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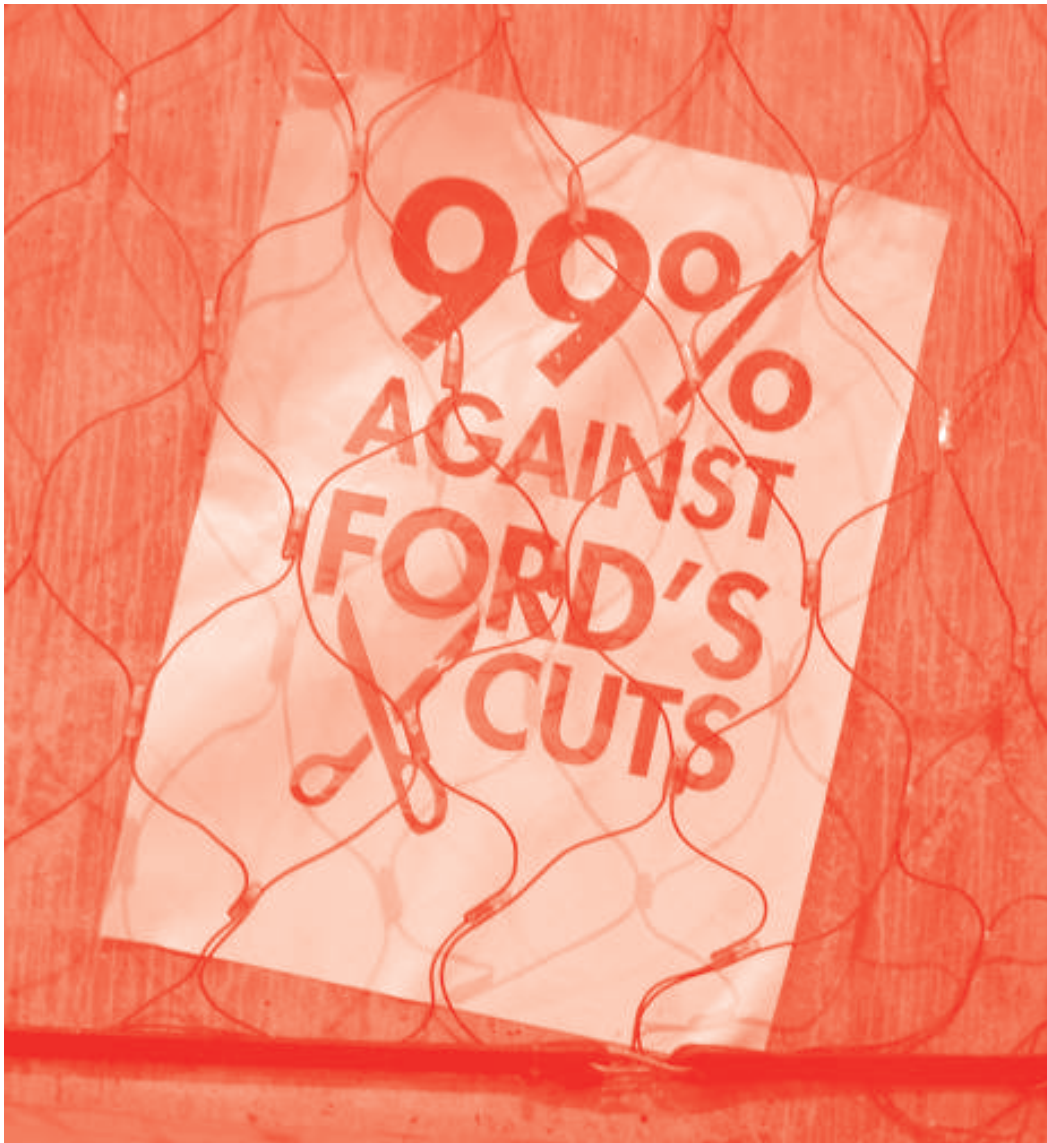
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people's VOICE

**15,000 rally
in London**

See page 11

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Toronto says "NO" to Ford's cuts

- page 2 -

Students mobilize against outrageous tuition: page 7

- * *Feb. 1 rallies across Canada*
- * *Quebec gears up for campus strikes*
- * *Chilean students demand free education*

5 Block Enbridge

Enbridge has a terrible record of oil spills - 804 over a ten-year span. That's just one reason to mobilize against the company's plan to build an 1100-km pipeline from Alberta to Kitimat.

INSIDE

6 Land grab warning

Faced with growing demands to tackle Aboriginal poverty, the Harper Tories are instead moving to privatize the historic land base of First Nations.

10 Why make this film?

Margaret Thatcher presided over the destruction of the British economy and ruined the lives of millions of working people. So why bother to make a film humanising the "Iron Lady"?

Ford administration suffers first big setback

By Liz Rowley

The hard-right administration of Toronto Mayor Rob Ford was dealt a big setback on January 17. After months of protests by community groups and labour, the city's 2012 austerity budget was amended to add \$19 million to rescue three homeless shelters, three child care centres, school nutrition programs, HIV/AIDS programs, city-owned homes for the aged, swimming and wading pools, recreation centres, libraries, and other essential services slated for closure, contracting out, or deep reductions and big new user fees.

Dubbed by some as a war on children's services, Ford's budget attacked everything from housing to transit to health and social services, from the arts and libraries

to public assets like theatres and zoos, affecting almost everyone in this city of 2.7 million. The public rose up in horror, from the trade unions to wealthy arts patrons and supporters of the library system.

Committees were formed, including the "Stop the Cuts Coalition", with its 27 neighbourhood affiliates, the "One Toronto" coalition of arts and cultural communities, and the individuals and organizations which came together to save libraries, swimming pools, school breakfast and nutrition programs, the children's zoo, social housing, and child care centres (Toronto has a waiting list of over 20,000 for subsidized child care spaces). There was wide opposition to cuts to snow clearing, especially in the suburbs and in higher income areas.

A truly mass movement sprung up almost overnight, starting in July after the KPMG audit and proposed cuts. By September the polls showed support evaporating for Ford and for Councillors backing his austerity measures.

A campaign of petitions, demonstrations, meetings, blogs, emails, and phone calls to Councillors identified with the budget started to get results in early December. Some of Ford's close supporters began to distance themselves from the parts of the budget dealing with libraries, child care and transit. The message was clear: vote for cuts and your political career is over.

Ford and most of his Council allies represent areas where services were traditionally poorer and the political representation



Rob Ford (at right) and allies look glum these days (Photo: Ed Bil)

more conservative than in the downtown core of the old City of Toronto. Ford played on the unevenness of services in the new amalgamated city, talking about "the privileged fat cats in the downtown" versus "the hard working taxpayers in the suburbs paying the freight."

But Ford's budget cuts had a big impact on the suburbs, where Ford's image was further eroded by his encounters with the CBC's "Marge Delahunty", by his wife's frequent 911 calls charging domestic assault, and by his sister and her boyfriend, who face charges of attempted murder and breaking into the Mayor's house.

As January 17 neared, a centre-right group of Liberals and some Tories joined with progressive Councillors to put together a "lifeboat" of important services. The vote to allow the "lifeboat" motion was the first signal that the Ford juggernaut could be stopped. When the main motion to use \$15 million from the 2011 revenue surplus of \$154 million passed by a vote of 23 to 21, it was greeted by a roar of support inside the packed City Hall chambers. It was a roar heard across the city.

In response, the Mayor declared he'd won the budget fight, while Del Grande called it a defeat, and said he was resigning. In fact, it was a partial but very significant victory for the coalitions and the people, and for democracy. Partial, because of the deep cuts and job and service losses that were passed. Significant, because this fight showed many people they could fight and win, despite attacks on opponents, starting with Margaret Atwood, who called on her twitter following to stop the attack on libraries. Doug Ford's remarks about Atwood exposed him as boorish and threatening, not the cultivated image of hard-working boys from the burbs taking on the downtown elites.

The huge turn-outs to time-limited public hearings on the

budget were slugged as "communists" and "full-time agitators", dismissed as "the same 500 people" by the Mayor and Budget Chief.

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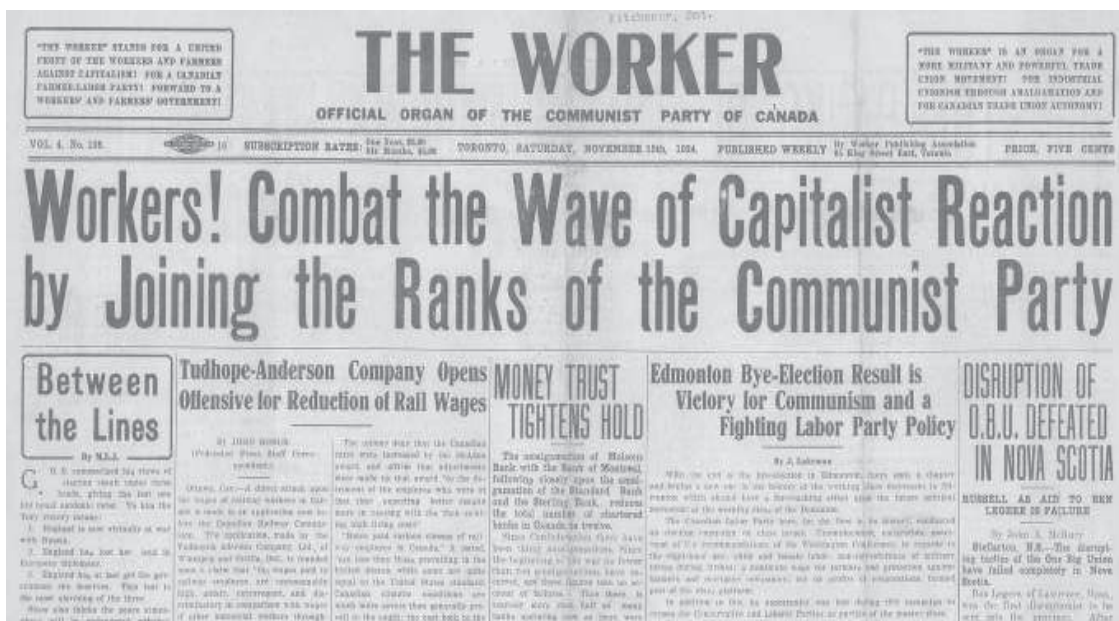
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The huge turn-outs to time-limited public hearings on the

see TORONTO, p. 11

2012: 90th anniversary of the working class press



March 15, 2012, will be the 90th anniversary of the first issue of The Worker, which launched the revolutionary working class press in Canada. During this year, we will print front pages from The Worker, the Canadian and Pacific Tribunes, and other newspapers which are the predecessors of People's Voice. The issue above, dated November 15, 1924, included front page reports on a civic by-election campaign by socialists in Edmonton, banking amalgamations in Canada, corporate attacks on railway workers, a radical strike by Belgian coal miners, and a successful fundraising dance organized by Vancouver supporters of The Worker. •

PV launches call for May Day greetings

This year, the working class press in Canada celebrates our 90th anniversary! From the first issue of The Worker (March 15, 1922), through successor publications such as the Canadian and Pacific Tribunes, and People's Voice since 1993, we have challenged the capitalist media monopolies, overcoming many difficulties to publish news from a working class perspective.

Much has changed over these nine decades, especially the rapidly developing platforms for all information media. Back in 1922, the columns of The Worker were packed with important content and analysis, but lacked visual and graphic appeal. Since then, radical-minded working groups have used a dazzling variety of bulletins, magazines, posters, radio programs, cable TV shows to get our message to the public. Today, electronic media platforms are widely used, often reaching a much larger audience. This includes People's Voice, which is actually read by more people online (www.peoplesvoice.ca, peoplesvoice.ca Facebook page) than in print!

But some things have not

changed. In particular, working class media such as ours remain closely linked with our readers. Since we have no interest in corporate backing, we rely exclusively on the support of our subscribers and progressive movements to survive. This includes our annual Fund Drive (which starts on March 1), street and store sales, and of course the income generated by our annual May Day greeting ads.

We want to thank the dozens of organizations which placed May Day greetings last year, and we hope that they can place a similar ad for 2012.

As our readers know, the May First issue of People's Voice has a large print run, for circulation at May Day events, picket lines, rallies, and other activities right across Canada. From coast to coast to coast, working people are fighting back against the corporate assault and the vicious agenda of the Harper Tories. Greeting ads from a wide range of trade unions and people's movements help lift the spirits of those engaged in critical working class struggles at this difficult moment in Canada's history.

This collective resistance is part of a wider fightback around the world, a growing rejection of imperialism and war, and the demand for a future based on peace, equality, social justice, and environmental sustainability. People's Voice goes further, openly working to achieve a socialist Canada in a world free from capitalist exploitation and oppression.

In the coming year, we will continue to support labour struggles large and small, in every corner of Canada. We will keep exposing the criminal actions of the Harper Tories and their right-wing allies in the boardrooms and legislatures. We will celebrate the gains and victories of working people and their allies, and call for the tactics and strategies needed to build a broad, united, Canada-wide movement for fundamental social change.

The campaign for our 2012 May Day greetings will help us to achieve these lofty ambitions. We look forward to receiving greetings from your organizations, and we extend our warmest solidarity again this year!

People's Voice Editorial Bureau •

MAY DAY 2012 GREETING ADS

To mark May Day 2012, People's Voice will print greetings from a wide range of labour and people's organizations in our May 1-15 issue, which will be distributed at events across Canada. The deadline for camera-ready ads will be April 20; if PV is preparing the layout, the deadline is April 18. Please check with us about the format if your ad is being sent electronically.

Ad rates (based on 5 column page):

One column-inch.....	\$15
One column x 2 inches.....	\$25
One column x 3 inches.....	\$35
Two columns x 2 inches.....	\$45
Two columns x 3 inches.....	\$60
Two columns x 4 inches.....	\$75
Two columns x 5 inches.....	\$90
Three columns x 4 inches.....	\$110
Two columns x 7 inches.....	\$130
Three columns x 7 inches.....	\$180

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

How B.C.'s "family friendly" premier attacks education and child care

Extracts from the Main Political Resolution adopted by the 39th BC Provincial Convention of the Communist Party of Canada, held Dec. 3-4 in Vancouver

B.C. Liberal Premier Christy Clark claims to head a "family friendly" government. But a look at the realities of public education and child care tell a different story.

In 1931 the BC Tory government under pressure from the "business community" funded a study on how to improve the provinces finances during the depression. The "Kidd Report" launched an attack on education that was so odious and vicious that even the Tories could not implement it. Nevertheless it was admired by the BC "business community" and formed the bedrock of decreased funding, cutbacks and teacher bashing that has guided the political agenda of the BC capitalist class and their successive Social Credit and Liberal governments ever since.

Except for a brief respite, far from perfect, during NDP terms, the battle lines in BC have been

drawn between a business culture with little respect for education and far less for educators and the needs and aspirations of working people.

Business sees education as a preparation for their labour requirements, the conditioning of working class youth to whatever the present mode of production or service demands.

Teachers and parents see education as a possible liberator, a social institution expanding quality of life and a quantity for social change.

In a period of rapid technological advancement and a general acute crisis in capitalism, why should billions be spent on educating people who are basically surplus labour? Why not design an elitist system that can "cherry-pick" the brightest for high tech needs, steal immigrants trained at someone else's expense, introduce private "for profit" schools for the elite and downgrade the public system as a holding apparatus for those destined for cheap manual labour and "McJobs". This whole scenario is an attempt to roll back the clock on the accomplishments of educators, primarily teachers,

and the evolution of education as an institution of the people.

The skirmishes and engagements fought by BC teachers are significant and courageous, reflected in the public support they have had and their victories in the Supreme Court. The people, including organized labour with teachers at the front, progressive school board members and the social justice movement, are locked in a struggle over education fought out over funding, or more precisely the lack of funding. The control of public money is the hangman's noose tightening around the school boards and their ability to protect and deliver the wages and programs the educational system needs.

The massive transfer of money from the working population into the corporate sector, accompanied by a huge reduction in corporate taxes to keep it there, and income tax breaks for the wealthy, is paralleled by equally massive cutbacks in funding for all social programs with health care and education at the top of the list.

In five of ten provinces, teachers are paid from \$14,000 to \$18,000 more than B.C. teachers who once were the best paid in Canada. In the

current bargaining environment, the zero percent attitude and policy of the government is pushing the BC Teachers Federation towards collision in order to enforce education standards and recapture stolen ground.

In 2010-11 there were 3,627 classes with over 30 students, in violation of the School Act. In the same period there were 12,000 classes with four or more special needs students, when the Act limits the number to three. Who is enforcing regulations and the rule of law in BC?

From 2001 to 2009 there were 176 school closures, more than any other period in B.C. history. The government claim that there are 73 new schools is false. Forty-seven were replacement schools, 24 were from the capital plans of the previous NDP government and only four were proposed and initiated by the Liberals. There is no net gain, only loss.

ESL student numbers are up; the numbers of teachers needed to service them are down. Special needs students are up; teachers are down. This is the pattern. The education system needs more funding. K-12 funding from 1991 to the present, as a share of the provincial budget, has dropped approximately 11%. If the corporate tax rate was restored to 2000 levels, there would be almost \$2 billion to spend on social programs and education. Clearly education funding is tied to general tax reform.

Senior levels of government in Canada have signed both international and inter-governmental agreements committing to provide accessible, affordable child care services. Yet according to the OECD, of the 14 developed countries studied, Canada is the worst provider of child care services (except in Quebec). Child care fees in Canada are the highest in the world, and in B.C. the second highest family

expense after housing.

In 2008 there were 567,000 children under the age of twelve living in B.C., and 358,000 of these children's mothers were in the paid workforce. Yet in 2011 there are only 97,000 licensed child care spaces. The average provincial cost of infant care is \$900 per month and over \$1000 in the Lower Mainland. According to UNICEF and the OECD, the worst policy approach for child care is where public funds are delivered to private providers through vouchers or subsidies for which there is little accountability. The largest proportion of the B.C. child care budget goes to such subsidies, directly into the profits of private providers who are increasingly invading the market.

The strongest child care systems are those that are publicly funded, owned and operated. "For profit" child care is the poorest quality, most costly and most inefficient. In B.C. the child care budget is only \$300 million, of which \$80 million is from federal transfers. (The new roof for BC Place cost \$563 million.) The Minor Capital Grants that provided up to \$5000 for emergency and building maintenance were cut to \$2000 in 2009, and then abolished entirely. The Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC proposes a "Community Plan for a Public System of Integrated Early Care and Learning" that addresses not only the needs of children and working parents, but improved wages and conditions for child care specialists. The plan is a publicly funded, and operated proposal that would establish child care for as little as \$10 per day, and free for families with an income of less than \$40,000 per year.

The government's priorities are clear, and Christy Clark's family rhetoric is a cruel sham. For the Communist Party of BC, this will be a major issue during the May 2013 provincial election. ●

VSB censures lying trustees

PV Vancouver Bureau

In a rare development, two right-wing school trustees who cooperated with homophobic groups during last November's civic election were held to account at the Jan. 16 meeting of the Vancouver School Board.

Vision Vancouver trustees supported a two-part motion by COPE trustee Alan Wong, to reaffirm the Board's standing anti-homophobia policy, and to censure NPA trustees Ken Denike and Sophia Woo for misrepresenting the Board's policies.

This was the Board's first meeting since the discovery of YouTube videos showing Denike and Woo speaking to groups which strongly oppose measures to protect gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans, and questioning youth (and school employees) from the impact of bigotry. The two NPAers told their audiences that the VSB has no special policy on LGBTQ issues, but that there was a "threat" along these lines posed by queer activists like Vision Vancouver's Ryan Clayton and COPE trustee Jane Bouey. In fact, the Board's groundbreaking LGBTQ policy was adopted in 2004, and drafted largely by Bouey, who is a frequent target of right-wing attacks.

Denike and Woo have given contradictory explanations for their claims on the videos. But they were clearly trying to ride a wave of fear spread last year in neighbouring Burnaby around that school district's new anti-homophobia policy. The so-called "Parents Voice" group of bigots failed to elect any trustees in Burnaby.

However, Denike was re-elected in Vancouver - not surprising since he is a long-term trustee. Woo was also elected, despite her lack of

any record around public education issues, but Bouey was defeated. It appears the NPA candidates succeeded in part by mobilizing among fundamentalist groups which want to give parents the "right" to remove their children from any classroom in which LGBT issues are discussed.

Normally witnessed by a handful of representatives from partner groups, this meeting was packed. Among the defenders of the Board's current policy were dozens of parents, students, teachers, and community activists. Many braved a deafening barrage of vicious insults from about 20 opponents as they rose to speak to the issue, despite efforts by VSB chair Patti Bacchus to encourage a respectful discussion.

Clayton was one of the most powerful speakers, calling on Denike and Woo to apologize to people impacted by their actions - including the conservative Christians to whom they lied about the VSB's policies. A secondary student won wild applause when she urged the NPA trustees to resign. Former NPA trustee Eleanor Gregory informed the crowd that early in the 2005-08 term, she had urged Denike to help make sure that the anti-homophobia policy was

not ditched by a newly-elected NPA majority. (Gregory later broke ranks with the NPA over several issues.)

Opponents of the Board made a series of bizarre claims, stating that sex education is a tactic to raise government revenues from the sale of condoms, or that those who object to anti-homophobia policies will be imprisoned.

These forces are led by the spokesperson for a group called "Culture Guard", Kari Simpson, who is connected with anti-choice, anti-Jewish and even fascist elements. Simpson even accuses the "Out in Schools" program, which has done effective anti-homophobia education for many years, of "inviting kids to porn parties."

All of this could be dismissed as the ravings of a handful, since trustees and parent groups have been deluged with messages demanding to protect the anti-homophobia policy, but virtually none asking for its removal.

But Simpson and her backers are pushing the demand for "parent rights" to remove children from any classroom discussion of LGBT relationships or sexuality. Cloaked in rhetoric about "free speech" and "protecting cultural values," this tactic aims to eliminate the secular and science-based content of public education, and to smash the unions of teachers and other school employees.

The Jan. 16 motion adopted by COPE's Alan Wong and the Vision majority on the VSB is a powerful statement on defending equality in Vancouver schools. On a wider scale, this episode points to struggles across Canada, as the far-right forces which helped elect the Harper Tories flex their muscles. Unity among working people and their allies can defeat attacks by noisy bigots, but this will take vigilance and hard work. ●



COPE Trustee Alan Wong

NIAGARA NEWS BULLETIN

People's Voice Niagara Bureau

* The Niagara Health System mysteriously announced that six **top managers are no longer working for the NHS** because of unspecified restructuring, despite the provincially appointed supervisor explaining he is for transparency. The supervisor was appointed after complaints about cutting local services to move them over an hour away to a P3 (public-private-partnership) hospital, over 30 patients dying from hospital-acquired infections, and patients being asked to call 911 from within the hospital for care.

* The Ontario Ministry of Health is into its fifth year of not answering for **why a for-profit company failed to build a nearly 100 long-term care bed facility** in Welland despite granting all approvals, contributing to one of the longest waiting lists in the region.

* CAW Local 523 steelworkers at Lakeside Steel in Welland are **still waiting to learn the terms of a proposed buy-out**, buyer unknown because of a "confidentiality agreement", after the union agreed to concessions earlier last year.

* 110 meat processing workers of UFCW Local 175 were **laid off at the end of a shift**, after the new owner decided to keep the business and machines but not the employees who had made the company successful. The press release announcing the sale to the family-owned chicken-processor said the company is committed to staying in Ontario but said nothing about the layoffs, which one worker told reporters was a "total shock" and caused tears on the last shift. The sale was approved by a producers' organization, Chicken Farmers of Ontario, who said they expect the buyer to honour "the relationships and contractual obligations" with growers, but were silent about the workers.

EDITORIALS

2012: a critical bargaining year

"Labour unrest" will mark this year, according to the Conference Board of Canada's annual Industrial Relations Outlook report. In the public sector, hundreds of thousands of workers are in bargaining, or will be soon. As a faithful tool of the ruling class, the Board argues that "governments must explain their case to the media and public" and that Canadians are allegedly "fed up with paying public servants \$19,000,000,000 more a year than they earn themselves for performing the same jobs."

Right-wing and even NDP governments hardly need such lies to slam workers in both the public and private sectors. Time after time in recent years, greedy corporate bosses have used their wealth and power to hammer wages, pensions and working conditions; Vale Inco, U.S. Steel, and now Caterpillar are just a few examples. Once rare, the lockout has become the favourite bargaining tool of big capital.

Union density in the private sector has been pushed down to about 16% in Canada. But the public sector remains 70% unionized, and the ruling class aims to crack this bastion of resistance to their agenda. This explains the barrage of corporate media lies about the supposed "gravy train" for workers who provide a wide range of vital public services to Canadians. The impending lockout of some 30,000 employees by Toronto mayor Rob Ford will be the next step in this all-out assault, but more attacks are coming. Another major confrontation will be the struggle between the B.C. Liberal government and the militant and well-organized B.C. Teachers' Federation. Over 22,000 Alberta health care workers are on the hit list, which gets longer by the day.

As the saying goes, workers must hang together, or we will be hanged separately. Without united labour resistance, 2012 may become a year of historic defeats. We urge the leadership of the CLC, and the Quebec and provincial federations, to act now to build unity against the bosses' offensive.

Confusion from the Right

These are complex and turbulent times, a period in which movements which take consistent stands in defense of working people are often relatively weak. Ultra-right forces posing as "progressive" sometimes take advantage to penetrate and mislead the resistance against corporate domination.

One example in Canada is the badly misnamed "Radical Press" website, which presents a mix of left analyses with a deadly dose of hate propaganda. Under the rubric of "defending free speech," this site posts the viciously anti-Semitic forgery *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, the fascist rantings of Eustance Mullins, and similar gutter trash. Not surprisingly, the Radical Press gives coverage to the hate campaigns led by Kari Simpson and "Culture Guard" (see page 3).

In the United States, despair at the failure of the Obama administration to work for truly progressive change has opened the door for libertarian Ron Paul to attract support from some opponents of the corporate agenda. But we must not be fooled into believing that Paul's criticism of U.S. foreign wars translates into a progressive agenda. Much as Adolf Hitler gained support by attacking unpopular policies of the ruling class in Weimar Germany, Ron Paul seeks to channel working class anger into the divisive and reactionary politics of immigrant bashing, homophobia, and narrow nationalism.

The Ron Pauls and "Radical Presses" of the world do not offer any future beyond blind hatred. What we need instead is to expand our patient efforts to build broad unity around the immediate and long-term needs of working people: jobs, democracy, social equality, global peace, protection of the environment.

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LETTERS

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706 Clark Drive, Vancouver, BC, V5L 3J1 or
pvoice@telus.net

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SPEAKING FRANKLY

Solidarity can block the Enbridge Northern Gateway pipeline!

The Joint Review Panel hearings into the Enbridge Northern Gateway (ENG) pipeline have become a historic clash between two different visions for the future of Canada. On the one hand, the transnational energy monopolies and their right-wing political backers are determined to use any means available to win approval for this project, which would make Canada even more dependent on the export of raw materials. On the other hand, a vast coalition has emerged, bringing together Aboriginal peoples, environmentalists, working people, and even sections of the business community who understand the grave environmental, economic and social dangers.

As the vast majority of submissions to the hearings have proven, the ENG project does not meet the criteria of being "required" and "in the public interest." Rather, it is intended to generate huge new profits for the oil and gas monopolies.

The Communist Party of Canada stands in full solidarity with the growing resistance to the ENG plan. The sleazy attempt by the Harper Tories to smear this broad opposition as "foreign radicals" and "billionaire socialists" has backfired. Rejection of the project is becoming even stronger. The decision by Gitksan chiefs to reverse a previous claim of support for Enbridge reflects the nearly universal view among Aboriginal peoples that the project is a disaster. The overwhelming majority of submissions to the hearings condemn the project, as do most British Columbia residents in opinion surveys.

Stephen Harper hopes to ram the ENG project through by completely ignoring the views of First Nations, the public and environmental experts. His government regularly acts in such a dictatorial fashion, wielding its

majority in Parliament to impose the corporate agenda. Ultimately, blocking this pipeline will require united, massive, and militant mobilizations.

The Enbridge project is a direct attack on the national rights of Aboriginal peoples along the pipeline corridor, many of whom have never ceded inherent indigenous title to their traditional lands and waters. By building the pipeline over the nearly unanimous objections of these peoples, the Harper Tories and the energy monopolies would render meaningless any future attempts to reach nation-to-nation agreements based on justice and equality.

Many opponents have warned of the strong potential for catastrophic environmental damage. This pipeline would be constructed across 1177 kilometres, crossing some 1,000 rivers, streams and bodies of water, bringing crude oil to load onto supertankers in the narrow Douglas Channel, one of the most environmentally fragile areas of the west coast. As Enbridge's record of 804 leaks over the past decade proves, the question is not "whether" leaks will occur, but the frequency and scale of such disasters.

Ever since the post-war Liberal government adopted the so-called "Abbott Plan", vast resources within the borders of the Canadian state have been increasingly controlled by transnational corporations, effectively denying the peoples of Canada any genuine sovereignty over our economic future. In this case, the project would fuel the greed-driven extraction of the sands, a process which has grave health consequences for the people of Alberta, and which contributes heavily to the dangerous escalation of global warming.

For decades, the Communist

Party has opposed the policy of exporting unprocessed raw materials, which strengthens U.S. imperialism and its Canadian cronies, but fails to create jobs. The Enbridge project is another nail in the coffin of Canada's declining domestic industrial and secondary manufacturing base.

For all these reasons, the Communist Party of Canada condemns the Enbridge Northern Gateway project. Instead, we call for a People's Energy Plan, based on several key principles, including: the need for a sustainable, conservation-based economy rather than expanded exports of crude oil and other raw materials; full respect for the inherent rights of First Nations over their traditional territories and resources; public ownership of the energy industry, as the material basis to rebuild Canada's industrial and manufacturing sector and to create jobs.

We urge the labour and democratic movements to build united solidarity with the Aboriginal peoples and environmentalists, both to kill this dangerous project, and to discuss a genuine people's alternative plan for the economic development of this country, based on people's needs, not corporate greed!

(Central Executive Committee, Communist Party of Canada, Jan. 23, 2012) •

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The “fracking” danger in British Columbia

BC's shale gas production is the natural gas equivalent of Alberta's tar sands oil. The BC government has kept it under the radar by being very reluctant to discuss or deal with the massive drain on water and energy this “fracking” extraction process requires.

The “hydraulic fracturing” or “fracking” process was first used in Texas. It is a combination of extremely deep vertical drilling, horizontal drilling and the introduction of massive amounts of high pressure water-sand-chemical mixture to fracture the limestone shale and allow the gases to escape.

In 1998 the NDP government created the “Oil and Gas Commission” (OGC) to oversee the development of natural gas and oil

Excerpt from the Policy Resolution adopted by the 39th B.C. Convention of the Communist Party of Canada, Dec. 3-4, 2011. Since then, the B.C. government has launched an online registry for oil and natural gas producers to disclose fracking fluid components 30 days after completion of a job. But Joe Foy, campaign director for the Vancouver-based Wilderness Committee, raises wider concerns: “People have a right to know the chemicals being pumped into the ground. But ... does the province of British Columbia really want to go down this road?”

exploration in BC. The OGC was given extraordinary authority over a wide range of permits from logging and road building approvals to the issuance of temporary water withdrawal certificates. There was no consultation required with the

public or First Nations. It was “one stop shopping” and water permits were issued sometimes in one day or even hours after application. To stimulate and speed up natural gas production the Liberal government in 2003 created the BC Oil and Gas Development Strategy which included incentives and the investment of public funds for development of road infrastructure, royalty reductions to subsidize deep drilling, regulatory streamlining and oil and gas sector development initiatives. It is impossible to calculate how much these gifts to the oil and gas industry cost or how much absolutely free surface and groundwater was given under the temporary one year permits.

The creation of the OGC was a reduction of oversight and a transfer of authority from government bodies who required consultation

and environmental studies. The massive extraction of natural gas is touted as a clean fuel but the “fracking” method with its massive use of water and energy is just as environmentally dirty as the tar sands. Presently most of the natural gas is piped into Alberta for the energy demands of the tar sands. The continent's most harmful extraction of natural gas is being developed to support the continent's most harmful extraction of oil. There are already approved licenses to establish Liquid Natural Gas facilities so that it can be shipped by tankers to Asian markets with much higher profits.

The spin-off problems of “fracking” are potentially very dangerous. BC has no water strategy and whole areas of the province have not been studied or evaluated. The massive use of groundwater and surface water, its contamination and disposal, the unknown chemicals added to it, the release of methane gasses at the well-head and power demands that are enormous will shape BC's environment in the years to come.

Power demand alone will require the Peace River Dam go ahead and perhaps one or two more. If these dams are not built the power will

have to be produced using fossil fuels. This puts the whole “self sufficiency” strategy of the Liberal government in another light. The massive demand for power by the gas industry will be a major factor in the size of “sufficiency” that will be developed and paid for by the households.

The “Clean Energy” posture of the Liberals is just an opaque guise for dirty energy that could cause the most serious damage to environment, contaminate water tables and completely ignore the rights of First Nations and the BC population. There is also the very real danger of stimulating earthquake activity or tremors that could put thousands in danger.

The excellent report released in November by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives has over fifty pages of data. It contains over eighteen recommendations for control and management of natural gas resources, but it does not call for nationalization and public control, which is a must for the Communist Party's 2013 election program. In the short term we will monitor the OGC and involve ourselves in environmental or social justice activities around the “fracking” issue. ●



Fracking has become controversial across North America. Seen here are protesters in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia.

Many reasons to reject Northern Gateway

By David Suzuki, Jan. 10, 2012

The battle lines are drawn, and Northern B.C.'s pristine wilderness is the latest front. With hearings underway into the proposed \$5.5-billion, dual 1,172-kilometre Enbridge Northern Gateway pipeline project to transport bitumen from the Alberta tar sands to Kitimat and imported condensate to dilute it from the coast back to Alberta, the fossil fuel industry and its supporters have stepped up the rhetoric. Environmentalists and people in towns, rural areas, and First Nations communities in B.C. have lined up in opposition.

It's not just about potential damage from an oil spill along the pipeline route or from a supertanker plying the precarious fiords and waterways along our northern coast - as critical as those concerns are. The larger issues are about our continued reliance on polluting fossil fuels and the economic impact of rapidly exploiting and selling our resources and resource industries.

It's about Canada's national interest. With lax royalty structures and massive subsidies to the fossil fuel industry, not to mention foreign ownership of tar sands operations and lobbying by foreign companies, Canadians are not enjoying the real benefits of our oil industry. In fact, increasing reliance on the tar sands is hurting other sectors of the economy, manufacturing in particular.

Thanks to the government's support for the fossil fuel industry, ours is a petro dollar that rises and falls with the price of oil. The high

price of oil has increased our dollar's value, and that has hurt the more labour-intensive manufacturing sector, which relies on exports. Not only have hundreds of thousands of manufacturing jobs been lost over the past few years, Canada has also been missing out on opportunities to join the boom in production of renewable-energy technology.

And when we build infrastructure such as pipelines to support the fossil fuel industry, we increase the incentive to use fossil fuels for a longer time and decrease the incentives to invest in cleaner energy.

Industry adherents have come up with many arguments supporting the Northern Gateway project. Some have more holes than an oilfield.

Take the jobs argument. Even Enbridge admits that most would be in short-term construction work. Only about 35 to 40 long-term jobs would be created at the Kitimat marine terminal, with some additional jobs in pipeline maintenance. It hardly seems worth risking tens of thousands of jobs in tourism and the fishing industry, among others, for a few short-term and even fewer long-term positions.

Most economic benefits from increased tar sands production would go to the companies and their shareholders, including firms from the U.S., Korea, and China. In fact, state-owned PetroChina, which already operates in the tar sands, has just bought 100 percent of the MacKay River project.

The “ethical oil” argument is so absurd as to be hardly worth mentioning, but it's one the

government has latched onto. Oil can't be ethical or unethical. People, and by extension the companies they own and operate or the governments they represent, can behave in ethical or unethical ways, but a product can't.

The Northern Gateway project, and much of the recent and pending tar sands expansion, will help companies owned by the government of China dig up the bitumen and send it there for refining and use. The ethical oil folks admit that China is a police state, so why do they support selling them our industry and resources? Canadian tar sands companies also do business in the countries tagged by the ethical oil folks as being unethical - often in partnership with state-owned companies.

The anti-American conspiracy theories are even more absurd. Saying that opposition to the Northern Gateway is a plot by U.S. funding agencies to protect America's access to Canadian oil is just idiotic in light of the fact that many of the same groups and funders also oppose the Keystone XL pipeline project that would carry oil from the tar sands to Texas. It's odd to see such anti-Americanism coming from conservatives who apparently support Communist China!

The only real argument for Northern Gateway is that it will increase profits for the oil industry, and hand over more of our resources and the associated profits and jobs to China. The arguments against it are so numerous we've barely touched them here.

(Written with contributions from David Suzuki Foundation Editorial and Communications Specialist Ian Hanington.) ●

other voices...

THE ECONOMIC

DIVIDE

Rising awareness of class divisions

From CommonDreams.org

The Pew Research Center has released a report that suggests about 66% of U.S. citizens believe there is a very strong conflict between the rich and the poor today - a steep increase since 2009. Many suggest that this shift is due to recent grassroots organizing such as Occupy Wall Street, which has drawn attention to economic inequality in the United States.

Conducted in December 2011, the Pew survey of 2,048 adults finds that 66% believe there are “very strong” or “strong” conflicts between the rich and the poor - an increase of 19 percent since 2009.

Not only have perceptions of class conflict grown more prevalent; so, too, has the belief that these disputes are intense. According to the new survey, 30% of Americans say there are “very strong conflicts” between poor people and rich people. That is double the proportion that offered a similar view in July 2009 and the largest share expressing this opinion since the question was first asked in 1987.

In the public's evaluations of divisions within U.S. society, conflicts between rich and poor now rank ahead of tensions between immigrants and the native born; between blacks and whites; and between young and old. Back in 2009, more survey respondents said there were strong conflicts between immigrants and the native born than said the same about the rich and the poor.

“Income inequality is no longer just for economists,” said Richard Morin, a senior editor at Pew Social & Demographic Trends, which conducted the latest survey. “It has moved off the business pages into the front page.”

The perception of class conflict surged the most among white people, middle-income earners and independent voters. But it also increased substantially among Republicans, to 55% of those polled, up from 38% in 2009. While the Republican party has railed against the concept of class divisions, some presidential candidate hopefuls have jumped on this shift in public attitudes, such as Newt Gingrich's truthful (but certainly hypocritical) accusation that Mitt Romney is a “ruthless corporate raider.”

The survey attributed the change, in part, to “underlying shifts in the distribution of wealth in American society.” The U.S. Census Bureau says that the share of wealth held by the top 10 percent of the population increased to 56% in 2009, from 49% in 2005, a startling shift in just four years.

However, the report also notes that while 46% of respondents agreed that most rich people “are wealthy mainly because they know the right people or were born into wealthy families,” another 43% say wealthy people became rich “mainly because of their own hard work, ambition or education.” ●

ATTAWAPISKAT *Block the Tory anti-Aboriginal agenda!*

Statement by the Central Executive Committee, Communist Party of Canada

The news of shocking living standards in Aboriginal communities such as Attawapiskat, where deteriorating housing conditions have forced members of that northern Ontario community to survive in tents for many months, reveals yet again the genocidal impact of Canadian racism and colonialism. It has always been Canada's dirty secret that Aboriginal peoples face abysmal housing, contaminated drinking water, high unemployment and incarceration rates, and poor educational standards both on and off-reserve. Ever since Canada was colonized by the European powers, poverty has been imposed on the occupied Aboriginal peoples. This policy is no accident; it is the inevitable outcome of the seizure of traditional territories and resources by the imperialist powers, and the ensuing capitalist domination of North America.

In recent decades, Canadian politicians have consistently refused to make it a priority to improve Aboriginal living standards. Small steps towards allowing First Nations to address their urgent needs are invariably followed by refusals to live up to treaties and campaign promises. The scrapping of the Kelowna Accord by the Harper Tories was just one cynical example. The lands and waters of Aboriginal peoples remain a source of vast wealth for transnational corporations, while the people themselves suffer Third World levels of poverty.

The treaties signed by First Nations with Britain were presented as "guarantees" of the status of these nations. The Canadian Constitution gives formal recognition to the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis as Aboriginal peoples, and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples - signed by the Harper government after years of foot-dragging - backed this recognition with a degree of international legal force.

But this status is not matched by true self-determination over traditional territories. Instead, the main direction of the Canadian ruling class has been to assimilate Aboriginal peoples, to pretend that "everyone is equal" in Canada today. This process inevitably leads to the permanent exclusion



Deplorable housing on Attawapiskat First Nation

of Aboriginal peoples from real equality, by denying their inherent national rights within the framework of the capitalist Canadian state.

The assimilationist agenda is clearly seen by the Harper Tory government's announcement that Aboriginal lands will be transformed from the collective property of First Nations into private property for sale on the capitalist market. Essentially, the Tory plan is to eliminate the concept of Aboriginal title, a Constitutional communal right deeply linked to indigenous culture, thus removing an important barrier to unchecked corporate exploitation of large areas of Canada.

Given the track record of this government, such as its destruction of the Canadian Wheat Board over the objections of prairie farmers, legislative measures will follow, disregarding the views of Aboriginal peoples, or even court decisions which are unfavourable to the Tory agenda.

In fact, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal opponents of the land privatization plan will face accusations that they are "terrorists" or "anti-Canadian." The moves taken by PM Harper after he assumed office in 2006 to spy upon any Aboriginal opposition to his policies is a chilling reminder that his government will stop at nothing to smear and undermine critics, and even to criminalize their legal activities.

Behind the impending attempt to scrap the historic collective ownership of traditional Aboriginal territories is the hand of the transnational resource monopolies. As seen in the drive to build a pipeline to bring tar sands oil to the west coast via the Northern Gateway pipeline, these corporate forces will spend

millions to buy off so-called "Aboriginal spokespersons" who allegedly support plans for such projects. The opponents of the pipeline and other resource projects are already being accused of being "unpatriotic" - a charge which is ludicrous, coming from a party which is in the pocket of U.S. energy giants and an eager lapdog for Yankee imperialism on the world stage.

The sale and break-up of Aboriginal territories will enrich a wealthy handful, at the expense of the vast majority of those who live

on reserves and unceded indigenous territories. Any hope of receiving sufficient compensation for economic development on their territories to substantially improve living standards will be lost in a mad scramble to profit from unchecked privatisation. We can expect a repeat - on a larger scale - of the shameful theft of Métis lands in Manitoba and Saskatchewan during the 1800s, carried out on the basis of unscrupulous tactics such as the issuance of "scrip".

The Attawapiskat scandal also extends to the racist tactic of "oversight" by "capable managers" appointed by the Harper Tories, for an enormous fee. The outrageous argument that Aboriginal peoples are incapable of managing their own finances is certainly refuted by the reality that the Harper government plans to waste nearly \$500 billion on military purchases over the next 20 years.

It is not the Aboriginal peoples who drove millions of Canadians into poverty and unemployment, or who sold out Canada's industry and sovereignty for a quick buck. That was the act of our own ruling

class, which built its fortunes through the seizure of Aboriginal lands and the exploitation of immigrant labour.

The Communist Party of Canada condemns the anti-Aboriginal policies of the Harper Tories, including the plan to eliminate Aboriginal title and other inherent national rights. The historic injustices imposed on Aboriginal peoples in Canada must be redressed immediately and substantively, starting with decent housing, clean water, jobs and education, not alienation of their territories. We demand a just solution to the national question, including a new constitution based on the equal and voluntary partnership of the Aboriginal peoples, Quebec and English-speaking Canada, guaranteeing the full protection of inherent Aboriginal national rights and the right to genuine self-determination, the right to consent over any change in their Constitutional status, and the right to accelerated economic, social and national development. This is the real lesson of Attawapiskat. ●

Métis land case goes to Supreme Court of Canada

An historic court case is examining a 140-year dispute between the federal government and Manitoba's Métis, who believe promises made to Louis Riel were never fulfilled. The case goes back to 1869-70, when John A. Macdonald's Conservative government promised land for 7,000 Métis children from the Red River Settlement, which was led by Riel.

The land deal was part of the Manitoba Act of 1870, which was the agreement that ended the Red River Rebellion and paved the way for Manitoba to enter into Confederation.

"The argument is that Ottawa failed altogether to fulfill the constitutional obligations to the Métis it assumed in 1870 when Canada and the Métis negotiated the entry of Manitoba into Confederation," states the Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF).

The Métis are not seeking damages, but are instead asking the Supreme Court to "declare that

Canada failed to fulfill its constitutional obligation to the Métis and their children." Such a declaration would likely lead to land-claim negotiations.

"This case represents the unfinished business of Confederation. The Métis' strong sense of community shaped the west. Now is the time to tell the Métis story," David Chartrand, president of the MMF, said in a statement.

Tom Berger, the aboriginal rights lawyer who will represent the MMF, said the case represents an opportunity to correct a historic wrong.

"It's important for us to get right with our history," Berger told the Canadian Press. "We have to remember our history and we have to remember that the Métis didn't go away. They're still here."

The Métis, who first launched their lawsuit 30 years ago, argue that Macdonald's government assumed responsibility to appropriate 1.4 million acres of farmland, and then distribute it to

the 7,000 children living at the settlement. That distribution was delayed for more than a decade and about 1,000 of the children never received any land. In many cases the land that was eventually handed out was chosen by lottery, and was often far from their traditional family land along the Red or Assiniboine Rivers.

Meantime, non-Métis settlers were lured by the promise of free land for homesteaders, and the Métis were marginalized. As many as half the Métis population actually left Manitoba as a result, the MMF suggests.

"A lot of our people went into hiding," Chartrand said. "Some of them, if they were white enough and spoke French, they said they were French-Canadian so they could protect their children."

According to a Métis legal team which spent two years doing archival research, statements by Macdonald and his Quebec lieutenant George-Etienne Cartier prove their claim is legitimate.

On May 2, 1870, Macdonald told the House of Commons that the grant was "for purposes of settlement by their children." Two days later, he reiterated that "No land would be reserved for the benefit of white speculators, the land being only given for the actual purpose of settlement."

A year after that, Cartier said "Until the children came of age the government were the guardians of the land, and no speculators would be suffered to get hold of it."

That sentiment was echoed by the government of Alexander Mackenzie, who succeeded Mackenzie.

The Supreme Court of Canada agreed to hear the case after the MMF lost its bid in provincial court, as well as a subsequent attempt in the Manitoba Court of Appeal. ●

George Gordon First Nation files legal action

A \$10 billion lawsuit has been filed by the George Gordon First Nation in Saskatchewan. The suit alleges that the federal and provincial governments improperly denied it access to billions of dollars worth of potash and oil and gas lands during the George Gordon Treaty Land Entitlement Settlement Agreement process. The agreement was signed by all three parties on Aug. 11, 2008.

"The general tenor of the lawsuit is that George Gordon First Nation, like many First Nations in Saskatchewan, are still owed land by Canada and Saskatchewan and before disposing of valuable oil and gas or potash lands to third parties," said Jeffrey Rath, an Alberta lawyer, who is representing the First Nation. "There's an obligation on the governments to find out from the First Nations whether they are interested in acquiring those lands first, which they did not do."

Part of the Treaty Four group, George Gordon First Nation is located near Punnichy, 110 km. north of Regina. It has an on-reserve population of 1,000, and about 2,000 more members living off-reserve.



Louis Riel and associates in Red River Settlement (1870), sketch by C. W. Jefferys.

Student protests planned on 50 campuses

Special to PV

Confronting skyrocketing tuition fees and rising student debt, the Canadian Federation of Students will hold a cross-Canada day of action for accessible education on February 1st. Actions are expected on over 50 campuses from Vancouver Island to Newfoundland, including mass rallies in Ottawa, Toronto and other cities.

"The Education is a Right campaign is the expression of students' collective vision for a well-funded, high-quality, public post-secondary education system that builds a fair, and equitable society" says Roxanne Duboise, CFS Chairperson.

The campaign follows "12 days for public education" in December which saw Ontario students deliver the provincial government 30,000 "gifts" in the form of petitions.

The CFS will highlight attacks on education across the country, such as:

* **Nova Scotia**, where the NDP government just announced that tuition fees will increase three

percent per year for the next three years, while operating grants to universities will be cut by three percent for 2012-13, meaning students will be paying more and getting less;

* **Quebec**, where mobilizations against the Charest Liberals will be taking place at the same time as hundreds of thousands of students vote on a mass strike for accessible education (see below);

* **Ontario** - the province with the highest fees in the country at \$6,640 average undergraduate tuition - where hundreds of thousands of students in need of aid are being left out of the new McGuinty Liberal tuition grants;

* **Manitoba**, where the average student will accumulate \$19,000 of debt to complete their post-secondary education and the Selinger NDP government is increasing tuition;

* **British Columbia**, where students pay more in tuition than corporations pay in taxes, but the Clark Liberal government charges the prime interest rate plus 2.5% on student loans, adding an extra

30.2% of principal to be repaid on the average student loan, over the standard ten-year period.

"The fight for public education in Canada is part of a global effort to maintain education as a basic right for all," Duboise says. "Around the world, governments are tabling 'austerity' budgets containing massive cuts to post-secondary education and other public services."

In Canada, according to the CFS, tuition fees for university students will hit record levels this year in most provinces. During 2011 undergraduate tuition fees increased by 4.3% to an average of \$5,366. This is a shocking 509 percent above inflation over the last two and-a-half decades. At the same time official youth unemployment is fluctuating between 14.5 and 18 percent, while minimum wages across the country are well below the poverty line.

A joint statement by the Communist Party and the YCL expressed full support of the CFS slogan "education is a right" and for the student actions. The statement calls for all students to step up their struggles against tuition increases and reactionary governments, especially the Harper Conservatives.

"All young people are facing a corporate steamroller in the form of tuition fees," Drew Garvie, a student

activist and Ontario organizer of the Young Communist League, told People's Voice. "Corporations want an educated workforce, but they aren't willing to pay for it through progressive taxation. And this is not just an issue for the students. Access to education is a broad class issue hitting hard at working people, unemployed youth, Aboriginal and racialized communities, and women."

The Young Communist League will be mobilizing for the demonstrations and promoting the Charter of Youth Rights campaign to unite progressive youth behind fighting demands, Garvie said. The YCL just concluded a successful student conference in Montreal with about thirty campus activists and friends, stressing that mass struggle and cooperation between the students and other movements, especially labour, is the only way forward.

"Despite the economic crisis, a militant, united and coordinated struggle across the country by students and their allies can win" said a YCL statement issued at the end of the conference. The event also looked at the need to link the struggles of Quebec students and those in English-speaking Canada, and discussed the fundamental problems presented by the Canadian constitution in regards to post-secondary education, and

the sovereignty and self-determination of nations. Participants considered ideas like the Post-Secondary Education Act which would extend the principles of the Canada Health Act to education.

"We fully support this proposal, with the caveat that Quebec and the Aboriginal nations must have control over their own education," said Johan Boyden, leader of the YCL. "More generally, we need a fundamental transformation of the education system, a sharp break with the current 'corporate greed model' of increasing two-tier elitism, P3 privatization, for-profit and military research, while millions of working class youth are left out in the cold.

"If capitalist Norway, Venezuela, and even poor socialist Cuba can afford free tuition then so can Canada," Boyden said. "If the Harper government can waste nearly \$500 billion on the Canada First Defence strategy, then this clearly a question of political priorities. The opinion polls all show majority support to freeze and reduce tuition and strong support for total abolition of fees."

Boyden added that students must "escalate and expand the movement with large and visible actions - working to create a broad, powerful and militant unity that cannot be ignored." ●

Quebec students gear up for anti-tuition strikes

PV Montreal Bureau

Québec students are campaigning against the Charest Liberal government's 75% tuition fee hikes. Successful actions have been building across the province, and a major student strike on the national-level is expected this March, shutting down campuses in all big cities and regions of Québec.

Strike votes will be take place in early February. Full-time student tuition in Québec is increasing by over \$1600, in addition to extra fees charged on campus.

Since September students have been holding a series of escalating actions, building pressure against the government. Some campuses saw students staging "paper storms" after paying tuition, as thousands of bills were thrown from campus balconies like confetti. Students also built a brick wall overnight in front of the minister of education's office door, highlighting blocked access to education.

The most significant protest was a demonstration of over 30,000 in the streets of Montreal. Even some campuses that have been shy of militant mobilization joined in. McGill students returned to occupy the president's office and were violently forced out by riot police.

The demo was the first united student march since 2005 when Québec students rallied with the labour movement for several weeks, shutting down high schools, colleges and universities, as well as the port of Montreal, in the largest education mobilization in Canadian history. That protest halted large fee increases until now, although it also created controversy, when one block of student unions broke unity to negotiate a compromise deal

without consulting the broader movement.

In Québec, student unions hold campus-wide general assemblies several times a year to decide important strategic and policy questions. Student unions are affiliated into three major groups - the left-wing Association pour une solidarité syndicale étudiante (ASSÉ), and the Fédération étudiante universitaire du Québec (FEUQ) and Fédération étudiante collégiale du Québec (FECQ). There is also a much looser organized TASQ and a large number of unaffiliated or independent student unions.

"Students are angry and optimistic," Marianne Breton Fontaine, leader of the *Ligue de la jeunesse communiste du Québec*, told *People's Voice*. Breton Fontaine pointed to a November all-student union meeting which agreed on a basis of unity around accessible education, and also a new coalition uniting ASSÉ with seven other student unions.

"Already some campuses have voted yes, but the FEUQ appears to be working on its own strategy, electing the nationalist Parti Québécois," Breton Fontaine said.

"In the electoral struggle it is not the PQ but Quebec solidaire that is closest to the demands of the students, but at any rate this question will mainly be decided on the streets," she said, pointing to the "Red Hand" coalition (labour, housing and other social activists, as well as many students) which is calling for a political strike in defence of public services, free health care and education, and progressive taxation. "Connecting as many people as possible, linking students' demands with broader social-economic issues - like the austerity budget and economic crisis - this is the way forward," she concluded. ●

Student protests shake Chile

The past year and a half has seen significant student resistance in the streets in Britain and Ireland, across Europe and the US, as well as North Africa and the Middle East. But one of the most significant struggles over education is in Chile, against the right-wing government of billionaire president Sebastian Pinera.

Most basic and secondary schools, and most universities in Chile have been privatised. Even public universities charge large fees. The state dedicates less than 5% of Chile's GDP to education, leaving students and families to pay 75% of education costs.

Not surprisingly, debts affect 70% of all university students, and most from poor families drop out. Monthly fees range from \$240 to \$840 USD; the average monthly salary in Chile is a little over \$1,000.

Protests started in July 2011, when miners shut down state-owned Codelco copper mines to protest privatization and demand higher pay and benefits in light of record global copper prices. The miners walked out on the 40th anniversary of the Salvador Allende government's nationalization of Chile's mining sector, joined by 7,000 students and teachers.

"We believe that the key to a successful student movement is [...] to interweave social networks with the people, the workers, with social organizations, the trade unions, and with the youth who did not make it into the University

- who were left kicking stones," said student leader Camila Vallejo, who is also a member of the Central Committee of the Young Communists of Chile.

In August, a political strike was launched on the national level by labour, calling to replace the Pinochet-era constitution with a



Chilean student leader Camila Vallejo

new charter guaranteeing free quality education. Repeated mobilizations saw 82 unions walk out. Santiago ground to a halt with 100,000 in the streets.

"The truth is I do not know the difference between the political and social, when social organisations realise that the current institutional framework cannot resolve the big issues of our country, such as the subject of education," Communist Party president and MP Guillermo Teilliers said.

A few days later, 600,000 marchers turned out in a country of about 15 million.

Into the fall and winter, students held negotiations with the government, as well as hunger strikes, occupations, disruptions of the Senate, and many more peaceful demonstrations, often facing police water cannons, tear gas, beatings and hundreds of arrests. Neo-fascists also burnt the

offices of the Communist Party of Chile. A government official tweeted about Vallejo: "Kill the bitch and the pack falls apart."

The demonstrations have taken place on a backdrop of indigenous land reclamations, environmental protests against damming of Patagonian rivers, and protests by gay and lesbian activists, earthquake victims, and the homeless and the poor against high gas prices. "This is no movement that comes of spontaneity," Vallejo told Chilean newspaper *Voz*. "It's been developing over many years based on historical demands of

the Chilean student movement."

"Not since the days of Zapatistas' Subcomandante Marcos has Latin America been so charmed by a rebel leader," UK newspaper *The Guardian* has written. Vallejo is currently Vice-president after another leftist (united with right-wingers) defeated her in the student federation's presidential vote. In January it was announced she was releasing a book of interviews and may be the Communist Party's candidate in Chile's Presidential elections.

"We do not want to improve the actual system, we want a profound change - to stop seeing education as a consumer good, to see education as a right where the state provides a guarantee," Vallejo says. Student actions are now building in Argentina and Colombia. ●



GLOBAL CLASS STRUGGLE

Cold-blooded murder in Colombia

In the latest murder of a trade unionist in Colombia, Mauricio Redondo, 36, and his wife, Janeth Ordonez Carlosama, were shot on Jan. 17 in their home in the southern department of Putumayo.

Redondo was a provincial leader of ICEM Colombia affiliate Union Sindical Obrera (USO) and both he and his wife were activists in a community group that advocated for better working conditions, environmental stewardship, and labour and human rights in the booming oil and natural gas fields of the Putumayo basin. Four days before the killings, Redondo was an active speaker in talks to open public protests over these issues. According to initial reports, two gunmen wearing work uniforms of the local oil contracting company EEEP (Energy Company of Lower Putumayo) fired multiple gunshots into the couple, who are survived by five young children.

Redondo was employed by Medellin-based P.E.I. Energy, an upstream oil and gas drilling company. He was a leader of the 220-member USO committee in Orito, in which 40% are employees of Ecopetrol and 60% employed by contract companies of the state-held energy company.

The deaths of the couple came just days after three other USO Orito leaders - Manuel Coronado, José Socimo Erazo and Julio Vargas - were threatened by calls made to their mobile phones. It also came after a bomb threat was directed at the USO regional office in Orito. At least 29 trade union leaders assassinated in the country during 2011.

Recall gathers 1,000,000 names

Critics of Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker have submitted more than a million signatures, nearly twice as many as the 540,200 legally required, on recall petitions against him to force a new election. State officials are studying the petitions for flaws and duplicated names. But the huge number of signatures puts any serious legal challenge out of reach.

A Republican who took office a year ago, Walker set off a firestorm by curtailing collective bargaining rights and wiping out thousands of public sector jobs. Months of huge rallies organized by the labour movement and its allies were held in the state capital of Madison, with repercussions across the U.S. At the height of the protests, Democratic politicians fled the state to block a vote on the legislation.

Walker will likely face a new election by early summer. Only two U.S. governors have ever been removed through recall. Walker told the media that he "looks forward to talking to the people of Wisconsin" and rejects any move to drop his anti-working class policies.

Ryan Lawler, a board member for United Wisconsin, the group that led the two-month signature-collection effort, said the numbers were evidence of the emotions

involved.

"Scott Walker and his supporters tried to demean and marginalize recall circulators, but in Wisconsin winter, an army of more than 30,000 Wisconsin-born-and-bred recall volunteers took to street corners, malls, places of worship, dinner tables and sidewalks to take their state back," he said.

Petitions were also submitted on Jan. 17 to recall the lieutenant governor, Rebecca Kleefisch, and four Republican state senators,



including Scott Fitzgerald, the majority leader who helped pass Walker's collective bargaining cuts.

Gov't targets Nigeria unions

Unions in Nigeria called off a nationwide strike in mid-January after the government said it would reinstate part of a fuel subsidy abandoned at the beginning of the year.

But evidence in a court case against labour unions suggests authorities are trying to silence trade union activists, say observers, including Human Rights Watch. Union leader Osmond Ugwu and member Raphael Elobuikwe were arrested last October and charged with attempted murder. Both men were seized after fights broke out between security forces and union leaders at a union meeting, which Human Rights Watch said was peaceful.

"A review of the prosecution's evidence reveals an apparent bid by the police and prosecution to silence union activists," according to Corinne Dufka, senior West Africa researcher at Human Rights Watch.

The men were arrested following disputes over plans to raise the country's minimum wage. Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and nearly three dozen Nigerian civil organizations have signed a statement condemning the government's action.

Protests over salaries in Costa Rica

Public employees upset over the Costa Rican government's decision to raise salaries by only 5,000 colons (\$10) this year say they will continue protests begun in mid-January.

On Jan. 19, some 200 members of Costa Rica's Educational Workers Union demonstrated in

front of Casa Presidencial, in southeastern San José's Zapote district, over the raise proposal, which is the equivalent of 33 cents per day. Workers are asking for a wage hike equivalent to 4.16 percent of their salaries, based on 2012 inflation rates calculated by the Central Bank.

In November, a government decree reduced unions' power to negotiate public workers' salaries by granting the Budget Authority, a government agency, discretionary power to make unilateral salary decisions. Union members have responded by planning protests to demand better raises and more negotiating power.

"We're working on an action plan, (and) everything is set for a strike (on Jan. 25) in front of the Labor Ministry at 2 p.m.," Rerum Novarum Workers Confederation President Rodrigo Aguilar said at the Jan. 19 rally. "We want to have a massive and united response so that the government will respect unions and sit down to negotiate."

Protests mark Egypt anniversary

Some 50 political movements, groups and parties launched a week of mass protests and marches starting Jan. 20 to commemorate, not celebrate, the anniversary of the Jan. 25, 2011 uprising. The "Week of Anger and Mourning" started with marches on "The Friday of the Dream of the Martyr," and another marking the first session of the newly-elected People's Assembly on Jan. 23.

"We are not going down [to Tahrir Square] to celebrate, but only to continue our unfinished revolution," a statement signed by the groups said. One of their demands is for the ruling military council to hand over power to a civilian authority.

The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces plan a series of celebrations to mark the anniversary of the popular revolt that ousted former president Hosni Mubarak.

"We won't celebrate when the blood of the martyrs [was wasted] without proper retribution; 14,000 prisoners are in military jails; the symbols of the old regime still rule Egypt; emergency law is still in place; social justice that has not been accomplished... We won't celebrate because they [the military council] are liars," the statement said.

On Jan. 20, marches began from the homes of martyrs, converging at Tahrir Square. On Jan. 23, three marches dubbed "Retribution", "Social Justice" (planned by the Union of Independent Workers) and "No to Military Trials" were to start from Abdel Moneim Riyad Square, Qasr Al-Aini, and the High Court of Justice, and meet at the parliament building.

Besides condemning the absence of justice for the martyrs, they are also objecting to media distortion of the image of the revolutionaries, the yet un-purged judiciary, and numerous arbitrary arrests of protesters on vague charges of conspiracy and incitement of violence.

Swazi unions keep fighting

Swaziland's major labour federations, the Swaziland National Association of Teachers (SNAT), Swaziland Federation of Trade Unions (SFTU) and the Swaziland Federation of Labour (SFL), have written to Prime Minister Barnabas Sibusiso Dlamini demanding that unless he withdraws Circular No. 1 of 2010, they will engage in a rolling strike action. The circular gives massive perks to politicians hand-picked by King Mswati III, while working people face pay cuts, staggering unemployment (over 70%), and one of the highest rates of HIV infections in the world.

The latest letter reads: "It is more than 12 months since we called for the withdrawal of Circular No. 1. ... All that we have had to live with are promises that it is being reviewed. In the meantime, it continues to be a drain that the country can ill-afford at this stage of its fiscal challenges worsened by the uncertainty when it comes to payment of civil servants salaries month to month".

Trade union activities are repressed in Swaziland. Repeated arbitrary arrests, intimidation and beatings are used to silence activists.

Back in 1973, King Sobhuza II issued a decree banning all political activities. This legislation is still in force today. Even earlier, the Public Order Act of 1963 gave security forces the power to break up any "political" meeting. This law was targeted at political parties, but now it is used against trade unions.

Following the IMF's advice, the government recently announced it would cut 7,000 jobs in the public sector. But this plan has not yet been carried out, since the

government fears angry opposition. Protest marches of around 1500 people were held April 12-14 last year, against wage cuts in the education sector. Many trade union participants were intimidated and beaten during or after these actions.

During the Global Week of Action on Swaziland, from Sept. 1 to 6, 2011, demonstrators were beaten, and supporters from South Africa and Zimbabwe were arrested and deported. In October, the police even banned a prayer vigil prior to a day of protest, on the pretext that a permit was needed.

Dictators go better with Coke

Coca-Cola has been accused of propping up one of Africa's most notorious dictators. The multibillion dollar beverage company owns a concentrate-manufacturing plant in Swaziland, ruled by Africa's last absolute monarch, Mswati III.

Mary Pais Da Silva, co-ordinator of the Swaziland Democracy Campaign, has called for Coca-Cola to pull out of the country immediately.

"Coca-Cola must know they're doing business with the wrong people," she said. "At the end of the day it doesn't benefit the economy in any way. Their profits don't help the average Swazi, while the king is getting richer by the day."

Coca-Cola says that Mswati III does not receive any profits or dividends from its Swazi operation, its biggest in Africa. But some activists estimate that Coca-Cola contributes as much as 40% of the country's GDP. The company admits it cannot account for how the money it pays in taxes is used by the Swazi government.

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

Send me information on the Communist Party of Canada



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

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Intelligence officers condemn war drive

A group of current and former U.S. intelligence agents have spoken out against the insanity of U.S. foreign policy. In a Jan. 4 statement, Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity urged President Obama to avoid a disastrous war in Iran.

As professionals with collectively hundreds of years of experience in intelligence, foreign policy, and counter-terrorism, we are concerned about the gross misrepresentation of facts being bruited about to persuade you to start another war.

We have watched the militarists represent one Muslim country after another as major threats to U.S. security. In the past, they supported attacks on Sudan, Somalia, Yemen, Iraq, Pakistan, Libya and Afghanistan, as well as Israel's attacks on Syria and Lebanon - nine Muslim countries - and Gaza.

This time, they are using a new IAEA report to assert categorically that Iran is building a nuclear weapon that allegedly poses a major threat to the U.S. Your intelligence and military advisors can certainly clarify what the report really says. As you know, the IAEA makes regular inspection visits to Iran's nuclear facilities and has TV cameras monitoring those facilities around the clock. While there is reason to question some of Iran's

actions, the situation is not as clear-cut as some allege.

Mohamed ElBaradei, a Nobel Peace Prize recipient and former IAEA director-general, said recently, "I don't believe Iran is a clear and present danger. All I see is the hype about the threat posed by Iran."

He is not alone: All 16 U.S. intelligence agencies concluded "with high confidence" in a 2007 National Intelligence Estimate that Iran had halted its nuclear-weapons program as of 2003.

We are seeing a replay of the "Iraq WMD threat." As Philip Zelikow, Executive Secretary of the 9/11 Commission said, "The 'real threat' from Iraq was not a threat to the United States. The unstated threat was the threat against Israel."

Your military and intelligence experts can also provide information on unpublicized efforts to derail Iran's nuclear program and on the futility of attempting to eliminate that program - which is dispersed and mostly underground - through aerial bombing. Defense Secretary Panetta and other experts have stated that an air attack would only delay any weapons program for a year or two at most.

Former Mossad head Meir Dagan said that an air force strike against Iran's nuclear installations would be "a stupid thing," a view endorsed in principle by two other past Mossad chiefs, Danny Yatom and Ephraim Halevy. Dagan added

that "Any strike against [the civilian program] is an illegal act according to international law."

Dagan pointed out another reality: bombing Iran would lead it to retaliate against Israel through Hezbollah, which has tens of thousands of Grad-type rockets and hundreds of Scuds and other long-range missiles, and through Hamas.

We are already spending as much as the rest of the world combined on National Security and \$100 billion per year on a Long War in Afghanistan. The Israel lobby has been beating the drums for us to attack Iran for years, led by people with confused loyalties like Joe Lieberman, who once made the claim that it is unpatriotic for Americans not to support Israel.

Another Long War is not in America's or Israel's interests, whatever Israel's apologists claim. Those are the same people who claim that Ahmadinejad said he would "wipe Israel off the map." Persian specialists have pointed out that the original statement in Persian actually said that Israel would collapse: "This occupation regime over Jerusalem must vanish from the arena of time."

What we have is a situation where Israel's actions, for example in sending 300,000 settlers into the West Bank and 200,000 settlers into East Jerusalem, are compromising U.S. security by putting us at risk for terrorist retaliation.

We have provided Israel with \$100 billion in direct aid since 1975. Since this is fungible, how has

funding settlements contributed to our security? You agreed to provide \$3 billion in F-35s to Israel in exchange for a 90-day freeze on settlements. What you got was 90 days of stonewalling on the peace process and then more settlers. What more do we owe Israel?

Certainly not a rush to war. We have time to make diplomacy and sanctions work, to persuade Russia and China to make joint cause with us.

James Madison once wrote that "Of all the enemies of true liberty, war is, perhaps, the most to be dreaded... War is the parent of armies; from these proceed debts and taxes... No nation can preserve its freedom in the midst of continual warfare."

We are currently winding down what you labelled a "dumb war"; we should not undertake another dumb war against a country almost three times larger than Iraq, that would set off a major regional war

and create generations of jihadis. Such a war, contrary to what some argue, would not make Israel or the U.S. safer.

Steering Group, Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS): Phil Giraldi, Directorate of Operations, CIA; Ray McGovern, US Army Intelligence Officer, Directorate of Intelligence, CIA; Coleen Rowley, Special Agent and Minneapolis Division Counsel, FBI; Ann Wright, Col., US Army Reserve (ret.), Foreign Service Officer, Department of State; Tom Maertens, Foreign Service Officer and NSC Director for Non-Proliferation under two presidents; Elizabeth Murray, former Deputy National Intelligence Officer for the Near East in the National Intelligence Council; David MacMichael, former history professor and CIA and National Intelligence Council analyst. ●



Halt the slide to war, urges CODIR

The ongoing killing of Iranian scientists has been condemned as a provocation to war by the UK-based Committee for the Defence of the Iranian People's Rights.

The assassination of 32 year old chemist, Mostafa Ahmadi-Roshan, was the fifth killing of a scientist associated with Iran's nuclear programme in the past two years.

If such actions had taken place on US or British soil they would have been seen as tantamount to a declaration of war. CODIR warns that there are elements within the Iranian regime which will see these actions in the same way and may foolishly and disastrously respond accordingly.

CODIR is calling for peace activists in the United States, the UK and across Europe and the Middle East in particular to put pressure on their governments not to press for conflict with Iran but to keep the door open for dialogue. The solidarity organisation believes that the Iranian people should not be made to pay for the provocative positions taken by the Iranian government or the belligerence of the United States and its allies.

"The interests of the people of Iran are not served by war," said CODIR Assistant General Secretary, Jamshid Ahmadi. "It is only the leaders of the theocratic regime in Tehran, who see war as a distraction from their serious internal problems, and

the United States, which sees it as a further chance to consolidate their influence in the region, who would regard war as an option. The Iranian people, through their progressive intellectuals, peace activists, progressive forces and labour organisations have made it clear that they have no interest in conflict."

While the US has distanced itself from the assassinations, Brigadier General Yoav Mordechai, expressed the view that the Israeli military are "definitely not shedding a tear." Experts in the intelligence community suggest that the killings have all the hallmarks of an Israeli operation.

The possibility of an Israeli attack on Iranian nuclear installations - one step removed from a direct US intervention - has long been considered a tactical option which the assassination campaign could make even more likely.

"We will continue to do all we can to support the people of Iran", said Ahmadi, "and we are looking to the peace movements across the globe to do everything they can to avert a conflict. The ordinary people of Iran would certainly be the first victims of a war but many others would follow. We call for peace and respect for international law at all times."

For more information, visit www.codir.net. ●

Syria: background to the crisis....

continued from page 12

Appointing Islamic bankers in the government will not redress inequities. The Arab protests are about the right to political participation and decent living conditions. In 2008, a basket of eggs, a principal protein provider for children, costing three to four times the price of two years earlier.

There was an active and purposeful act of pauperisation of the Syrian working population, which also compromised national security. The fate of Syria as a state always hinged upon upholding Arab historical rights and on maintaining a national front based on a relatively equitable distribution of resources. For a social class in power to relinquish any of these tenets is to relinquish the state as form of social organisation that mediates class differences; hence the danger to Syria represented by the usurping of the popular revolt by imperialist-backed forces masquerading as revolutionaries. Has the momentum for resource extraction from Syria been exhausted? Is it now time for capital to reorganise with broader geopolitical concerns in mind?

The answer to this remains to be seen in the concessions that are going to be made to the Syrian working class, as opposed to the US and "moderate" Arab regimes and in the political position *vis-a-vis* the Arab-Israeli conflict.

On the economic side, a re-

socialisation of the economy has to be undertaken. Reinstating land reforms, which had made Syria a net producer of food, can be a start. Revitalising industrial and agricultural state-sponsored banks that lent to national projects at concessional long term rates can be another. Putting the protection of the national industry back in place is also vital. Strict monitoring of the capital account, and the reinstatement of multiple exchange and interest rates aimed at galvanising national resources, provide exchange rate stability and

induce investment. Heavy subsidies and price controls elevating the standard of living for the working population are a must.

On the political side, the matter can be easily settled with the smallest glitch over the border in South Lebanon, which would realign all national forces behind the regime and possibly quiet all protests. Only serious concessions to the working class, including an empowerment of working people in a strong national front, could redress the course of events. Or else, whither Syria? ●



The Fifth of the Month to Free the Five

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

E-mail: president@whitehouse.gov

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

Phone 1-202-456-1111

Fax 1-202-456-2461

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

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



The Iron Lady: why on earth?

The Iron Lady, directed by Phyllida Lloyd, starring Meryl Streep. Review by Jeff Sawtell, Morning Star

Why on earth would you make a film about a monster who did more to harm Britain's industrial hinterland than Hitler's bombers? Well, apart from the moolah guaranteed in the US, there are still those here in thrall to the mythology that Thatcher freed Britain from the "shackles of socialism."

Not unnaturally, it's a film which hasn't been accorded universal approval, with Thatcher's former champion Norman Tebbit considering it "a disgrace." That was also the Tory chorus at the press opening, with one viewer complaining that "it's made by a bunch of lefties, so what would you expect?"

I thought I was in a time-warp and wondered what planet politically the speaker was on, only to realise that the Tories present were no-marks, Thatcher's grandchildren straight out of the Village Of The Damned.

Back in the day Thatcher never did command a majority and the mere mention of her name for millions is guaranteed to ignite a fight since her declaration of class war - "You're either with us or against us."

So, how best to sell her image to the masses again, especially when we're currently experiencing a crisis which feels like her evil offspring wreaking revenge?

Easy. Employ a Hollywood superstar to go into method-acting mode to conjure up an image that would maintain the mystique of the media-created myth.

Enter Meryl Streep as a poor, little old lady buying milk in a local shop and commenting on the price before walking home alone to make tea for her hubby. That's "dear Dennis," played by the ever-so-likeable Jim Broadbent as a decent, loving, self-effacing and long-suffering chap who could make her laugh.

We realise we're watching a fantasy as Dennis disappears when her maid interrupts, followed by worried minders inquiring as to her whereabouts. She's showing signs of senility and daughter Carol (Olivia Colman) is urging her to pack up her memories so they can move but she's being obstinate.



Mineworkers union leader Arthur Scargill dumps "Thatcher" into a wastebasket.

Obviously in the real world, a working-class pensioner wouldn't be living in the lap of luxury, she'd be trying to decide on whether she could afford to eat or heat her home.

So the whole story is coloured by that first sequence - everything else is related in flashbacks, beginning with the image of her dad expounding his Tory politics of self-reliance. Then the young Margaret (Alexander Roach) proceeds to Cambridge and meets young Dennis (Harry Lloyd) at a Tory meeting who encourages her to confront the old codgers.

As Streep takes up the imitation baton, she's supported by Airey Neave (Nicolas Farrell) and Geoffrey Howe (Anthony Head), symbolising a new force for change.

As the ruling class know, your sex or colour matters not, it's always about power politics and the ability to expound the virtues of finance capitalism.

Streep's delivery of the infamous quote from St. Francis of Assisi is far stronger than the squeaky rendition uttered by Thatcher at the doors of Number 10 after she first gained power.

What follows is the interweaving of family life with affairs of state, her final victory being symbolised by the Malvinas, where she's pictured in Churchillian mode. All the issues are illustrated - TV news coverage from IRA bombings, the miners' strike and the poll tax revolt which finally tested the patience of Howe.

The classical "Et tu, Brute" moment is symbolised by Michael Heseltine (Richard E. Grant) prompting a leadership election which Thatcher prefers to ignore by going to France. In short, she's shown as being sold out. Only "dear Dennis" is her constant support, even after death, and we're supposed to empathise.

This film's a reminder of those dreadful days and you might imagine the younger generation asking: "What did you do during the war against Thatcher?" after seeing it. You'll react depending on your sympathies, especially those who suffered at the hands of Thatcherism.

Yet the film strives to see that policy through her eyes and feelings - except, as she says, "I don't have feelings, I have thoughts," before repeating the refrain "I must do the right thing."

It's the phrase that would be taken up by Blair, Brown and now Cameron and Clegg, all trying to present themselves as her heirs, but with velvet gloves. This is an unacceptable caricature to all except those who've been peddling the mythical middle way as an alternative.

Written by Abi Morgan and directed by Phyllida Lloyd, the producers are clearly trying to walk that line since it's rumoured they wanted a more upbeat ending. That's the reason for releasing it now. It's a political primer preparing us for the day she dies and there's a state funeral.

Let's hope it signals a day of mass resistance to rid ourselves of these political parasites. ●



MUSIC NOTES

By Wally Brooker

Three songs for Bradley Manning

Several well-known songwriters have rallied to the cause of Bradley Manning, the 24-year-old U.S. soldier facing court-martial for releasing 250,000 diplomatic cables to Wikileaks, including videos of war crimes committed by U.S. troops. Outstanding activist songwriter David Rovics released *Song for Bradley Manning* early last year. The broadside ballad effectively describes the soldier's courageous response to learning that he possessed evidence about war crimes, and it explains the motives of the powerful forces persecuting him. Last December Rock & Roll Hall of Fame member Graham Nash released *Almost Gone: The Ballad of Bradley Manning*. Timed to raise awareness of his Dec. 17 pre-trial hearing, the seventies-style rock song's title alludes to Manning's precarious mental state as he suffered under a long solitary confinement. Songwriter Cass McCombs' poignant song "Bradley Manning" explores another dimension of the case: that Manning was bullied for being gay. These songs can all be found on YouTube. For more info visit www.bradleymanning.org

PJ Harvey's anti-war album

English singer-songwriter and composer PJ Harvey is receiving accolades for her 2011 album "Let England Shake." In this powerful and bitter work Harvey draws largely upon the experience of the horrors of war (most notably on several songs relating to the disastrous British campaign at Gallipoli in World War I), and links those images to an equally bleak portrait of her "glorious" homeland. Without overtly mentioning England's recent imperial wars, or the ruthless austerity being imposed upon its working class, or the resurgence of popular protest, Harvey has created a disturbingly contemporary album. While her unflinching take on militarism and nationalism is sober, her music is brilliantly evocative and often strangely uplifting. In the ephemeral world of pop music where PJ Harvey works, "Let England Shake" appears to be that rare thing: an album that people will return to again and again. Visit YouTube to see some of the videos Harvey made for this album with filmmaker Seamus Murphy.

Woody Guthrie centennial update

The International Folk Alliance is planning a special Woody Guthrie centennial celebration in Memphis Feb. 22-26. So far 23 Canadian acts have been invited to perform at the annual North American folk music gathering. Canadian participants include Annabel Chvostek, Rose Cousins, Dave Gunning and The Sojourners. They'll join 200 other acts and 2000 registered conference attendees. Meanwhile Oklahoma, the home state of Woody Guthrie, has finally got around to recognizing its great folksinger, despite opposition in some quarters to his communist sympathies. The Woody Guthrie Archives will soon be permanently housed in an exhibition and study centre in Tulsa, where a March 10th "Midwest Gala Tribute" featuring Woody's son Arlo, will be followed by a conference. Other major tribute concerts are planned for Los Angeles (April 14), Brooklyn (Sept. 22) and Washington, DC (Oct. 14). For info on these events visit www.folkalliance.org and www.woody100.com.

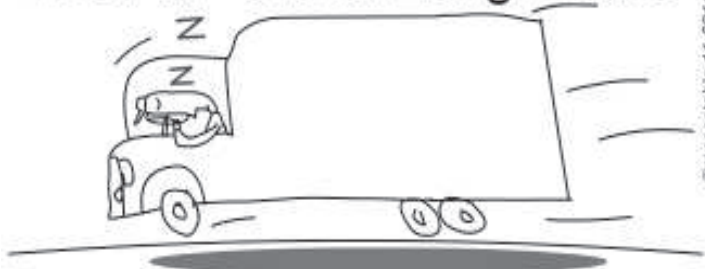
Raffi calls for muting Don Cherry

Renowned children's singer and long-time hockey fan Raffi Cavoukian has started a Twitter campaign to mute Don Cherry's "Coach's Corner" segments on "Hockey Night in Canada." Raffi is anti-fighting and anti-violence. Cherry, of course, is an unabashed promoter of violence in the sport, a defender of the so-called manly virtues. Raffi has more than 3800 Twitter followers, and many times that number will have picked up the story from the mass media. The singer calls upon parents to set a good example for their kids. Describing Cherry's style as "loud, dismissive, bordering on boorish," Raffi looks forward to the post-fight era when "we'd all enjoy hockey more because there would be so many good plays." A *Toronto Star* poll declared that 64% of respondents supported Raffi while only 27% supported Cherry. Follow Raffi at http://twitter.com/raffi_rc. While you're at it check out "Hockey Fans for Peace" on Facebook.

Tribute concert for Cornelius Cardew

The 75th birthday of British composer Cornelius Cardew (1936-1981) was observed Dec. 17 with a London concert that featured pianist Chisato Kusinoki's interpretation of Cardew's "Thaelmann Variations" (dedicated to German communist leader Ernst Thaelmann). Cardew first made his mark as a disciple of then-controversial German avant-garde composer Karlheinz Stockhausen. Later he founded The Scratch Orchestra, an inclusive group that used innovative methods of musical notation and saw itself as much a social forum as a musical ensemble. In the decade before his untimely death in 1981 (he was killed by a hit-and-run driver) Cardew became a Maoist-oriented communist and developed a tonally-based music that included revolutionary songs as well as instrumental works. Cardew wrote often about the meaning of his music, and this too remains an important part of his legacy. For more info visit www.composer.co.uk/composers/cardew.html.

The Hazard of Long Hours



"Fatigue Kills!" is the slogan of an ongoing worldwide campaign by road transport drivers to raise awareness on the issue of hours of work.

Get info at www.whsc.on.ca

15,000 demonstrate against 55% wage cut and lockout at Caterpillar

PV Ontario Bureau

The CAW and Ontario Federation of Labour organized a massive demonstration on Jan. 21, when 15,000 workers rolled into London's Victoria Park on 72 buses rented for the occasion by unions and Labour Councils across the province.

They were there in a massive show of unity and solidarity with the almost 500 members of Local 27 CAW, locked out since December 29 by Electro-Motive Canada. EMC is a subsidiary of the super-profitable transnational corporation Caterpillar, which produces heavy equipment in plants located around the world.

EMC illegally locked out its employees after they voted to refuse the company's final offer: a 55% wage cut and deep cuts to

pensions and benefits. Workers were told that a "no" vote would lead to the company relocating its operations to Indiana, leaving its employees in Canada jobless. But the concession demands were so outrageous that Local 27 members voted against the offer anyway. Many are skilled trades workers who earn as much as \$35 an hour. The company sought to cut their wages to \$16.50. Since the lockout began, the company has removed machinery and equipment from the plant in violation of the collective agreement.

EMC is owned by Progress Rail, a subsidiary of Caterpillar, which had global operations and revenues of \$58 billion last year and posted profits of \$1.14 billion. Progress Rail has received an estimated \$5 million in corporate

tax breaks from the federal government.

The trade union movement is warning that a victory for Caterpillar will encourage corporations across Canada to roll out equivalent "offers" in a race to the bottom for Canadian workers. OFL President Sid Ryan and CAW President Ken Lewenza both called on the labour movement and its allies to rev up for a major battle with Caterpillar to protect the jobs, wages, pensions and living standards of workers, as well as Canada's sovereignty and independence.

The OFL and CAW are demanding that the terms of sale of EMC to Progress Rail under the Investment Canada Act be made public, and that the federal government hold the company accountable to obey Canadian investment and labour laws. They are also demanding the Harper government stop all tax breaks going to the company, stop removal of machinery and equipment out of the plant, and allow locked out workers to qualify for EI benefits and supplemental unemployment benefits.

As the federal and provincial governments across Canada get ready to introduce deep new cuts and austerity, including job and wage cuts in the public sector, many of those workers present in London were aware that they could be next. The crowd was loud and enthusiastic, and many of the buses stopped at the plant for a rally with picketers before leaving town. Buses from as far away as Timmins made the trek to show labour's opposition, and its muscle too.

The Communist Party of Canada (Ontario) supports the union's demands, and also calls on the government to introduce plant closure legislation with teeth that would require companies to show just cause before a public tribunal with the legal power to stop the closure, levy fines and even jail terms where necessary.

The Party also called on the provincial government to be prepared to put EMC under public ownership and democratic control in the event its owners don't reconsider their approach to free collective bargaining, and to Canadian workers, Canadian laws and Canadian sovereignty. ●

People's Voice deadlines

February 15-29 issue: Thursday, Feb. 2

March 1-15 issue: Thursday, Feb. 16

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

Toronto budget fight continues....

continued from page 2

another three years with Ford and Co. at the helm.

Outside, Nathan Phillips Square was filled with protesters, facing 100 riot cops behind two lines of barriers. As demonstrators tried to get into City Hall, others tried to get out and join the protest. Five were arrested, and several were pepper sprayed. A woman was punched in the face, and according to witnesses, at least one of those arrested was pulled over the barriers by cops, a mini-G20 redux.

The fight is not over by a long shot. Many important services, assets including public housing, theatres and real estate, the Toronto zoo, and thousands of city jobs, have not yet been saved. New user fees, and other cuts and reductions will soon be felt, including ironically a 2.5% property tax hike supported by the

Fords. Round two will start shortly.

As PV goes to press, the City has received its no-Board report, allowing it to lock out 30,000 city workers before the next issue of this paper reaches subscribers.

The Ford administration is demanding massive concessions, including around job security, which Ford and Co. have dubbed "jobs for life." The broad coalition that came together to derail the budget cuts must understand that city services and city workers go together, and that 15,000 city workers are part-time, with few or no benefits, and earning a little above the minimum wage.

The only fat cats in this fight are on the throne in City Hall, and behind the scenes on Bay Street, which financed the Fords to break the unions and break up public services, in Toronto and across Canada.

What's Left

STUDENT RALLIES

Wed., Feb. 1, for details of Canadian Federation of Students actions in your area (see story on page 7), visit www.educationisairight.ca/en.

Vancouver, BC

Jose Marti Celebration, sponsored by Canadian-Cuban Friendship Association-Vancouver, 1 pm, Sunday, Jan. 29, Chilean Housing Co-op, 3390 School Ave. Music, poetry, refreshments, donations welcome. Info: contact CCFA c/o Ray Viaud, 604-254-1350.

Left Film Night, 7 pm, Sun., Jan. 29, Centre for Socialist Education, 706 Clark Dr. "Cultures of Resistance," (2010, 73 min., dir. Iara Lee). Admission by donation, call 604-255-2041 for details. Next Film Night: Sunday, Feb. 26, 7 pm.

Haiti Through the Lens of Wikileaks, forum with Kim Ives, editor of Haiti Liberté weekly, Monday, Jan. 30, 7 pm, Harbour Centre, Room 7000, 515 W. Hastings, organized by Haiti Solidarity BC.

COPE Annual Meeting, Sunday, Feb. 19, 2-4 pm, 154 E. 10 Ave. (Ukrainian Church).

Afghanistan: the war is not over, film and discussion, Sun., Feb. 19, 7 pm, Rhizome Cafe,

317 E. Broadway, organized by StopWar, Vancouver's broad-based anti-war coalition.

Winnipeg, MB

Day of action "Public, For the people!", Wed., Feb. 1, 1 pm, Rally at the Legislature to reduce student debt, increase funding, reduce tuition, support equality for International Students, increase access for Aboriginal Students, and restore democracy and autonomy to campuses. Information: Canadian Federation of Students-Manitoba, 783-0787.

Toronto, ON

Celebration of Life for Tom Bull, Sunday, Feb. 5, 2 pm, GCDO Hall, 290 Danforth Ave. (see obituary below).

Annual Norman Bethune Dinner, Sat., Feb. 25, 7 pm, at 290 Danforth Ave. Tickets just \$5, available across Canada from supporters of media sponsor People's Voice. Door prize: all-inclusive trip for two to Cuba! Info: 416-469-2446.

Montreal, QC

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

In Memoriam: Tom Bull

We are sad to note the passing of Comrade Tom Bull, who died at home December 12th of pneumonia, after a long struggle with chronic illness.

Tom was a long-standing member of the Communist Party in Toronto, and was a member of the YCL in the early 1970s. He played a small but important part in the struggle against liquidation in 1990 as a member of the Downtown Club which was the centre of liquidation in Toronto. He also fought hard to maintain the YCL against liquidation. He had been an active member of the Party and YCL in the 1970s and 80s, and was a Party candidate in a provincial election and a member of the Toronto Committee. For the past several years he was an active member and contributor to the East Toronto club. Tom understood the Party and its historic and immediate role. He was an active campaigner for the Party when his health was better and worked in the student, peace and other mass movements when he was younger. He was a keen observer of municipal and provincial politics and often made interesting comments and suggestions. Most recently he raised the issue of reasonable accommodation, and the East Toronto Club's approach to developments around a school in his neighbourhood. Firmly committed to scientific socialism, to working class internationalism, to peace, socialism, and the CPC, he will be greatly missed by his comrades and friends. The Ontario Committee extends deepest sympathy to Tom's sister Dianne Bull and her family.

Messages of sympathy may be sent c/o Ontario Committee, CPC, 290A Danforth Avenue, Toronto, ON M4K 1N6. Donations in Tom's memory to People's Voice will be gratefully accepted.

There will be a Celebration of Tom's Life on Sunday, Feb. 5, 2 pm, at the GCDO Hall, 290 Danforth Avenue (Chester subway). ●

Win a Trip For Two to Cuba!

Annual Norman Bethune Dinner

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Demystifying Syria: background to the crisis

By *Salim Kassem*

Two relationships have long been at play behind the stability of the Syrian regime. The first is an economic relationship, in which the regime would put back into national production just enough to create jobs and produce cheap national goods to keep the working population in steady or, better yet, improving living conditions.

The second is a political relationship, in which the regime must raise its repression and pan-Arab rhetoric, as more power, control and wealth become concentrated in the hands of the ruling military elite and its adjunct bourgeois class. As the recent popular uprising has come to show, serious distortions have been incurred in both relationships, which are also, under more realistic conditions, inseparable.

The distortion to the economic

process began with Syria's adoption of neoliberal reforms. The Syrian ruling elite siphoned resources that were needed to reproduce the working population under stable or enhanced living conditions. As early as 1987, the Syrian regime, expressing the interests of a small military elite, which had clasped the state apparatus, began to dissociate itself from a relatively planned and heavily state interventionist past.

Up until 2002, the reforms were circumscribed to promote private investment with some, albeit very little, erosion to the subsidies and the basic consumption bundle delivered to the working population.

The initial reforms did not pay off, and the investment rate as a whole declined. In the uncertainty and geopolitical risk engulfing Syria, private investors steer away from projects with high initial costs

and long gestation periods and engage in speculative ephemeral endeavours. Until 2002, and just prior to the second oil boom, real per capita growth rates were on

In the absence of autonomous trade unionism, the corresponding rise in wages was torpid. It was a prolonged and calculated shock therapy, which formalised the hold of the state bourgeoisie on the economy, desocialised land tenure, widened the income gap, dealt a blow to national industry, and promoted import-led growth.

average zero or negative, and unemployment figures reached the two digit level.

In 2006, the second-generation of intensive neoliberal reforms were born. There was a lifting of price controls on basic commodities, a lifting of tariff barriers, a relative freeing of capital accounts, and soon, lifting of

subsidies on certain essential commodities. The price of staples rose, and initially, the inflation rate jumped to more than 10 percent a year. When inflation tapered down,

and so on.

But for the Syrian working people, the anecdote was that ours is a regime that signals to the left but turns to the right. There was a certain predictability when dealing with the regime, based on the premise that the interests of a small ruling clique forms the context for decision making. But the ruling clique itself did not predict the wave of Arab revolts shattering the fear barrier, the frustration of a dispossessed working population subjected daily to the ostentatious display of *nouveau riche* wealth, or that the distance it kept from Iran was no longer tolerable by the US.

The regime had survived because it knew what distance to keep from war and peace, which made a best friend out of an enemy. The left ignored its transgressions on human rights because Syria did not go the unilateral peace way of Egypt and Jordan. The US and Israel acquiesced because repression hollowed development, the radical splinter groups were effectively contained, and not a bullet was fired over the Golan for nearly forty years.

But Syria also lies in a region that falls squarely under the diktat of accumulation by encroachment and dispossession, where war and dissolution represent inherent relationships, which compose a steadying force for global capital accumulation. The pertinent questions then become: does the US drive for hegemony over the Iranian side of the Persian Gulf necessitate a US/Israeli instigated "sectarian strife" in Syria? Will the West overlook the ongoing events in exchange for delivering Hezbollah, or will the regime reform and resist with Iran coming to the rescue?

The regime is faced with a choice between resistance - aligning a broad spectrum of social classes integrated and empowered in a reformed political process - or dissolution. Capitulation is not an option. Discrete sectarian lines and forty years of authoritarian rule have dimmed the possibility of sacrificing a president to save a social class.

The regime's reaction has not been to embark on serious reforms, although the most recent developments may signify a shift towards real political reforms. Earlier, it raised salaries as if it these were handouts to subjects under an absolute monarch, and lifted the ban on niqab-wearing teachers to appease a minority of ultra fundamentalists, measures that do not amount to reform.

see SYRIA, page 9

SYRIA: Internal struggle, imperialist aggression

Despite its relatively small size, Syria plays a significant role in the struggle against US imperialism's drive for unrivalled hegemony in the region. Like Libya before the installation of a client regime by NATO, and unlike most Arab countries, Syria's neoliberal reforms had not yet dismantled the public sector or completely eradicated the earlier social gains of the working people.

Nor have they had the chance to produce a shift in political power to dislodge Syria from its nationalist, objectively anti-imperialist positions. Syria's resistance to US diktat put her squarely in the crosshairs of imperialist aggression. For almost a decade before the wave of popular protests began, the US has been actively pressuring Syria to kowtow to its policies, financing reactionary groups and satellite TV stations which promote American "democratic values", enacting legislation and enforcing sanctions, and threatening to use the assassination of a former Lebanese prime minister as a pretext for further aggression.

The external dimension of the crisis in Syria involves not only U.S. and European imperialists, but also U.S. client regimes in various Arab countries, most notably the Gulf emirates; so much so that Syria can be characterized today as an arena of an Arab Civil War. Some of these Arab countries played an active role in the occupation of Iraq, publicly supported Israeli aggression against Lebanon and Palestine (Gaza 2008-09), schemed against the Egyptian uprising, supported the crushing of the Bahrain uprising, and supplied weapons and mercenaries to topple the Libyan regime.

After a number of false starts, US-backed Syrian opposition groups managed to ride a wave of popular protests and immediately started a campaign of destabilization using assassinations, killings of

security personnel and, as government claims go, even protestors. The drive to "militarize the uprising" has greatly weakened its popular base, and ensured that Aleppo and Damascus, the two largest population, economic and political centers of the country, would not join the uprising, leaving it confined to a few small cities and rural areas.

This has further enabled the extreme right-wing to take charge of the uprising and sideline leftist and nationalist groups, and set the stage for calls for foreign intervention *a la* Libya. Combined with psychological warfare and a massive media disinformation campaign laden with lies and fabrications (Al Jazeera, AlArabia, Fox, France24, CNN, BBC, CBC...), the US-backed opposition has managed to become a spokesperson for the uprising, at least internationally. United in the Syrian National Council (modeled after the Libyan one), this opposition actively seeks foreign military intervention, lately couched in their calls for such an intervention by Arab states, and supports the paramilitary gangs operating under the moniker of the "Free Syrian Army". These conditions amount to a complete gutting of the initially progressive character of the Syrian uprising.

The imperialist aim is to destroy the Syrian state and possibly divide the country, because any regime in an undivided Syria will have to contend with the issue of the Golan, at a minimum, in the national interest. Now is the time for concessions, not to the U.S. whose appetite cannot be satiated, but to the working people in order to build a strong national front and ensure readiness for war. It is a duty of progressives everywhere to stand in solidarity with the Syrian people, for genuine democratic and economic reform, and against imperialist aggression.

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As our correspondent relates, there are competing class interests engaged in the sharpening struggle over Syria's future political and economic direction, including pro-imperialist forces.