school nutrition programs, three of our child care centres, three of our homeless centres, theatres, and zoos, but his removal does not mean they are stopping. We need to show we reject this agenda now, under any face new or old."

The only real guarantee that the Fords and co. will be side-lined is through the building of a strong and progressive civic reform movement that can unite all those forces now fighting the right-wing agenda at City Hall, to develop a

progressive municipal platform and put forward a slate of candidates who will fight for it and win in the 2014 civic election.

The Communist Party of Canada (Ontario) calls on the provincial and federal governments to end the chronic financial crisis in Toronto and other municipalities by providing cities with a new financial deal, including:

- * provide adequate funding through statutory transfers to Toronto and all municipalities, enabling cities to provide the array of municipal services necessary in the 21st century.

- * stop the firesale of municipal land and assets, including public housing, schools, and parks; and reverse user fees.

- * upload the Harris download and rescind balanced budget legislation.

- * fund the capital and operating costs of the TTC and municipal transit systems; reduce fares and increase ridership.

- * transfer 50% of gas and road user to municipalities.

- * collect unpaid and deferred corporate taxes, and introduce progressive tax policies based on ability to pay.

- * remove education from the property tax, cut property taxes in half, and fund education through provincial general revenues

- * develop a provincial and federal affordable housing plan and enact rent controls.

- * introduce a provincial system of universally accessible affordable quality public child care.

- * give cities status in the Constitution; and protect local autonomy and democracy.

The Party's 10-point prescription for a People's Recovery, and its alternative to the austerity policies, is online at www.ontariopc.ca/10-point-prescription-for-a-peoples-recovery. ●

EDITORIALS

Palestine: good news and bad

First the good news, as they say. Recent weeks have seen important victories for the Palestinian people, starting with their heroic resistance against the Israeli aggression which killed some 140 residents of Gaza. The threat of an IDF ground invasion was blocked, thanks to the courage of the people of Gaza, and powerful protests across the world, even inside Israel. This was followed by the historic vote of the United Nations General Assembly to grant Palestine "observer state" status, a major step towards full international recognition and self-determination of the Palestinian people. This was more than a symbolic decision, since it gives the Palestinians access to new legal and diplomatic tools to help achieve their goal of full statehood.

For Canadians, the bad news is that our Tory government has again shown its vicious hatred of the Palestinians. Canada, the U.S., the Czech Republic and Israel were isolated in voting against the General Assembly resolution. (Ironically they were joined by a handful of Pacific Islands which will eventually be swamped by rising oceans if global warming is not checked. Perhaps Harper's climate change deniers will offer these islanders refuge in Canada?)

Foreign Minister John Baird was greeted with silence when he urged the General Assembly to vote against Palestine. But that matters little compared to the praise of Benjamin Netanyahu, who immediately thanked Stephen Harper for backing the apartheid occupation of Palestinian territories. This "special relationship" was seen again when Canada failed to criticise the latest illegal expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank.

The day is coming when Palestine will be free. The best solidarity Canadians can provide is to demand that the Harper Tories and all parties in Parliament join the rest of the world in recognizing the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.

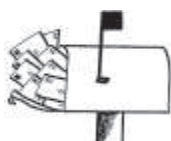
Reflecting on a tumultuous year

As 2012 comes to an end, revolutionary and progressive activists have much to reflect upon. This was the fourth full calendar year of the global economic crisis which erupted in the fall of 2008, and there is no end on the horizon for 2013. Everywhere in the "developed" capitalist world, austerity is the only item on the menu for the corporate elite and their parties, including social democratic politicians who were elected on platforms to defend working people.

This was also a year in which the US-dominated NATO imperialists and their local supporters ramped up efforts to sabotage the "Arab Spring." Terrified by the popular mobilizations across the Arab world to demand better pay and working conditions, social equality, and democratic freedoms, the ruling classes are willing to use every weapon at their disposal to divide the peoples and fan bloody civil conflicts, such as the current attempt to overthrow the government of Syria.

Not least, 2012 saw the spread of environmental catastrophes and climate change, arising from greenhouse gas emissions which are the result of unchecked capitalist expansion. It is obvious that our planet's future cannot be left to the whims of an economic system driven solely by the quest for maximum corporate profits.

The recent meeting of Communist and Workers' parties in Beirut (see pages 6 & 7) showed that there is a people's alternative to the austerity agenda. However, the working class and its allies must be prepared to fight for fundamental social change to halt the slide into poverty, ecological collapse, fascism and war. This will be a difficult and complex battle against a ruthless enemy, but as a famous revolutionary once warned, the only options for our world are socialism or barbarism.



Letters to the Editor

Article gives wrong impression of Iran regime

Re. the article by Eric Wallberg in the Nov 1-15 issue of PV (*Other Voices*, "Canada's Toxic Spill of Anti-Native Racism") on the visit of Native leaders to Iran to publicize the exploitation and discrimination Native people face in this country.

While the article provides excellent information about the plight of the indigenous population in Canada, and rightfully criticizes the Harper government's hostile attitude toward Iran which has not done anything harmful to Canada,

it goes on to portray the Islamic Republic in a very positive light and characterizes it as democratic.

In truth the Iranian government is based on the profoundly undemocratic principle of the *vilayet-e-faqih* (the vice-regent of God on earth) who appointed by a group of fellow mullahs and is the supreme authority of the land even over above the elected Parliament. The regime discriminates against women, persecutes trade unionists and imprisons, tortures and kills communists, progressives and

even democrats who challenge its policies.

For the last decade or so, while the people of Iran struggle under immense economic hardships, the regime has been spending incredible amounts of money outside of Iran on individuals, organizations [so-called charity foundations] and media outlets to distort the vision of the struggle of the people in Iran against the regime. And so, a lot of left and the so-called progressive forces have joined that league of "the enemy of my enemy is my friend".

As communists, our main focus should be to oppose a possible attack on Iran by Israel, expose imperialism's aims for the country and the region and call for lifting western sanctions against it which have caused tremendous hardships for the Iranian people.

At the same time we stand to lose our credibility as communists if we do not stand against the merciless oppression of the Iranian people who struggle for democracy and social justice at the hands of its Islamic government.

*Kamal, CPC member,
Davenport Club, Toronto*

(Editor's Note: Articles under the "Other Voices" label present valuable information and analysis to our readers, but do not necessarily reflect the full editorial position of People's Voice.)

Stop the privatization of Canada Post

Canada Post was founded in 1867 and has since become a vital service to all Canadians, delivering 40 million items to 14 million addresses everyday, and employing over 70,000 full and part-time employees.

However, Canada Post is under threat from the Harper Government's attack on public sector workers and unions, with the Conservatives continuing the push for privatization.

In the 1980s and the 1990s, 1500 public post offices were closed, the services offered being taken over by multinational corporations that do not serve the interests of Canadians, but private investors with anti-worker policies. Now at least 16 closures in urban areas across Canada are underway.

The privatization of Canada Post would negatively impact Canadians in many ways. Since private postal outlets are only interested in making a profit, they are less reliable and do not provide the same services that a public postal service does, and unlike public services, are not accountable to Canadians. Rural mail delivery would be especially threatened by privatization, since it is not profitable for private corporations to deliver to remote areas.

The workers at private postal outlets are often underpaid and overworked, as corporations exploit workers in an endless desire to force larger profits out from their workers. Workers are more

likely to have less secure and part-time employment, while many jobs will be eliminated entirely, exacerbating the rising income inequality in Canada.

Countries that have privatized their postal service have experienced significant repercussions, with the workers and the general public forced to endure the burden. More than 16,000 well-paid jobs were eliminated in Sweden between 1993 and 2005, with only a meager 2,000 jobs created as a result of the privatization. Additionally, postage rates for small business and the public increased dramatically as a result of the privatization of the national postal service. In New Zealand, postal workers suffered a major wage reduction as a result of privatization.

According to polls by Ipsos Reid and The Canadian Federation of Independent Business, 69% and 52% of respondents do not want a privatized postal service in Canada. The two major concerns of the respondents were the environmental consequences of a private postal service and the risk to their privacy.

Canadians don't want to see their post offices closed and replaced by private corporations. Canada needs a reliable public postal service that is accountable to the public. Stand up to the privatization of vital public services!

T.J. Petrowski, Winnipeg

PEOPLE'S VOICE

ISSN number 1198-8657 Published by New Labour Press Ltd.
Canadian Publications Mail Sales Product Agreement #40011632

Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to Circulation Dept.,
People's Voice, 706 Clark Drive, Vancouver, BC, V5L 3J1
Tel: 604.255.2041 Email: pvoice@telus.net

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The deadly price of cheap clothes

by Julhas Alam, *Morning Star* (UK)

Clothing is king in Bangladesh, a country that exports more garments than any other in the world except China. It is responsible for four out of every five export dollars and has turned factory owners into members of parliament and leaders of sports clubs.

That power has been turned against the workers in those factories, especially those who complain about poor working conditions and pay that can be less than \$40 a month. They are barred by law from forming trade unions and the Industrial Police deals ruthlessly with unrest in factories - it has been accused of murdering union organiser Aminul Islam in April 2012.

"The owners must treat the workers with respect. They should care about their lives and they must keep in mind that they are

human beings," said Nazma Akhter, president of Combined Garment Workers Federation, in the aftermath of the fire that killed 112 people on Nov. 24 at a factory that made T-shirts and polo shirts for Wal-Mart. "Is there anybody to really pay any heed to our words?"

Garment-factory fires in Bangladesh have claimed more than 300 deaths in the last six years. The Nov. 24 fire - by far the deadliest - has finally drawn international attention to dubious labour practices at a time when the government is trying to encourage Western investment.

The Tazreen Fashions factory had no emergency exit, and workers trying to flee found the main exit locked. Fire extinguishers were left unused, either because they didn't work or workers didn't know how to use them. One survivor said that after the fire alarm went off managers

told workers to get back to work.

Speaking to Dhaka's *Daily Star* the managing director of Tazreen Fashions said: "I'm concerned that my business with them (West) will be hampered," but typically there was no concern for the victims or their families.

Bangladesh garment industry earns \$20 billion a year which amounts to 80 per cent of its total export earnings and making it a major contributor to country's \$110 billion GDP.

In 1982 the country had 47 garment factories, in 1985 587, and now 4,000.

The factory owners are a politically and economically powerful group, but the principal reason for their success is cheap labour. Violent protest by workers early this year led to the doubling of the minimum wage to \$38 a month. World Bank figures show per capita income in 2011 to be \$64 a month.

On Nov. 27 Bangladesh held a day of mourning for the dead. "I've lost my son and the only member to earn for the family," said Nilufar Khatun, the mother of a worker who died. "What shall I do now?"

On the same day, about 2,000 members of 14 labour organisations held a rally in central Dhaka where leaders accused the government of neglecting the rights of garment workers.

A Walmart spokesperson said the Tazreen factory was making clothes for the retail giant without its knowledge. It had received an audit deeming the factory "high risk" last year and had decided to stop doing business with Tazreen, but a supplier subcontracted work to the factory anyway. That

supplier's contract was terminated two days after the fire.

Many global buyers have been pressing Bangladesh to allow garment factories to form trade unions, but the government and industry have resisted.

Earlier in November, senior executives from more than two dozen global clothing brands and retailers visited Bangladesh in a bid to forge long-term agreements to source garments from its factories. In September, Karl-Johan Persson, chief executive of the Swedish retail chain H&M, visited Bangladesh and said his 2,600-store group would increase its business relationship with the country.

Mustafizur Rahman, executive

director of the Centre for Policy Dialogue - Bangladesh's leading independent think tank - said that Western buyers "talk about ethical buying and ethical sourcing, but when it comes to price they refuse to offer a good rate."

Phil Robertson, deputy director of Human Rights Watch-Asia, blames a "nexus of influence" between senior government officials and factory owners that "allows impunity to flourish." Until that changes, he said, government vows to improve safety should be treated with scepticism.

"Six months or eight months down the road, if history is any indication, we will have another factory fire, and more workers will be killed," he added. ●



The tragic Tazreen Fashions fire has been followed by huge protests against the terrible working conditions in the Bangladesh textile industry.

"Some of the world's lowest wages"

The Institute for Global Labour and Human Rights (IGLHR) documents the abuses committed by transnational corporations producing goods in the developing world. Here are some of the IGLHR findings about conditions at the Tazreen Fashion Factory in the Ashulia district of Bangladesh.

* **Wages are some of the world's lowest.** Helpers earn 18 cents an hour (\$8.44 a week for 48 hours). Junior sewing operators earn 21-22 cents an hour (\$9.85 to \$10.69 a week). Senior sewing operators earn 23-26 cents an hour (\$11.26 to \$12.66 a week).

* **Workweeks average 72 to 81 hours.** Workers get two days off each month. Overtime is mandatory. Complainers are fired.

* **Physical abuse is common.** Supervisors curse, slap and punch female workers for sewing errors or staying in the bathroom too long.

* **Maternity leave is denied.** So is sick leave. Workers arriving late three times for any reasons are automatically fired.

* **Workdays run from 8 am to 8 pm,** with an hour for lunch.

* Tazreen was authorized to build a three-story factory. It built a nine-story facility. No one in government objected. Safety precautions were ignored. **Few fire extinguishers were available.**

* On November 24, **fire began on Tazreen's ground floor.** Upper floor workers were trapped. At least 112 died, another 150 were injured. Containing the blaze took hours. ●

WFDY announces 18th World Festival of Youth & Students

From Rebel Youth

From Nov. 8-12, representatives from more than 40 different youth and student organizations descended on Quito, Ecuador for a General Council meeting of the World Federation of Democratic Youth (WFDY). The main task of the meeting was to examine a proposal that made Ecuador the host of the next World Festival of Youth and Students.

Progressive and Communist organizations were represented from a geographically diverse range of countries such as Greece, Portugal, the United States, Canada, Mexico, Venezuela, Cuba, Brazil, Western Sahara, Syria, Egypt, Palestine, Vietnam, India, Angola and Eritrea.

The meeting coincided with the sixty-fifth anniversary of the youth organization. WFDY was founded in 1947 as a product of the anti-fascist struggles of the period, with its mandate being to unite youth for peace and against imperialism.

Sixty-five years later, WFDY reiterated its anti-imperialist stance in the political resolution amended and adopted unanimously: "Our choice, to stand for the needs and interests of the youth, derives from our founding principle: to struggle against imperialism".

WFDY and its members dedicated themselves to fighting against imperialism's increased aggressiveness, such as the

creation of a bloody proxy-wars in Syria and Libya, the danger of intervention in Iran, the US backed campaign against the DPR Korea, continued occupations of Afghanistan, Western Sahara, Palestine and Iraq.

The Young Communist League of Canada's representative to the General Council was Drew Garvie.

"The political choice to have the meeting in Latin America was a powerful one," Garvie said. "While capitalist governments are bringing in austerity policies to make the people pay for capitalist crisis around the world, the struggle in Latin America is giving rise to progressive policies and a process that is uniting the continent against imperialism."

Ecuador is starting to become a leading protagonist in this transition away from over a century of domination by United States monopoly capitalism. President Rafael Correa and his "PAIS" coalition were elected in 2006 after several years of mobilization by indigenous and anti-neoliberal forces. Since then, Ecuador has kicked out a US military base from its territory, written a constitution that includes the right to the

regeneration of the environment, eliminated tuition fees in public universities, joined regional progressive trading partnerships, refused to participate in any international meeting that Cuba is not invited to, and is currently shielding Wikileaks' Julian Assange from extradition to the United States.

The Young Communists of Ecuador proposed the hosting of the 18th World Festival of Youth and Students in Ecuador in order to help "strengthen and radicalize the national democratic revolution". Several government officials, including the Governor of Imbabura province, a cabinet Minister of the PAIS coalition, and representatives from the Secretariat of the People, Social Movements and Citizens



The Young Communist League of Ecuador will help to host the 18th World Festival of Youth and Students in 2013.



Delegates at the November WFDY meeting in Quito. (Photo: Drew Garvie)

Participation, greeted the WFDY meetings.

The Ecuadorian delegation has proposed to mobilize ten thousand youth from Ecuador and invite ten thousand international delegates to participate in the 18th WFYS. After hearing a comprehensive presentation, which included a political report and logistical details, the international delegates adopted the proposal unanimously.

Garvie was optimistic about the potential of organizing for the upcoming festival: "The overwhelming feeling of the delegates leaving

the meeting was one of enthusiasm start mobilizing to build the Festival movement back home. We know that the 18th WFYS comes at an important political time, when more and more youth are taking to the streets and starting to look for an alternative to the war, crisis and environmental destruction inherent in capitalism."

"Several delegates were very interested in the recent student strikes in Québec," said Garvie. The Young Communist League of Canada's intervention to the meeting noted that sharing struggles like the victory of the Québec students is important at this time. "Of course, we see the World Festival of Youth and Students as an excellent venue to come together and share our struggles, and build the necessary unity for the struggles ahead." ●

The Beirut Declaration

The meeting, follows the extraordinary meeting which was held in the Arab region, in Syria 2009, about Palestine within a three year period, and constitutes a new opportunity for the Communist and Workers' Parties to express their continued solidarity and support for the struggle of the working class and the popular struggles and uprisings in the Arab countries against imperialist aggressions and big capital and for democratic change.

The discussions, which took place during the meeting, contributed to the exchange of views regarding unfolding developments worldwide and to agreement on the development of common and convergent actions aiming to effect a revolutionary struggle for socialism.

The 14th meeting of the International Communist and Workers' Parties (IMCWP) re-asserted its earlier statements issued during previous meetings between 2008 and 2011 regarding the capitalist crisis of capital overproduction and over-accumulation, the root of which lies in the sharpening of the main contradictions between capital and labour, which continued to deepen and intensify. The different bourgeois versions for the management of the crisis have failed to bring it under control; all of them have the same barbaric effects for the people's rights. The imperialist reaction to the crisis is being marked by a multifaceted offensive of imperialism against the social, economic, democratic and national rights of the peoples, an offensive that aims to destroy the achievements won by the workers' and people's struggles during the 20th century and to intensify the level of exploitation and oppression.

This fact, in combination with the increased aggression of imperialism and the expansion of the imperialist wars, the realignments in the international correlation of forces where the relative weakening of the position of the USA co-exists with the growing economic and political power of several countries, raises a group of issues which indicate that the world is, once again, at a critical and dangerous junction where contradictions and competition are intensifying, and where great dangers coexist with real opportunities for the development of the workers and peoples' struggle.

In this regard, it is useful to pose the question: how does the universal, increased, imperialist aggression manifest itself, militarily, politically, economically and socially and what forms does it take?

Firstly, imperialism is pursuing an offensive that aims at large-scale destruction of economic, social, political, cultural and national rights, and a regression in the correlation of forces even more in favour of capital and against labour. Massive operations are under way to further concentrate and centralize capital. At the same time far reaching attacks are launched against social and labour rights, with massive cuts in salaries,

massive unemployment, privatization and destruction of social functions of States, the privatization of nearly all the sectors of the economy and areas of social life. This anti-social offensive is accompanied by an

This Declaration was adopted by the 14th meeting of the International Communist and Workers' Parties (IMCWP), held in Beirut, Nov. 22-25, under the banner: "Strengthen the struggles against escalating imperialist aggressiveness, for satisfying peoples' socio-economic-democratic rights and aspirations, for socialism." The meeting was attended by 84 delegates, representing 60 parties, from 44 countries from five continents. See page 7 for a report by Kimball Cariou, who represented the Communist Party of Canada in Beirut.

unprecedented offensive against the democratic, national and ecological rights of the peoples.

In particular, the attack against the labour, economic and social rights of women has sharpened, provoking a brutal worsening in the conditions of life both in public and private fields. Addressing and defeating this aggression is crucial, because the struggle for the real equality of women is a vital part in the struggle against capitalism.

Secondly, it should be stressed that the reassertion of Barack Obama in the UN, where he stated that his country will not "withdraw" from the world, agrees with the program approved by NATO at its latest Chicago summit, effectively implying an increased military imperialist intervention throughout the world under the slogan of "smart defence". This includes launching the first phase of "missile shield" or "star wars" in Europe and the global anti-missile shield program, direct military intervention in Libya, threats against Iran and DPR of Korea, increased military activity, aggressions and provocations in the Middle East, the Asia Pacific zone and throughout the African continent, intensified imperialist militarism in Latin America and the Caribbean. The intensification of hostility and the blockade against Cuba continues, as well as the plots against Venezuela.

Thirdly, this campaign of military aggression is accompanied by insolent and public political interventions in the affairs of most countries worldwide. These interventions are manifested by the use of capital and influence in order to distort and falsify the will of the people, in order to manipulate, intimidate and prevent the representatives chosen by the people from reaching power.

Imperialist forces do not hesitate from employing the worst tools in order to reach their goals, including organizing terrorist attacks, military coups, allying themselves with neo-fascist powers, promoting political - religious powers, and the various counter-revolutionary forces of different ideological backgrounds - all for the sake of exerting imperialist control throughout the planet, by redrawing borders and rearranging sectoral markets, especially the energy market with its oil and gas resources and transportation routes.

Fourthly, this military aggression campaign is also accompanied by the intensification of aggressiveness, such as employing the full resources

of various international agencies and organizations, and in particular the IMF, World Bank, and the European Union with a view to safeguard the power of Big Capital. In order to guarantee its interests and objectives, in addition to further developing its aggression and insolent interventions in the countries of the world, the global capitalist regime is adamant on waging war on the international working class and their representatives, through a variety of measures including:

- A denial of the basic human right to work, and the associated gains achieved by the working class.

- A global ideological and media offensive aiming to restrain the workers and people struggles and persecute all the social and political forces that struggle against imperialism, especially the Communist and Workers' Parties.

- Concerted efforts and actions in violation of all that is included in the UN charter and in the "Universal Declaration of Human Rights", which have been formed in conditions of a different correlation of forces thanks to the presence of the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries.

Fifthly, in the context of this overreaching, global imperialist aggression, attention must be paid to the manner in which it is manifesting itself through the project of "the New Middle East" which aims at re-dividing the region and its people into ethnic and religious groups, constantly fighting each other. This in turn allows the appropriation of the natural resources found in this region and particularly the oil and gas resources. The military wars and occupation of Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya, and of the Israeli aggressions on Lebanon and against the people of Palestine are an inseparable part of the imperialist "Big Middle East" project. In addition, it is within the context of this project that recent developments should be analyzed including: 1. The escalation in the rate of the USA and European Union imperialist threats of military intervention in Iran, and against Syria, taking advantage of both violent acts being perpetuated against civilians and relying on the forces which are supported by the imperialists, 2. the continued efforts to control the path of the uprisings which have occurred over the past two years in several of the Arab countries and, in particular, Egypt and Tunisia, through the use of sectarianism, racism and prejudice as well as the forever-obliging petro-dollars of all Arabian Gulf regimes.

These developments, and their potential consequences, exert pressure on the working class and Communist and Workers' parties to carry out their historic responsibilities of confronting the capitalist system and imperialist aggression. This confrontation, which must take place in different countries separately, and on the international level, is necessary in order to conquer anti-monopolist and anti-imperialist ruptures and achievements, and succeed in building socialism, as specified

by the thirteenth International Meeting of Communist and Workers' Parties, held in December 2011 in Athens.

The confrontation with imperialism dictates the strengthening of cooperation and solidarity of our Parties and the definition of our common goals and guidelines of struggle on the one hand, and the convergent action with the various anti-imperialist forces and mass movements, including unions, women, youth and intellectual organizations, on the other hand.

In Latin America, the anti-imperialist forces, the trade union and other social movements continue their struggles for people's rights and against imperialism. These struggles, that are the target of a counter-offensive of imperialism, led, in some cases, to the emergence of governments that declare themselves programmatically in defense of national sovereignty and of social rights, for the development and protection of their natural resources and biodiversity, considering that they give new impetus to anti imperialist struggle.

This universal confrontation also dictates the organization of the working people in the workplace and the trade unions, the strengthening of the class oriented movement the promotion of the alliance of the working class with the oppressed popular strata, the intensification of the struggle of the international working class and the peoples of the world. In order to impede the anti-people measures and promote goals of struggle that meet the contemporary people's needs, demands a counter attack for anti-monopoly and anti-imperialist ruptures for the overthrow of capitalism.

The ideological struggle of the communist movement is of vital importance in order to defend and develop scientific socialism, to repulse contemporary anti-communism, to confront bourgeois ideology, and all alien tendencies, anti-scientific theories and opportunist currents which reject the class struggle; and combat the role of social democratic forces that defend and implement anti-people and pro-imperialist policies by supporting the strategy of capital and imperialism. The understanding of the unified character of the duties of the struggle for social, national and class emancipation, for the distinct promotion of the socialist alternative requires the ideological counteroffensive of the communist movement.

Considering the capitalist crisis and its consequences, the international experiences from the socialist construction prove the superiority of socialism. We underline our solidarity with the peoples who struggle for socialism and are involved in the construction of socialism.

Based on all the above, we stress the need to focus on the following joint actions:

* Struggling to confront the new plans of imperialism on the military, political, economic and social levels in order to prevent it from controlling the world and destroying it.

* Rallying for removal of NATO military bases and the right of withdrawal from the imperialist alliances.

* Expressing class solidarity with and providing support to strengthen the working class and popular struggles in the capitalist countries against the policies that put further burdens on people and for winning benefits for improving the livelihoods of the workers and peoples effecting revolutionary change.

* Reasserting international solidarity with democratic popular movements and uprisings in the face of occupation and oppressive regimes; and the adamant rejection of imperialist intervention in these countries.

* Confronting anti-communist laws, measures and persecution; waging an ideological struggle against the revision of history, for reasserting the contribution of the communist and labour movement in human history.

* Condemning the US blockade of Cuba and supporting Cuba's struggle for its immediate lifting. Strengthening the campaigns for the release and return of the five Cuban patriots to Cuba.

* Condemning the ongoing atrocities perpetuated by the Israeli occupying forces against the Palestinian people, supporting their right in resisting occupation, and building their independent state, Jerusalem as a capital, and strengthening the campaign for the immediate lifting of the blockade against Gaza and for the Right of Return.

* Promoting the international front against imperialism and the support for the international anti-imperialist mass organizations, the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), the World Peace Council (WPC), the World Federation of Democratic Youth (WFDY), and the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF), in the specific framework of every country.

Beirut, Nov. 25, 2012 •



The 14th IMCWP meeting came just after the Israeli aggression against Gaza. Delegates held a rally and news conference at UN House in Beirut, to protest the criminal Israeli attack.

Historic meeting of Communists in Beirut

By Kimball Cariou

For the first time, this year's International Meeting of Communist and Workers' Parties (IMCWP) took place in an Arab country. Delegates representing sixty parties from five continents took part in the 14th IMCWP, held Nov. 22-25 in Beirut, Lebanon.

The event was hosted by the Lebanese Communist Party, which draws its members from all of the country's cultural and religious communities. The LCP was an important force in popular resistance against past Israeli invasions, and its members take great pride in their military and political role in helping to drive the aggressors from their homeland.

Large areas of Beirut have been rebuilt after the devastating civil wars of 1975-1991 and 2005. Some of the city's historic mosques and churches still remain, not far from the Hamra neighbourhood where the IMCWP delegates met at the Hotel Commodore. Many of us arrived a day early, and took a few hours to explore nearby neighbourhoods with very different demographics, from poor to wealthy. Beirut's reputation as a financial centre is seen with gleaming bank buildings, casinos, and upscale retail shops familiar to North Americans. Nothing says "transnational capitalism" quite like a Macdonalds or a Starbucks!

The IMCWP began on the evening of Nov. 22, with a meeting of the "Working Group" of parties which organize the annual event. Other delegates used the time to share news from our respective countries over a delicious Lebanese-style dinner.

The full meeting started the next morning, with ten-minute contributions by each party, going in alphabetical order. As we moved from Azerbaijan to Bahrain, Belgium to Brazil, Britain to Canada, several themes emerged.

One was the confirmation of the Marxist analysis of the nature

of capitalist economies, especially the crisis of overproduction which is at the root of the "boom-bust" cycle of the system, leading to constant inter-imperialist rivalries and intensified exploitation of the working class.

In nearly every major capitalist country, the crisis which erupted in 2008 has continued. Unemployment levels are again rising, living conditions are falling, and austerity policies are being implemented ruthlessly, especially in the European region. At the same time, working class and popular resistance to austerity keeps growing. On Nov. 14, just a week before the IMCWP convened, general strikes shook six European countries, and demonstrations against austerity were held in many more (see page 12). In Latin America, the left and progressive forces have made important gains in recent years.

Many of the contributions in Beirut revolved around a crucial question: how to transform protests against austerity into a powerful movement for fundamental social change, and for socialism? There are no easy answers, but in most

countries, the Communists are fighting for immediate measures to defend working people, while also warning that social democratic parties have usually abandoned anti-austerity platforms upon taking office.

A second theme of the Beirut meeting concerned developments in the Middle East and the Arab world: how to understand the origins of the "Arab Spring", and how to ensure that these popular uprisings win real gains for democracy and working class rights.

There was a broad consensus among the delegates that the uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt, which helped spark wider popular movements, were based in the anger of working people against unemployment, inflation, falling living standards, lack of human rights, and the widening gap between rich and poor. These uprisings were not the result of "conspiracies," as some have suggested. But imperialism and the regional capitalist elites - such as the rulers of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states - have had some success in redirecting popular

anger into forms of so-called "political Islam", for example the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. Such ideologies, the delegates agreed, are a reactionary diversion from genuinely revolutionary struggles for working class interests.

This has been seen clearly in countries such as Libya and Syria, where legitimate popular discontent around certain problems was channelled into reactionary alternatives. The result was the imperialist-backed overthrow of the Gaddafi government in Libya, and the current attempt by outside forces to topple the secular-oriented Assad government of Syria. There was strong agreement by the IMCWP that communists will continue to condemn the intervention against Syria by imperialist powers and the Gulf states, at the same time as helping to build genuine popular struggles for political freedoms and improved living standards.

Since the IMCWP convened just as the latest Israeli aggression against Gaza was ending, solidarity with the Palestinian people was a third major theme. The delegates strongly condemned the attacks by Israel, and its refusal to negotiate a peace agreement which would end its "settlement" policies and allow the establishment of a viable Palestinian state within the pre-1967 borders.

On the first full day of the meeting, delegates adjourned in mid-afternoon to travel by bus to United Nations House in central Beirut, for a rally and news

conference to condemn the bombing of Gaza. There was a large turnout by local media and by Al-Jazeera, which reported the protest on its website.

Following two days of presentations, the meeting concluded on Nov. 25 with a plenary to consider a final statement (see page 6 for full text). Several concrete proposals were made to strengthen the initial draft, but much of the discussion focused on the complex and critical issues of how to resist imperialist interventions in the region.

With consensus reached on the final wording, delegates went by bus to Batroun, a historic town north of Beirut where a new office of the Lebanese Communist Party was being opened. We packed the building together with local members and supporters, and the party's general secretary, Dr. Khaled Hadadah, gave a powerful speech, thanking those who helped make the new office a reality, and outlining the work of the LCP in the current conditions.

Possible venues for the 15th IMCWP are still being considered, taking into account the need for geographic diversity of this important annual event. The Working Group is expected to announce the date and location for the 2013 meeting early in the new year.

(People's Voice editor Kimball Cariou represented the Communist Party of Canada at the Beirut meeting. Readers can find the Final Statement and contributions by most parties at <http://solidnet.org>.)



Several delegates at the statue of Lebanese communist philosopher and poet Dr. Michel Souleiman, in Batroun. At left is Marie Nassif-Debs, deputy general secretary of the LCP.

REDS ON THE WEB

www.comunist-party.ca

www.peoplesvoice.ca

www.ycl-ljc.ca

www.solidnet.org

What did India achieve by hanging Kasab?

By Gurpreet Singh, Surrey

The recent hanging in India of Ajmal Amir Kasab, a convicted terrorist of Pakistani origin, has sparked euphoria both in India and Canada. Kasab was executed on Nov. 28 for his involvement in a terrorist attack on Mumbai, India's financial capital on November 26, 2008 that left 166 people dead.

Kasab and other armed extremists came by boat from Pakistan and took the city hostage. While Kasab survived, others died fighting with the police and soldiers. Undoubtedly, it was an attack on India's sovereignty that originated from a hostile neighbour which had been helping anti-India activities on its soil for years.

The trial of Kasab revealed the level of involvement of the Pakistani agencies in the attack. This helped India in isolating Pakistan diplomatically in a post 9/11 environment. Ironically, the US that welcomed the hanging of Kasab had largely ignored past

complaints by the Indian government against Pakistan over its support of terrorism. After all, Pakistan is an old US ally, and any complaints coming from a pro-Soviet India from the cold war era were bound to fall on deaf ears.

With India emerging as a nuclear ally of the US, it is not surprising that the US has learned to acknowledge trans-border terrorism in India as a real threat. The 2008 attack quickly came to be known as 26/11 as a 9/11 synonym, whereas Mumbai has witnessed terror attacks more than once, including those before 9/11.

Kasab filed for mercy after receiving his death sentence. However, his mercy petition was rejected by the President of India. His hanging was welcomed by the Hindu nationalist BJP, the major opposition party of the country, and people danced and rejoiced his death in different parts of India.

This may have helped India's Prime Minister Manmohan Singh domestically, by raising his profile from being a docile leader to a

hawkish politician, but it has saddened the members of civil society whose voices have been virtually muzzled by jingoism.

Manmohan Singh had lost his credibility in the face of massive corruption and his inability to bring economic reforms both nationally and internationally. The western media had portrayed him as a weak leader. The hanging of Kasab coincides with the recent death of ultra Hindu nationalist leader Bal Thackrey who was given a state funeral. If that was not enough, Manmohan Singh, who represents the so-called secular Congress party, had cancelled a dinner meeting with BJP leaders because of Thackrey's death. Thackrey, who considered Hitler as his role model, was known for Pakistan bashing. His supporters recently announced that they won't let the Pakistani cricket team play on Indian soil. It is a separate matter that they did not show up to fight against Kasab and others who invaded Mumbai.

While Thackrey was honoured despite his involvement in anti-

Muslim violence in Mumbai, Kasab was hanged for an equivalently grave crime against humanity. Only recently the President of India stayed the death sentence of Balwant Singh Rajoana, a Sikh extremist convicted for bombing, after receiving a mercy plea from the Chief Minister of Punjab state, Parkash Singh Badal. This was in spite of the fact that Rajoana wanted to be hanged and had refused to file a mercy petition. Clearly, Badal had buckled under pressure from Sikh radicals in Punjab. Likewise, the leaders from Kashmir and Tamil Nadu have also been pleading for the lives of convicted extremists on death row from their regions.

The issue of capital punishment has been totally politicized in India. There is no serious consideration given to abolish such an inhuman system. The hanging of Kasab has actually made him a hero for supporters of the pan-Islamic militant movement. Instead of hanging Kasab, India could have used him to bargain for amnesty for Indian prisoners languishing

in Pakistani jails.

Above all, the state should not be allowed to become a killer. The Indian government had scored a victory, by giving him a fair trial, and also bringing forward the real face of Pakistan. It was in a win-win situation. What was the point in hanging Kasab when he could have languished in jail for life?

It's a shame that Rajoana has been spared for political compulsions, whereas Kasab has been killed despite his plea for life. This sends conflicting signals about the impartiality of the legal system and secularism in India. While there is no justification for Pakistan to support terrorism in India, the Indian government should also punish those guilty of anti-Muslim or anti-Sikh pogroms, and those accused of state repression against other minorities. This would help to defeat the designs of terrorist organizations which survive due to lack of political will to address such sensitive issues in a fair and just manner. ●



GLOBAL CLASS STRUGGLE

Singapore deports Chinese drivers

Singapore will deport 29 mainland Chinese bus drivers and prosecute five others for taking part in the city-state's first strike since the 1980s. The Nov. 26-27 strike highlighted Singapore's dependency on migrant labour for its economic growth amid falling birth rates.

The Ministry of Manpower said 29 drivers' work permits had been revoked and immigration officials "will be repatriating them" for involvement in the two-day stoppage to demand better pay and working conditions. "The strike was planned and premeditated. It disrupted our public transport which is an essential service, and posed a threat to public order," its statement said.

Five drivers have been brought to court for allegedly instigating the stoppage at state-linked transport firm SMRT. They could be jailed for up to a year or fined a maximum of \$1,640 - the equivalent of two months' wages. Strikes are illegal in Singapore for workers in "essential services" such as transport unless they give 14 days' prior notice and comply with other requirements.

A total of 171 drivers launched the strike by refusing to leave their dormitories to report for work, with the number falling to 88 on the second day. The strikers are contract workers who do not belong to any union, and are paid less than their Malaysian counterparts for the same work.

The strikers drew scorn from some Singaporeans, but sympathy from others after their wages and living conditions were exposed. SMRT has promised to look into the strikers' demands, fumigate their bedbug-infested dormitory rooms, find alternative housing, and open permanent communication lines with its Chinese workers.

Walmart linked to deadly fire

A fire in a Bangladesh garment factory that killed at least 112 workers has been linked to Walmart. Photos from the scene show Faded Glory-brand clothing, an exclusive Walmart label. Walmart said in a statement the Tazreen Fashions factory was no longer authorized to produce merchandise for them, but that a supplier subcontracted work to it "in direct violation of our policies."

Scott Nova, executive director of the Worker Rights Consortium, told The Nation magazine that Walmart is creating an industry in Bangladesh where extremely low wages and dangerous working conditions are the norm.

"So Walmart is supporting, is incentivizing, an industry strategy in Bangladesh: extreme low wages, non-existent regulation, brutal suppression of any attempt by workers to act collectively to improve wages and conditions," Nova said. "This factory is a product of that strategy that Walmart invites, supports, and perpetuates."

Bangladesh is now the world's second-largest clothes exporter with overseas garment sales topping \$19 billion last year, or 80 percent of total national exports. Yet the base pay for a garment worker is the equivalent of \$37 a month - the same monthly amount it costs to buy food for one person.

There are no unions at the Tazreen Fashion factory to represent workers. Bangladeshi garment workers struggling to gain safe working conditions and decent



pay face huge opposition. Earlier this year, union activist Aminul Islam, a leader of the Bangladesh Garment and Industrial Workers Federation, a Solidarity Center partner, was tortured and murdered.

Egyptian unions oppose Morsi

The Egyptian Federation of Independent Trade Unions (EFITU) has rejected the Constitutional Declaration announced by President Mohamed Morsi, and is calling on workers to mobilise against the decree. Mass demonstrations have been organized by opposition groups, including the labour movement.

A statement from the EFITU says, "The draft of this constitution ties the hands of the government and prevents it from taking any action to re-open companies which have been shut down, or saving their jobs, or winning back their rights."

"Likewise the draft constitution cancels the quota of workers and peasants' representation in parliament and the Shura Council. There will be no-one at all to defend the rights of everyone who works in Egypt, like our right to have a Labour Law to replace the unjust Law 12 of 2003, or a genuine law on the minimum and maximum wage, or social security, or universal health care for all citizens, or any of the other laws which protect many of the rights of hard-working people..."

"We have been prosecuted, detained, suspended from work, transferred and victimised because we practised our rights to strike and found trade unions. Why have we been waiting for two years while the government has not issued a law on trade union freedoms, but has instead rushed out a law in the name of protecting the revolution which criminalises strikes and sit-ins? ... These decisions are a direct attack on our interests. That's why we have to stand and fight. That's why we can't let the president grab these powers for himself, and protect

the Constituent Assembly and Shura Council from dissolution...."

Bahrain trade unionist released

Education International, the umbrella group for global teachers unions, reports that Jalila Al-Salman, the acting President of the Bahraini Teachers' Association (BTA), was released from prison on November 25. Her colleague, Mahdi Abu Dheeb, the BTA President, is still serving five years in the Jaw prison. Mahdi and Jalila were condemned, respectively, to 10 and three years in prison by a military court in September 2011. The verdict was upheld by the Manama Court, but the sentences were reduced to five years and six months respectively.

EI says that Jalila had been unjustly detained on false charges, for exercising her right to freedom of assembly and demanding reforms in the educational system in Bahrain. Held under difficult conditions, Mahdi was denied medical treatment required by his doctor, as well as medical tools provided by his family following doctors' orders. As a result, his back and knees are in worsening condition.

"While EI cautiously welcomes Jalila's release, it reminds us that we still have to fight hard for Mahdi to assume his rightful place as a leader of the Bahraini Teachers' Association," said EI General Secretary Fred van Leeuwen. "While welcoming this important step forward, EI, on behalf of its member organisations around the world, once again calls on Bahraini authorities to immediately and unconditionally set Mahdi free," he added.

Social Forum on Migrations

The Fifth World Social Forum on Migrations (WSFM), held Nov. 27-30 in Manila, demanded free mobility for migrants and denounced globalisation policies which intensify their hardships.

More than 3,000 delegates participated in four main sessions and in workshops focused on challenges faced by migrants. The delegates urged more action for the betterment of migrants' rights. "We will now try our best to transform those ideas into action," said William Gois, the regional coordinator of Migrant Forum in Asia, one of the key organisers of the fifth WSFM. "We will strengthen the process, protest movements and organisations around the world to fight for integration and full exercise of rights migrants who migrate in hope of leading a dignified life."

Participating groups included trade unions, NGOs, and civil society representatives. The event wrapped up with a mass rally, as around 10,000 workers and WSFM delegates marched to the Mindiolla Peace Arch, led by NAGKAISA (United), the broadest labour coalition in the Philippines.

Workers' rights rally in Qatar

The Gulf state of Qatar permitted a rare protest for workers' rights on Dec. 1 at a government-approved rally of about 300 activists demanding action to combat climate change. Marchers, largely foreigners attending the Nov. 26-Dec. 7 talks among 200 nations on slowing global warming, chanted "Arab leaders, time to lead" and "climate action now" as they marched along the waterfront past skyscrapers in central Doha.

The rally called for greater freedoms for migrants, who make up about 94% of the workforce. Qatar will host the 2022 World Cup soccer tournament, and expects a construction boom ahead of the event.

Poor working conditions are common across the Gulf, where impoverished men and women from South Asia work on construction sites, oil projects and as domestic help.

"Migrant workers ... have no rights, no voice right here in Qatar," said Sharan Burrow, General Secretary of the International Trade Union Confederation. "More workers will die building the stadiums than players will play on the field," she said, referring to the World Cup.

Non-Qataris are banned from joining a labour union, but Burrow said after meeting Acting Minister of Labour Nasser Abdullah al-Hemedi: "Qatar's labour minister said that if we establish a union, he will personally ensure that any workers who join it are not punished. We will test him on that."

Qatar does not publish figures for industrial deaths. Nepal's embassy said 191 Nepalese

workers died in Qatar in 2010, when the Indian embassy said 98 of its nationals died.

Tunisians hit police repression

Hundreds of Tunisians marched on Nov. 30 on the freeway near Siliana, blocking traffic between the city and Tunis. The protest was organized by the Union of the Unemployed and the General Union of Tunisian Students (UGET) to protest against police brutality in Siliana, an impoverished governate in the interior north-west. The General Union of Tunisian Workers (UGTT) supported the march.

The demonstrators demanded an end to police violence and the dismissal of the governor of Siliana, Ahmed Zine Mahjoubi. In a symbolic act, they initially marched away from the city, satirically offering to leave in order to let the government rule in whatever fashion it deems appropriate.

Demonstrations began in the city several days earlier, involving clashes with the police, and a large amount of damage and roadblocks.

"Our main objective is threefold: stop the repression of Siliana inhabitants, fire Ahmed Zine Mahjoubi, the governor of Siliana, and the resignation of the government," said Bilal Rekik, a youth member of the Popular Front political coalition.

Hundreds also protested in front of the Interior Ministry in Tunis, condemning the use of force by police in Siliana. "We are thinking about organizing a caravan to Siliana to break the siege on the region," said Ayoub Amara, a leading member in the Union of Tunisian Communist Youth.

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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South Korean presidential campaign in full swing

By Sean Burton

South Koreans will vote for a new president on December 19 as Lee Myung-bak's single five-year term comes to an end. Several candidates have registered, but the focus has been on three: Ahn Cheol-soo, Park Geun-hye, and Moon Jae-in.

Ahn Cheol-soo, a computer technology entrepreneur and professor at Seoul National University, is known primarily for his company's widely-used antivirus software. Registered as an independent until Nov. 23, Ahn presented himself as delivering "new politics", condemning the Lee Myung-bak administration and adopting a populist platform similar to the late president Roh Moo-hyun.

Moon Jae-in, a civil rights lawyer and a close friend of President Roh who served as his chief of staff, has been registered as the Democratic United Party candidate. The DUP is ultimately derived from liberal groups that supported Roh ten years ago, and Kim Dae-jung years before that.

The similarities between candidates Ahn and Moon led to talks about joining forces. Ultimately, Ahn resigned his candidacy. So far, Moon is doing what the opposition has done for years: present himself as the inheritor of Roh's legacy against right-wing politics. A Moon victory probably won't bring substantial change, but would likely see a change toward north Korea. Whether that means a return to the "Sunshine Policy" of Kim and Roh is not yet clear.

Then there is Park Geun-hye. As the daughter of military dictator and architect of modern south Korea Park Chung-hee, Park Geun-hye carries a certain legacy. To her supporters in the New Frontier Party, Park is just what the doctor ordered: a strong commitment to conservative principles and a direct connection to the man who facilitated rapid economic expansion in the 1970s. This allows her to present herself in a very different light from the much-maligned Lee Myung-bak. Even beyond right-wing circles, General Park's legacy is still often a cause for positive opinions. But Park Geun-hye's opponents look at history differently. Many found themselves arrested and tortured by the so-called Yushin government just for being activists.

Painfully aware of these things, Park's angle has been to present herself, absurdly, as non-ideological. Naturally she doesn't dwell on her father's regime. A few months earlier, Park apologized for some of those who suffered in the past. It rang rather hollow, as it was never specified exactly what she was apologizing for.

Regarding her father's 1961 coup d'état, which General Park called a "revolution to save the country", his daughter called it "an event that happened which cannot be refuted", and insisted that it is not the province of politicians to judge the matter, but a job for historians. After all, why

"live in the past"?

Presenting herself as non-ideological, Park instead applies such labels to her opponents. Even the late president Roh was accused of waging ideological battles, such as attacking the National Security Law and the Private Education Act, dividing and agitating the people.

It is easy to see through Park's comments. Everyone understands that the National Security Law can get people arrested or threatened even for innocuous activities, just for being remotely pro-DPRK or anti-imperialist. A number of internet message boards have gotten people in trouble this year. The law was made to reinforce the

previous dictatorship and prevent any real engagement with the north. Park acts as if the law was always there; questioning this "natural" entity in the service of Korea means being "ideological", i.e. belonging to the wrong ideology.

Candidate Moon has been poking holes in Park's view of Korean history, as well as mocking her pampered upbringing. Conservatism and liberalism are set for a heated campaign against each other.

Where is south Korea's left in all of this? Moon and DUP might strive to represent the values of Roh Moo-hyun, but what are those values? Roh made a name for

himself as a human rights lawyer and a critic of certain right-wing policies. But his tenure was no great victory for working Koreans, and Lee Myung-bak has done much to roll back whatever was done.

The Unified Progressive Party has also put forward a candidate. Lee Jung-hee has had little exposure in the media and will be overshadowed by Park and Moon. And even the UPP is a moderate social-democratic party at best. Working people in south Korea demand a government that serves their interests and doesn't force concessions or sell out. Too bad the system is rigged to perpetually deny them such an option. ●

Korean labour demo marks anniversary

By Sean Burton

Thousands of labour union members and activists took to the streets of Seoul on a rainy November 11, marking the anniversary of Jeon Tae-il's sacrifice in November 1970.

That was a time of extreme privation, when south Korea's military dictatorship ignored the labour code and allowed sweat shop conditions to prevail around the country. Attempts by Jeon Tae-il and his colleagues to protest working conditions fell on deaf ears. Desperate, Jeon took action on Nov. 13, 1970. He set himself on fire and ran through central Seoul, calling for enforcement of the labour code. Taken to a hospital, he succumbed to the burn injuries. The event motivated a new generation of labour activists, though they could not act very openly until the dictatorship loosened its authority in the late 1980s.

This year's event included representatives from many of south Korea's major trade unions and other social activists, including an LGBT rights organization. Demonstrators marched from Jeon Tae-il's memorial on a bridge at Cheongyecheon, to Seoul Station where a large rally was held.

Several issues are at the fore here: the privatization of public services, "restructuring" layoffs, regulations that undermine labour rights at work, and the deaths of several Ssangyong Motors employees from work-related problems.

One speaker at the rally gave a heart-felt plea for a better social care system, referring to the recent death of a physically disabled woman, left alone to perish when a fire broke out in her apartment.

There was also some talk about the December 19 presidential election, and efforts to elect a progressive candidate. Supporters of the Unified Progressive Party (UPP), south Korea's primary left-wing party, were numerous among the demonstrators. Some activists harbour no illusions about the election and the UPP. Despite its appearance of strong, labour-oriented credentials, the hostile environment of south Korean politics limits just how "progressive" any party can be. The UPP has even criticized north Korea explicitly, since all leftist parties in the south are seen to be sympathetic with the north and

potentially "unpatriotic" as a result.

Many cheers could be heard and raised fists seen at this rally;

when can these people finally achieve the government they deserve? ●



This float in the Nov. 11 rally says, "2012 progressive administration shift! Guarantee worker participation in government!"

Africa's land grabs: a disaster in waiting

By Alex Awiti, *Third World Resurgence*

A new report by Oxfam, a leading international relief agency, warns that climate change will increase the frequency of large spikes in global food prices, leading to more hungry people around the world. Besides climate change, rapid population growth, higher per capita incomes, rapid urbanisation, changing diets in developing countries and rising demand for biofuel feedstocks are exerting unprecedented pressure on the global food system.

The world's poorest, a majority of whom live in sub-Saharan Africa, are especially vulnerable to rising food prices because they spend up to 75 percent of their income on food. According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the price surges of 2007-08 resulted in an eight percent increase in the number of malnourished people in Africa.

According to the OECD-FAO Agricultural Outlook 2012, food production needs to increase by 60 percent over the next 40 years to meet the rising global demand for food. To meet the soaring global demand, additional food will need to come from a combination of

increased productivity and expansion of farmland.

Globally, the scope for expanding farmland is limited. But with 60 percent of the world's unused arable land, Africa is a hot commodity. Foreign investors are scrambling for Africa's farmland. The pace of purchase or lease of Africa's land is so furious that it is now referred to as a "land grab."

Of the 83.2 million hectares of land earmarked for agricultural investment worldwide, 56.2 million hectares are in Africa. The land grab was in part fuelled by the food and financial crisis of 2008, as corporations and investment funds began to focus on the profitability of agricultural commodities.

For Wall Street-based private equity firms, the motive is profits. For countries scrambling for Africa's farmland - Saudi Arabia, India and China - the real value is water. Saudi Arabia does not lack land for food production. What's missing in the kingdom is water. Indian companies are doing the same because aquifers across the sub-continent have been depleted by decades of unsustainable irrigation. Africa's land grabs could be the biggest virtual water export in history.

The huge land deals in Africa involve large-scale, commercial

agriculture, which will require large quantities of water and mineral fertilisers. Nearly all of the foreign land deals are located in Africa's major river basins: the Congo, the Niger and the Nile. Collectively, three of the main countries in the Nile basin - Ethiopia, Sudan and South Sudan - have already leased about 8.5 million hectares. Uganda has leased a total of 868,000 hectares to investors from China, Egypt, Singapore and India.

The Kenyan government has granted the Tana River Authority (TARDA) tenure rights to 40,000 hectares of the Tana Delta. TARDA, in a joint venture with Mumias Sugar Company, seeks to establish sugarcane plantations on the fragile delta. A second company, Mat International, is in the process of acquiring 30,000 hectares of land in the Tana Delta. Bedford Biofuels, a Canadian company, could secure a 45-year lease on 65,000 hectares in Tana River District, which includes access to water resources, to produce biofuels.

Also in Kenya, in Lake Victoria, Dominion Farms was granted a lease on 7,000 hectares in the hydrologically vital and ecologically fragile Yala Swamp. These land grabs could hurt smallholder farmers

see AFRICA, page 11



The Fifth of the Month to Free the Five

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

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

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

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



Setting tap water on fire: Gasland documents the fracking industry

GASLAND, written, directed and narrated by Josh Fox, 2010, 104 minutes. Review by Glen Truax.

The Canadian government has recently pushed legislation aimed at cracking down on crime, including drug offenses such as the grave crime of smoking a joint in public. This is more than a little ironic in North America; you would be hard pressed to find bigger resource junkies than the Western Hemisphere. Texas, that oil pumping powerhouse that's physically larger than France, consumes more oil than it produces. Keep in mind that Texas, the home of do-it-yourself, rugged individualism, is addicted to the resources being pumped out from foreign countries.

Gasland is a documentary account of America's attempt at fuel self-sufficiency, as they explore the option of natural gas. Natural gas is touted as the answer

to foreign diplomacy squabbles that have led the United States to form relations with questionable regimes such as Saudi Arabia; natural gas is also seen as cleaner and more environmentally sound than raping the earth for fossil fuels.

Of course, there's still a whole lot of environmental rape going on with natural gas exploitation. The extraction process consists of fragmenting the earth below, loosening the soil to allow easier withdrawal. The chemical

People's Voice at the movies

concoction that the oil companies (such as Dick Cheney's former buddies at Haliburton) pump into the earth is incredibly toxic, containing elements that are lethal to man or beast. And the "fracking" process almost always hits the

water table. If you like watching people setting tap water on fire, this film is for you.

Gasland primarily consists of interviews in rural areas of the US. Individuals sitting on natural gas bedrock generally receive a stipend from whatever company is doing the fracking, yet it generally takes legal action by farmers and ranchers to provide clean water in the form of massive tanks.

The film provides an illuminating and frustrating look at this systemic poisoning. Company heads and various flak catchers (PR people who grudgingly allow interviews) take a weirdly "working class hero" stance, all but accusing the documentarians of being ivory tower intellectuals. During the sole congressional committee meeting on the subject, a congressman states that he's tired of being browbeaten by people who don't understand his constituency; he makes the claim that natural gas exploitation frees America from dependence on "foreign countries and terrorists".

If nothing else, *Gasland* makes a strong case against the short term search for non-renewable sources of fuel. This is the mark of the business world - only the first quarter matters, and let tomorrow take care of tomorrow. While most of us will not see the extinction of fossil fuels in our lifetimes, we will see the bloody results of scarcity. If anyone remembers the Carter years, you haven't seen anything yet. It's unfortunate that the documentary doesn't have any concrete solutions, but it drives home the despair of people caught in a cycle of victimization, to say nothing of the environment in which they live. The sky really is falling, and we have Henry Ford to thank for that. ●

Tax havens for Canadian wealth

24% of Canadian direct investment overseas in 2011 went to the top twelve tax havens, up from 10% in 1987. Tax havens of the Barbados, Cayman Islands, Ireland, Luxembourg and Bermuda were five of the top eight destinations of total Canadian investment abroad. Canadian investments in these tax havens totalled \$130 billion in 2011.

Barbados is the tax haven of choice for Canadian financiers. In 2011, \$53.3 billion of untaxed Canadian dollars were parked there. Four years earlier that figure was \$33.4 billion. That is a growth of nearly 60 per cent.

Tax havens are the ultimate hide-out for dead money. The banking and financial services sector now accounts for 51% of Canada's total direct investment offshore, more than double its share from 1987. For instance, the Royal Bank of Canada has 30 subsidiaries in confirmed tax havens. Other financial institutions aren't far behind. This means that a growing share of this money isn't used for actual economic activity - as when a small business invests in innovation or employees. Instead it is parked there to avoid tax. ●

(Original source: www.tackletaxhavens.ca)



MUSIC NOTES

By Wally Brooker

"Cape Breton Island Protest Songs"

A heroic era lives again with the release of the compilation album "Cape Breton Island Protest Songs." More than 30 local musicians have contributed to a landmark album that demonstrates the depth of Cape Breton people's music. It all began when scholar and musician Richard MacKinnon unearthed some 120 poems and songs from the *Maritime Labour Herald*. The weekly paper, co-founded by communist labour leader J.B. McLachlan, was a powerful voice of the workers at a time (1921-1926) when Cape Breton coal miners and steelworkers were engaged in epic struggles that reverberated across Canada. Determined to set the lyrics to music, MacKinnon and musician Victor Tomiczek circulated verses among a host of musical friends. The result is an utterly compelling album. For this writer standout tracks include "Grand and Glorious Day" (a celebration of May Day), "The Shutdown" (concerning plant closures) and "They Cannot Stand the Gaff" (a satire of the British Empire Steel Corporation sung in classic rock style by Richard MacKinnon). This album has great contemporary relevance. It would make a fine gift for the music-minded socialist on your holiday shopping list. For lyrics, musician biographies, historical notes and ordering information visit www.protestsongs.ca.

Cops attack Cameroon musicians

A peaceful march by 500 members of the Cameroon musicians' union SYCAMU was brutally repressed on Nov. 8 by more than a thousand police. The rally in the West African republic's capital city of Yaoundé was called to protest music piracy and the refusal to pay royalties to music copyright holders. SYCAMU President Roméo Dika, one of 63 unionists arrested, is accused of starting an insurrection, a charge that could be punishable by death. Among those beaten and tear-gassed was renowned 85-year-old singer Anne-Marie Nzié. Cameroon has one of the highest rates of music piracy in sub-Saharan Africa. A local support organization recently revealed that 18 musicians died over the past three years because they lacked the means to pay for medical treatment. The festering copyright issue and the violence of the state response is ultimately the responsibility of the corrupt 30-year dictatorship of President Paul Biya and the failure of his neo-colonial regime to establish a cultural infrastructure to serve recording artists. Sign on to the solidarity campaign at www.labourstart.org.

AFM takes on digital gaming industry

As gross revenues in the digital gaming industry exceed the combined world-wide revenues of pop music and motion pictures, game music has evolved from tinny beeps to fully-scored orchestral works. Now the American Federation of Musicians (AFM) is campaigning for a tough new agreement with digital game companies. The union's first agreement with a video game company was negotiated in 1993. By 2006 it had signed collective agreements with more than 60 companies. But in 2006, in a bid to encourage more AFM music scoring, the union made the fateful decision to relax use agreements and offer wage concessions. The move only encouraged digital game companies to contract with unorganized third parties. With industry profits sky-high despite the crash of 2008, the AFM began to fight back, prohibiting third-party agreements in 2010. But one of the biggest companies, Sony Computer Entertainment of America (SECA) persisted in hiring non-union musicians. Last October, the AFM revised its digital game agreement, abolishing the concessions of 2006 and placing SECA on its international unfair list. AFM members are now prohibited from working with SECA, with penalties including stiff fines and expulsion. For more info: www.afm.org.

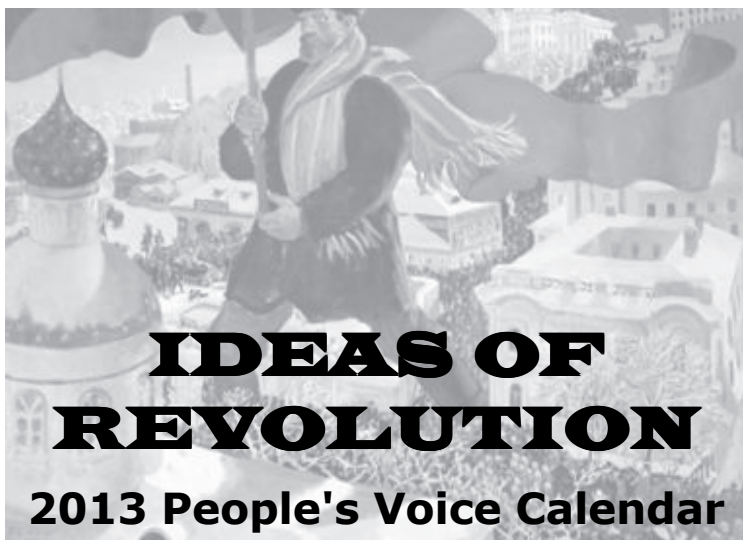
Félix Awards: window on Québec music

The Québec recording industry's annual celebration, the Félix Awards, took place in October at Montréal's Théâtre St-Denis. This event is a golden opportunity for Canadians to learn about the province's vibrant music scene. The awards have been presented by the *Association québécoise de l'industrie du disque, du spectacle et de la vidéo* (ADISQ) since 1979. Named for the outstanding writer and musician Félix Leclerc (1914-1988), the Awards were established because of the failure of the JUNOs to adequately acknowledge French-Canadian music. Here are just a few 2012 winners to check out: Fred Pellerin (Folk Album for *C'est un monde*), Richard Desjardins (Adult Contemporary for *L'Existance*), Coeur de Pirate (Pop Album for *Blonde* and Female Artist), and Lisa Leblanc (Newcomer of the Year for her self-titled debut album). Many artists are creating thoughtful and exciting music in Québec today, and the list of Félix nominees is a good place to start an investigation. Another excellent entry point, especially for the linguistically challenged, is CBC Radio's weekly show *A Propos*, hosted by Jim Corcoran, whose Félix Award preview shows are available online. Corcoran provides helpful English translations of lyrics. For more info: www.adisq.com and www.cbc.ca/propops.

Cape Breton protest songs CD



As reported in our "Music Notes" column on this page, information on the album "Cape Breton Island Protest Songs" can be found at www.protestsongs.ca. The album can be downloaded, or ordered by mail for \$15 plus postage. This photo from the front cover of the CD shows coal strikers at Glace Bay, circa 1945. The photo is from the Beaton Institute, Cape Breton University.



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).

Put the Communist Party on your holiday gift list!

As the holiday season approaches, many of us are thinking about gifts for family and friends, and maybe some holiday cheer after a very busy and active year.

Most December gifts result in a credit card bill come January, but a gift to the Communist Party before December 31st can actually generate a 75% tax rebate when you file your taxes next spring! And, you get the satisfaction of donating to a political party that's totally biased towards working people, youth, women, Aboriginals, migrants, and the unemployed.

The Communist Party has a track record that's 91 years long, fighting for peace, jobs, democracy, sovereignty, equality, and socialism. Though thick and thin, the Communist Party's been there - fighting for unity, for class struggle policies and for mass action by the 99% to defeat the 1% and change the world! It doesn't get much better than that when it

comes to "making your list and checking it twice" for a party deserving of your support!

Your gift to the Communist Party of Canada will generate a tax rebates of 75% on the first



\$400 you donate this year, a 50% tax rebate on the next \$350, and 33.33% on the next \$450, up to a total of \$1200 for the year.

That means a \$400 donation to the CPC will cost you just \$100 after you file your 2012 taxes;

a \$200 donation will cost just \$50; and a \$100 donation will cost just \$25. A \$750 donation will cost you just \$275; and a \$1200 donation will cost \$575 (after filing your taxes).

Any amount you can give will help the Communist Party continue to counter-attack capitalist globalization, war and austerity, to defend working people and campaign for real and progressive change, for a people's coalition, and for socialism.

You can also donate to the provincially registered parties: the CP-BC, CP Alberta, CPC (Manitoba), and CPC (Ontario), to receive similar tax rebates and benefits.

Send your cheque made out to "CPC", (or to the provincial parties in BC, Alberta, Manitoba or Ontario), to 290A Danforth Avenue, Toronto, ON, M4K 1N6. Questions? Give us a call at 416-469-2446, or email Liz Rowley at erowley@live.ca. •

Africa's land grab disaster...

continued from page 9

and could undermine national food security objectives. In the Yala Swamp, local communities have lost access to water and pasture for their livestock. According to residents of the Tana Delta, allocation of land to TARDA displaced them to a sub-optimal area with poor access to water and suitable land for agriculture.

The wave of land-grabbing is nothing short of an ecological and economic disaster in the making. There is simply not enough water in Africa's rivers and water tables to irrigate all the newly acquired land.

The ecological and social costs

of foreign-led commercial agriculture are socialised while the benefits are privatised by big industry. Africa must learn from Asia. Pakistan flooded its way into the Green Revolution. The mighty Indus River irrigates 90 percent of the country's crops. Today the Indus hardly flows all the way into the Arabian Sea. Hundreds of thousands of hectares of farmland are no longer usable due to waterlogging or salinisation.

Similarly, India drilled and pumped its way into the Green Revolution. Today India's annual abstraction of ground water for irrigation is 250 cubic kilometres

per year, about 100 cubic kilometres more than can be recharged by rainfall.

Transformation of Africa's agriculture must be predicated on sustainable use of natural capital, especially water. Improving the productivity and efficiency of hundreds of millions of Africa's hardworking smallholder farmers must be central to this transformation. Investments in industrial-scale agriculture must be balanced by an equitable flow of benefits to smallholder farmers, reducing their alienation and encouraging their participation through access to technology, credit, inputs and markets. •

Jim Buller

It is with deep sadness we mark the passing of Comrade Jim Buller, who died on Nov. 18 at the age of 86, in palliative care at Scarborough General hospital after suffering a fall and hip fracture from which he never recovered. The Central and Ontario Committees of the CPC send sincere condolences to his beloved daughter Carol.

The son of the legendary Communist leader and organizer Annie Buller, Jim's earliest memories were of Annie doing a year in jail for organizing support for the Estevan miners' strike in 1931, and sending out messages written on toilet paper to her young son back home with family in Toronto. Three strikers were shot dead by police, and Annie was sent by the Party to organize support for the strikers.

Thrown into the struggle from the moment of birth, Jim was a fighter in his own right for workers in the printing trades. He was President, Organizer and Secretary Treasurer of the Toronto Typographical Union for many years. Jim was also the

Canadian President for a time, as well as President of the Ontario Federation of Union Retirees, in spite of a massive effort by the right-wing to keep him out. He led strikes and walked picket lines for his own members, and for many others, from the Cold War years through to the '90s. He was a delegate to the Toronto and York Region Labour Council for decades, retaining his credentials until just months before his death.

Jim regarded the Labour Council as labour's parliament, and he saw himself as a fighter for class struggle policies and for mass independent labour political action that could unite working people in struggle for peace, social justice and socialism. A working class intellectual, he was a voracious reader, thinker and debater, challenging the bosses and those who kowtowed to them inside the labour movement. Woe betide anyone who underestimated Jim's broad and deep knowledge of politics and economics, and his lifelong determination to achieve fundamental change. His interest in books and reading, and all things to do with print, was well matched by his wife Grace, a well known librarian and CUPE activist in Toronto's library system. They were a good match in all respects.

A Communist Party member

for almost 70 years, Jim fought for a labour movement that was militant and class conscious. Like Marx, he thought the working class should be a class for itself, and lead the broad struggle for a new socialist society in which the 1% should be liberated of their stolen riches, and the 99% should have working class power in their own hands.

A great friend of Cuba, Jim never ceased telling people about the huge contrast between socialism and the power of the people to change the world, versus the power of capital to destroy the world's peoples with bombs and wars, starvation, exploitation, racism and oppression. He never wavered in his stance, despite inflated pronouncements of the "end of history", and stayed true to his class and his Party.

Jim will be deeply missed by his comrades, and by the many trade unionists and others with whom he worked and struggled for so many years.

A celebration of Jim's life will be held in the New Year. Look for a notice in a future issue of People's Voice. Condolences can be sent to Carol Buller at 5 Deerfield Road, Toronto, ON, M1K 4W8. •

What's Left

Vancouver, BC

Commemorate Palestinians killed in the attack on Gaza, Art Gallery North Fountain, Sat., Dec. 8, 1:30 pm. Details at www.boycottisraeliapartheid.org, or phone 604-254-1803.

Saskatoon, SK

Saskatchewan Women's Forum 2013, Jan. 18-19, 2013, a coalition of women and organizations will meet at the Bessborough Hotel in Saskatoon. Registration \$50 (reduced rate available). For information see article on page 2 of this issue, or contact michelle.beveridge@oxfam.ca or 306.242.4097.

Winnipeg, MB

Expanded planning meeting for May Day 2013, to plan march and themes. Sun, Dec. 16, 2 pm. Winnipeg Labour Council boardroom, 504-275 Broadway. RSVP WLC at davesauer@mts.net, 942-0522.

Marxism course, register with the Communist Party's

Manitoba office, 204-586-7824 or send email to cpc-mb@changetheworldmb.ca.

Toronto, ON

Hemingway's HOT Havana, a play by Brian Gordon Sinclair, Sat., Dec. 22, 7 pm, Royal Theatre, 608 College St., tickets \$25, all proceeds to Cuban Hurricane Sandy Relief fund, Canadian Network on Cuba, for info ph. 416-654-7105.

Protest at the Ontario Liberal Convention, Sat., Jan. 26, 1 pm, rally at Allan Gardens (Jarvis & Carleton), followed by march to the Liberal convention at Maple Leaf Gardens. For information, visit <http://ofl.ca/index.php/campaigns/democraticrights/>

Montreal, QC

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

People's Voice deadlines

January 1-31 issue: Thursday, Jan. 3

February 1-14 issue: Thursday, Jan. 17

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

David Mackling, 1920-2012

David Mackling was a socialist, and the s-word was prominent at the celebration of his life on November 16, six days after he passed away at age 92. More than 300 family and friends attended the celebration at Winnipeg's Ukrainian Labour Temple. Dave was born in Winnipeg on Sept. 7, 1920. His formative years were during the Great Depression, creating a deep understanding of the unnecessary suffering caused by unemployment and poverty.

He also blamed our ruthless social system for the World War, but it was not until the Vietnam War that he became active in the peace movement and served as chair of the Manitoba Peace Council. He was a delegate to World Peace Council Conferences in Moscow, Warsaw and Sofia, Bulgaria. While visiting those socialist countries, Dave became convinced that some type of socialism could be the answer to people's problems.

Dave became active in the Canada-USSR Association, as President of the Winnipeg Branch for many years. He served on the executive of CUPE Local #694, a broadcast division of CBC Winnipeg, where he worked as a scenic constructor and crew leader, retiring in 1985 after 30 years of service.

After a visit to Cuba in 1972, Dave became an active supporter of the Cuban people and a member of the Manitoba Cuba Solidarity Committee. He participated in many of the Pastors for Peace' Caravans which challenge the immoral and illegal U.S. blockade of the island.

David was a reader and strong supporter of the People's Voice. He will be missed greatly by his partner of many years, Jeannie Romanowski, his family and the many friends he made during his decades of commitment to creating a better society.

In memory of

**Roberto Moretton, Jim Buller,
and Vi Dewhurst**

**Comrades and Friends, Fighters for
Peace, Democracy and Socialism**

Anna Yanovsky, Toronto

"No to European Austerity"

By Adrien Welsh, Paris

"No to European austerity!" the main labour unions of 23 countries across the continent chanted on November 14th, from Portugal to Hungary, overwhelming the continent with crowds of workers responding to the call of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) to mobilise against austerity.

France

According to the General Labour Confederation (CGT), the most important and militant French trade union, 15,000 people gathered in Paris from Montparnasse to Ecole militaire, while in Marseille 20,000 people responded to the call. People demonstrated in 130 cities across the country behind the slogan "For jobs, European solidarity and against austerity".

The general feeling of the crowd in Paris was one of deep discouragement about the socialist government of Francois Hollande, elected under the promise of change but behaving almost exactly like his predecessor Nicolas Sarkozy, by following the austerity policies dictated by EU troika. It is urgent to act, otherwise "we'll get caught like the Greeks," a teacher from the Saint-Denis suburb in northern Paris told me.

In the same mood, Bernard Thibault, general secretary of the CGT, historically linked with the Communist Party of France, told the crowd that, "Certainly in France we're not on the same scale of austerity as in Greece or in Spain. But austerity policies are in Europe and in France: as soon as wages are frozen, the announcement of higher income taxes and less public investments, is an austerity policy!" The Hollande government is allocating 21 Billion Euros to the rich as tax cuts.

The Paris demonstration followed a massive protest on Sept. 30 for a public referendum on the European Fiscal Compact. Formerly known as the Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance (TSCG, or the Fiscal Stability Treaty), the Fiscal Compact is a coercive system developed by big business to

accelerate the economic integration of Europe to more effectively strong-arm austerity measures on the people.

The treaty institutes the principle that no budget exceeding 0.5 percent of the structural deficit could be voted on by the French parliament. If this were to happen, "consequent corrective measures" would be applied by the EU. Concretely, it means that the French parliament will have to cut 33 billion Euros in useful public services.

Despite strong popular opposition in which the Front de Gauche (an electoral coalition including the Communist Party of France) played an outstanding role, all aspects of the treaty were voted by the National Assembly, with the Senate confirming the vote on Oct. 29.

The most important contradiction here is that when Sarkozy and Merkel presented the first version of the TSCG, the opposition Socialist Party were clearly opposed. This position was reiterated even more strongly during the presidential campaign. Hollande told voters, several times, that as President he would "renegotiate" the Fiscal Compact and "change the global orientation of Europe."

Hollande was elected, but unsurprisingly, not only did he drop his call to "renegotiate" the treaty, but he imposed it on the French people.

"When we see how the government, which was elected thanks to the 11 million votes from the Front de Gauche and the Communists, is making fun of us, we want just one thing: go into the streets and cry out loud our

opposition," one trade unionists from the RATP (Paris public transportation network) told me, adding "if it worked for you guys

visit to Portugal by Angela Merkel, who kept repeating that the Portuguese would eventually understand the long term benefits



in Québec, why wouldn't it work for us too?"

Iberian Peninsula

Strikes were also organized in Portugal, where the official unemployment rate is around 16% (the global data for Europe is around 10.6%). Armenio Carlos, the general secretary of the General Portuguese Workers' Confederation (CGTP), the only major labour central which called for a general strike, described the action as "one of the biggest strikes since April Revolution" in 1974.

The strike came right after a massive demonstration against a

of austerity measures.

Portugal is a country where the population keeps getting poorer after experiencing the troika of European Union, International Monetary Fund and European Central Bank policies. The general strike showed how the people, and especially the organized workers, are determined to fight together for their rights, highlighted by the unity of social movements and major trade unions during the mobilizations.

Meanwhile in Spain, homeland of the Indignados who launched the Occupy movement, and where 54% of the youth are unemployed, the movement went further than just indignation. According to the Communist Party of Spain (PCE), the strike experience was "globally positive" despite an unmeasured presence of the police forces. November 14 was the second general strike in eight months.

According to Luis Centella, PCE General Secretary, the strike was "one of the strongest since democracy returned" after Franco. Indeed, the country was paralysed: 75% of employees went on strike to oppose the austerity policies of the Rajoy government and its next 40 Billion Euro budget amputation. The trade unions are calling for a referendum on these imposed on the Spanish people.

Belgian "tsunami"

"No to our industry's genocide", was a slogan of the workers in Belgium, where the Parti du Travail de Belgique (PTB) obtained a historically high vote in recent municipal elections. People gathered to express opposition to deindustrialization and the massive loss of jobs. October 2012 will be designated as "Black October", due to the loss of 30,000 jobs in one month. The brutal situation is compared to a "social tsunami."

The major trade unions didn't call for a general strike, but many rallies and actions were organised, especially in Brussels, the EU capital, in front of the different embassies. Strikes are being planned among the most impacted workers, including railway workers and the steel workers from Arcelor Mittal.

"No to fascism" in Budapest

In Hungary, anti-austerity demands were boosted by strong opposition against the ultra-right or quasi-fascist Orban government. Elected in 2010 in a period of economic and social crisis, the new government imposed authoritarian measures, restricting freedom of the press. The government adopted a new nationalist Constitution, affirming the Christian roots of the nation and preparing for action against labour unions and social movements to allow debt refunding and market flexibility. Every opponent of the government could be a traitor to the nation!

These policies are supported by the neo-fascist Jobbik party, which attributes Hungary's problems to "Roma criminals". The party uses the Roma as a pretext to form paramilitary groups, charged with "re-establishing social order."

The intransigent attitude of the European governments as well as the whole EU troika, in the face of such popular opposition, and the poor results of their austerity plans, all suggest that tensions on the continent will continue to sharpen.

Nevertheless, the perspective of fighting the EU itself is not yet envisaged by many social movements and unions. The main trade unions, including the ETUC itself which called the action, and many progressive parties such as European United Left/Nordic Green Left, believe this battle has to be fought within the EU framework.

This debate within the people's movements is also sharpening. Strike actions in Greece, led by the PAME labour union and the Communist Party of Greece, did not hesitate to recognise the imperialist nature of the EU. If this more global perspective doesn't overtake the current understanding, the Greeks point out, the struggle could fail.

Nevertheless, many left and progressive commentators agreed that the success of this "Day of Action" shows the European people's struggle against austerity measures has reached a further step, beyond just outrage. More and more people, especially youth, are willing and ready to organise themselves and act in a united and militant way, which has to be the way forward for the working class of Europe.

(Adrien Welsh, originally from Montreal, is a student and journalist based at the National Institute of Eastern Languages and Civilization in Paris.) •



November 14 Day of Action demonstration in Spain

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