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# people's VOICE

## Youth Festival stirs debates

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## Nationalize US Steel operations in Hamilton!

*People vs. US Steel...  
see page 2*



Photo from USW Local 1005 website, [www.uswa1005.ca](http://www.uswa1005.ca)



## People's Intifada in Tunisia rocks Arab world



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### Meltdown averted

The labour movement stepped back from the precipice of major divisions in early January. But the deeper problems arising from the ideology of "business unionism" have yet to be tackled.

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### Agent Orange

The U.S. military dumped 75 million liters of Agent Orange on the forests and fields of Vietnam, where the people still pay a deadly price for this crime.

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### Corporate tax cuts

The Harper Tories have continued and accelerated the Liberal policy of tax cuts for the corporate sector. How much is this costing the federal treasury? Can working people afford this massive tax giveaway?



# Nationalize US Steel operations in Hamilton!

By Liz Rowley

Fifty busloads and hundreds of cars and vans from all over Ontario were headed to Hamilton January 29, in support of steelworkers on the picket line since early November. The rally is being organized jointly by USW Local 1005, the Hamilton and District Labour Council, and the Ontario Federation of Labour, which mobilized Labour Councils and affiliates across the province.

The "People vs. US Steel" rally is to support 900 locked-out Local 1005 members, as well as 9,000 retirees whose pensions will be de-indexed if US Steel has its way. The company also wants to exclude new hires from the defined benefit pension plan. In a 2007 letter to union members, US Steel had promised to properly fund and protect the plan, because unlike others, it understood the value of good pensions to employees. Clearly, this letter was just part of a cynical propaganda campaign to convince Canadians to support the foreign takeover of Stelco operations. The cost of the purchase was \$1.2 billion - the exact cost of the pension plan.

US Steel also contracted with the Canadian government, through Investment Canada, to maintain employment and production levels at the Hamilton Works for at least three years. But within a year, the company started handing out layoff notices, and then banking and shutting down blast furnaces. Shortly after the last Hamilton blast furnace was shut down last year, US Steel opened up two new furnaces at its US operations.

Under pressure to protect steelworkers and the Canadian steel industry, the federal government finally acted - three years after the deal was signed. Predictably, the company's response is that the three-year term has expired, and it is no longer bound by the Investment Canada agreement.

But Stelco was the last Canadian steelmaker to be sold off to a foreign transnational corporation, and public opinion supported the union's demand that the government hold US Steel to account.

Finally, the Attorney General sued US Steel in a proceeding likely

to go on for some time. Local 1005 and Lakeside Steel (a competitor interested in purchasing the Hamilton Works) have been granted intervener status. This is a victory for the Local union, which can now put the case for the workers, the community and the country, on the court record - something US Steel

to belong to a union, to free collective bargaining, and to strike.

This is the "Spirit of 1946" that Local 1005 President Rolf Gerstenberger and the local union executive invoke in the current struggle. Gerstenberger says the fight is not only about pensions and collective bargaining, but

Canadian prices and production through illegal price-fixing and mill closures, layoffs, and now flaunting provincial labour laws by refusing to bargain a collective agreement with Local 1005. This is politics at a high level. The company's clear message: stop us if you can. The union's message: we will mobilize

Ontario and Quebec, and the vicious attacks on wages, pensions and living standards in the private and public sectors, the time for real political and economic change is overdue.

Nationalization under public control is what governments at all levels should be addressing and implementing, says the Communist Party. This must include key sectors: basic steel, energy and natural resources, banking. Further, this must include production of a small, fuel-efficient, environmentally sustainable Canadian car, as part of a transportation plan to build rolling stock in Canada.

This is how to put the country back to work. Canada has a right and an obligation to build up the industrial base of the economy in the interests of Canadians. To kick-start a recovery in the real economy, we must create jobs, and raise wages, living standards, and purchasing power.

But since governments don't represent Canadian interests, or Canadian workers, escalating mass, independent labour political action must force governments to act. It will take the expanding action of the whole community and the whole labour movement to win the struggle in Hamilton, which is being fought on behalf of working people everywhere.

The pending federal election offers an opportunity to make the lockout and the government's abysmal record a central issue. Defeating the Tories would send a strong message to a new government that Canadian sovereignty, an industrial strategy for Canada, and workers' rights matter. Workers and unions like Local 1005, and those coming out to support them January 29th, are not waiting around with cap in hand.

(Rowley is the Ontario leader of the Communist Party.) •



Photo: www.uswa1005.ca

wanted to avoid.

In the court proceedings, the company has acknowledged engaging in price fixing - filling Canadian orders with steel imported from its US mills. As the pieces fall into place, it's obvious the lockout is about monopolizing the Canadian steel market by keeping other foreign steel operations on the sidelines, while levelling the cost of Canadian labour to the lower US standards, or eliminating its Canadian operations altogether.

One of the biggest "costs" is at the Hamilton Works, where 9,000 pensioners and their widows depend on Stelco pensions to live with dignity and security.

The century-old steel operations were originally set up by what became the Steel Company of Canada - Stelco. During the 1930s, initial union drives at this Canadian owned basic steelmaker were led by CIO organizers in Canada, including Harry Hunter, Dick Steele, and other members of the Communist Party of Canada. After the war, the big steel strike of 1946 involved the whole labour movement in Hamilton, winning the Rand Formula. The 1946 strike nailed down what the 1945 auto strike in Windsor opened up for workers across Canada - the rights

about having a domestic industry to produce steel for Canadian manufacturing and secondary industry. Nation-building, as the union calls it, or Canadian sovereignty and independence by another name.

As the union correctly points out, Canada and Canadian steelworkers are hostages to a foreign multi-national's corporate greed. A Canadian basic steel industry is decisive for Canada to have any control over development of the economy. Steel is a central and essential building material for the auto and machine tool industries, for agricultural implements, ship building, appliances, housing and construction.

This cannot be left in the hands of a foreign multinational interested only in profits, willing to blow off Canadian laws and squeeze

the people of Hamilton, and the people of Canada. We will force our governments to act in the interests of Canada, and to enforce labour laws which require US Steel to bargain a collective agreement. We will not allow US Steel to abandon its legal obligations in Hamilton and in Canada.

The union is doing its best to alert the labour movement and to invite all those concerned with Canada's sovereignty and independence to join their fight for a country where workers' rights, wages and pensions matter. This is a fight for a country Canadian government has more power and authority over these vital economic issues than foreign corporations.

After the earthquakes in the auto and auto parts industries following the loss of the Auto Pact a decade ago, the de-industrialization of

## CUPW enters tough bargaining

PV Vancouver Bureau

Facing resistance by Canada Post management against a fair new contract, the 54,000 member Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) applied on Jan. 21 for conciliation. The request sets the stage for possible strike action by this spring.

"We've taken this action because Canada Post has to move from its hardline position on demanding significant concessions from our members, even while it continues to post profits and spend money on technological changes," said Denis Lemelin, national president and chief negotiator for the union.

Canada Post is seeking to replace sick leave with a short-term disability plan, and to impose a defined contribution pension plan for new hires rather than the current defined benefit plan. As the union says, this "two-tier" system could be forced on all employees in a future round of bargaining.

Management also insists on new work methods that the union considers unsafe, based on huge problems and disruptions of mail service in Winnipeg, where they

were first implemented.

One element of this round of bargaining is the struggle to win equality for rural postal workers. Despite the Harper government's claim to speak for the interests of rural Canadians, these workers have lesser vacation times, sick

rallies across the country in late January. A message from Denis Lemelin to union members stresses that "By sticking together we can negotiate a good collective agreement that provides equality, respect and the sharing of the benefits of new technology."

In his New Year 2011 message, Lemelin pointed out that "the struggles we are waging now at Canada Post are part of a greater battle, i.e., one for the kind of life we want as a society in the future. Do we want a world of cheap labour that caters to the whims of large corporations and the governments who are in their pockets, or a world that is based on decent jobs and good services for all? For us at CUPW, the choice is clear. We want a world with a human face.

"We've been saying since 2008 that we will not be made to pay for a financial and economic crisis that was caused by multinational corporations and their insatiable appetites for maximum profits. We are the ones who, as workers, produce the goods and services required for society as a whole. That needs to be recognized." •

CUPW Days of Action



leave, and maternity and adoption benefits than their counterparts in the urban system. They are required to pay 50% of drug plan premiums, when other Canada Post employees are only required to pay a 5% premium.

CUPW held "days of action"

## Niagara News Bulletin

By PV Niagara Bureau

\* After thousands of people protested the Niagara Health System (NHS) elimination of local emergency rooms in favour of a P3 (public-private-partnership) hospital far from local hospitals, the NHS has fired its CEO. However, the NHS says they are not changing their minds about closing the emergency rooms. Activists as well as local mayors, MPPs and other elected officials say firing the CEO is not enough; the problem is with the "hospital improvement" plan that cuts local emergency services, and the province should investigate the decision-making behind it. The Ontario Health Coalition issued a statement calling again for a public investigator so that health care systems are accountable to the community they are supposed to serve and not to for-profit developers. The province has refused to appoint an investigator despite continued pressure.

\* The DSBN (District School Board of Niagara) has taken away voting rights from unions on its policy advisory committee, reducing the voice of the Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario, the Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation, and the Canadian Union of Public Employees in their work place.

\* Niagara Regional Police have arrested a special constable for allegedly beating up someone in custody after New Year's Day. Police have not released any explanation of the incident, believed to have happened in the cell area of Niagara Falls division. •



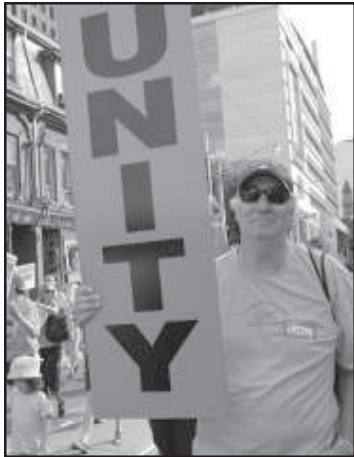
# Labour meltdown halted, but for how long?

By Sam Hammond

The dispute that NUPGE has been nursing with the CLC since 2005 or perhaps longer, over the issue of raiding, motivated National President James Clancy to announce in November 2010 that his union would withdraw from the central labour body January 1st, 2011. The first shock wave was felt in British Columbia, when the BC Fed going into its November convention had to decide if NUPGE's affiliate, the BCGEU, could seat its delegates.

The BC Fed wisely decided that until January 1 they were affiliates and should be seated. Unfortunately, CUPE did not agree and pulled 300 or so delegates from the Convention, although CUPE's largest affiliate, the Health Employees Union (HEU), stayed on the floor.

On the NUPGE website the reasons, as they see them, for the withdrawal are articulated in a commentary, "NUPGE - CLC dispute over raiding" presented by James Clancy. There is also a



discussion paper, "A Vision for the Future of Labour Centrals in Canada," that reveals quite articulately that the grievances go far beyond raiding and also involve structure.

On January 5, the crisis was temporarily halted when NUPGE was apparently invited into a conference call of the CLC leadership and a deal was worked out. Although speculation on the content of that discussion is running wild across the country, apparently the withheld per capita will be paid and NUPGE intends to be seated at the next CLC Convention in May 2011.

Whatever criticism or charges of irresponsibility could be laid, it

is now time for a breath of relief that a major tragedy has been forestalled. But for how long?

The emergence of what has come to be known as "business trade unionism" went through several stages since the early 1900s in the United States. It was imported

**how we see it...**

into Canada, where the Canadian units of American unions were ordered and sometimes volunteered to mirror the policies of their parent bodies. In the American Federation of Labour, business trade unionism sought peace and deal-making with employers, vigorously opposed the organization of industrial workers, and promoted an "aristocracy" of privilege in the working class. Dissatisfaction in the AFL finally led to a split that created a new industrial labour centre, the CIO. This was reflected in Canada, where the AFL affiliate, the Trades and Labour Congress, was faced with the CIO and the left-oriented All-Canadian Congress of Labour.

In 1956, shortly after the AFL and CIO compromised and reunited into the AFL-CIO, the TLC and CCL merged into the Canadian Labour Congress. These mergers maintained both the business union models and the newer and more progressive industrial union models.

Over the years business trade unionism has developed and changed. While absolutist or stereotypical definitions are too rigid, it is true to say that business trade unionism has penetrated the old industrial unions and has a presence in their organizational and programmatic operations.

The public sector unions, which emerged in the late 1950s and continue to evolve and shape the labour movement, were born into an environment where business unionism was already an expanding factor. Although not business unions as such, they are definitely affected by its strong presence. In some of their competitive struggles with each other, these unions have adopted its ideology by some degree.

The lines of demarcation are blurred also by the privatization of public sector jobs. In a struggle to maintain and represent their members, public sector unions are forced into the private sector, in turn becoming a target for opportunist raiding from some private sector, even industrial, unions.

The left-oriented class conscious workers, especially communists, who organized most of the large private sector unions, were battered into a minority by a combination of the McCarthyite capitalist state, the Cold War and the business union rejection of class struggle. The problems of trade union unity, or the lack of it, can be traced back to the attack on the class conscious left.

In the late '50s, raiding emerged in the Canadian Labour movement as an instrument of anti-communism inspired by the McCarthyite attack on everything to the left, especially within the labour movement. U.S. unions were required to insert anti-communist clauses into their constitutions and many thousands of workers were expelled or denied membership.

This condition was imported into Canada and used as the excuse for raids on unions that did not expel communists, or people labelled communist, from their ranks and leadership. The Canadian Seamen's Union was destroyed in this struggle and replaced by a gangster-led union. The raids by the Steelworkers against Mine Mill were a part of this attack.

Raiding as an instrument of pro-capitalist interests to smash and divide was imported into the labour movement. This was the biggest boost that opportunism and class collaboration had received, firmly entrenching them as a feature expressed in business trade unionism.

Over the years the changing production methods of industry and the resulting changing structure of the industrial working class, the attack on trade unionism that escalated after the destruction of the socialist states, and the de-industrialization of large sections of our country, have posed very serious problems for the trade union movement. The loss of industrial jobs, the break-up of large production units and the hostile environment of the global neo-liberal agenda, have depleted the sector density of industrial and transport unions, and shifted the ratios in favour of the public sector unions.

The private sector unions, because of the dominance of business unionism, did not commit all their resources to fighting back. They did not commit their treasuries to organizing the unorganized, or restructure to reflect the new class demographics or replenish militancy. Where it was easiest, workers were organized. If the numbers were too few, they were turned away as "too costly" to represent with an insufficient dues base.

Some unions began to lean towards the model of self perpetuation, to maintain income and financial investment. The instrument of raiding to maintain membership, the infusion of competition to lure workers, the provider-client relationship



As Hammond points out, the loss of well-paying jobs and the deindustrialization of Canada have had a negative impact on the trade union movement. (Photos from the 2009 Labour Day parade in Toronto, by Ed Bil)

between leadership and membership, are the conditions of business unionism. The provider-client relationship also spawns the tendency of memberships to shop for unions, rather than shaping their own to their needs.

Sector organizing and concentration has gone largely by the boards. Steelworkers try to organize banks, public sector unions and auto unions try to organize casinos, and are raided by Teamsters who have largely left the transportation sector. Every large union moves to becoming a labour centre competing with the others. Dragged more and more into the impossible job of arbitrating disputes, while being ideologically neutralized by warring affiliates, the CLC is ineffective in the real class struggle.

Fortunately this bleak picture, this bourgeois model, is not and never will be complete. There are many fine trade union officials in Canada, and the membership of unions are all working people whose self-interest objectively cannot be served without unity and struggle. We cannot advance without struggle and we cannot struggle without unity. But by

degree, business trade unionism is a threat to the ability of workers to struggle. That is why a dispute over Casino workers in Manitoba kept NUPGE's delegates out of the last CLC Convention, and brought the CLC to the verge of a meltdown.

The meltdown was prevented. That is wonderful, but the conditions which threatened the cohesion of the CLC, and would have bankrupted most Provincial Federations, severely damaged the Quebec Federation of Labour, and virtually destroyed most labour councils outside of Quebec, are still there.

Raiding and competition will destroy labour or turn it into an instrument of corporate capital. Raiding and competition are spawned in opportunist leadership, and are a threat to the ability of working people to form unified resistance and defense against the global onslaught. The danger is imminent, and time is very short.

This last dispute was patched up. Thank goodness the ship is still afloat but the patches only temporary.

A general exchange of ideas in the People's Voice would be very healthy and informative. Please consider this, dear readers. •

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## MAY DAY 2011 GREETING ADS

To mark May Day 2011, People's Voice will print greetings from a wide range of labour and people's organizations in our May 1-15 issue, which will be distributed at events across Canada. The deadline for camera-ready ads will be April 22; if PV is preparing the layout, the deadline is April 20. Please check with us about the format if your ad is being sent electronically.

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# EDITORIALS

## Solidarity with Tunisians, not dictators!

The news that relatives of Tunisia's ousted dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali have arrived in Canada is an appalling sign of the true policies of the Harper Tories. On Jan. 21, one of Ben Ali's brothers-in-law flew into Montreal on a private jet, with his family and a governess. Others may follow. Two years ago, the dictator's daughter, Nesrine Ben Ali and her husband purchased a \$2.5 million villa in Montreal's Westmount neighbourhood. Ben Ali's relatives are fleeing Tunisia, after 33 family members were arrested for their plunder of the country's wealth.

Contrast Canada's welcome mat for these wealthy crooks with the response to Roma people fleeing racism and persecution, Mexicans and other Latinos escaping the violence and poverty of their homelands, or Tamils who arrived here in the wake of Sri Lanka's devastating civil war. The Harper Tories have used these refugees as scapegoats to whip up racism and chauvinism, in an attempt to sow divisions at a time when working class unity is vital to resist corporate attacks. Acting in solidarity with the rich and powerful everywhere, the Harper government has shamefully refused to welcome the overthrow of Ben Ali, or to join other countries in freezing the assets of the dictator's clique.

But working people across Canada and around the world do celebrate this historic popular victory. The revolution in Tunisia is a powerful blow against the corrupt, authoritarian, capitalist regimes which use violence and phony "elections" to maintain their domination over working people. The upsurge of protests in Algeria, Egypt and other countries is also welcome. These actions expand the struggles by the workers of Europe against the global imperialist agenda. We send our warmest solidarity to the people of Tunisia, and to their sisters and brothers everywhere taking to the streets to demand jobs, democracy, civil rights, equality and peace!

## "This ain't Canada right now"

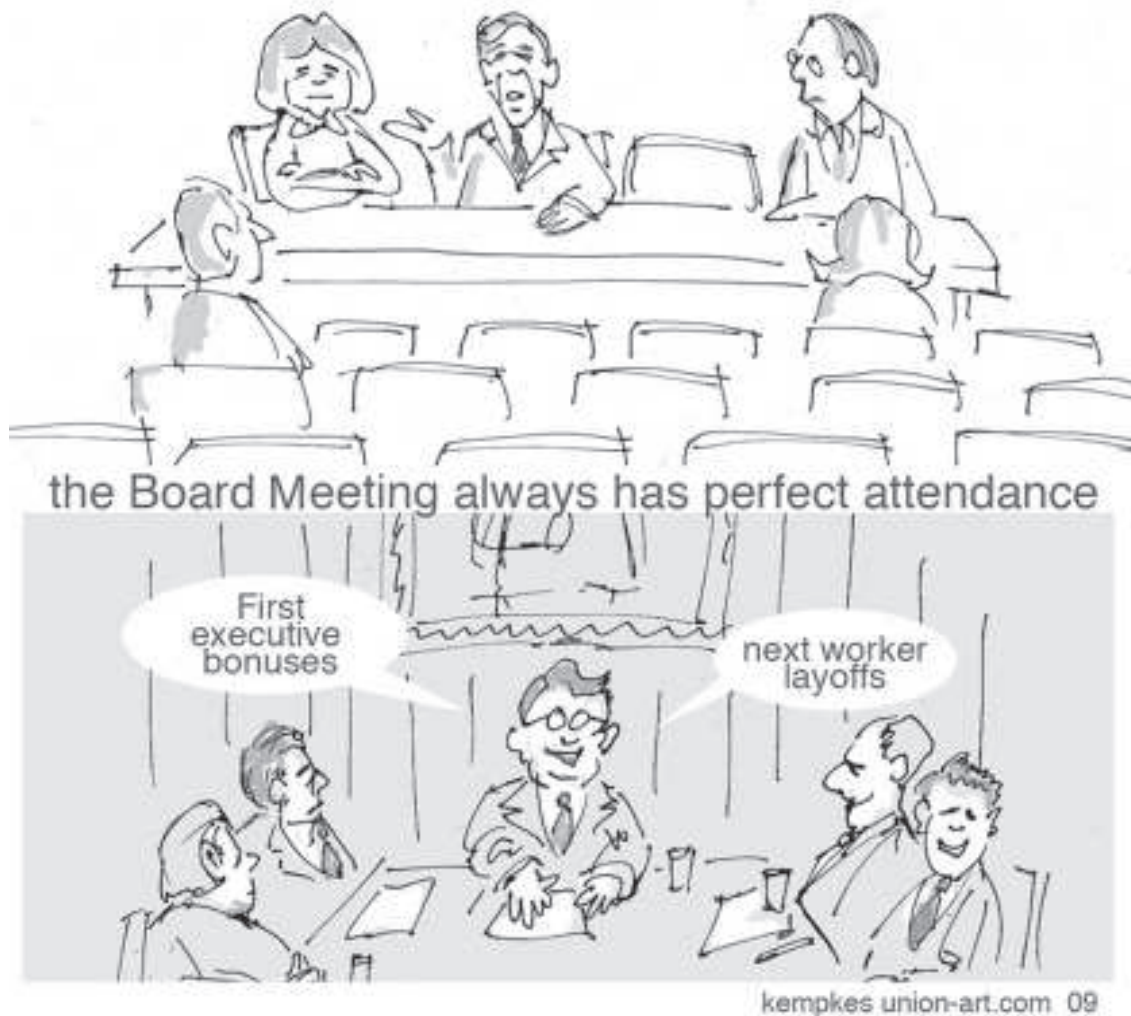
It seems that police these days have difficulty in grasping a simple concept: people who witness brazen violations of civil rights often record these incidents for everyone else to see.

One such case concerns Officer 815, AKA Sgt. Mark Charlebois, videotaped searching protesters last June 27 near the St. Andrew TTC Station in Toronto. This, of course, is during the crackdown against anyone walking the streets near the G20 Summit. Outside the station, a young man refuses to hand over his backpack. Off-camera, a woman's voice points out that the protesters are not within five metres of the zone where police and politicians claim (falsely) that anyone can be legally searched. The young man insists that, as a Canadian, he has the right to refuse the search. To the surprise of the crowd, Officer 815 replies, "This ain't Canada right now.... There is no civil rights here in this area."

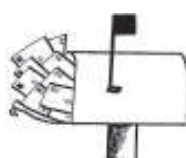
Another (we could list dozens) happened recently in Kelowna, where an RCMP officer was filmed kicking Buddy Tavares in the face after a phone call reporting that the victim had been sighted firing a shotgun. Turns out Tavares actually works at the nearby golf course, scaring geese away from the greens. Instead of admitting that the officer had made a big mistake, the RCMP quickly invented a tall tale about domestic abuse.

Both officers are "under investigation", still receiving their paycheques. Nobody knows what the outcome will be. The fact is that police seem to be immune from prosecution for violating civil rights. So, are we still living in Canada? Actually, the police have always used unjustified force against Aboriginal peoples, strikers, immigrants, and others. But it's also true that the "whiff of fascism" in the air these days makes cops even bolder, despite all the cameras. What this country desperately needs is not more cops, but political leaders with the guts to impose full civilian oversight against these thugs in blue.

While the Union Meeting is half empty...



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## Letters to the Editor

### U.S. arms stoke Mid-East tensions

The Canadian media recently reported that the U.S. will be selling more armaments in the Middle East, \$60 billion to Saudi Arabia, and \$20 billion to Iraq, during the next twenty to thirty years. Shouldn't we think of the implications of such an action?

Since the Israeli nation was founded in 1948, the U.S. has assumed a role as protector of the fragile nation. International public opinion seems to say that Israel has a legitimate right to endure. In my mind, the prospect of Israel enduring will depend very much on the extent of peaceful co-existence with other states, even with some that have been hostile toward Israel.

Tension between Iran and the U.S. has existed ever since the

Shah, a staunch ally of the U.S., was overthrown thirty-two years ago. The new regimes in Iran, recognizing the protective role of the U.S. in relation to Israel, project resentment toward the U.S. Saudi Arabia, a committed ally of the U.S. in the region, is ready to purchase \$60 billion in armaments from the U.S. Why? Presumably, to thwart any aggressive action of Iran toward Israel. The U.S. sees such militarization as a stabilizing move, but can it be?

The puppet government of Iraq is about to purchase \$20 billion in armaments from the U.S. The Iraqi government is tenuous and unpredictable. There is an undercurrent in it that demonizes the U.S. because of its interference

in the region. It is apparent that the U.S. wants Iraq to be its centre of military operations in the region. Why? Assuredly, so that the Americans will have strategic control over the vast petroleum resources in the region.

These arms sales are for the primary benefit of the military-industrial complex in the U.S. Huge amounts are paid for oil from Saudi Arabia and Iraq. The multi-billion arms sales offset the huge payments made for oil. The road to peace in the Middle East will be through demilitarization of aggressive nations. The United Nations, founded for the purpose of promoting world peace, should have a high profile in inducing that demilitarization.

Roy L. Piepenburg, Edmonton, AB

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### Volunteers and contributors for this issue:

Asad Ali, Dave Arland, Ed Bil, Johan Boyden,  
Marianne Breton-Fontaine, Wally Brooker, Miguel  
Figueroa, Sam Hammond, B. Prasant, Liz Rowley,  
Stephen Von Sychowski, and our mailers in  
Vancouver & Toronto.

Editor: Kimball Cariou Business Manager: Sam Hammond  
Editorial Board: Kimball Cariou, Miguel Figueroa,  
Doug Meggison, Naomi Rankin, Liz Rowley, Jim Sacouman

## LETTERS

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

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### Open Letter from Dr. Jean-Bertrand Aristide, former President of Haiti

Jan. 19, 2011 - I would like to thank the government and the people of South Africa for the historic hospitality, deeply rooted in Ubuntu, extended to my family and I.

Since my forced arrival in the Mother Continent six and a half years ago, the people of Haiti have never stopped calling for my return to Haiti. Despite the enormous challenges that they face in the aftermath of the deadly January 12, 2010 earthquake, their determination to make the return happen has increased.

As far as I am concerned, I am ready. Once again I express my readiness to leave today, tomorrow, at any time. The purpose is very clear: To contribute to serving my Haitian sisters and brothers as a simple citizen in the field of education.

The return is indispensable, too, for medical reasons: It is strongly

recommended that I not spend the coming winter in South Africa's because in six years I have undergone six eye surgeries. The surgeons are excellent and very well skilled, but the unbearable pain experienced in the winter must be avoided in order to reduce any risk of further complications and blindness.

So, to all those asking me to return home, I reiterate my willingness to leave today, tomorrow, at any time. Let us hope that the Haitian and South African governments will enter into communication in order to make that happen in the next coming days.

United to the Haitian people, once again my family and I express our sincere gratitude to the government and the people of South Africa.

(Circulated by Haitian Lawyers Leadership Network)

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# "I am a human smuggler"

The group No One Is Illegal in Vancouver has published a powerful series of posters exposing the anti-migrant legislation Bill C-49 being pushed through Parliament by the Harper Tories. A statement from the group says, "Under the banner of combating 'human smuggling' and deterring the arrival of boats such as the *MV Sun Sea*, politicians are proposing and debating blatantly anti-migrant legislation. Criminalizing smuggling cannot prevent human migration as millions of people across the globe are forcibly displaced from their lands and communities due to

military occupation, environmental degradation, and corporate profiteering.

"Much like the hypocritical ideology of 'liberation' through military occupation, anti-smuggling provisions are justified through the rhetoric of protecting migrants. In reality, such legislation only increases the stakes in irregular, often dangerous, migration. There are an estimated 500 deaths per year at the US-Mexico border and over 1000 deaths at the African-European border.

"We affirm human smuggling as an often necessary pathway to

protection and freedom. Human smuggling exists as a symptom in a broader context of increasing border controls, repressive immigration policies, and racist security processes that cast migrants as undesirable human cargo.

"We also reject anti-trafficking legislation that perpetuates exploitation of women and children through policies of detention and deportation. In actuality, the state is the biggest culprit in the trafficking of humans - importing hundreds of thousands of exploitable migrant labour to the fields and homes of Canadians to toil under conditions of servitude and legally denying them basic rights.

"Rather than despair, historic resistance from within the walls of detention centres to human underground railroads has inspired us to create a poster series 'I am a human smuggler'. We encourage you to please download, post, and distribute this poster widely!"

The posters can be viewed at [www.flickr.com/photos/nooneisillegal/5366393464](http://www.flickr.com/photos/nooneisillegal/5366393464) and [www.flickr.com/photos/nooneisillegal/5365781147](http://www.flickr.com/photos/nooneisillegal/5365781147). ●

My name is Harriet Tubman. Some people call me "Moses". I was born into slavery in Maryland.

In 1849 I escaped to Philadelphia, then returned to rescue my family. Slowly, for 11 years, I brought relatives with me, and guided more than 70 other slaves to freedom using the network of antislavery activists and safe houses known as the Underground Railroad.

I usually worked during the winter when the nights are long and dark and used disguises. I helped guide people as far north as Canada, and helped newly freed slaves find work. Large rewards were offered, but no one suspected me as a petite five foot tall slave with a disability who had run away years before.

## I am a human smuggler

Criminalizing smuggling and trafficking cannot prevent the migration of those seeking safety and freedom. Reject anti-smuggling and anti-trafficking legislation.

[nooneisillegal.org](http://nooneisillegal.org)

**43.3 million people were forcibly displaced worldwide at the end of 2009, the highest number of people uprooted by conflict and persecution since the mid-1990s. The Global Trends report for 2009 issued by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees says refugee numbers were 15.2 million, plus another 27.1 million people displaced by conflicts within their own countries. The number of new individual asylum claims worldwide grew to nearly 1 million during 2009, and 6.6 million people were officially known to be stateless at the end of 2009.**



## Marxist Theory Today

# The impending systemic crisis of imperialism

By Sitaram Yechury

Quite apart from the periodical crisis that will continuously erupt under neo-liberal globalisation, a much graver systemic crisis is impending. The USA, with its currency being the stipulated medium of wealth holding for the capitalist world as a whole, occupies this superior position not only through its economic might but through its superior military and political dominance in the world.

Irrespective of such might, a crisis will, necessarily, follow because in order to maintain the stability of its currency, the USA accumulates a massive current account deficit vis-a-vis other major capitalist economies.

This is because the dollar is the stable medium of wealth holding. This also happens because the USA, in order to maintain its leading position, necessarily has to accommodate the products of other major capitalist economies within its own market. However, when it seeks to reduce this deficit, this would affect the exports of other capitalist economies leading to counter-intensified protectionism and disruption of international monetary stability.

As of October 16, 2009, the total deficit of the US economy reached US\$1.42 trillion. Its current account deficit was US\$726.6 billion in 2007 and US\$706 billion in 2008.

This is not an inherently stable situation because those holding the dollar would sooner than later wish to trade them for more lucrative US assets. This will, surely, invoke passions of patriotism that will oppose such foreign ownership of its assets. However, if the holders of dollars decide then to shift to some other currency, then the plunge in the dollar's standing and consequently of the US economy would send the entire capitalist system into a profound crisis.

The indications of this are

already unfolding with the dollar having lost over 11 percent in recent months. In order to stabilise itself and the global capitalist economy, the US will now increase the pressures on countries which hold huge amounts of its currency, like China and other Asian economies, to revalue their currencies upwards in order to cushion its own burgeoning current account deficits. This, in turn, if it were to happen, would lead to a slump in the latter economies. Even if the US were to insulate itself from such a slump, it would still bring the global capitalist system to the brink of a major crisis because of sharp deflation in the emerging economies whose currencies the USA is today seeking to revalue.

Therefore, irrespective of how the current crisis is overcome, a major systemic crisis for world capitalism is in the offing. The US would, however, seek to thwart such a crisis by transferring the burdens, that is, intensifying exploitation through its accompanying political and military might.

Marx once remarked that the stability of a ruling class is ensured only by the extent to which it presses the best minds of the subordinate and exploited classes in its service. As both Marx and Engels pointed out, the ruling ideas of any epoch are the ideas of the ruling classes. The ideological war to establish the intellectual hegemony of imperialism and neo-liberalism has been on the offensive during this period. Aided by this very process of globalisation and the vastly elevated levels of technologies, there is convergence of information, communications and entertainment (ICE) into mega-corporations.

For instance, the mega-publishing corporation *Time* had earlier merged with the entertainment giant Warner Bros. The information giant American Online Ltd (AOL) has now acquired



Time-Warner at a cost of \$164 billion to become the largest ICE conglomerate in the world. Rupert Murdoch now commands a combined news, entertainment and internet enterprise which is valued at \$68 billion. Likewise, Walt Disney has now acquired Marvel (of Spider-Man fame).

Culture here acts not as an appeal to the aesthetic, but as a distraction, diversion from pressing problems of poverty and misery. The cultural products that are universally created are bombarded across the world garnering phenomenal profits.

This monopolisation of the sphere of human intellectual activity and the control over dissemination of information through the corporate media is a salient feature of this period that seeks to continuously mount an ideological offensive against any critique or alternative to capitalism.

Viewed in terms of class hegemony, the culture of globalisation seeks to divorce people

from their actual realities of day to day life. Culture here acts not as an appeal to the aesthetic, but as a distraction, diversion from pressing problems of poverty and misery.

Though imperialism has strengthened its hegemony and heightened its multifaceted offensive all across the globe, as we have discussed earlier, it is on the brink of a systemic crisis which could prove far graver and more encompassing than the current global recession.

However, irrespective of the intensity of the crisis, capitalism does not automatically collapse. It needs to be overthrown. An erroneous understanding only blunts the need to constantly sharpen and strengthen the

revolutionary ideological struggle of the working class and its decisive intervention under the leadership of a party wedded to Marxism-Leninism - the subjective factor without which no revolutionary transformation is possible.

This period has also seen the rising resistance to such growing imperialist hegemonic efforts. But it must be noted that much of the struggles launched by the working class and the exploited sections have essentially been defensive in nature, i.e., defending their existing rights from greater encroachment by neo-liberalism. Resistance in the nature of mounting the assault on the rule of capital is yet to take a decisive shape.

In Latin America, the sharp rise in the distress caused by neo-liberalism has led to big movements of resistance that have resulted in electoral victories of the anti-neo-liberal forces in at least eleven countries. Some like Venezuela and Bolivia have adopted radical Left-wing programs. In Cyprus, for the first time in that country a communist was elected as a president.

It is the strengthening of the parties wedded to Marxism-Leninism along with the sharpening of class struggles through the mobilisation of popular masses under the leadership of the working class that the strength and success of the International Communist movement in the 21st century will be determined.

Sitaram Yechury is a member of the Polit Bureau of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and editor the Party's newspaper, *People's Democracy*. ●

## Rebel Youth #11

The latest issue of Rebel Youth magazine is now available at offices of the Communist Party & Young Communist League. Check it out online at [rebelyouth-magazine.blogspot.com/](http://rebelyouth-magazine.blogspot.com/)





# "Hope in Struggle"

## Debating the past and future at the Youth Festival in South Africa

By Johan Boyden

My partner and I are sitting in our living room, taken over by suitcases. Mixed between bags, hats, and clothes are posters, magazines, address cards, and stacks of papers and pamphlets in Arabic, French, Vietnamese, Spanish, and other languages. The mess of slogans and dirty socks spills over the floor. The gift of a carved wooden statue has broken open. A fine rain of tiny dead insects has fallen like dust in one corner.

We are not just making a two-week laundry pile. We are unpacking memories, making sense of two weeks spent in another continent, another pace of living, another setting of political discourse. We are not returning from a holiday, but from an intense and unique experience. Looking out our dark winter window there is a silent shine of snow and Christmas lights. Less than seventy-two hours ago we were in Africa.

### African dawn

"I remember that morning, the last morning we were in Africa." I am having coffee with a member of the All-Canada delegation, looking out onto ice and slush sprayed up by trucks on a busy Montreal street. "I must have fallen asleep at 4 am, kept awake by the sound of drums and chants and songs as the last parties continued into the night."

We stayed in modern university dorms, a maze-like complex of towers. Sometimes the music and partying seemed to reverberate through the brick buildings.

"At 6:30 I was woken again by the bird noises, probably peacocks. It was already light outside. I stood at my window and I could see the full sweep of countryside."

I also remember that landscape. From the small single-story township buildings over on one hill, we could see four grey wide-mouthed smoke-stack towers of a local factory. More and more buildings poked out of then green trees of the humid, subtropical climate, and then were swept away under a pinky-blue hue of low cloud.

Finally skyscrapers rose out of the cloud, catching the sun, marking the financial district of downtown Pretoria. Somewhere below us in that view were the Tshwane Fair Grounds, the large complex where the festival was held.

### Contrasts and struggle

The African continent is the birthplace of humanity. Using binoculars we might have seen the United Nations Heritage site, with some of the oldest hominid skeletons in the world. Millions of years have moved over these lands where the festival came together. The last few hundred have forged a new society, giving birth to a generation whose parents overcame one of the most brutal

regimes in human history: apartheid.

Look close at modern South Africa and you will see a new country, shaped and scarred by old contrasts and contradictions, social-economic, racial and class divisions. Yet the young people we met were impatient for the future.



Delegates from Canada and other countries outside the Festival opening ceremonies.

"I was really taken by the spirit of the young people despite what they were facing, their sense of community and optimism," another delegate tells me over a bad cell-line from Vancouver, "it was really strong."

Each day in the streets between the conference halls a chorus of chanting voices could be heard. Bold and rich, they were the combined singing, clapping, crying and stomping of the militant harmonies of anti-apartheid struggle songs.

### Rename and reclaim

Except for the downtown, the Pretoria area is now known as Tshwane, after a local African language. Listening to the many voices around the festival, we realized the re-naming is part of a political struggle over language. Many black South Africans are trilingual, knowing English as well as two African languages.

A struggle of re-claiming is taking back a country where many signs and names are still in English or Afrikaans. Now there are over ten official languages in South Africa.

"That means that if you are in a meeting or a conference or something, and you start speaking your language, nobody says 'why is she doing that?'" explains Sipehelele 'Sphelly' Xulu, the residence advisor where we stayed. "When I came, the white and black girls didn't sleep in the same dorm rooms. We changed that."

Our building was a women's student residence. The framed photos of sports teams in the halls illustrated Sphelly's story. The photos go back to about 1994, the year of the first elections with universal suffrage. In the first photos we see only white students smiling. Then black women appear, but stand separately. Recent photos show young women huddled together. Yet while today white people make up less than 20% of the population, they are

still significantly over-represented in post-secondary education.

### Free education

"When Apartheid was defeated and the negotiations went on, the new constitution gave people the right to vote. We won many of the

demands of the Freedom Charter but not the land, not the economy."

The speaker is from the South African Student Congress. She is contextualizing the current struggle for free education during an inter-exchange meeting of students.

"Many lands were privatized," she explains. "Large territories held by the apartheid government were taken out of public ownership and given to private individuals. Even this Fair Grounds is no longer public. To hold this event, this festival, we must enrich a private individual."

In the South African context, what featured large in the Festival debates over social transformation was the question of free education. "Denial of education, ignorance, is a form of oppression," a leader of the African National Congress Youth League, Julius Malema, said in a speech to a mass arena.

You could sense the South African youth listening closely to his words, catching his fiery rhetoric. They would discuss his ideas and personality later. Malema is not without controversy. The next speaker would be the Youth League president. Malema turned some heat on his leader, making a passing criticism of the ANC government's work in this area.

### National Democratic Revolution

Officially, the promise is to implement free education for first-year university, and then the first degree in President Jacob Zuma's current term. Announcements have been made, but many speakers insist they are too far from the objective. Already the discussion about full emancipation is going further, to the question of ownership of the economy.

Malema's call is to also nationalize the mines. Mining investments have driven South African capitalist development for decades. In the 1960s, South

A delegation of forty young workers and students from across Canada travelled to South Africa last December for the World Festival of Youth and Students - two weeks of conferences, sports, music, and politics under the slogan of "Let's defeat imperialism: for peace, solidarity and social transformation!" People's Voice coverage of the Festival continues with this report on the issues of social transformation and Africa.

Africa had an economic growth rate and profitability second only to Japan. Apartheid was good for business. We learnt how black workers' wages were held down by a fascist police state with an arsenal of dogs, guns, tanks, bomber fighters, and nuclear weapons. Miners' wages saw little improvement for generations under apartheid, and there was no health and safety code for black workers. Now that is changing.

What everyone was describing comes under a grand banner: the National Democratic Revolution. A brave, tortuous, difficult process of winning freedom for South Africa, not just democratic elections but economic democracy.

### Bumps in the road

In the context of the economic crisis, does nationalization mean enriching new black capitalists, some of whom have mistakenly purchased mines exhausted of minerals? Malema himself is a wealthy businessman, a striking contradiction that has drawn sharp criticism from the major labour union central, the Congress of South African Trade Unions. Profiteering on the side from government contracts and corruption is an endemic problem inherited from apartheid.

Even at the festival, poor distribution of food left many delegates hungry on some days. COSATU publicly called for an independent audit of the organizing committee's finances. In a small way we lived these contradictions, these bumps along the road. More serious were problems like sexual harassment and sexism in the festival, a topic for a subsequent article.

### AFRICOM

In a festival unique for its significant participation of African delegations - over 300 youth came from countries like Angola, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and large numbers from Libya, Zambia, Western Sahara, Swaziland, and Morocco - the question of the next step after de-colonization came forward in different ways.

In the seminars, workshops and anti-imperialist tribunal, there was a kind of consensus, an agreement woven around grievances against imperialism, the system that creates wars where rape is a weapon of mass horror, establishes a US military base system in Africa,



Youth Festival volunteers engaging in a lively discussion.

and still makes off with the continent's resources and wealth on a vast scale.

US military bases are a new danger to Africa, with the recent establishment of United States African Command, covering all of the continent except Egypt. Other than Ethiopia and Liberia, most African countries have refused to accept a US base on their soil. AFRICOM's headquarters remains in Germany.

### Zimbabwe, Angola

Zimbabwe literally marched into the festival, over 300 youth clad in green sports track suits and bright yellow hats, announcing they will never again be a colony, fists in the air. Their country faces hard sanctions by Britain the US, and other countries, including Canada.

The sanctions make it difficult for farmers to get basic tools like fertilizer. "We disagree over the approach to political dissent, such as of the labour movement," a representative from the Young Communist League of South Africa tells me, noting that right-wing opposition forces in Zimbabwe receive support from the United States. "But we agree on the necessity of the land reform and the need to end the sanctions."

In bi-lateral discussions, the Zimbabwe delegates explain some of the history of land theft during the century of colonization. "These stories are not told by your media," a young Zimbabwean woman says to me. Now they are looking also at expanding public ownership, into the highly profitable diamond mines.

Likewise Angola on the Atlantic coast talked about control over their large oil industry. They are looking towards China and Venezuela in terms of investment and development models.

### What next?

Where is Africa fighting to go? One young woman delegate tells a session, "we are dealing with questions like HIV and AIDS, unemployment, so many issues... I am a health worker. A young man said to me, I do not get sex when I take a condom. It is unlucky! So these are the issues we are facing."

And here was a lesson, perhaps something we could all relate to - that even in moments that may seem bleak, there is hope in struggle.

"We have had enough of this all, now we have to get rid of capitalism" another delegate tells me. "This is the policy of my union. We need socialism. We need control over our economy."

Precise definitions, theories of different models of socialism, of tactics and strategy - these questions were on the sidelines. The main concern of delegates was a break with imperialism. In this sense we discussed social transformation at the Festival, within, you might say, a broad sentiment against war and racism, and for our countries to seek out a new destiny, one of democracy, solidarity, sovereignty and peace. ●



# Stand by the toiling people of Tunisia!

The Communist Party of Turkey declares its solidarity and support to the ongoing popular revolt against the dictatorship of Zain Al-Abidin Bin Ali and his regime based on unemployment, poverty, political oppression and state terror.

The Communist Party of Turkey stands by the revolt, which calls itself the "intifada of the poor", and the progressive, revolutionary forces leading the movement, and

people of Tunisia against the Bin Ali regime to other countries in the region marks how common the problems are.

In order to maintain its hegemony in all territories, imperialism gives support to many dictators like Bin Ali. Yet, the same imperialism is also shifting its support rapidly whenever such political figures fail to serve its interests further or become a hindrance to its hegemony. It is

## Statement of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Turkey on the "intifada of the poor" in Tunisia

calls all workers, the poor and the progressive forces of Turkey to support the revolt.

The dictatorial practices of the Bin Ali regime are not unique, neither in the world nor in the Middle East and the Arabic world. Unfortunately, regimes based on lawlessness, police and military terror and plunder of the values created by the toiling people cannot be seen as "singular" cases in our world and our region which has been living under the tyranny of imperialism for decades. The rapid outstretch of the flag unfurled by the toiling

evident that such imperialist manipulations have played a role in the events ongoing in Tunisia.

In this respect, the revelation of the former commander of general staff Rashed Ammar, receiving instructions minute by minute from the U.S. embassy after the events broke out, is just an example of such manipulation attempts. Like-wise, the intrigues to plant a "new" government that will brag about the so-called "democratization" of the country while pursuing the same pro-market and Americanist policies with the Bin Ali regime can be seen in this context as well.



Rally in solidarity with the people of Tunisia, Jan. 22, 2011, at the Vancouver Public Library (PV photos: Kimball Cariou)

However, the "intifada of the poor" has given this game away. The revolt of the people and the struggle of the progressive forces rendered the temporary government obsolete, which hastily strives to hold an election without taking any significant step towards a genuine change, and in which the officers of Bin Ali actively take part. Moreover, the demands and actions of the progressive forces against looting events that are intentionally organized to undermine the legitimacy of the people's movement circumvented the acts of imperialism and the capitalist rule in Tunisia.

At the heart of the events in

Tunisia, there lies the deep exploitation and inequality, unemployment and poverty, lawlessness and corruption, political oppression and terror. The consciousness of large masses is not blurred in the sense that all of these causes are valid in the entire region and especially in our country. The Communist Party of Turkey considers standing by the toiling masses of Tunisia as a requirement of challenging the dictatorship of Justice and Development Party that has been established step by step in Turkey; as a requirement of challenging the imperialist hegemony and capitalist rule. Hence, our party calls our working people to support the

revolt of the Tunisian people for this cause as well.

We declare our support to the demands of the progressive forces of Tunisia, which can be fully realized only through a change of the social order. We support the demands to immediately prosecute those responsible for the killing of the protestors, to establish a genuinely new and legitimate government composed of the representatives of the workers and the poor, to remove all barriers before the organization of the people.

*Long live the intifada of the poor!  
Long live socialism!*

*Communist Party of Turkey -  
Central Committee* •



## Obama's speech in Arizona

### Reflections by Comrade Fidel Castro, Jan. 13, 2011

Yesterday I listened to him when he spoke at the University of Tucson where homage was being paid to the six people murdered and the 14 wounded in the Arizona massacre, especially the Democratic congresswoman for that state, seriously wounded by a gunshot to the head.

It was the deed of an unbalanced person, drunk on the preaching of hatred that reigns in American society, where the fascist Tea Party has imposed its extremism on the Republican Party which, under the aegis of George W. Bush, led the world to where it is now, on the brink of the abyss.

Added to the disaster of wars was the greatest economic crisis in the history of the United States and a government debt that today is equal to 100% of the GDP, together with a monthly deficit totalling more than 80 billion dollars and again more homes being lost as a result of unpaid mortgages. The prices of oil, metals, and food are progressively going up. Lack of confidence in paper currency causes gold purchases to increase and there are

quite a few people who see the price of gold ascending to \$2,000 a Troy ounce. There are some who even think it will reach \$2,500.

Climatic phenomena have worsened, with considerable losses to harvests in the Russian Federation, Europe, China, Australia, North and South America and in other areas, putting in danger the food supplies for more than 80 Third World countries, creating political instability in a growing number of them.

The world is facing so many political, military, energy, food and environmental problems that there is no country wanting the United States to return to extremist positions that would increase the risks of nuclear war.

International condemnation of the crime in Arizona was almost unanimous, a crime that demonstrates an expression of that extremism. No one expected the President of the United States to make an impassioned or confrontational speech, something that wouldn't correspond to his style or with the domestic circumstances and the climate of irrational hatred that is prevailing in the United States.

The victims of the shooting were definitely brave, each with their merit, and in general they were humble citizens; if it hadn't been so, they wouldn't have been there, defending the right of all Americans to medical care and opposing the anti-immigrant laws.

The mother of a 9-year-old girl born on September 11th had courageously stated that the hatred unleashed in the world had to cease. I do not harbour any doubt in the least that the victims were worthy of recognition by the President of the United States, along with the citizens of Tucson, the students at the University and the doctors who, whenever events of this type occur, always unreservedly express the solidarity which human beings carry inside themselves. The severely wounded congresswoman, Gabrielle Giffords, deserves the national and international accolade being given her. Today, the medical team was continuing to give positive information on the state of her condition.

Of course, Obama's speech was lacking the moral condemnation of the policies which inspired such an act.

I was trying to imagine how men such as Franklin Delano Roosevelt would have acted in similar circumstances, not to mention Lincoln, who didn't shrink from giving his famous Gettysburg Address. What other moment is the President of the United States waiting for to express the opinion that I am sure is being shared by the great majority of US people?

It is not a matter of the government of the United States lacking an exceptional personality to lead it. What transforms a president into a historical personage, who has been able to reach that position because

of his merits, does not lie in the person, but in the need for him at a determinate moment in the history of his nation.

Yesterday when he began his speech, he looked tense, and very much dependent on the written pages. He soon recovered his calm, his usual command of the stage, and the precise words to express his ideas. What he didn't say was because he didn't want to say it. For delivery of well-written and just praise for those deserving it, he could be awarded a prize. For a political speech, he left a lot to be desired. •







# GLOBAL CLASS STRUGGLE

## Sodexo human rights violations

On Jan. 19, activist and actor Danny Glover unveiled an extensive report by the TransAfrica Forum on Sodexo's treatment of workers in five nations. TransAfrica—the oldest and largest African-American organization promoting diversity and equality around the world—based its report on months of in-country interviews with workers, activists, and community members in Morocco, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, France, and the U.S.

According to Glover, the report “tells the story of workers who are trapped in poverty by a powerful global company—and then in these cases harassed, threatened and fired when they speak up for their rights.” Its purpose is to “shine a spotlight on the working and living conditions of Sodexo workers around the world, and help those workers access their basic rights to improve their lives and their communities.”

TransAfrica found that Sodexo does not appear to be living up to social commitments it has made. In fact, in country after country, the “business model Sodexo employs keeps workers poor and locks their communities into seemingly endless cycles of poverty.”

In Guinea, Sodexo workers report that all Guinean employees are required to eat at a separate cafeteria apart from Europeans and others at the Simandou mine. In Colombia, some female job applicants have reportedly been required to take pregnancy tests, and the company is reported to have fired workers who sought to join a union. Sodexo workers at the Pueblo Viejo gold mine in the Dominican Republic report making as little as \$224.30 per month, while workers at the Simandou mine report making as little as \$78 per month. Moroccan workers report that Sodexo has created “an atmosphere of fear and intimidation” when workers have sought to form a union.

(For more information, visit <http://cleanupsodexo.org>)

## S.A. unions protest Livni trip

Prominent Israeli politician Tzipi Livni has cancelled a visit to South Africa after protests by the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). While a spokesperson for the opposition leader in the Israeli Knesset claimed the cancellation was due to a domestic labour dispute, COSATU says the real reason was the legal threat to arrest Livni for her alleged actions as a war criminal. During the 2008-2009 attack by Israel against Gaza, Livni denied that there was any humanitarian crisis in the territory, even as hundreds of Palestinians were being killed by Israeli military forces. At the time, she was Israel's deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister.

The COSATU-led Coalition for a Free Palestine (CFP) had announced its support for a call for South African authorities to arrest Livni. She had been scheduled for speaking engagements in Cape

Town and Johannesburg, organised by the South African Jewish Board of Deputies.

For over a year, there has been a bitter dispute between the Israeli government and the Foreign Ministry Workers' Union. The Jewish Board of Deputies has condemned union strikers for obstructing the visit by Livni. The dispute has forced the Russian President to cancel a visit to Israel, and Israeli P.M. Benjamin Netanyahu has used members of the Mossad spy agency to act as strike-breakers.

## Labour central rejects Tunisian government

The three ministers belonging to the Tunisian Central Union UGTT, resigned on Jan. 18 from the



transitional government formed the day before, at the request of their organization.

“We withdrew from the government on the appeal of our union,” said Houssein Dimassi who had been appointed minister of Training and Employment.

The General Union of Tunisian Workers (UGTT), a powerful Tunisian trade union federation which played a major role in the events that caused the downfall of President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, had decided that morning “not to recognize the new government.”

“It does not interest us to be part of a government that does not give sufficient assurances to the Tunisian people when the will is to move towards a real democratic transition,” said Abdeljelil Bedoui, who had been appointed Minister to the Prime Minister. The third minister to resign was Anouar Ben Gueddour (Secretary of State to the Minister of Transport and equipment).

Widespread criticisms were raised against the composition of the new government. Many members of the Democratic Constitutional Rally (RCD) party of ousted President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali continued to occupy all key positions: Interior, Defense, Foreign Affairs, Finance, among others.

## Wage talks to start in Argentina

Wage negotiations between the Union Industrial Argentina (UIA) employer group and the country's trade unions are set to begin soon, in a context of sharply increased inflation. CGT President Hugo Moyano says the wage increase

should be 20% “to be in line with inflation at the supermarket.” The UIA, meanwhile, says it will not accept “floors or ceilings”, indicating that there will likely be a sharp clash between labour and bosses.

Following discussions, Labour Minister Carlos Tomada and the CGT's Moyano agreed in January that trade unions should propose their own wage increase figures. The wage battle is expected to take place in February, with different demands raised by various labour groups. The Argentine Workers' Centre (CTA) is seeking increases of 25%, while the CGR Azul y Blanca, run by Luis Barrionevo, is demanding a 35% raise.

Meanwhile, Argentina's fruit packers have gone on strike following the failure to reach a salary agreement between the Fruit Packers union with the National Ministry of Employment. Employees began a blockade of warehouses and refrigeration facilities on Jan. 17, joining a chorus of dissent in Argentina's fruit industry after growers blockaded roads the previous week in Rio Negro and Neuquen.

The union's secretary general Ruben Lopez said that companies had suspended many workers on the grounds that strike activity generates uncertainty.

“All the delegates have the order to set the blockade, they are already organized and it will be for an indefinite timeframe,” he told the media, saying that some companies have accepted the pay increases requested by the union and are seeking arrangements with their employees.

## Unions may be allowed in Burma

The Burmese government is set to table new legislation that could allow workers to establish trade unions. The proposal has been welcomed by the International Labour Organisation (ILO), which says it is working with the Burmese government to improve workers' rights.

The ILO's representative in Burma, Steve Marshall, says the move by the government “is obviously extremely significant, the situation has arisen that the constitution that was adopted in 2008 has a provision that makes allowance for the right of persons, particularly workers to be represented, which would lead them to the situation of collective bargaining.”

Since the Burmese military's crackdown on the country's trade union movement, many groups have been driven from the country or reduced to underground associations. Suspected trade unionists have been arrested and imprisoned despite the government having ratified the ILO convention on the Freedom of Association.

But international pressure has seen the government adopt a lighter approach. Since November 2009, there have been a series of strikes in Rangoon, with workers protesting and demanding higher wages, with little interference from armed forces.

The latest developments come amid calls from Southeast Asian

neighbours for Western nations to either lift or ease their sanctions against Burma. Moves to permit the establishment of trade unions could vindicate ASEAN's stance that Burma has made significant progress towards democracy, especially since the release of opposition figurehead, Aung San Suu Kyi.

But some remain sceptical that the regime may form a “non-independent” trade union under the control of the government. Marshall says the ILO is adopting a wait and see approach, since it remains unclear what structure will be put into place—a full trade union structure, or a model which restrains the ability of workers to control their unions. The bill is set to be tabled after the country's new parliament holds its first session in late January.

## Wages stagnant, says ILO

The second Global Wage Report from the International Labour Organization (ILO) confirms that global wages have stagnated during the current economic crisis. Released in December, the report says global wage growth (adjusted for inflation) slowed from 2.2% in 2007 to only 0.8% in 2008 and 0.7% in 2009.

While these world averages remained slightly positive, wages actually decreased in many countries. Even workers who remained employed during the crisis experienced flat or falling pay.

Over-reliance on exports and consumer borrowing for economic growth has proven to be unsustainable, says the report, which urges countries to increase

domestic demand based on rising wages and a more equal distribution of income. The ILO emphasizes three policy solutions: inclusive collective bargaining, legislated minimum wages, and social protection programmes.

The report also presents a longer-term analysis of low pay, defined as being below two-thirds of a country's median wage. Since the late 1990s, the incidence of low pay has increased in two-thirds of the countries for which figures are available. However, the ILO found that low pay is much less prevalent in countries with higher levels of union membership.

## Portugal union leader arrested

During a rally Jan. 18 at the Portuguese Prime Minister's residence, activists were provoked and assaulted by the police. Among the arrested was Jose Manuel Marques, vice-president of the Sindicato Nacional dos Trabalhadores da Administracao (STAL, National Union of Public Service Workers). The protests were against austerity measures and wage cuts unilaterally imposed by the government against public service workers.

In a letter of protest, the STAL condemned “the outrage and arrogance of the police forces, who hindered the freedom of expression and demonstration of people merely acting on the defence of the most elementary rights of workers, particularly in this case where they were justly protesting against the unconstitutional plundering of their wages.”

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

## Send me information on the Communist Party of Canada

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

**Central Committee CPC**  
290A Danforth Ave, Toronto, ON, M4K 1N6  
416-469-2446 <[info@cpc-pcc.ca](mailto:info@cpc-pcc.ca)> [www.comunist-party.ca](http://www.comunist-party.ca)

**Parti Communiste du Quebec** (section du Parti communiste du Canada)  
5359 Ave Du Parc, Suite "C"  
Montreal, QC, H2V 4G9  
Email: [pcq@cpc-pcc.ca](mailto:pcq@cpc-pcc.ca)

**B.C. Committee CPC**  
706 Clark Drive, Vancouver, BC, V5L 3J1  
Tel: 604-254-9836 E-mail: [cpbc@telus.net](mailto:cpbc@telus.net)

**Edmonton CPC**  
Box 68112, 70 Bonnie Doon PO  
Edmonton, AB, T6C 4N6  
Tel: 780-465-7893 Fax: 780-463-0209

**Calgary CPC**  
Unit #1, 19 Radcliffe Close SE,  
Calgary, AB, T2A 6B2 Tel: 403-248-6489

**Saskatchewan CPC**  
Email: [mail@communist-party-sk.ca](mailto:mail@communist-party-sk.ca)

**Ottawa CPC**

Tel: 613-232-7108

**Manitoba Committee CPC**  
387 Selkirk Ave., Winnipeg, MB, R2W 2M3  
Tel/fax: 204-586-7824

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# Agent Orange continues to cause suffering

By Stephen Von Sychowski

The Anti-Imperialist Court convened on Dec. 19-20 in Tshwane, South Africa, as part of the 17th World Festival of Youth and Students. Witnesses from across the globe told of the horrors inflicted upon their countries by imperialism.

Among these moving presentations was that of the Vietnamese youth, who told of the terrible consequences of the chemical substance Agent Orange, used between 1967 and 1971 by the US military as part of their war of aggression against the national liberation movement in Vietnam.

Agent Orange, code named for the orange barrels in which it was shipped, was used as a herbicide and defoliant. The chemical was used to remove the cover provided by forests to Vietnamese liberation fighters, and to destroy crops in order to force peasants towards the US-dominated cities. The goal was to deprive the guerilla forces of their base of support and food supplies in the countryside.

The US air force cynically termed this campaign of chemical warfare "Operation Ranch Hand". During this genocidal operation, 6,542 spraying missions occurred, pouring 75 million liters of Agent Orange on South Vietnam. These missions destroyed 10 million hectares of agricultural land. More than 20% of South Vietnam's forest land was sprayed at least once.

This alone would have made the use of Agent Orange a crime against humanity and an act of terrorism, considering the mass, indiscriminate use of dangerous chemicals on civilian populations. But Agent Orange also includes a highly toxic dioxin compound called 2,3,7,8-Tetrachlorodibenzodioxin.

About 4.8 million Vietnamese people were exposed to Agent Orange. More than 400,000 people were killed, injured, or disabled, and over 500,000 children were born with birth defects due to the exposure of their parents. Some 1.5 million refugees were forced into



One of the millions of tragic victims of Agent Orange.

the slums of Saigon during this period. These numbers include neither the additional use of Agent Orange in Laos and Cambodia, nor its effects on US troops.

Survivors, and their descendants, continue to suffer from birth defects and deformities, high rates of cancer and skin

diseases, and other illnesses. Dioxin continues to turn up in the breast milk and blood of South Vietnamese people. Dioxin-contaminated soil continues to menace food and water supplies. The Vietnam Red Cross estimates 3 million Vietnamese people have been affected.

The spraying of forests deeply harmed the ecology of Vietnam. Deforested areas remain difficult, if not impossible, to reforest. Areas subjected to Agent Orange have very low levels of species diversity. Dioxins continue to move through the food web as a result of the ingestion of contaminated plants, animals, and water.

Both the US government and the corporations who produced Agent Orange (Monsanto, Dow Chemical, Diamond Shamrock) deny responsibility for the monstrous effects of the chemical warfare unleashed by US imperialism. A class action lawsuit filed by US veterans resulted in compensation which was pitifully inadequate. Meanwhile, compensation to the Vietnamese

people has been practically nonexistent.

Vietnamese complaints were ignored until 2002, when the US and Vietnam began joint research and discussions around the health and environmental impacts of Agent Orange. In 2004, Vietnamese victims of Agent Orange filed a class action lawsuit, which was dismissed in the US courts. The US government invoked sovereign immunity, which was also declared applicable to the chemical companies contracted to make Agent Orange. Negotiations broke

down in 2005 and joint research was cancelled. An appeal against the dismissal of the class action suit was denied in 2007.

In 2006, George W. Bush promised cooperation with Vietnam on addressing the affects of Agent Orange. But to date only \$9 billion has been provided by the US government, while the cost of cleaning up Agent Orange is estimated at around \$300 million.

In June 2010, a joint panel of U.S. and Vietnamese policymakers,

see AGENT ORANGE, p. 11



## Romanians say communism was better than capitalism

From a commentary first posted on the 21st Century Socialism website, by James Cross, October 2010

According to a recent poll conducted in Romania, a large majority of those who expressed an opinion stated that life was better when the Communist Party was in power than it is now under capitalism. Most people gave a favourable view about communism in principle, with over 60% saying that communism is 'a good idea'. The pollsters noted a significant increase in sympathy with communist ideas since a similar poll was carried out four years ago.

Conducted by the Romanian polling organisation CSOP, the survey found that over 49% of respondents agreed that life was better under the late Communist

leader Nicolae Ceausescu, while only 23% think that life is better today. The remainder gave a neutral or 'don't know' answer.

The reasons given by the participants for their positive evaluation of the communist period were mainly economic, with the availability of jobs cited by 62% and decent living conditions by 26%; the provision of housing for all was referred to by 19%.

The survey was sponsored by the government-funded IICMER (the Institute for Investigating the Crimes of Communism and the Memory of Romanian Exile), in order to help guide the institute in its work to 'educate' the population about the evils of communism. Among the most bitter disappointments for that organisation were the answers given to a question which asked whether the participants or their families had suffered under the communist system.

A mere 7% of respondents said they had suffered under communism, with a further 6% asserting that although they personally had not suffered, a family member had suffered. Again, the reasons given were mainly economic, with most of the small group who had direct or family experience of suffering under Communist Party rule citing the shortages which occurred in the 1980s when Romania implemented an austerity programme in order to repay the country's foreign debt. A small fraction of the minority who had suffered during the communist period said they had lost out by having their property nationalised, and a handful (6% of those who had experience of suffering under

communism) recalled that they, or a family member, had been arrested at some time while the communists were in power.

Putting their best spin on the outcome of the survey, the IICMER noted that pluralities of those polled (41% and 42% respectively) agreed with the statements that the communist regime was criminal or illegitimate. A substantial minority (37% and 31%) disagreed with those propositions and the rest were neutral or gave no opinion...

Before the communists took power in Romania, most people were illiterate and had no access to health care. Few in the countryside, where the majority lived, had sanitation or electricity. Infant mortality rates were among the worst in Europe, and most people died from hunger or disease before reaching the age of 40. Romania had a right wing regime which allied itself with Hitler during World War Two, and as part of that alliance Romania's capitalist administration sent most of the country's Jewish population to the Nazi death camps.

Achieving power following the Soviet victory against Nazi Germany in 1945, the Romanian communists - hitherto an illegal underground group fighting the pro-fascist government and the Nazis - numbered only a few thousand. However, they succeeded in mobilising the enthusiasm of the people to rebuild their war-shattered country. Illiteracy was almost wiped out, health services were massively improved and extended, and - as the participants in the CSOP survey point out - jobs, homes and decent living standards became available for everybody.

Buoyed by these successes, the government led by Nicolae Ceausescu went into debt during the 1970s, buying expensive industrial equipment from the West to increase the country's economic growth rate on the expectation that Western countries would increase their imports from Romania. That strategy failed, and the austerity programme implemented to pay off the national debt gave rise to increasing resentment...

In its analysis of the poll results, IICMER noted that Romanians are far from alone in their generally positive evaluation of 20th Century communism. According to a survey carried out in several Central and East European countries in 2009 by the US-based Pew Research Center, the proportion of people in former socialist nations who take the view that life under capitalism is worse than it was during the period of communist power is as follows: Poland, 35%; Czech Republic, 39%; Slovakia, 42%; Lithuania, 42%; Russia, 45%; Bulgaria, 62%; Ukraine, 62%; Hungary, 72%.

Particularly significant in the results of the 2010 CSOP/IICMER poll in Romania is that, as they acquire more experience of life under the 'market economy' people are becoming more negative about capitalism and positive about communism. In the previous poll in 2006, 53% expressed a favourable opinion about communism; the 2010 survey showed that 61% are favourable towards communism.

The CSOP's survey findings are not altogether surprising in view of what has taken place since capitalism was reintroduced - increased poverty, the rise of unemployment and insecurity. Romania's health system is currently in crisis, and public sector workers have recently had their pay cut by 25%.

Information on the poll: 1133 people aged 15 and over were interviewed between Aug. 27 and Sept. 2, 2010. Interviews were conducted based on a standardized questionnaire, face to face at home. Margin of error: 2.9%. ●

## U.S. anti-war activists slam FBI infiltration

Anti-war and solidarity activists who are being called before a grand jury in Chicago have learned that before the protests against the 2008 Republican National Convention in St. Paul, Minnesota, police infiltrated the Twin Cities Anti-War Committee (AWC). The infiltrator, "Karen Sullivan", joined the AWC in April 2008, and later the Freedom Road Socialist Organization.

Misty Rowan, of the Anti-War Committee, said, "The AWC played an important role in organizing the permitted march on the Republican National Convention on September 1, 2008, and also organized a rally and march on the fourth day of the convention. We can only assume that this First Amendment protected organizing was the reason that this agent, Karen Sullivan, infiltrated the AWC. It is the same kind of infiltration criticized in the October 2010 inspector general report and highlighted in the recent release of documents from the Richmond, Virginia, police, where any sort of assembly is defined as a disturbance and threat."

In the summer of 2009, the agent signed up for a solidarity trip to Palestine. Three members of the delegation were denied entry at the Tel Aviv airport and eventually sent back to the U.S., Sarah Martin, Katrina Plotz and the agent. On the word of this agent, these activists were prevented from witnessing what is paid for with U.S. tax dollars in Israel and the Occupied Territories.

It appears that the investigation of the U.S. Attorney is focused on small donations to the daycare and women's centre projects of the Union of Palestinian Women's Committees, an NGO registered with the Palestinian Authority with local offices across the West Bank and Gaza. The Union is a progressive women's organization that strives to build respect for women's rights. ●

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



CPC-PCC  
**90**

## Unity and militancy: labour struggles of the 1920s

During 2011, the 90th anniversary of the Communist Party of Canada, we will print a series of articles on prominent historical figures and struggles linked with the Party. This issue looks at the Trade Union Educational League, which played a critical role in working class resistance during the 1920s, and remains relevant to this day.

Since its origins, the Communist Party of Canada has grappled with a complex problem: how to strengthen both the militancy and the unity of the trade union movement. In 1918, the organized working class in English-speaking Canada was split between the radical syndicalist One Big Union (OBU) and the reformist-led Trades and Labour Congress (TLC). The OBU, closely linked to the labour upsurge around the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike, considered "industrial unionism" as a form of labour organization superior to the "craft union" approach of the TLC.

The years following 1919 became a period of "disorderly retreat" and bitter disputes for the labour movement. Many prominent OBU leaders joined the Communist Party (known publicly as the Workers' Party until 1924) and supported its stand for wider working class unity. But others with an anarcho-syndicalist outlook rejected this position, reflecting the radical views widely held among sections of the working class in western Canada.

At the 1922 Workers' Party convention, this issue sparked a heated debate, ending with overwhelming endorsement of the

call for broad trade union unity on the basis of industrial unionism and class struggle policies. While this led to antagonisms between Communist and anarcho-syndicalists, the eventual outcome was clear. By the end of the decade, the influence of anarcho-syndicalism had waned, and the OBU became a shadow of its original self.

Meanwhile, the communist trade unionists channelled their energies into building the Trade Union Educational League, an international formation which became active in Canada in April 1922. The TUEL was not a separate federation or union body, but instead carried out agitational and educational activities. The program of action adopted by the Canadian section of the TUEL included 12 key points:

1. Organize the unorganized workers for higher wages, shorter hours.
2. Organize a powerful minority movement within the trade unions.
3. Organize shop committees.
4. United independent labor political action.
5. Canadian trade union autonomy.
6. Affiliation of every functioning trade union to the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada.
7. Affiliation of every local union to the local Trades and Labour Councils.
8. Build a workers' press.
9. Nationalization of industry.
10. Amalgamate the craft unions.
11. International trade union unity.

12. The Abolition of Capitalism.

To overcome the impact of the widespread split in labour, the Communist Party helped to persuade radical workers to support a "back-to-the-unions" movement, countering the "mistaken worship of secession" among Canadian radicals. The party's early organizers were simultaneously the initiators of campaigns to organize the unorganized, and to reunite in one union workers who had become divided in the course of the class struggle.

Workers increasingly sought out the advice and assistance of the Communists. Party leaders like Tim Buck, Annie Buller, Beckie Buhay and Jeanne Corbin went into every mining camp in Nova Scotia, Northern Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia.

The campaign to reunite the radicals with the masses of the workers in the old unions had important results. All over Canada, workers who had been on the sidelines returned to the TLC craft unions, winning support for militant policies. The newspaper published by the Canadian TUEL, *The Left Wing*, received support from local unions in every part of the country. Organizations representing one-third of the trade unionists in Canada endorsed the program of the TUEL.

When the convention of District 26, United Mine Workers of America, met at Truro, Nova Scotia,

see TUEL, page 11

## People's Voice 2011 Calendar: "Working Class Heroes"



The 2011 People's Voice Calendar is now available. This year's theme is "Working Class Heroes", paying tribute to fourteen Canadian labour activists who played important roles in the struggle against the bosses and the capitalist state. The 14-month Calendar (January 2011-February 2012) includes a wide variety of memorable dates for the working class movements, from birthdays of prominent revolutionaries to the anniversaries of watershed struggles for peace, social justice, equality and socialism. The above photo from the Calendar shows demonstrators in Regina's Market Square during the On to Ottawa Trek of 1935.

For your copy, send \$5 plus \$3 to cover postage to People's Voice, 706 Clark Drive, Vancouver, BC, V5L 3J1. The Calendar is also on sale at the Ontario Bureau of People's Voice (290A Danforth Ave., Toronto, M4K 1N6) and our Manitoba Bureau (387 Selkirk Ave., Winnipeg, R2W 2M3). Rates for bulk orders are available on request.

British Columbia readers can pick up the Calendar at People's Co-op Books, 1391 Commercial Drive, Vancouver. •



## MUSIC NOTES

By Wally Brooker

### Steelworker sings for Hamilton

At a time when locked-out Hamilton steelworkers are on the front line of a fight crucial to all Canadian working people, one of their union brothers has recorded a powerful song, set it to an equally strong video and posted it on YouTube, where it's received almost 10,000 views. Remo Cino worked for 10 years at the former Stelco plant until he was laid off in November 2008. Sometime later at the union hall he heard a child read a poem that moved him to write "Everything Comes at a Price." The song touches a lot of bases: the feeling of being laid off, the effect on the local economy, the pride of Hamilton's steelworkers and their betrayal by the Canadian state. Look it up on YouTube and leave a message for Remo while you're at it.

### Lawyer seeks arrests in Jara murder

A Chilean government lawyer is seeking the arrest of four retired army officers for the murder of Victor Jara. The renowned folksinger was executed shortly after the U.S.-backed coup of September 11, 1973 that overthrew the socialist government of Salvador Allende and installed dictator Augusto Pinochet. Chile's Interior Ministry submitted the request to Judge Juan Fuentes Belmar on Dec. 21, naming retired officers Edwin Dimter, Hugo Sanchez, Raul Joffre and ex-prosecutor Ronaldo Melo as defendants. The investigation began in 2008 when army conscript José Paredes Marquez was charged with the killing. He continues to protest his innocence. Victor Jara was detained in a stadium along with 5,000 other Allende supporters. Soon after he was tortured and shot to death. In 2009 his remains were reburied in a massive public funeral.

### Cubans pay homage to John Lennon

On Dec. 8, early risers in Havana were surprised by a rock band on the roof of the Central Museum of Decorative Arts. On the 30th anniversary of John Lennon's murder, local musicians were paying their respects by performing in the manner of the Beatles' final concert on the roof of their London recording studio. The Cubans, who gather once a month to play Beatles music, closed with "Imagine", Lennon's anthem for world peace. Ten years earlier President Fidel Castro and musician Silvio Rodriguez, at a nearby park, unveiled sculptor José Villa's statue of John Lennon, and Ricardo Alarcon, President of the National Assembly, delivered a moving eulogy. Read it here: <http://cubamigo.org/juliancindy/lennon.html>.

### Musicians donate to Arizona migrants

Sound Strike, a musicians' organization that calls for the boycott of Arizona until it repeals its anti-immigrant Bill 1070, donated 40 tons of food and distributed 2,000 toys to immigrant families at an outdoor concert in Phoenix on Dec. 18. Money for the food came from a concert in Los Angeles by rockers Rage Against the Machine and singer-songwriter Conner Oberst. Potatoes, oranges, beans and rice were purchased from Native American co-ops. Funds for the toys came from online donations to Sound Strike. December 18th is International Migrants Day, proclaimed by the United Nations to highlight human rights issues facing migrants throughout the world. For more information visit [www.thesoundstrike.net](http://www.thesoundstrike.net).

### Phil Ochs: There But For Fortune

Phil Ochs, one of the outstanding radical folksingers and songwriters of the 1960s, is a relatively obscure figure today, but a new film about his life and times may change that. "Phil Ochs: There But For Fortune" opened in New York on Jan. 5 and is showing at selected North American theatres. The documentary, directed by Kenneth Bowser, contains rare performance footage plus interviews with Joan Baez, Peter Yarrow, Pete Seeger, and many others. Ochs walked in the footsteps of Woody Guthrie, believing that music should be a force for social justice. In 1976, misunderstood by the counterculture he'd helped to create, depressed by the state of the movement, and suffering from mental illness, Phil Ochs took his own life. His music lives on. For more info: <http://philochsthemovie.com/>.

### Nova Scotia Mass Choir honours Dr. King

Martin Luther King's birthday, a federal holiday in the USA since 1986, is celebrated unofficially by many Canadians. On Jan. 15 in Halifax, the Nova Scotia Mass Choir presented "The Dream Continues," its eighth annual Martin Luther King concert at the Dalhousie University Arts Centre. Guest soloists were African-Canadian jazz singer Jeri Brown and Nova Scotia R&B singer Frank MacKay. Special tribute was paid to the Jamaican Maroons. More than 500 of these descendants of escaped slaves were deported to Canada in 1796, where they were employed to work on the Halifax Citadel and subsequently founded the nearby town of Preston. The 35-member Nova Scotia Mass Choir was founded in 1992. For more info: <http://nsmasschoir.com/>.



# The Tunisian uprising: a great victory of the people

*Excerpts from the Jan. 16 declaration by the Tunisian Patriotic and Democratic Labour Party*

The Patriotic and Democratic Labour Party greets the people of Tunisia for the prodigious work which it carried out by taking part in the general uprising whose first spark burst in Sidi Bou Zid with the martyrdom of young Mohammed Bouazizi, and which led to the fall of the dictator Ben Ali.

This uprising was truly a popular general movement, initiated by the people and carried out by the people. Today, after the escape of the tyrant and the fall of the most extreme elements of his system, the Party makes a point of stressing the following tasks and urgent points:

1. To mobilize all forces to bring to an end the plundering and terror being carried out by the criminal gangs in the service of the most extreme sectors of the Ben Ali regime.

2. To support and widen the "Citizens' Civil Defence Committees" which have been formed in the districts to protect

the citizens and to ensure the safety of people and goods.

3. To mobilize all the means of the State to restore safety, so that the army and police force can return to barracks.

4. To quickly create a national commission of inquiry on the recourse to the shootings with live rounds; to pursue the persons responsible; to replace the prefects, under-prefects.

5. To quickly create a national commission of inquiry on corruption and illegal enrichment, and to give it all the necessary means to pursue those who acted in a manner to expropriate goods the acquired in an illegal way and of restoring all seized goods to their owners.

6. To quickly create a national committee of democratic foundation, to break with the iniquitous system which prevailed from 1955 to 2011, and to found a new system that will guarantee freedom, guarantee transparent elections, and consolidate the progressive gains that the people obtained by virtue of the struggle.

7. To demand that the provisional Government answers the claims of the protest movement of the people and the youth for coordination with the trade-union centre (UGTT) and the living forces of the country, and shuns the diktats of the European Union about the liberalization of the economic exchanges and services.

8. To demand that the provisional government recognizes the Patriotic and Democratic Labour Party immediately, as well as all

other parties and civil organizations.

9. To call upon the provisional Government to cut the bonds between RCD party and the State, and to immediately restore to the public domain the goods which this party seized.

10. To demand that the provisional government offers all necessary facilities to the Union of Students, the trade union of the journalists, the association of the magistrates and the league of human rights so that they provide structure to the citizens, and maintain the destiny of the country in the hands of Tunisians, far from the interference of the foreign hegemonic forces.

11. The Party declares that it will exert, in the connection of the provisional government, a policy of positive critical opposition.

12. The Party affirms that it will continue to consolidate its relationships with all national, democratic and progressive forces within a framework of the struggle against imperialism, Zionism and reaction, for national sovereignty, democracy and progress.

The Party thanks all those in the Arab world and the in whole world who supported the struggle of our people and thus helped it to carry out this great victory.

*(While not a Marxist-Leninist party, the Tunisian Patriotic and Democratic Labour Party has warm relations with the South African Communist Party, and attended the 2nd Conference for Democracy in Africa and the 1st Forum of Left movements in Africa, organized by the SACP.)* ●

## TUEL...

continued from page 10

in June 1922, delegates unanimously endorsed the TUEL program. Scores of local unions of railway workers supported the TUEL, especially the idea of amalgamating their craft unions into one industrial union of railway workers. In Alberta, the return of the militants to the United Mine Workers of America led to the election of a slate of left-wing candidates to the district leadership, and a successful campaign to organize workers at open-shop mines in the province. In Montreal, Communists were elected to the executive of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers Union, the largest needle trades union in the country.

Not surprisingly, the right-wing leaders of the craft unions in the TLC actively obstructed campaigns for amalgamation, Canadian autonomy, and militant policies. One response was the formation in 1927 of the All-Canadian Congress of Labour (ACCL), based mainly among independent Canadian industrial unions. In other cases, secessionist tendencies grew within the Canadian sections of unions affiliated to the American Federation of Labour.

Despite red-baiting and other attacks, left wing labour activists continued to struggle for unity. But the class collaborationist approach of the leaders of the TLC and even the ACCL finally compelled a change of tactics. In 1929, the TUEL was reorganized as the Workers' Unity League, with a mandate to organize the unorganized into powerful industrial unions under rank and file control. The stage was set for a new era in Canadian labour history. ●

*(Continued in our March 1-15 issue.)*

## People's Voice deadlines:

**FEBRUARY 15-28 issue: Thursday, Feb. 3**

**MARCH 1-15 issue: Thursday, Feb. 17**

**Send submissions to PV Editorial Office,  
706 Clark Drive, Vancouver, V5L 3J1,  
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## Norman Bethune Day Dinner

**Celebrate the pioneer of Canada's Medicare system! Door prize: one week all-inclusive trip for two to Cuba.**

**Sat., February 26, 7 pm  
290 Danforth Avenue  
Toronto**

**Tickets \$5. Media sponsor  
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Call 416-460-2446 for  
tickets and information.**



## What's Left

### Surrey, BC

**Honour Dr. Darshan Gill**, Feb. 6, 2-5 pm, Strawberry Hill Library, IndoCanadian Workers' Association and Radio India public meeting to honour secular Punjabi writer Dr. Darshan Gill. For info, call Gurpreet Singh, 778-862-2454.

### Vancouver, BC

**Left Film Night**, "The Cradle Will Rock," Tim Robbins film on 1930s cultural upheavals in New York, Sun., Jan. 30, Centre for Socialist Education, 706 Clark Drive. Admission free, donations welcome, call 604-255-2041 for details. Next Left Film Night will be Sun., Feb. 27.

**Jose Marti Anniversary Celebration**, Sun., Jan. 30, 2-5 pm, Peretz Centre, 6184 Ash St. Featuring the documentary *Sin Embargo*, on how Cubans cope with the U.S. blockade. Entertainment, refreshments, admission by donation, organized by Canadian-Cuban Friendship Association-Vancouver.

**Open Pit Imperialism: Canada at Home and Abroad**, launch of "Imperial Canada" with author Todd Gordon, and forum on Canadian mining companies with Tria Donaldson and Bayron Figueroa (UNRG Canada), Tue., Feb. 1, 7 pm, SFU Harbour Centre 7000, 515 W. Hastings. For info, email [antigoldcorp@gmail.com](mailto:antigoldcorp@gmail.com)

**20th Annual Women's Memorial March**, honour missing and murdered women, Monday, Feb. 14, 12 noon at Carnegie Centre, Main & Hastings. For info on related events during early February, visit <http://womensmemorial-march.wordpress.com> or call Marlene, 604-665-3005.

**Wars, Lies and Wikileaks**, Thur., Feb. 17, 7 pm, public forum with Gail Davidson (Lawyers Against War) and Micheal Vonn (BC Civil Liberties), Room 1800, SFU Harbor Centre (515 W. Hastings), organized by StopWar, Vancouver's anti-war coalition.

**COPE Winter Gala**, Sat., Feb. 26, 7-11 pm, Coalition of Progressive Electors masquerade ball at Museum of Vancouver, 1100 Chestnut St. Hosted by comedian Charles Demers, west coast food,

special musical performance and more. Tickets \$70 (student/youth \$40, low-income tickets available), email [cope@cope.bc.ca](mailto:cope@cope.bc.ca) or 604-255-0400.

### Winnipeg, MB

**Keep Resisters in Canada**, fundraising dinner Feb. 12, 6 pm, with war resister Joshua Key, Ethiopian vegetarian food, 411 Cumberland Ave., tickets \$20, call KRICC, 792-3371.

### Toronto, ON

**Never Again for Anyone**, hear Auschwitz survivor Dr. Hajo Meyer, writer Lee Maracle, and Khaled Mauammar, President of Canadian Arab Federation, Tuesday, Feb. 1, 7-10 pm, Winchevsky Centre, 585 Cranbrooke Ave., \$10 or PWYC. Info: [www.neveragainforanyone.com](http://www.neveragainforanyone.com).

**Why We Need the Canadian Boat to Gaza**, Sat., Feb. 12, 7:30 pm, Bloor Street United, 300 Bloor St. W., speaker Jeff Halper (Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions). Advance tickets \$10 from Beit Zatoun, 612 Markham St., or Toronto Women's Bookstore, 73 Harbord St., call Ruth at 416-588-6356.

**Norman Bethune Day Dinner**, Sat., Feb. 26, 7 pm, 290 Danforth Ave., tickets \$5. Media sponsor People's Voice. Door prize; one-week all-inclusive trip for two to Cuba. Call 416-460-2446 for tickets.

**Global Crisis, Fiscal Restraint and Public-Private Partnerships**, 2011 Clarke Memorial Lecture with John Loxley. 7 pm, Thursday, March 10, Ryerson University, Oakham Lounge, 2nd floor, 63 Gould St. Co-sponsored by Ryerson CUPE Locals 233, 1281, 3904, Ontario Council of Hospital Unions/CUPE. Info: Bryan Evans at 416-979-5000 x4199.

### Montreal, QC

**Whose Security? Countering the National Security Agenda**, Feb. 4-6, Concordia University, People's Commission Network Popular Forum. For details, visit [www.peoplescommission.org](http://www.peoplescommission.org).

**Palestinians And Jews United**, Boycott-Disinvestment-Sanctions picket, every Saturday 1-3 pm, outside Le marcheur at Duluth & St Denis.

## Agent Orange....

continued from page 9

citizens and scientists released a proposal urging \$30 million per year over the next 10 years to clean up dioxin-contaminated sites. To date, the demands of Vietnam, and many others in the international community, have been ignored by the US government.

The use of Agent Orange was a crime against both humanity and the environment. The efforts of US imperialism to use terror, mass murder, economic sabotage, and ecological destruction, did not stop the Vietnamese people from winning their independence. But a third generation of

Vietnamese continue to face the tragic consequences of chemical warfare.

Today, the US continues its violent occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan, which include the use of such substances as depleted uranium. Israel, a close ally of the US, continues to act as an apartheid state, carrying out genocidal policies against the Palestinian people, and using illegal weapons such as white phosphorus. One can only wonder if today's warmongers have learned nothing from the past. And worse, what price will future generations pay for today's crimes of imperialism? ●



# Can we accept a \$172 billion revenue gap?

By Kimball Cariou

For the political left, it sounds like a gift from a distant relative; apparently, the next federal election will be fought over the issue of corporate wealth. Stephen Harper and his chest-thumping Tories are ready to go the wall for their right to keep slashing taxes for the benefit of big capital.

What a golden (excuse the pun) opportunity to point out to working class voters that this will keep making the rich richer, at the expense of the rest of us. Even voters who lean to the right may question the Tory "deficit cutting" mantra, since Harper's gang are inflating the deficit by reducing revenues, and ratcheting up spending on boondoggles like the \$16 billion fighter-jet purchase.

Ironically, Liberal leader Michael Ignatieff has grabbed the headlines, courageously pledging to resist moves for further corporate tax cuts, down to 15% by next year. Ignatieff refrains from mentioning that it was the Chretien/Martin Liberals who started slashing the federal tax rate on corporate profits, which stood at 29% just over a decade ago.

The NDP's Jack Layton does seem to realize that this issue may resonate with Canadian workers, who remain battered and shell-shocked from the global capitalist

crisis. But the NDP has also signalled that they may vote for a Tory budget which includes the next corporate tax cuts. And the Greens, sadly, refuse to sound too critical of big business these days.

That leaves it up to the Communist Party of Canada to ring the alarm. About two dozen Communist candidates will be on the ballot across Canada, campaigning on a platform to restore the former 29% corporate tax rate.

Think what this could mean for the federal treasury. First, here are some figures to help comprehend the scale of the corporate tax rip-off and the blatant transfer of wealth to the rich.

Just eight years ago, net corporate profits in Canada for 2003 reached an all-time record, topping \$102 billion. Over the next three years this figure jumped to \$132 billion, then \$157 billion, and finally \$168 billion in 2006. As Mel Hurtig wrote in *The Truth About Canada*, corporate profits before taxes were 4.7% of GDP in 1992. By 2006, they hit 13.9% of GDP.

Remember, these figures don't include inflated paycheques for CEOs. For example, Robert Gratton, CEO of Power Corp., received \$173.2 million in compensation in

2004, including \$169.4 million in profits from stock options.

However, wages in 1992 were 55.2% of GDP. By 2005, they had fallen to only 50.2%. That 5.2% difference represented a decline of \$71.3 billion in the share of GDP represented by wages in 2005.



And then things got worse. Heading into the economic crisis of September 2008, profits kept skyrocketing, past the \$250 billion mark per year. During the third quarter of 2008 alone, corporations raked in an astounding \$77 billion in pre-tax profits.

This profiteering hit a speed bump in 2009, dipping about one-third thanks to the global capitalist meltdown, to slightly below \$200 billion - almost double the record set in 2003! Since then, profits have ballooned again, hitting \$61.5 billion for the third quarter of 2010. Analysts project that corporate profits may zoom past \$300 billion or more within a year or two.

We have no crystal ball to forecast the future, although we can say with certainty that the cycle of booms and busts is built into the fabric of capitalism. It's also clear that the recent global crisis is far from over, considering the ongoing currency wars and the enormous levels of consumer and government debts.

But even if Canadian corporate profits stabilized at about \$250 billion over the next five years, consider what the Liberal/Tory tax cuts will mean. The 29% rate advocated by the Communist Party would bring in about \$360 billion in total revenue. But the 15% rate set to take effect next year would mean just \$188 billion. That's a gap of

\$172 billion over the lifetime of one majority government - enough to lift millions of Canadians out of poverty, to build homes for everyone, to dramatically upgrade transit systems and cut greenhouse gas emissions, to make post-secondary education and apprenticeship programs free for young Canadians.

There are other ways to calculate the net outcome. Progressive economist Erin Weir notes the Finance Canada estimate that by slashing the federal corporate tax rate from 22% to 15%, the Harper Tories are reducing annual revenues by \$14 billion.

The ruling class argues that cutting corporate taxes is "good for the economy". A new 36-page report released by the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters says "corporate tax cuts create jobs, boost investment and they make Canada more globally competitive."

But tax cuts to profitable businesses will not necessarily increase investment or jobs. In fact, corporations are driven to invest in labour-saving technology in order to cut costs and boost profits. This explains why millions of

Canadian and U.S. workers remain unemployed at a time of world-record profits.

Weir also notes another reason why the tax cuts are ineffective at providing their supposed benefits.

"Much of the revenue forgone by Canadian governments will flow not to enterprises operating in Canada but to foreign governments," says Weir. The U.S. and Japan tax their corporations on a worldwide basis, and U.S.-based businesses account for nearly one-third of all profits subject to Canada's general corporate tax rate. The net effect of cutting federal and provincial corporate taxes in Canada, explains Weir, is that between \$4 billion to \$6 billion annually will shift from Canadian governments to the U.S. treasury, and more to Japan. (For a full explanation, read Weir's commentary on the *Progressive Economics Forum* website.)

Cutting corporate tax rates is good for a handful of wealthy investors, but not for working people. That theme should be driven home on the campaign trail, whenever the election is finally called.

(Kimball Cariou was the Communist candidate in Vancouver Kingsway during the 2006 and 2008 federal elections.) •



## SINKING DEEPER: CANADIANS IN DEBT

While corporate profits recover from the economic crash to climb past the \$250 billion level, most Canadians keep sinking deeper into debt. Here are some figures from *Where Is the Money Now: The State of Canadian Household Debt*, a report commissioned by the Certified General Accountants Association of Canada.

- \* Household debt in Canada reached \$1.41 trillion in December 2009.
- \* If household debt was spread across all Canadians, each individual would hold some \$41,740 in outstanding debt in 2009, 2.5 times greater than in 1989.
- \* While growth rates of mortgages (secured credit) somewhat slowed over 2008-2009, consumer credit (typically not supported by assets) accelerated. The share represented by revolving credit (personal lines of credit and credit cards) within total consumer credit issued by chartered banks grew from 21.1% in 1989 to 77.7% in 2009.
- \* Borrowing through personal lines of credit increased 25-fold within this period of time.
- \* Canada has the highest consumer debt-to-financial assets ratio among 20 OECD countries examined.
- \* In 2010, 38% of Canadians said their debt load had increased, but only 33% said it had decreased.
- \* Equity support of the household sector's ability to incur debt for consumption purposes has eroded. By the end of 2009, owner's equity dropped to 67.8% from a peak of 70.8% at the beginning of 2007.
- \* In 2010, some 37% of those holding mutual funds, stocks and bonds outside of RRSPs, and 31% of respondents holding private pension assets, gauged the value of their assets as decreasing.
- \* More than half (56%) saw their income unchanged or decreasing, while 85% of those whose income did increase said it did so only modestly.
- \* The debt-to-income ratio reached a new record high of 144.4% at the end of 2009.
- \* The debt-to-assets ratio was 19.4% at the end of 2009, up from the 1990-2007 average of 15.2%.
- \* Declining residential assets pushed the mortgage-to-residential assets indicator to 65.4% at the end of 2009, much higher than the 55.0% average between 1990 and 2007.
- \* Almost half of Canadians (43%) are concerned about their financial condition at retirement. 32% of non-retired Canadians commit no resources to any type of savings.
- \* Families with annual household incomes under \$35,000 are much more likely to have increased debt loads.
- \* The composition of household assets has become riskier and less diversified. Stocks and mutual funds accounted for 19.2% of all household assets in 2009, more than double the 1990 level. Holdings of lower risk cash and deposits fell to 12.3% of household assets, down from 18.0% in 1990.
- \* Bankruptcies nearly doubled over the past two decades, from 20.5 per 10,000 adults in 1990 to 39.0 in 2007, and then soared higher during the economic crash. •

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