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people's VOICE

Carry On Spying!

See page 12

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Rally in Victoria against Canada Post cuts

What's behind the Tory attack on postal services?

Privatisation and corporate profits: page 2

Modern day slavery - story on page 6 -



Migrant workers line up heading to dangerous worksites in Qatar, including construction of facilities for the 2022 World Cup.



"Workers endure 12-hour days in sweltering conditions and living in squalid, overcrowded accommodation. Up to 4,000 workers may die before a ball is kicked in 2022 without meaningful reform of the kafala sponsorship system and stringent control of the myriad construction companies and sub-contractors..."

3 Stop BC Ferry cuts

Communities along the west coast are speaking out against major cuts to the B.C. Ferry system. The cuts are expected to have a huge negative economic and social impact in British Columbia.

INSIDE

5 Fire O'Leary!

The gap between the ultra-rich and the rest of us keeps getting wider, but the CBC's Kevin O'Leary thinks poverty is a great thing.

10 Winter Olymics

U.S. progressive sports analyst Dave Zirin looks at the impact of protests against the Russian government's bigoted anti-LGBT legislation heading into the Winter Olympic Games in Sochi.

EU postal privatisation: the future for Canada?

Special to PV, based on a report by Christoph Hermann, in www.globalresearch.ca

Virtually everywhere in the major capitalist countries, the drive towards privatization of formerly public assets continues to wipe out jobs, services, and government revenues. The "restructuring" of Canada Post announced in December follows a similar pattern, leaving the door wide open for private delivery companies to expand even further into this sector of the economy.

A look at the European Union helps to understand where this trend is leading.

The final elements of the old national postal delivery monopolies are being eliminated across the EU, concluding a lengthy process of the "liberalization" of postal services. While the "letter markets" are still dominated by the former national post companies (some of which have been privatized), new competitors are gaining ten per cent of the market share or more, with negative results for the public, small business, and postal workers.

The traditional post office network has been largely replaced with private partners such as grocery stores or gas stations, offering a reduced range of services. In Germany and the

Netherlands, the former national companies have given up their own postal outlets.

With few exceptions, the new competitors emerging from the liberalized market never opened post offices or installed letter boxes. Instead they pick up mail directly from their large corporate customers, and typically deliver only two or three days a week in highly populated areas.

Prices for large customers such as banks, telephone companies and online retailers have decreased, since they can negotiate individual rebates. But standard mail costs have increased

in a number of countries. Even so, in spite of automation and drastic cuts in labour costs, several former

wiped out in the letter market since 1999, while the new market entrants have created 16,308 full-time equivalent jobs. In Sweden, 1,740 full-time equivalent jobs were created by the new competitors, but 12,000 jobs were lost at Swedish Post between 1998 and 2008. In Spain, 4,000 full-time job losses are "balanced" by an equal number of mostly part-time jobs created by the new competitors.

The former national post companies have increased the proportion of part-time workers. Dutch Post has shifted to a mail delivery model based on 85 per cent of the workforce employed on part-time contracts. In Cyprus and Lithuania, nearly 60 per cent of workers employed at the former national post companies work part-time, and in Latvia and Luxembourg about 40 per cent.

Part-time work is even more widespread among the new competitors. In Germany and Spain, the new market entrants mainly operate with staff who often work less than half-time jobs. In the Netherlands, the new market entrants hire mainly "self-employed" workers for just a few hours per week.

In Austria, new market entrants almost exclusively operate with "self-employed" mail deliverers. Workers in this category account for slightly more than 50 per cent of the new competitors' workforce in Poland. "Self-employed deliverers" lack employment protection and social security, and are also paid extremely low, piece-rate-based wages.

In the parcel and express service industry, much of the workforce



national companies are struggling to break even, because of decreasing letter volumes and market losses to new competitors.

The only delivery businesses doing well have a major stake in the booming parcel and express services market, such as Deutsche Post with its subsidiary DHL Express.

Postal liberalization has not improved services and reduced prices. Instead, liberalization has produced a few winners - private shareholders of former public monopolies, managers and large customers - and many losers, including private households (especially in rural areas), and postal workers.

Liberalization has reduced employment dramatically since the late 1990s. In some cases, the job cuts amount to as much as 40-50 per cent, and typically for 20 to 30 per cent. Contrary to the European Commission's prediction, these job cuts were not offset by job growth among new market entrants.

In the Netherlands, 34,000 near-full-time jobs were lost at Dutch Post compared to 22,000 part-time jobs created by the new competitors. In Germany, 38,000 mostly full-time jobs have been

see POSTAL, page 11

Minimum wage campaign pressures Ontario Liberals

With files from RY Ontario

In Ontario over the last several months, the "Campaign to Raise the Minimum Wage" has built considerable pressure on the Wynne Liberals to raise the minimum wage to \$14/hr from

their current poverty rate of \$10.25.

On the Jan. 24-25 weekend, activists, local campaigns and supporting organizations convened in Toronto to discuss the way forward and hear from successful campaigns in the United States.

Under the slogan, "Fair Wages Now", and "You deserve a raise", the campaign has been successful in organizing days of actions around different themes on the 14th of every month, in dozens of communities, for the past several months.

Recently the Toronto Star has come out in favour of the raising the minimum wage, and the "Minimum Wage Advisory Panel" which was created by the Wynne Liberals almost a year ago, is expected to report their findings. The campaign has been focusing much of its message on the panel, and it hopes that their recommendations will be adopted.

While the public has rallied around the demands of the campaign, and it has unified grassroots poverty and labour activists across the country with a success that is rare in Ontario, there is still a battle to make sure that Wynne and her government can't shelve the report and shut out the campaign with the buzz of an election, where it looks like none of the major parties are supporting the demands of the campaign.

How can we take it to the next level and build a very successful campaign into a movement that can't be ignored by the parties in Queen's Park - the very parties who are supported by large employers who benefit from poverty wages. It's possible, but requires even greater militancy and unity from the campaign, anti-poverty groups and the labour movement as a whole across Ontario. It is also important that if an election is called, that the campaign step up its work, and resist the tendency to give up its independent voice to a lesser-evil political party, that ultimately won't deliver on the demands of the campaign.

The guests from south of the border attending the meetings included representatives from the historic "Fight for 15" fast-food worker strikes, and from "Working Washington" which recently won a \$15/hr wage at the Seattle-Tacoma airport.

Join the fight for a \$14 minimum wage! Get in touch with the campaign through the website (www.raisetheminimumwage.ca) or find your local chapter. ●



Rally at Premier Kathleen Wynne's office. (Photo: Ed Bil)

MAY DAY 2014 GREETING ADS

To mark May Day 2014, 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 18; if PV is preparing the layout, the deadline is April 16. Please check with us about the format if your ad is being sent electronically.

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NIAGARA NEWS BULLETIN

People's Voice Niagara Bureau

* **Georgia Pacific is "idling" its paper mill in Thorold**, laying off 109 workers after a merger last summer with another paper company. Georgia-Pacific is owned by the billionaire right-wing Koch brothers. Its takeover of another US paper company was changed to a merger after the US Justice Department started digging for more information. Thorold used to have one of the highest concentration of paper mills in Canada. Statistics Canada says unemployment in Niagara is 8.8%, the worst in the country outside the Maritimes.

* The YWCA said there has been a **130% increase in homelessness** in Niagara since five years ago, and most homeless are "invisible" as they live in cars, abandoned buildings, or move from friend to friend.

* An investigation has started into the **death of a public works labourer** repairing a manhole in December. Meanwhile the memorial promised 80 years go to workers killed building the Welland Canal, used by Great Lakes shipping to bypass the Niagara Falls, is finally under construction. Names of killed workers are still being newly discovered, including one who survived the slaughter of World War I only to die on the job at home.

* **Parents are suing a private school** for shutting down its boarding program for special-needs students mid-semester because it was "financially unsustainable". Just 24-hours notice was given to pick up their children, while a Football Academy continues operating in the same wing of the building. The principal and a teacher continued working without pay so students could at least get academic credit. The Education Ministry said it only inspects curriculum and not finances, advising parents to "consider their options carefully when entering into a contract". Parents said they were squeezed into the private school because funding for public schools doesn't allow for enough supervision required by special-needs.

* Since 2003, Grimsby has **stopped using polling stations** in favour of mail-in ballots for municipal elections. The town will use electronic voting this year, making elections even less accessible. Mail-in ballots have already caused many re-counts because of votes being overlooked. Without polling stations, voters cannot register at the polls. ●

BC Communists slam ferry service cuts

Starting in April, British Columbia residents face yet another increase in costs to take the ferry system, plus a wide range of service cuts on many routes. The announcement has sparked wide public opposition, especially since it comes in the wake of major fare increases and steep decline in ridership in recent years. Protest rallies have been held in a number of coastal communities, especially in areas which rely largely on the ferry system for personal travel and delivery of goods.

The BC Committee of the Communist Party has released the following statement, condemning the attack on the ferry system.

"The decision by the British Columbia Liberal government and the BC Ferry Corp. to slash services on many so-called 'minor routes', and to eliminate free sailings during Monday to Thursday each week for seniors, will cause enormous hardships to the people of this province, while bringing paltry benefits to taxpayers. In fact, these cutbacks will likely create economic losses far outweighing the supposed

savings which are the justification for this announcement.

"We join with groups and individuals across British Columbia demanding the cancellation of these changes. In our view, the coastal and inland ferry system of BC must be treated as an extension of the highway system, i.e. as an essential public service for the people of this province, not as a 'for sale' operation geared to squeeze a profit out of each route.

As with the highway system, residents of British Columbia have historically made important life decisions about where to seek employment and to live, based largely on access to regular, reliable, affordable transportation routes. For decades, working people in this province have contributed to the economy through their employment in a wide range of industries along the coast, depending on the ferries to get to work, school, and community facilities.

"This remains true today, even when some industries have shrunk, especially as the importance of

tourism becomes more significant. It is particularly unfair and unjust to treat coastal residents in this way, by imposing cuts which will have huge consequences on their communities, all for the sake of arbitrary budget decisions.

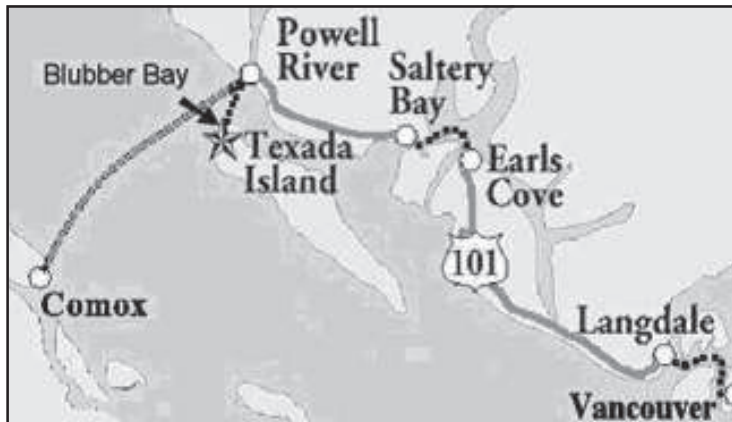
"These cuts will severely impact the ability of residents of many communities to get to crucial medical appointments within one day, or to send sports teams or cultural groups to other communities. The cuts will further

devastate the tourism sector on Vancouver Island and other coastal regions, which already suffer from reduced numbers of visitors due to skyrocketing ferry rates. And to add insult to injury, the cuts are being imposed by a top-heavy BC Ferries bureaucracy, loaded with high-paid managers.

"The latest announcements are an ominous signal to the workforce at BC Ferries, who can expect layoffs and a determined corporate/government attack on their wages

and working conditions in the next round of collective bargaining. The Liberal government is gearing up for a push to convince the public that the hard-working, skilled workforce of BC Ferries, those with serious responsibilities to transport passengers, vehicles and goods safely under all types of conditions, are somehow the cause of the system's financial problems. The real truth is that the economic losses of BC Ferries are mainly caused by the decline in passenger numbers following years of sharp rate increases.

"We demand that all the current ferry sailings be protected, that the plan to impose charges for seniors during Monday to Thursday be cancelled, and that the government take urgent steps to increase ridership, including by a moratorium on any rate increases as a first step towards reductions. We also extend solidarity to our sisters and brothers who work at BC Ferries, as they prepare to defend their jobs, incomes and working conditions in the next round of collective bargaining." ●



Some of the ferry routes facing service cuts this April.

No charges in Burns Lake explosion

By Kimball Cariou

The decision against laying charges in the Jan. 2012 explosion which killed two workers and severely injured 20 others at Babine Forest Products in Burns Lake has sent shockwaves across British Columbia.

A ten-month investigation by WorkSafe BC ultimately led to a report to Crown counsel, "for consideration of charges under the Workers' Compensation Act." The findings of the investigation made it clear that the explosion was preventable, and that the owners of the sawmill had failed to take the necessary steps to prevent the deaths of Robert Luggi and Carl Charlie.

But B.C.'s Criminal Justice Branch declined to charge the principal owner, Hampton Affiliates of Portland, Oregon, claiming that the supposed "inadmissibility" of some evidence gathered by investigators made a conviction less than certain.

In response, B.C. Federation of Labour President Jim Sinclair

urged significant steps to restore confidence in worker protection in British Columbia.

The investigation report clearly shows the incident was preventable, that risks were known and that necessary measures were not taken, said Sinclair, yet the crown rejected the recommendation to lay charges.

Sinclair called on Premier Christy Clark to ensure a full public review of the matter. He also demanded the imposition of maximum penalties under the Workers' Compensation Act, and that the Criminal Justice Branch, the WCB and the BC Safety Authority should report within six months on a new process to ensure investigations into workplace incidents are conducted in a thorough, timely and effective manner, resulting in charges where warranted.

"Unless these steps are taken, and effective cooperation between agencies results, worker safety will remain compromised in our province," said Sinclair.

WorkSafe BC, assigned to

prevent and investigate injuries, illness and disease at 500,000 workplaces across the province, describes itself as an independent body governed by a board appointed by the province.

As a recent Vancouver Sun editorial says, "At the Burns Lake sawmill, a team of 30 investigators found a horror story of unsafe conditions."

Problems included an ineffective dust collection system at the sawmill, inadequate inspection and maintenance, and poorly trained supervisors.

And yet the Crown counsel was more concerned about whether the investigation complied with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and other statutory and legal requirements. This despite the fact that WorkSafe BC staff have used the same investigative methods for at least the last decade.

The Sun editorial continues, "B.C. workers, and families of those who died or were injured, must now wonder why the rules regarding evidence gathering suddenly changed in the case of the Burns Lake accident. And were the investigators given notification of such a change beforehand? In other words, who is responsible for the current situation in which a mill was found to be operating in an unlawful and reckless manner, resulting in death and/or injury to 22 B.C. workers and where no charges can be laid? Are the rules regarding the gathering of evidence in WorkSafe BC investigations clear even today? And what remedy can now be sought against the mill owners who clearly bear responsibility for the January 2012 disaster?"

Premier Clark quickly appointed her deputy, John Dyble, to carry out an investigation, but this will not bring justice to the families and co-workers of those killed and injured in Burns Lake.

In fact, the roots of this tragedy go much deeper than the crimes of individual sawmill owners, reflecting the patterns of capitalist extraction of resources in North

America over the past two centuries.

As revealed in the groundbreaking "Empire of the Beetle" by environmental journalist Andrew Nikiforuk, the over-harvesting of old growth forests along the west coast brought unexpected consequences, including the unchecked pine beetle infestations which have killed billions of trees.

The B.C. government has encouraged companies to harvest beetle-infected trees before they

crumble into stumps. But as experts now agree, processing such trees creates a finer form of sawdust, with far more potential for the 2012 explosions which destroyed mills in Burns Lake and Prince George.

In other words, the scramble for forestry profits which began over a century ago leads directly to the deaths of Robert Luggi and Carl Charlie. But no corporate executive will face jail time for these crimes against workers and the environment. ●

"Make corporate criminals pay for Babine sawmill deaths"

BC Committee, Communist Party of Canada, Jan. 25, 2014

It is shocking and unacceptable that criminal charges will not be laid in the 2012 explosion at Babine Forest Products in Burns Lake. The BC Committee of the Communist Party of Canada demands immediate action against those who bear responsibility for the deaths of two workers and the injuries of 20 others.

The claims by Crown counsel that charges should not be laid because of perceived shortcomings in the investigation certainly point to a resistance against holding corporate interests accountable for their actions. This is unfortunately not surprising in British Columbia, where employers rarely face serious consequences for workplace deaths, injuries and diseases.

The thorough investigation into the Burns Lake catastrophe by WorkSafe BC made it clear that the owners of Babine FP failed to take steps to avoid a preventable explosion. Their failure to install and maintain an efficient dust collection system led directly to the deaths of Robert Luggi and Carl Charlie. There is no other possible conclusion - given the strong evidence that the owners are guilty of homicides, they should face appropriate legal charges, and the maximum penalties available under the Workers' Compensation Act.

The BC Committee CPC agrees with the BC Federation of Labour, which has called for swift action to reassure the public that investigations into workplace deaths will be carried out swiftly and competently, with charges whenever warranted. The health and safety of the workers of British Columbia must have a higher priority than protection of corporate profits, not the other way around.

Fearful of the political blowback from this situation, Premier Clark has appointed her deputy, John Dyble, to conduct another investigation, but this will not lead to criminal charges. This process is therefore simply a face-saving exercise for Christy Clark, who is in truth the "Corporate Premier" of B.C., not the "family premier" as she claims. We call upon Clark to use her powers to bring the Babine Forest Products owners to justice. ●

What could British Columbia do with \$2.4 billion annual revenue by reversing the Liberal tax cuts?

Gordon Campell's tax cuts for the wealthy and corporations cost the B.C. treasury \$2.4 billion every year in lost revenue. We invite you to this forum on how to reverse the cuts and put people and the environment ahead of private profits.

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EDITORIALS

The Canada Post fightback

In Conservative cowardly fashion, the news of huge service cuts and layoffs at Canada Post was revealed just before Christmas, the most difficult time of the year to mobilize public anger. Now, resistance is building against the federal government's attack, including rallies, town hall meetings, petition campaigns, letters to the editor and to MPs. But much more is needed, because time is short, and because the stakes are so high.

The Harper government is trying to frame their vicious decision as something "forced" by factors beyond anyone's control. The losses would be staggering, they claim, and "nobody sends mail anymore." And anyway, seniors and people with disabilities have been begging the Prime Minister for a reason to get out and exercise on icy sidewalks in the middle of winter.

This is just noise and lies. The truth is that right-wing governments in most capitalist countries have been deliberately attacking public mail delivery for over a decade, with predictable results: declining service, higher costs, massive layoffs, lower living standards... and higher corporate profits. The real agenda is to eliminate every aspect of public ownership, except of course for the repressive arms of the state (prisons, courts, the armed forces, surveillance agencies) - and even these may end up being sold to private interests.

The assault on the public sector is well underway in Canada. We have to draw a line in the snow, before we lose universal medicare, public pensions, and much, much more. The fight to save Canada Post should become that line. We call on every People's Voice reader to get union locals and community groups to pass resolutions, to circulate CUPW's petitions in neighbourhoods, workplaces and classrooms, to flood MP's offices with calls and letters, all raising the demand: Save Canada Post!

BC teachers win big

British Columbia teachers have won a major court victory, with implications across Canada. In a Jan. 27 ruling, the BC Supreme Court restored collective agreement provisions stripped in 2002 under then-premier Gordon Campbell, whose Education Minister was Christy Clark, the current premier. The province was also ordered to pay the BC Teachers Federation \$2 million in damages plus court costs.

This has been a marathon battle for the teachers, targeted by the Liberals since Campbell was elected in 2001. The 2002 legislation was already declared unconstitutional in 2011, when a judge found that by removing class-size limits and class-composition guarantees, the government had damaged learning conditions in schools across British Columbia. The Liberals were given one year to restore the bargaining rights illegally removed nine years previously. Instead, they arrogantly reintroduced the same unconstitutional provisions.

As the BCTF points out, children who were in kindergarten when the bills were passed are now in Grade 12, having spent their entire school careers in larger classes with fewer resources. The legislation removed provisions that guaranteed smaller classes, support for students with special needs, and services from teacher-librarians, counsellors, and other specialists. The contract-stripping allowed the government to slash hundreds of millions of dollars from education budgets, forcing school boards to cut programs, close more than 200 schools, and eliminate 3,500 teaching positions.

Whenever pro-corporate governments engage in similar illegal union-bashing, this ruling provides a useful weapon to fight back, and to help build mass resistance. But it also appears likely that Premier Christy "Cutback" Clark, still a bitter enemy of public education, will appeal the ruling. In the meantime, provincial spending annually per student in British Columbia remains a shocking ninth out of ten provinces, and a shameful \$1000 below the Canadian average. This fight is a long way from finished.

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LETTERS

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What's really going on in Ukraine?

This excerpt from a commentary by Andy Dilks on the Global Research web site (www.globalresearch.ca) gives a perspective on events in Ukraine which is very different from that found in the Canadian corporate media.

... The problem with the "popular protests against the government and for integration into the EU" narrative is that it omits crucial information regarding the role of the West is fomenting and orchestrating demonstrations such as these; a role which illuminates broader geopolitical objectives in the region and the extent to which intelligence agencies and their offshoot organizations meddle in the affairs of sovereign nations...

The seemingly spontaneous 2004 Ukrainian "Orange Revolution", sparked by alleged electoral fraud and allegations of voter intimidation, was led largely by a number of grassroots movements tied to political activists and student groups. Many of the groups involved, however, were funded and trained by organizations intimately linked to the US government. The foreign donors of these groups included the US State Department, USAID, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, the Open Society Institute and the National Endowment for Democracy.

The candidate who emerged victorious in the wake of these widespread orchestrated protests, Viktor Yushchenko, was not only endorsed by the same institutions which wielded their influence over the protest movements themselves, he was also supported by the International Monetary Fund...

It is tempting to automatically assume that the same process is taking place in Ukraine at the moment.... The widespread political support for the protesters in Ukraine and the lack of condemnation for their use of violence would certainly add to the view that these protests are at least tacitly backed by the West, if not outright orchestrated. While none of this constitutes "proof" of outside interference, at the very

least it is enough to raise suspicions. On the other hand, without firm evidence it is perhaps equally plausible that the support for the protesters is simply a case of making political capital out of the situation, stoking the flames of an already lit fire.

As the violence on the streets of Kiev continues, already spreading away from the capital, the Russian State Duma recently passed a resolution slamming foreign politicians and other players for interfering in Ukrainian internal affairs in an attempt to escalate the conflict. It's a marked contrast to the rhetoric emerging from Washington and the EU, both of whom have expressed the possibility of intervening, with the US adopting a stance which hints at another planned "regime

change" on Russia's doorstep. In Ukraine as being led by far-right extremists - many protesters are taking to the streets through genuine and legitimate grievances with the current government. The danger lies in these moderate protesters allying themselves with those on the far-right - combined with tacit support from the US for the likes of the Svoboda party, it could be a concoction which would set the stage for a dictatorship far more corrupt and repressive than those currently clinging onto power.

With the geopolitical stakes as high as they are, not least with the potential for a broader NATO influence in the region, it would be wise to view the situation in Ukraine through the wider prism of the global balance of power and all that this entails. Equally, we should be wary of simplistic media narratives which seek to paint any conflict in black and white/good vs. evil terms, particularly when the "good guys" are being backed by the US government and her allies. All too often this amounts to little more than propaganda designed to rouse support for opposition movements favourable to "regime change", and by now it should be clear how little this has to do with vague, idealistic notions of "democracy", and how much it has to do with regional - and ultimately global - hegemony. ●

Other voices...

Perhaps the most damning indictment of the West's stance over Ukraine and their support for what they refer to as a "pro-democracy protest movement" is the profoundly anti-democratic leanings of the violent protesters at the vanguard of the assault on the Ukrainian authorities. Anyone familiar with the crisis in Syria and the attempts to topple President Assad will be all too familiar with the US's willingness to get into bed with extremists of the worst possible nature in order to achieve their objectives.

In Ukraine today it appears that very little has changed. Just as the Western-backed Syrian rebels with intimate ties to al-Qaeda were presented in our media as "pro-democracy" organizations, so too are many of those protesting in Ukraine drawn from far-right and fascist groups such as the opposition Svoboda party, whom John McCain was more than happy to appear on stage with in December 2013 and offer his - and by extension America's - support.

Yet it would also be wrong-headed to characterize the protests

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British veterans rejected WWI "celebrations"

Canada is not the only country where a right-wing government is celebrating the centenary of the First World War. In this commentary from the Morning Star in Britain, Solomon Hughes finds that the last thing the generation who fought in the "Great War" wanted was to mark the start of the carnage.

UK Education Secretary Michael Gove has announced that David Cameron's Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition government wants to celebrate the anniversary of the start of the First World War.

Gove attacked "left-wing myths" that the war was "a series of catastrophic mistakes perpetrated by an out-of-touch elite." For Gove it was a "just war" which was "seen by participants as a noble cause."

Gove wants to enlist the Great War dead in his own desire to "challenge existing left-wing versions of the past designed to belittle Britain and its leaders."

But Gove is doing what none of the people who actually went through WWI would dream of - celebrating the declaration of the war, not its end.

Who commemorates the outbreak of war instead of the arrival of peace? Who would want to have parades and celebrations to remember 1914 instead of 1918?

Gove does. Cameron does. But the people of 1918 did not.

Gove believes he is the man to blurt on about the "heroism, and sacrifice, of our great-grandparents." But when it ended, those "great-grandparents" rejected any idea of celebrating the start of war.

Britain declared war in August 1914. During WWI there were annual official celebrations of the declaration of war in August. So on August 4, 1917, there was a "great patriotic meeting" in the Queen's Hall.

The prime minister and the archbishop of Canterbury addressed the 2,500-strong audience, where, according to the programme, "the singing of Rule Britannia will conclude the proceedings."

But by August 1918 the mood had darkened.

The official Remembrance Day marking the anniversary of the declaration of war was a more sombre church service for the king and his ministers, where "any display of pageantry, any musical decorativeness was avoided."

The archbishop of Canterbury still spoke about "glory" and "heroic sacrifice" but also said: "The world has been learning by fearful experience what war actually is. The facts have been burned into our living souls. To most of us war used to seem a far-off thing. There was about it a romance and glamour which pushed its horribleness not out of sight, but out of the foreground. Four years have taught us much. These lessons of 'war's unspeakable hatefulness' meant soldiers are the first to resolve that, please God, a repetition of its ghastly horrors shall become impossible among men."

As soon as the war ended in 1918, all suggestions of having any ceremony to mark the outbreak in 1914 disappeared.

I've searched through the *Times*

and the *Mail* of August 1919 and there is no suggestion of commemorating the start of war. Anyone who was actually in the war only wanted to remember the end, not the beginning.

The first attempt to remember the war by the generation that fought it came on "Peace Day" on July 19, 1919. A government committee led by foreign secretary Lord Curzon planned elaborate celebrations. They were a big event, with a huge "victory march" by troops in central London and bonfires around the country.

But many servicemen wouldn't even celebrate peace because they were so angry about the conditions they faced on returning from the trenches.

The *Times* records that "several hundred ex-servicemen in the Chertsey area have decided against participating in any peace celebrations as a protest at not having secured all their rights."

This was one of many rejections of Peace Day by soldiers'

organisations angry at the lack of "homes fit for heroes" or decent jobs for ex-servicemen following their terrible fighting.

Gove wants to celebrate the start of the war, but many of the war's veterans wouldn't even celebrate its end.

In Luton the Federation of Discharged Sailors and Soldiers were enraged that they were not allowed to have their own ceremony in the Town's Wardown park. They felt the official ceremony at the town hall was the kind of empty "patriotic" guff Gove wants to revive now.

Discharged soldiers went to the town hall and made speeches complaining about "the inadequacy of pensions" for former servicemen and "the fact that no steps had been taken to provide a peace feast and entertainments for discharged men and their families."

The demobbed soldiers were so angry that their Peace Day protest turned into a riot. The crowd set fire to the town hall, leaving it a burned-out shell. The *Mail* reported that "the police charged again and again but the crowd remained supreme."

Rioters dragged pianos from a looted shop into the street "and played Keep the Home Fires Burning, afterwards breaking up the pianos and using the wooden and iron supports as weapons."

Alongside the violence the *Mail*

reports that "gramophones were also brought out of the shop and set playing in the streets. It was a kind of an orgy for an hour or two. All this time the town hall was blazing."

A platoon of active soldiers finally restored order, although there were more riots the next day as Luton ex-servicemen demanded their comrades be released from the police station.

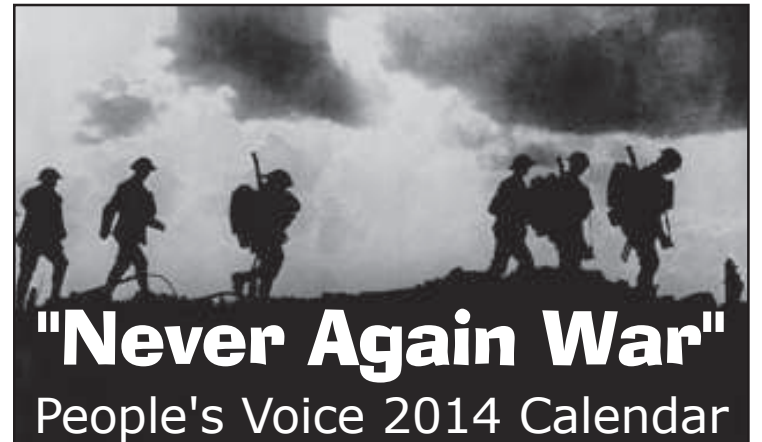
The July Peace Day was never repeated. The only "celebration" of the war that finally stuck with the generation who fought it was Armistice Day, quietly remembering the November 11 1918 end of the war.

This was marked in 1919 by

"two minutes silence" - what the *Times* called "two short minutes to thanksgiving, rejoicing, pity, lifelong pride and grief," a time when "many were experiencing again the grief of the war."

It was only this silence that was acceptable to the people who went through the war. So any remembrance of the war beginning disappeared in 1918. Even attempts to celebrate peace that looked to bombastic could provoke protests and riots by ex-servicemen.

The only way to properly reflect the feelings of those who lived through the first world war is to ignore Gove and sign up to the No Glory campaign at www.noglory.org. •



To order a copy of the People's Voice 2014 Anti-First World War Calendar, send \$15 (includes postage and handling) to People's Voice, 706 Clark Drive, Vancouver, BC, V5L 3J1. Contact us at 604-255-2041 or pvoice@telus.net for bulk order prices.

"Fire Kevin O'Leary" campaign continues

Rebel Youth magazine is renewing its call to fire CBC economic commentator Kevin O'Leary after comments made on Jan. 21 about growing global social inequality.

Responding to co-host Amanda Lang's summary of a new report by Oxfam which notes that the 85 richest people on the planet have as much wealth as the poorest 3.5 billion people, O'Leary said: "It's fantastic. And this is a great thing because it inspires everybody, gets them motivation to look up to the one per cent and say, 'I want to become one of those people, I want to fight to the get up to the top.' This is fantastic news and of course I applaud it. What could be wrong with this?"

Oxfam is an international anti-poverty NGO. Its report "Working for the few,"

confirmed that almost half of the world's wealth is now owned by just one percent of the population.

Ishmael Daro of the news site The Albatross broke the story and recorded a Youtube video below which received close to 10,000 views in less than 24 hours.

On the clip O'Leary calls the report "a celebratory stat, I'm excited about it, wonderful to see it happen" and says "I love capitalism!" adding: "Don't tell me that you're going to redistribute wealth again, that's never going to happen."

"What value [O'Leary] possibly provides to the CBC is entirely unclear. Either nobody watches the Lang & O'Leary Exchange to catch this routine stupidity or management is purposely destroying the CBC," Daro wrote on The Albatross.

Oxfam documents how seven out of ten people live in countries

where economic inequality has increased in the last 30 years, a "massive concentration of economic resources in the hands of fewer people" which means



"governments overwhelmingly serve the interests of economic elites to the detriment of ordinary people."

"That monopoly capitalism undermines democracy and social well-being is, of course, a

suggestion which fits with the long-standing analysis of our magazine," says Rebel Youth. "The reality that working people socially produce all the wealth in society but do not control the results of their labour which is privately accumulated has been consistently exposed by Marxists who describe this relationship of 'we make it, they take it' as exploitation and the main contradiction of capitalism."

Perhaps ironically the Oxfam report still sets out to defend capitalism, quoting Adam Smith and claiming that "Some economic inequality is essential to drive growth and progress, rewarding those with talent, hard earned skills, and the ambition to innovate and take entrepreneurial risks."

But Oxfam's picture in its new report can't hide the reality today - an emergency situation with the global capitalist economic crisis which is very difficult to hide, despite continued claims of "economic recovery" just around the corner - capitalism is crisis.

Rebel Youth says that "O'Leary's role as a commentator on CBC is to peddle cheap lines defending the boss class and their capitalist system, presented as news from an expert TV personality - and for that reason we urge all our readers to sign the petition to get him off the air."

Check out the petition at www.change.org/en-CA/petitions/cbc-fire-kevin-o-leary.

The Rebel Youth website is www.rebelyouth-magazine.blogspot.com. •



Hundreds of migrant workers die in Qatar

From the UK Guardian

The extent of risks faced by migrant construction workers building the infrastructure for the 2022 World Cup in Qatar has been laid bare by official documents revealing that 185 Nepalese men died last year alone.

The 2013 death toll, which is expected to rise as new cases come to light, is likely to spark fresh concern over the treatment of migrant workers in Qatar and increase the pressure on FIFA to force meaningful change. According to the documents the total number of verified deaths among workers from Nepal - just one of several countries that supply hundreds of thousands of migrant workers to the gas-rich state - is now at least 382 in two years alone.

At least 36 of those deaths were registered in the weeks following the global outcry after the *Guardian's* original revelations in September.

The revelations forced FIFA president Sepp Blatter to promise that football would not turn a blind eye to the issue following a stormy executive committee meeting. Qatar's ministry of labour hired law firm DLA Piper to conduct an urgent review and Hassan al-Thawadi, chief executive of the World Cup organising committee,



governing body, which awarded the World Cup to Qatar in December 2010.

"FIFA and the government of Qatar promised the world that they would take action to ensure the safety of workers building the stadiums and infrastructure for the 2022 World Cup. This horrendous roll call of the dead gives the lie to those reassurances," said the PNCC. "These were young or otherwise able-bodied men, with their futures in front of them, families at home and everything to

for the relevant health authorities or the government of Nepal."

As long ago as 2011, FIFA said it would work with the International Trade Union Confederation to address labour issues with the Qatari authorities. "We have a responsibility that goes beyond the development of football and the organisation of our competition," FIFA secretary general Jerome Valcke said in November 2011.

But the ITUC has remained a strident critic of the lack of progress made by Qatari authorities on the issue, while groups including Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have continued to highlight the appalling conditions suffered by some of the workers in a 165 billion Euro construction boom.

In November, Amnesty warned in a damning report that workers were enduring 12-hour days in sweltering conditions and living in squalid, overcrowded accommodation. The ITUC has warned that up to 4,000 workers may die before a ball is kicked in 2022 without meaningful reform of the kafala system and stringent control of the myriad construction companies and sub-contractors involved.

After last summer's report, Blatter travelled to meet the Emir of Qatar and declared it was "on the right track" in dealing with the issue. But following a meeting with the ITUC in Zurich a month later, FIFA said that "fair working conditions with a lasting effect must be introduced quickly".

The PNCC, which has painstakingly cross-checked death certificates and other documentation with official records in Doha, said FIFA and the Qatari government needed to move faster: "FIFA president Sepp Blatter said in October there was 'plenty of time' to address this issue. For the labourers dying every week in Qatar to build the infrastructure to host Mr. Blatter's World Cup, there is no time left."

Attention is also turning to the role of FIFA's sponsors, with the PNCC joining calls for them to review their relationship with it. Visa and Adidas recently signed new deals until 2022. "Qatar's failure to disclose or explain these deaths, and FIFA's failure to monitor them, are alarming in the extreme. We call upon the World Cup's corporate sponsors - Coca-Cola, Adidas, Visa, Hyundai and Budweiser - urgently to review

workers as property rather than human beings."

The full list of deaths recorded between January and September 2012, also seen by the *Guardian*, shows that at least 127 Nepalese nationals died during that period and there are believed to have been at least another 70 fatalities during the final three months of that year.

Qatar is spending huge sums at home and abroad in an attempt to position itself as the diplomatic and business hub of the Middle East and secure its position politically and financially for the years ahead.

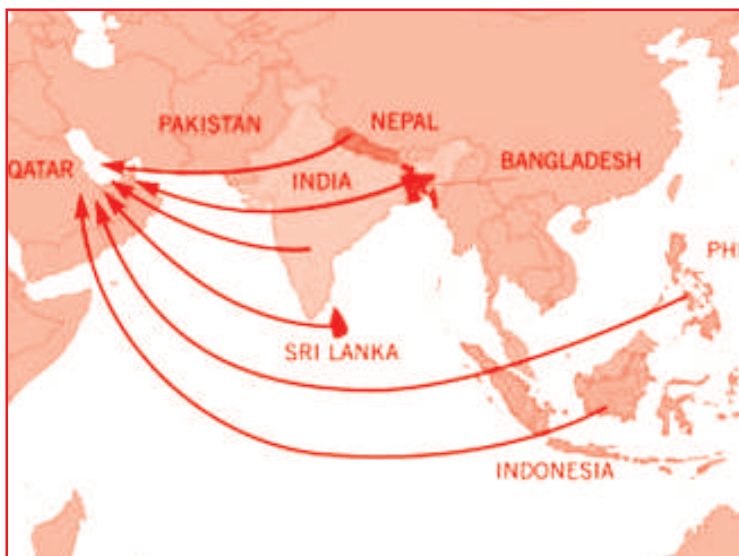
Qatari officials insist moves are being made to hold construction companies, and their myriad sub-contractors, to existing labour laws, which they argue are among the strongest in the region.

Qatar's under-secretary to the ministry of labour, Hussain al-Mulla, has said that at least 99% of businesses are complying with the law. The ministry of labour says it is "committed to ensuring that all workers are treated in a fair and just manner".

The Qatar 2022 supreme committee, which is responsible for staging the World Cup and recently began work on its first stadium, pointed to its own workers' charter and said it was "committed to the wellbeing, health, safety, security and dignity of every worker".

"We anticipate 2014 being a big year for the supreme committee in terms of delivery, with up to five stadiums in various stages of construction. With this in mind, and as an evolution of the charter, we have worked hard to develop detailed workers' standards which will be enforced across all Qatar 2022 projects," a Qatar 2022 statement said.

"It has been our commitment and our belief from the first day of our bid to host the FIFA World Cup that we can utilise the power of football to accelerate positive social and human development across our country and region." •



said the findings would be treated with the utmost seriousness, vowing that the tournament would not be built "on the blood of innocents". The DLA Piper report is expected to be published in the coming weeks.

The Nepalese make up about a sixth of Qatar's two million-strong population of migrant workers. Verified figures for the 2013 death rates among those from India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and elsewhere have yet to emerge.

The Nepalese organisation working with the families of dead workers to repatriate their bodies and campaign for adequate compensation from the companies that employed them under the kafala sponsorship system said on Jan. 24 that FIFA should do more.

The Pravasi Nepali Co-ordination Committee (PNCC), which has cross-checked the figures from official sources in Doha against death certificates and passports, is still receiving new cases on a regular basis. There is evidence of at least a further eight cases, which would take the 2013 total to 193.

The PNCC called on FIFA's sponsors to reconsider their relationship with world football's

live for. Many have been literally worked to death. Some have met with even more sinister ends. All have been betrayed by FIFA."

Last year 44 Nepalese workers died in Qatar between June 4th and August 8th, more than half of them of heart attacks, heart failure or workplace accidents. But the full list of deaths recorded during the year, collated by the Nepalese NGO from official sources and documents in Doha and seen by the *Guardian*, shows that the actual figure is much higher.

In June, July and August alone 65 deaths were recorded by the PNCC during summer months when temperatures can regularly top 40C. The causes included traffic accidents, blunt injuries and fractures ascribed to falls and suicide. But more than 65 of the deaths in 2013 are ascribed to "sudden cardiac arrests" and more than half to some kind of heart failure. Campaigners believe the cause of death is often officially listed as a cardiac arrest because it covers a "multitude of sins".

Asked last year by the *Guardian* why so many young Nepalese men died of heart attacks, the Qatari labour ministry said: "This question would be better suited

UN envoy slams rights violations

A top UN official recently urged Qatar to improve conditions for foreign labourers, as the Gulf emirate builds a massive infrastructure for the 2022 football World Cup.

"Many migrants face human rights violations in the workplace," said the UN special rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, Francois Crepeau, concluding a visit to Qatar last November.

"Some are not paid their wages, or are paid less than agreed," he said. "I am also concerned about the level of accidents in construction sites, and hazardous working conditions resulting in injury or death."

Qatar has the highest ratio of migrants to citizens in the world. Approximately 88 per cent of the total population are foreign workers, he noted.

Crepeau urged the energy-rich state to introduce measures that would protect workers, including establishing a minimum wage for all employees, including domestic staff.

Gulf countries do not enforce a minimum wage for foreign workers, leaving it up to employers.

The UN envoy advised an "effective labour inspection system," with more inspectors "well trained on human rights standards, and interpreters in the most commonly used languages."

He also called for the "right of association and to self-organisation for all workers," in addition to allowing workers to change jobs "without sponsor/employer consent and (to) abolish the exit fee requirement."

The sponsor system, by which an employee must be sponsored by an individual or a firm, is applied in most Gulf countries, leaving expats at the mercy of sponsors who could refuse to allow them to leave.

Crepeau recommended that Qatar ratify a number of UN conventions on the protection of migrant workers, civil and political rights, and the convention against torture.

(From Agence-France Presse) •

The war over poverty, or poverty from war

By James Thompson, from the ML Today website, www.MLToday.com

On January 9, the bourgeois liberal Princeton faculty economist Paul Krugman, who completed the best US education money can buy at MIT and Yale, wrote an op-ed piece for the New York Times entitled "The War over Poverty." <www.nytimes.com/2014/01/10/opinion/krugman-the-war-over-poverty.html>

In the piece, Prof. Krugman discusses the fallacious received view in this country and throughout the other capitalist controlled countries that the plight of the poor is due to some vague fault of the poor. Admirably, Prof. Krugman argues against this insane attempt to blame the poor.

He goes on to argue that low income people in the US "are much healthier and better nourished than they were in the 1960s" and ties this to the success of anti-poverty programs initiated 50 years ago. He concludes "the problem of poverty has become part of the broader problem of rising income inequality, of an economy in which all the fruits of growth seem to go to a small elite, leaving everyone else behind."

The article elucidates the differences between liberals and conservatives on the issue of poverty. He characterizes conservatives as "callous and mean-spirited." He sums up the conservative position as "government is always the problem, never the solution; they treat every beneficiary of a safety net program as if he or she were 'a Cadillac driving welfare queen.' And why not? After all, for decades their position was a political winner, because middle-class Americans saw 'welfare' is something that Those People got but they didn't."

He characterizes the liberals' position as "Meanwhile, progressives are on offense. They have decided that inequality is a winning political issue. They see war-on-poverty programs like food stamps, Medicaid, and the earned income tax credit as success stories, initiatives that have helped Americans in need-and should be expanded. And if these programs enroll a growing number of Americans, rather than being narrowly targeted on the poor, so what?"

He draws the conclusion "So guess what: On its 50th birthday,

the war on poverty no longer looks like a failure. It looks, instead, like a template for a rising, increasingly confident progressive movement."

Although some of Prof. Krugman's arguments are not completely without merit, he still remains a well-paid cheerleader for bourgeois liberal "safety net" programs. We must concede that such programs as Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid have benefited a great number of people across all economic classes.

Even people among the wealthiest classes have benefited from "safety net" programs because they shamelessly shuffle their poorer loved ones off to these programs so they don't have to pay for their subsistence. The same people hypocritically argue that "safety net" programs should be eliminated. Some doctors even argue that Medicaid and/or Medicare should be eliminated while they bill their patients' Medicaid and/or Medicare.

What Prof. Krugman and his bourgeois liberal readers fail to recognize is that the US government functions to protect the interests of the capitalists with little or no regard to the interests of the people of this country. He makes a swift tangential reference to the "class war" but fails to recognize that the class war is raging in this country. Even Warren Buffett has warned us that the capitalists are winning the class war with little opposition from the people.

He also fails to recognize that interest among the people in alternative socioeconomic systems such as socialism or communism has grown remarkably recently. Since he does not recognize this reality, he cannot make the connection that income inequality leads to such tendencies.

Although the struggle between liberals and conservatives is real, Prof. Krugman does not seem to recognize that as long as the US government functions to protect the interests of the wealthy, reforms such as the "safety net" programs mentioned above will be under constant attack. And they can be eliminated by the government at any time if it is deemed to be in the interest of the capitalists.

Prof. Krugman also fails to recognize and factor in the fact that the most important interest of the capitalists is to constantly expand profits. Prof. Krugman has also failed to recognize that the necessity for capitalists to constantly expand their profits has led to an era of unending imperialist wars of occupation across the globe.

Prof. Krugman fails to recognize that these wars have been conducted for the benefit of the capitalists so that they can continue to expand their profits. He also fails to recognize that the



Marxist Theory

taxpayers have spent far more of their hard-earned money on the wars than the capitalists have made in expanded profits. It should be noted that throughout history capitalist governments have repeatedly spent taxpayer money to protect capitalist profits overseas and the money they spend to protect the profits exceeds the profits themselves.

In short, the Bush and Obama administrations have spent an extraordinary amount of money on killing working people in foreign countries to protect the profits of the capitalists in those countries. Unfortunately, the working man in the US foots the bill. It should be noted that the money expended is nothing compared to the loss of human life as well as permanent physical and mental injuries among the combatants and people in the foreign countries where the imperialist wars are conducted. Of course, the surviving, injured combatants return to the US and their working families must care for them using the pathetic "safety net" programs available. Prof. Krugman fails to note this point as well.

So, a combination of multiple imperialist wars being fought for the benefit of the wealthy at the expense of the poor working people as well as the wholesale exportation of jobs and industry to foreign countries in pursuit of the lowest wages possible have resulted in sustained high unemployment in the US. Meanwhile, the stock market rises and profits continue to expand because capitalists benefit when wages fall. However, there is an end to this process and it is called a crisis of overproduction commonly referred to as an economic depression.

What Prof. Krugman and other bourgeois liberal pundits fail to discuss is that the responsibility for the downward spiral of the economy rests with the capitalist system itself. As long as the system functions to benefit the capitalists, working people will continue to suffer and their suffering will expand proportionally with the expansion of profits.

Another thing that conservatives and liberals are oblivious to is that "safety net" programs tend to perpetuate inequalities between rich and poor. "Safety net" programs are carefully designed to provide a subsistence level for certain segments of the population such as elderly, disabled and to a lesser extent, unemployed pregnant mothers. They allow certain impoverished individuals to survive and such programs are funded by extracting a minimum amount of money from the public wealth created by

working people.

This enables the wealthy to continue extracting a maximum amount from the public wealth created by working people. In other words, if the public wealth was conceptualized as a pie, "safety net" programs would be a mere sliver.

On the other hand, the piece of the pie reserved for the wealthy would be gigantic. The "safety net" programs also serve to reduce the general misery of the public just enough to prevent them from engaging in revolutionary activities. The capitalists must walk a fine line to provide just enough misery relief to prevent revolution and at the same time must limit the misery relief in order to expand their profits. This serves as the basis for the struggle between liberals and conservatives.

Herein lies the difference between bourgeois liberals and Marxist-Leninists. Social democratic bourgeois liberals fight

for reforms that they justify on the basis of charity and maintain it is the right thing to do. They characterize their detractors as "callous and mean-spirited."

Marxist-Leninists agree that reforms that benefit working people and the poor are for the good. However, we recognize that such reforms are not sufficient and can easily be overturned and/or manipulated by the capitalists when socioeconomic conditions permit. Marxist-Leninists maintain that only by advancing from capitalism to socialism can humanity build a system which benefits all working people. In a socialist system, workers would achieve political dominance and would form a government that would function to protect the interests of workers.

Perhaps such ideas were not taught to Prof. Krugman and his classmates at MIT and Yale. Such ideas would probably not be received very well at Princeton either. ●



Infant mortality in Cuba 30% lower than Florida

Havana, Jan. 2, 2014 (*Prensa Latina*)

Cuba reached a record low in infant and maternal mortality rates in 2013, according to official figures released by *Granma* newspaper. Regarding infant mortality, Cuba recorded a rate of 4.2 per thousand live births, and eight provinces were below the national rate.

Such territories are Sancti Spiritus and Granma, both with 3.2, Holguin (3.3), Havana and Ciego de Avila (3.4), Pinar del Rio and Villa Clara (3.9) and Las Tunas (4.0), reported the journal, adding that the municipality of Isla de la Juventud had 2.0.

Of the country's 168 municipalities, 22 had no child dead.

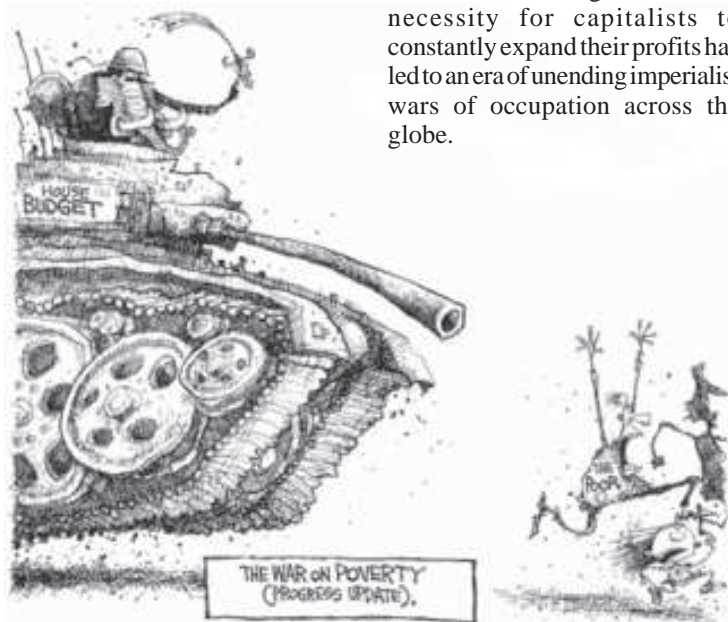
Granma explained that the main causes of the death of children under one year old are mainly perinatal conditions, congenital abnormalities and infections.

This time 45 children less than in 2012 died from congenital malformations, which keeps Cuba among the countries with the lowest infant mortality from this cause. According to preliminary data provided by the National Board of Medical Records and Statistics of the Ministry of Public Health, last year there were 125,830 births, 156 more than in 2012.

Granma newspaper said that Cuba also strengthens the results of the program aimed at reducing complications and maternal deaths, reporting only 26 deaths directly related to pregnancy, childbirth and postpartum.

In this regard, Cuba achieved a direct maternal mortality rate of 20.7 per 100,000 live births, the lowest in the country's history.

Tallahassee, Florida - Florida's infant mortality rate is at an all-time low. State health officials credit improved prenatal and infant health care for the good news. The infant mortality rate dropped from 6.4 out of every 1,000 live births in 2011 to 6 in 2012. ●





GLOBAL CLASS STRUGGLE

Garment factories ignore pay law

Nearly 40 percent of the garment factories in Dhaka and its adjacent areas have not implemented a new wage structure which was to begin on Dec. 1.

Last September, thousands of demonstrators demanding higher wages forced the closure of 400 of the country's 5,000 clothing factories. The protests reflect the rising labour tensions in Bangladesh, which has the lowest wages in Asia after Myanmar. In November, the government finalised a minimum monthly wage of Tk 5,300 (\$76 Can.) for garment workers, a raise of 77 percent.

"It will take another two to three months for full implementation of the wage structure as the garment sector is passing through testing times," said Shahidullah Azim, vice-president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association.

A BGMEA survey conducted between January 10-22 covered 596 factories in Dhaka and 350 in the port city of Chittagong. Only 5 percent of the factories in Chittagong have implemented the new salary. The reason, Azim claimed, is that most of the factories there are "not as capable as the ones in Dhaka."

Most of the non-implementing factories have assured their workers that the new wage rates would take effect within next few months. There have been no reports of labour unrest yet over the delay, he said.

Amirul Haque Amin, president of the National Garment Workers Federation, said workers are lodging complaints every day but few can be resolved through discussion with the owners. According to the union's preliminary estimates, about half of the factories have implemented the new wage structure, and the others have failed because of "various problems."

Istanbul sit-in defends KESK

Istanbul police used tear gas on Jan. 22 against a group of people trying to hold a sit-in protest at Istanbul's Calayan Courthouse in support of members of the Confederation of Public Sector Trade Unions (KESK) who were being tried inside.

The group was in front of the courthouse building ahead of the trial of 56 KESK members, on charges of being members of an illegal organization. The protesters resisted dispersal despite being affected by the tear gas. After the intervention, the police allowed the group to make a statement.

KESK head Lami Ozgen called for the release of the charged members, who were detained on Feb. 19, 2013, and added that union activities were being cited as illegal activities in the indictment.

More U.S. workers join unions

The number of U.S. workers in unions rose by 162,000 last year.

An increase of 281,000 workers in private-sector unions was offset by the decrease of 118,000 public-sector union members, according to figures released by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS).

There were strong gains in construction and manufacturing, against a background of strike actions by low-wage workers in the private sector. But layoffs of continued to hurt overall public-sector union membership, leaving the total percentage of the workforce that is unionized virtually unchanged.

Said AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka: "Wall Street's Great Recession cost millions of America's workers their jobs and pushed already depressed wages down even further. But in 2013, America's workers pushed back... These numbers show that unorganized workers have taken up the fight for their right to a



voice on the job."

Workers in the public sector continued to bear the brunt of the continuing economic crisis, weak labour laws and political assaults on their rights on the job. In Wisconsin, political attacks on public-sector workers' right to collectively bargain resulted in bargaining coverage falling. Broadly, federal, state and local governments continued to lay off needed public workers, leading to an overall loss of 118,000 union members.

The BLS figures show that union members continue to have higher weekly median earnings than non-union workers - \$950 a week compared to \$750 a week. Union members also have greater access to health care, retirement savings plans, sick and vacation leave.

Key findings in the BLS survey include:

* Industries with the biggest growth include construction (up 95,000), hospitals and transportation equipment manufacturing.

* Sectors hit hardest include social assistance and administration and support services.

* By gender, 10.5% of women and 11.9% of men were in unions.

India union plans political campaign

A four-day national convention of the 200,000-member All India Insurance Employees Association (AIIEA) ended on a political note. The left-aligned union plans to launch a campaign, seeking better health care, education and removing private control of water supplies, reaching out to the public and unions from other sectors.

The conference was addressed by Communist Party (Marxist) Politburo member Sitaram Yechury, who urged delegates to take their agenda to the public.

One of the major resolutions passed during the conference calls for mobilizing the working class against communalism, especially the right-wing BJP and its prime ministerial candidate, Narendra Modi, which aim to "polarize the people for electoral benefits."

While the AIIEA is not directly affiliated to any political party, it is based on a left philosophy, said Amanullah Khan, union president. On whether the campaign will lead to any electoral gains to the left parties, he said it may get some mileage in Kerala or Tripura, but it is difficult to predict about West Bengal.

Khan said AIIEA will use its network of 8,000 branches across the country to press the three-point agenda of health care, education and water. Committees will be formed by uniting unions from various sectors. For example, unions of health sector, medical representatives and doctors will be associated.

"Successive governments have failed to provide these basic services. At the same time, the stress will also be on propagating that communalism is weakening the workers' movement," said Khan. "Attempts are being made to seclude the Muslim population from the rest of the country. This can be disastrous, indeed destroying the secular fabric of the country. Muslims form as much as 15% of the total population, equal to that of Indonesia."

New labour protests in Egypt

The Egyptian Centre for Economic and Social Rights (ECESR) reports that at least 26 labour protests took place between January 1 to 13. The different types of protests ECESR reported included eight demonstrations, nine strikes and seven sit-ins. At least eight of the 26 protests were organised in relation to a strike by doctors, which started on January 1.

The Doctors' Syndicate (union) has agreed to expand its action to a partial strike twice a week starting in February to push for reforms within the healthcare sector, and then to strike three days a week in March. Should the partial strike remain fruitless, the doctors intend to prolong their strike to an open-ended one after March. The doctors already carried out partial strikes on January 1 and 8, with a level of participation of at least 75%, according to union figures.

Doctors have been pushing for ratification of the draft Staff Law, which would organise financial, technical and administrative matters such as training, promotions and working hours for all professionals in the public healthcare sector. Doctors have also demanded an improvement in security conditions in hospitals, by lobbying for a law that enforces harsher penalties on anyone who commits an act of aggression

against doctors or hospitals, and an increase in the state budget for health.

During 2013, ECESR reported that Egyptian workers held 2,486 protests, 2,243 of which took place during the reign of ousted former President Mohamed Morsi. A total of 243 protests were held under the military-installed interim government.

KCTU rejects gov't guidelines

Korea's militant umbrella labour federation has rejected a set of government guidelines on wages, vowing to fight to reverse them.

In December, the Supreme Court ordered that regular bonuses paid to workers be classified as ordinary wages. The landmark ruling affects companies that do not count bonuses as regular payment.

Announcing guidelines for implementing the court decision, the Ministry of Employment and Labour said on Jan. 23 that some regular bonuses should be excluded if they are paid only to currently working employees, not those on leave or who recently departed. Ordinary wages refer to a fixed amount paid to an employee on a regular basis, and are used as the basis for calculating certain employee benefits, such as overtime pay, paid annual leave, severance pay and other allowances.

"We will declare a fight for the normalization of ordinary wages during a rally to be held sometime after a Feb. 25 general strike," Shin Seung-cheol, head of the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU), told reporters.

The KCTU plans to circulate its own guidelines to unions around the country, he said, warning that affiliates will later stage another general strike if the government and management ignore its demands.

The KCTU said the new government guidelines on

ordinary wages were the result of its erroneous understanding of a related court ruling intended to enhance workers' rights. The union points to a Supreme Court precedent that ruled if bonuses are paid regularly and in a fixed amount, even workers who leave the company soon before pay day can claim the money based on the number of days they worked.

The government guidelines have sparked a fierce backlash from unions, because most South Korean companies pay bonuses only to currently working employees, so that many workers would not fully benefit from the latest court ruling.

Toyota workers want pay hike

A key labour union in the Toyota Motor Corp. group plans to demand a pay scale hike of some 4,000 yen a month (\$43 Can.) in this year's "shunto" wage negotiations. The Toyota Motor Workers' Union is expected to present the plan to its members on Jan. 30 and finalize its demand on Feb. 6.

Wage talks at the leading Japanese automaker are being closely watched as a precursor to negotiations at other companies. The government is calling for pay hikes to keep up with the inflation it is stoking by weakening the yen, in order to improve corporate earnings.

Toyota President Akio Toyoda has said that companies with improved earnings should reward employees in the form of pay hikes. But he stopped short of endorsing overall pay scale hikes, arguing that the issue should be discussed between labour and management at each company.

The Toyota union last demanded a pay scale hike in 2009, but the demand was rejected amid the global financial crisis triggered by the collapse of U.S. investment bank Lehman Brothers in September 2008.

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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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New report dismantles U.S. accusation against Syria

By Kimball Cariou

The corporate media in Canada has ignored revelations exposing the U.S. claim that the Syrian military fired rockets carrying poison sarin gas into a Damascus suburb last August 21.

From the moment the accusations were made, many observers were extremely dubious. The gas attack killed hundreds of people, at a time when the Syrian government and armed forces were winning important successes against mercenaries backed by the NATO alliance and reactionary Gulf Arab regimes. Why would Syria pick such a moment to risk provoking a U.S. attack?

The incident invited comparison with the lies spread by the Bush regime about non-existent "weapons of mass destruction" to justify the 2003 destruction of Iraq. The extent of foreign involvement in the war against Syria pointed to a strong possibility that the gas attack may have been an attempt by the "rebels" to lure the U.S. into launching missiles. That strategy failed, in the wake of massive public scepticism in Britain and the United States.

Now, the McClatchy news service reports that "a team of security and arms experts, meeting ... in Washington to discuss the matter, has concluded that the range of the rocket that delivered sarin in the largest attack that night was too short for the device to have been fired from the Syrian government positions where the Obama administration insists they originated."

Apparently, the rocket in question, said to be an improvised 330mm to 350mm rocket equipped with a large receptacle on its nose to hold chemicals, did not appear in the Syrian government's declaration of its arsenal to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

Washington continues to claim that Syrian government forces could have used such a rocket.

But the authors of a report released on Jan. 15 said that it would have been impossible for the rocket to have been fired from inside areas controlled by the government of Syrian President Bashar Assad.

Titled "Possible Implications of Faulty U.S. Technical Intelligence," the report fingers a major weakness in the Obama administration's call for military action.

President Obama later withdrew his request for congressional authorization for a military strike, after Syria agreed to submit to the Chemical Weapons Convention.

The report focuses on one key target of the attacks, the suburb of Zamalka, where the largest quantity of sarin was released. Relying on mathematical projections about the likely force of the rocket, and noting its awkward design, the authors conclude that the rocket likely had a maximum range of two kilometers, far short of the necessary range of at least six kilometers.

The authors used a map produced by the White House, showing which areas were under government and rebel control on Aug. 21 and where the chemical weapons attack occurred. Drawing circles around Zamalka to show the range from which the rocket

U.S. analysis of Syrian chemical weapons attack is under fire

A new study suggests the U.S. intelligence assessments of the August 2013 chemical weapons attacks outside Damascus, Syria, were flawed. The study says the design of rockets used in the attacks, its likely payload and its possible trajectories show it would have been impossible for the rocket to have been fired from inside areas controlled by the Syrian government.



could have come, the authors conclude that the likely launching points were inside rebel-held or disputed areas.

Theodore Postol, a professor

of science, technology and national security policy at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, explained, "My view when I started this process was that it couldn't be

anything but the Syrian government behind the attack. But

www.mcclatchydc.com/2014/01/15/214656/new-analysis-of-rocket-used-in.html#storylink=cpy

now I'm not sure of anything. The administration narrative was not even close to reality. Our intelligence cannot possibly be correct."

The second author, former UN weapons inspector Richard Lloyd, disputed assumptions that the rebels are incapable of making rockets. "The Syrian rebels most definitely have the ability to make these weapons," he said. "I think they might have more ability than the Syrian government."

Both rejected U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry's insistence that satellite images had shown the impact points of the chemical weapons. The charges that detonate chemical weapons are too small, they said, to be visible in a satellite image.

"What, exactly, are we spending all this money on intelligence for?" Postol asked. ●

'Khalistan Movement' - the British hand

By B. Prasant, PV correspondent in India

The lanes and by-lanes of the Punjab town of Amritsar were not quite deserted that fateful evening in 1981. I crept along hugging the dilapidated brick-made boundary wall of a large single-storey house, my trusty Minolta 101 at the end of my upthrust left arm, clicking away blindly.

I was shooting at a large column of oddly jungle-camouflaged Indian army troops who crept along the far side path of the curving street, nervous fingers shivering along the trigger-guards of the British-made sten guns crooked in their arms. There was a sudden burst of gun fire from some roof top. The army column halted and the officers went into a huddle.

The smell of gunpowder hung acrid in the summer evening air. The Khalistan movement was raging across north India, with hundreds killed almost every week. What could have enraged the very stable and courageous community of the Sikhs, dubbed as one of the martial races over the centuries?

My mind went back to my childhood days when I lived in a large middle bourgeois household in north-central Calcutta. Our large and strapping chauffeur, the young Gurudev Singh, was the only man other than my father and uncles who was allowed into the andarmahal (inner sanctum) of the household, talking to the women and asking for the inevitable shopping lists of daily necessities.

I recalled the brave role of kirpan-brandishing groups of Sikhs on powerful motorbikes, saving men and women of both the majoritarian communities in Calcutta during the successive riots we had in the 1960s, 70s and 80s.

What had made the Sikhs go violent? The answer lies with the negotiated settlement called independence, which was handed over to India on a platter of platitudes by the Sandhurst man, Lord Mountbatten, to the Oxford-educated Nehru.

Linguistic states were set up across India. Only the Sikhs were asked to be satisfied with what at

least one right-wing Congress party leader called the truncated and moth-eaten remnants of Sikhdom. The Sikhs began by politely petitioning the Nehru government to expand into the Punjab, where the Punjabis had migrated after being driven out in a bloodbath from Pakistan.

When this was not done, the Sikhs started to agitate under the Akali Dal, which however had its allied loyalties to Congress and the centre-right groups in Delhi. The failure of the Akali Dal led other frustrated Sikh groups to the point of demanding semi-autonomy for the expanded Punjab.

This was the start of the movement for a separate, semi-independent state called Khalistan, by the Sikhs in particular and Punjabis in general. Khalistan means "land of the chaste." In an unfortunate turn, extremists among the Sikh leadership wanted Khalistan to be a theocratic entity, clashing with the existing religious groups as well as the state.

Terrorist elements soon took over. The killings of non-Sikhs started, as did those of Sikhs by "low-caste" communities of the majoritarian groups. There was indescribable violence on every side. The federal government, now under Indira Gandhi, deployed the Army and gave it a free hand. A hellish "Lebanese" situation developed in the entire sweep of north and central India.

Then an unfortunate event occurred in 1984. Under circumstances yet to unravel fully, Indira Gandhi was found dead, ridden with bullets inside her residential complex. One of her two bodyguards killed the other. The Indo-Tibetan border police officer guarding the complex killed the first bodyguard. All three were Sikhs with a high sense of loyalty to the prime minister, to the extent they were distrusted by the Sikhdom in general.

A fourth Sikh Army man was found on the spot, quickly brought to justice, and later hanged. Waves of killers spread out, under the overt and covert encouragement of the then majority political party, and in the space of two weeks

84,000 Sikhs were dead.

These events came just months after the Army, determined to deal a final blow to the theocratic centre of the Sikhs, attacked the Golden Temple of Amritsar and destroyed the Akal Takht, one of the seats of temporal-physical authority of the Sikhs. Close to four thousand Sikhs and a few Army men died in this "Operation Blue Star".

There was a sharp repercussion in the Hindi heartland. Burst after burst of killings on all sides took place - women and children as soft targets suffered most. The riots continued well into the 1990s. The Sikhs then gradually withdrew from all parts of India and considered it safe only in the Punjab, a sad story.

Recently, documents have been leaked that Margaret Thatcher's government facilitated and aided the Congress government to plan and execute Blue Star. The documents show that India sought the help of British intelligence, especially the SAS, to chalk out a plan to "oust the Sikhs" from the Golden Temple.

Accordingly, an SAS operative, maybe a team of officers, visited India and drew up a plan that the Indian Army subsequently put into operation. There is a possibility that a team of SAS officers took part in the op itself. According to

Army veterans we spoke to, the SAS in camouflage and visors carried dozens of RPGs and gas explosives which they used with deadly effect. Two letters that have appeared have put paid to all chances of the Congress getting into a denial mode about the role of the SAS.

The first letter from Thatcher's P.A. to the Indian PM talks about sending advisers to aid in occupying the Golden Temple. The second letter talks glibly about the possible role of the SAS in the op that was to be unleashed 'shortly' on the unsuspecting Sikh religious men and women and on others who reside in the Golden Temple. The officer then requests the Indian PM that the role of the SAS, if known to the public, would enrage the Indian community in the UK and elsewhere with "possible domestic implications."

Sikh communities in the sub-continent and those forming the diaspora in Great Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and the US have registered their strong protest over the dastardly events that have now come to light. Prime Minister Cameron's "inquiry" will do little assuage the hurt feelings of the Sikh community, and of all the right-thinking people of the sub-continent and beyond. ●



The Fifth of the Month to Free the Five

Join in the worldwide action 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

What will the "Billie Jean Delegation" mean for LGBT rights in Sochi?

The Winter Olympic Games opens Feb. 6 in Sochi, Russia. As always, the Olympics is more than a sporting competition, raising a wide range of social and economic issues. In the case of Sochi, these include the staggering expense (\$50 billion to host the event in a sub-tropical region), allegations of immense corruption, displacement of much of the local population, the potential for terrorist attacks, and a frightening level of military security. The Sochi Olympics also take place in the context of Russia's recent anti-gay laws. This column by progressive U.S. sports analyst Dave Zirin examines this topic.

Anyone who opposes the draconian anti-Gay laws in Russia, and supports the emerging movement of LGBT athletes in the sports world, should take serious note of the latest news out of Washington DC. President Barack Obama's White House has chosen their official delegation for the opening and closing ceremonies of the 2014 Winter Games in Sochi. For the first time since 2000, this group will not include a current or former President or Vice President. Instead, the faces representing of the United States will include out-and-proud tennis legend Billie Jean King and out-and-proud two-time Olympic hockey player Caitlin Cahow. [NOTE - plus figure skater Brian Boitano, who came out after Zirin's column was published.]

Both King and Cahow are far more than just people who happen to be "part of the LGBT community." King has been a fearless activist over the course of

decades on a host of issues from labor rights to women's reproductive freedom. On the issue of making sure Sochi is a platform of LGBT resistance she is as unafraid as one would expect,



saying that she is not only "deeply honoured" to be part of the delegation but is also "equally proud to stand with the members of the LGBT community in support of all athletes who will be competing in Sochi... I hope these Olympic games will indeed be a watershed moment for the universal acceptance of all people."

King was chosen even though she made an explicit plea for athletes to defy the International Olympic Committee's decree against political statements in Sochi, saying in September, "Sometimes I think we need a John

Carlos moment." This was a reference to the great 1968 Olympian who along with Tommie Smith raised his fist for civil rights on the 200 meter medal stand.

Caitlin Cahow's story is far less known than "the legend of Billie Jean" but she is also more than an athlete. Cahow is an activist who is part of what is known as the Principle 6 Campaign. This is a movement that aims to pressure the craven International Olympic Committee to actually enforce Principle 6 of its own charter which states, "Sports does not discriminate on grounds of race, religion, gender, politics or otherwise." Their work has already pushed the IOC to state that "otherwise" includes sexual orientation.

As Cahow has said, "The Olympics is a global celebration that belongs to all of us. Principle 6 is a way for everyone everywhere to celebrate the values that inspire the Olympic Games while showing their support for Russians suffering under Putin's human rights crackdown."

The appointing of King and Cahow is in so many respects a tribute to the movement over the past year of LGBT athletes to make sure the locker room no longer continues to be the last closet. It is also, let's be clear, a diplomatic power play by the Obama administration. The White House just delivered a thumb to the eye of a country that has challenged US hegemony in Syria and East Asia, and provided safe haven to NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden. There is a strong element here of the administration using LGBT rights like a pawn on a chessboard against a country that is more adversary than ally. It is hard to see it as anything else considering the lack of commentary from the Obama administration on ally India's recent anti-LGBT legislation. In addition, this White House's own piss-poor record in pushing The Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) and the attendant fact that it is still legal in 29 US states to fire people on the basis of their sexuality, should be mentioned every time this administration speaks out for LGBT rights internationally.

The most important question however is whether this move by the Obama administration to send the "Billie Jean Delegation" will serve to make the situation on the ground better for LGBT people in Russia or will it just serve to open the door for more repression? Will this provide a pretext for Putin to maliciously say that LGBT activists inside Russia are just tools of the United States? Does the intervention in a grass roots movement by the world's number one super power create more or less oxygen for the brave people fighting for their freedom inside Russia? After the smoke has cleared and all the delegations have gone home from Sochi it is the only question that really matters. ●



MUSIC NOTES

By Wally Brooker

Saxophonist enters T.O. mayoralty race

Jazz musician Richard Underhill has entered Toronto's mayoralty race, stepping out with the emphatic issues-oriented slogan "may the best PLAN win." He's rightly sidestepped the divisive and misleading personality politics surrounding controversial neo-con Mayor (and candidate) Rob Ford. Underhill is a Juno Award-winning saxophonist and co-founder of the Shuffle Demons, a popular jazz combo that combines funk, rap and avant-garde jazz with extravagant costumes. His platform contains a host of thoughtful and innovative proposals including: "Yes" to the Scarborough LRT; "No" to island airport expansion; more affordable housing, expanded TTC service, increased arts funding, more nutritional and recreational programs for kids and seniors, solar farms above TTC parking lots, and proportional representation. While he has little chance of winning, Underhill's campaign could have a positive effect on the outcome of the Oct. 27 vote. At the very least he'll help mobilize the arts community. He's promised to withdraw at some stage to support a "more viable progressive candidate." For more info visit: www.underhillformayor.com.

Where is Pussy Riot going?

In February 2012, five members of feminist punk rock collective Pussy Riot staged their anti-Putin "Punk Prayer" in Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Saviour, and became instant global celebrities. The subsequent "hooliganism" trial of members of the group exposed deep cultural fault lines in Russian society. The defendants attracted international support from prominent musicians, politicians, and human rights groups. The Pussy Riot story resumed in December, when band members Maria Alyekhina and Nadezhda Tolokonnikova were released as part of a general amnesty. The two announced that they would abandon performances to concentrate instead on founding "Rights Zone," a human rights organization. It's hard not to sympathize with these young women. They've exposed the cozy relationship between the governing United Russia Party and the Orthodox Church. Their "Punk Prayer", if nothing else, dramatized the reactionary nature of this alliance. But another statement gives cause for concern. The two also declared their "close ideological and conceptual cooperation" with the recently-released oligarch Mikhail Khodorkovsky. The tycoon (and reputed future presidential candidate) is the most prominent representative of a generation of corrupt Soviet-era bureaucrats who made vast fortunes, thanks to the wholesale privatization policies of the Yeltsin era. Are Alyekhina and Tolokonnikova naive or what?

Inaugural "Woody Guthrie Prize"

Legendary folksinger Woody Guthrie (1912-1967) has proven a hard act for American elites to co-opt. Despite the mainstream acclaim on the centenary of Guthrie's birth, his progressive legacy endures. Pete Seeger, who passed away on Jan. 27, was to have received the inaugural Woody Guthrie Prize at a Feb. 22 ceremony in New York. The annual award will honour an artist who "best exemplifies the spirit and life work of Woody Guthrie." In the announcement, Woody's daughter Nora Guthrie said, "We hope that the Woody Guthrie Prize will shed an inspirational light on those who have decided to use their talents for the common good rather than for personal gain," adding, tongue-in-cheek, that her father loved to refer to himself and a "common-ist." That Pete Seeger should be the first recipient is a no-brainer. Woody's old sidekick and friend inspired millions of people around the world, both with his music, and with his activism on behalf of world peace and countless social and environmental causes. An obituary of Pete Seeger will appear in our next issue. For more info visit: www.woodyguthriecenter.org.

Amiri Baraka 1934-2014

Poet, playwright, cultural critic and political activist Amiri Baraka died in Newark, NJ on Jan. 8. Typically, the *New York Times* headline announcing his death referred to him as a "polarizing" figure. Even before he founded the influential Black Arts Movement in 1965, Amiri Baraka (then known as LeRoi Jones) exerted a powerful influence on American culture. He played a leading role in the beat poetry movement in the 1950s. In the 1960s, he received acclaim for his play *The Dutchman*, and for his book *Blues People*, a groundbreaking study of African-American music. By the mid-seventies, influenced by his wife Amina, Baraka moved from cultural nationalism towards Marxism. He called himself a scientific socialist for the rest of his life. His influence on the younger generation can be heard on "Something of the Way Things Are (In Town)", his 2002 collaboration with hip-hop band The Roots. The Jan. 10 episode of Democracy Now (www.democracynow.org) was dedicated to Amiri Baraka. It features archival film clips (including one of the poet performing with jazz saxophonist David Murray), and insightful interviews with Puerto Rican and African-American activists he'd mentored, as well as with his Black Arts Movement collaborator, poet Sonia Sanchez. For more info visit: <http://peoplesworld.org>.

REDS ON THE WEB

www.comunist-party.ca

www.peoplesvoice.ca

www.ycl-ljc.ca

rebelyouth-magazine.blogspot.com

<http://solidnet.org>



La Trova Nuestra

Friday, January 31, 8 pm

"La Peña Nuestra"

Centre For Socialist Education, Vancouver

706 Clark Drive (Clark and Georgia st)

\$10 Entry

About Vancouver's "La Trova Nuestra"

La Trova Nuestra is composed of 20 individual trovadores who originate from across Latin America and now reside in Vancouver. These trovadores are the keepers of a musical tradition which began with pioneers of the vernacular song. La Trova Nuestra incorporates this tradition interplaying music and poetry. At its foundation is the essence of a popular culture interpreting daily expression... an expression with origins deep within La Raza Mestiza (mixed roots) of Latin America - an expression of the explosive changes within the continent of Latin America today. La Trova Nuestra could be defined as "The encounter between a man, a guitar and poetry -Voices pledging for a better world."

Workplace fatalities in Iran

Iran, Jan. 19, 2014: "two female workers were killed in a fire that broke out in a textile workshop."

The fatality of workers because of profiteering of employers and lack of monitoring by the inspectors of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security has become common [in Iran]. On the day before the fatal accident, three well-digging workers in Argentine Square in Tehran lost their lives under the rubble of a collapsed well.

On Jan. 12, a worker died after falling from a building scaffold in Mashhad. On Jan. 8, five members of the technical crew died in an explosion during a filming project. The tragic fatality of workers does not happen only in small shops. On Jan. 6, a worker's uniform was caught on a load-carrying car in the subway line in Ahwaz, which resulted in the tragic death of the worker. On Jan. 4, at the Petrochemical plant in Khorram-Abad (Lorestan province), two welders were killed in an explosion of a gasoline tank. These are just a few examples of workplace accidents that are reported and reflected in the media.

In this recent case of the tragic death of two textile workers, firefighters came to the scene without air cushions and aerial ladders long enough to reach the higher floors of the burning building. Realizing that firefighters did not have proper equipment, the terrified workers jumped out of the window to escape the blazing flames. This fatal incident

CCFA-Toronto holds annual Marti dinner

The Canadian-Cuban Friendship Association-Toronto held its annual Dinner and Dance on Jan. 25 to honour the 161st birthday of Cuban poet and revolutionary hero, Jose Marti.

Juan Carranza, a Toronto lawyer who chaired the Tribunal on the Cuban Five in Toronto in 2011, was an eloquent and lively master of ceremonies for the evening.

Javier Domokos Ruiz, Consul General of Cuba, brought a message of greetings. He spoke of the upcoming summit in Havana of CELAC, made up of all Latin

happened in an area close to the Presidential Palace.

The Union of Metalworkers and Mechanics of Iran extends condolences to the mourning families of the killed workers, and pledges to submit a report to the ILO about the large number of workplace accidents in Iran. ●

(Union of Metalworkers and Mechanics of Iran, Jan. 20, 2014)

American and Caribbean countries. "The summit will look at a very important resolution declaring Latin America and the Caribbean as a zone of peace," he said.

The event welcomed new Consuls of Cuba, Teresa Daisy Diaz Albuerno and Francesca Rivero Rodriguez. Special guests for their first CCFA event were Damarys Maldonado, Vice-President of Havana House and her family. Also, John Cartwright, President of the Toronto and York Region Labour Council attended with a number of members from the Ontario Public Service Employees Union.

Elizabeth Hill, President of the CCFA Toronto, thanked the many volunteers for their support that made possible the Jose Marti evening. She talked of a new book of Marti's poetry in Spanish and English, edited by Professor Keith Ellis, and announced an information meeting on the Che Guevara Brigade, taking place on Feb. 9. ●

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**Tickets just \$5... Door Prize:
One week all-inclusive trip
for Two to Cuba!**



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Komagata Maru calendar released

A calendar dedicated to the centenary of the *Komagata Maru* episode has been released. Issued by the Indo Canadian Workers' Association (ICWA) the calendar bears the picture of the passengers aboard *Komagata Maru*, which was forced to return under the discriminatory immigration law by the Canadian government 100 years ago.

Chartered by Gurdit Singh, the ship took over 300 South Asian passengers aboard, travelling to Canada for a better livelihood. The passengers were not allowed to disembark and were forced to return on July 23, 1914, under the shadow of guns. Canadian authorities now acknowledge that it was a discriminatory act. Prime Minister Stephen Harper has apologized for the episode in 2008, and the British Columbia legislature has passed a motion of apology.

The calendar carries other important dates related to the history of South Asian political activists in Canada. It was issued by Raj Toor, a member of a group representing the descendants of the *Komagata Maru* passengers, and local elected officials, MP Jinny Sims and MLA Harry Bains. The ICWA has been issuing annual calendars dedicated to political activism since 2007, when the birth centenary of India's towering revolutionary Bhagat Singh was celebrated. The 2014 calendar is also dedicated to Bhaag Singh's death centenary. Bhaag Singh, a prominent community leader, died in a temple shooting in September 1914, in the aftermath of the *Komagata Maru* incident. He was shot by an agent of the controversial Immigration Inspector William Hopkinson, who was later assassinated by another political activist, Mewa Singh.

Bhaag Singh had played a significant role in various social justice struggles for equal rights to the immigrants. ICWA President Surinder Sangha warned that the challenges such as racism continue to prevail even today, and called upon the community to get organized and resist rather than remaining confined to symbolic celebrations.

In the meantime, Punjabi Sahit Sabha Mudhli will hold an event in Abbotsford to mark the 100th death anniversary of Harnam Kaur, the wife of Bhaag Singh. Harnam Kaur had participated in the struggle for right to bring families from India. The event will be held at the Heritage Sikh temple, 2 pm, Sunday, February 2. ●

What's Left

Cross-Canada

Omnibus March Against Harper, Saturday, March 1, events across Canada. For local details, check on Facebook.

Victoria, BC

Save the Agricultural Land Reserve, Family Day rally at the Legislature, 12 noon, Monday, Feb. 10. See www.farmlandprotection.ca

Vancouver, BC

La Trova Nuestra, evening of Latin American music and socialising, admission \$10, 8 pm, Friday, Jan. 31 and Feb. 28, Centre for Socialist Education, 706 Clark Drive.

Day of Dignity, event honouring 22nd anniversary of military uprising led by Hugo Chavez in Venezuela, 7 pm, Tues., Feb. 4, Chilean Co-op, 3390 School Ave. Organized by Hugo Chavez People's Defense Front.

Central American celebration, honouring 32nd anniversary of the URNG (Guatemala), Saturday, Feb. 8, 7 pm, free admission, at the CSE, 706 Clark Drive.

Save Canada Post, solidarity leaflet & banner action organized by BC Committee CPC, Sat., Feb. 8, 12 noon, across from Canada Post main outlet, 300 block W. Georgia. Ph. 604-254-9836 for details.

Left Film Night, Sunday, Feb. 23, 7 pm, at the CSE, 706 Clark Drive. For film information, call 604-255-2041.

Reverse the Liberal tax cuts, public forum, Thursday, Feb. 27, 7:30 pm, at the CSE, 706 Clark Drive. For info, ph. Vancouver East Club CPC, 604-255-2041.

Edmonton, AB

"The socialist press in the age of the internet", forum with PV Editor Kimball Cariou, 2 pm, Sat., Feb. 15, at Hostel International downstairs meeting room, 10647-81 Ave. For info, call 780-435-6795.

Toronto, ON

Cafe Cuba, Sunday, February 9, 2 pm, Greek Hall, 290 Danforth Ave. Learn about the 2014 Che Guevara Volunteer Work Brigade to Cuba, April 28-May 17, from National Coordinator, Alvand Mohtashami. Sponsored by Canadian-Cuban Friendship Association Toronto (CCFA), ph. Mara at 416-253-1393.

Norman Bethune Day Dinner, Sat., Feb. 22, 7 pm, 290 Danforth Ave. Tickets \$5, door prize all-inclusive trip for two to Cuba. Media sponsor: People's Voice. For tickets & info, call 416-469-2446.

Guelph, ON

Public Auto Insurance, Tues., Feb. 11, 5:30 pm, forum at Room 441, University Centre, University of Guelph. Call CPC (Ontario) at 416-469-2446 for information.

Montreal, QC

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

Pete Seeger, 1919-2014

Pete Seeger, the iconic singer/songwriter who personified folk music in North America for most of his life, died on January 27 in a Manhattan hospital, at the age of 94. His death came just a few weeks before he was to receive the inaugural Woody Guthrie Prize, honouring Seeger's musical and political mentor. As a *New York Times* obituary wrote, "Seeger's career carried him from singing at labour rallies to the Top 10 to college auditoriums to folk festivals, and from a conviction for contempt of Congress (after defying the House Un-American Activities Committee in the 1950s) to performing on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial at an inaugural concert for Barack Obama." For readers of People's Voice, Pete

Seeger will always be remembered as a musician who devoted his enormous talents to the struggles for working class rights, peace, social justice, democracy, equality, and environmental protection. A full obituary will appear in our next issue. ●

People's Voice deadlines

February 15-28 issue: Thursday, Feb. 6

March 1-15 issue: Thursday, Feb. 20

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

Postal privatization hurts EU workers....

continued from page 2

are self-employed drivers paid at piece rates. Both the new companies and the former national post companies contract "service partners" who, in turn, hire self-employed drivers to carry out the delivery tasks. In 2010, 85 per cent of the parcels sent through Dutch Post were delivered by subcontractors.

Some former national companies also use temporary employment, including Malta (where 32 per cent of the workforce of the former public postal company are employed on a

temporary basis), Estonia (21 per cent), Greece (18 per cent), Poland and Ireland (14 per cent), the Czech Republic (13 per cent), Finland (12 per cent), and Portugal (9 per cent).

Some former national companies cut wages for workers hired after a certain date in the liberalization process (in Germany minus 30 per cent after 2001, in Austria minus 25 per cent after 2008). In others, wage cuts were decreed for new job categories, such as assistant or auxiliary mail deliverers, who earn 40 per cent less in the Netherlands.

The wages paid by the new competitors are usually still lower

than the reduced wages of the former national companies. In Germany and Austria, the difference is about 30 per cent, while in Spain it may have risen to 50 per cent since the economic crisis.

Liberalization and new surveillance technology have led to a far-reaching deterioration of working conditions. This includes the extension of delivery routes, and under-staffing in post offices and sorting centres.

In the parcel and express service industry, self-employed deliverers need to cope with unforeseen difficulties, and also from working hours of up to 15 hours per day. ●

Carry on spying...

By Rob Gowland, from *The Guardian*, weekly of the Communist Party of Australia

Have you noticed how the brouhaha over the revelations that America's spy agencies eavesdropped on everybody's phone calls, correspondence, conversations and so on, with the willing co-operation of so-called "social media" companies, has quietly been allowed to fade away?

True, in the USA, President Obama has enacted some milk-sop legislation that is supposed to curb the "excesses" of the intelligence agencies, but which in reality merely adds an annoying level of extra bureaucracy to be negotiated before it's "business as usual".

In Britain, the country that leads the world in domestic surveillance, David Cameron's Tory government has not only refrained from joining the global criticism of US "extraterritorial" surveillance, but has continued to make its GCHQ electronic spying centre in Cheltenham available to support the USA's NSA bugging program.

The global outcry over this US spying spree, disclosed in all its gobsmacking breadth by former NSA employee Edward Snowden, was fended off by US authorities as necessary to fight terrorism. That argument looked a bit threadbare when the victims of this US bugging were revealed to include German Chancellor Angela Merkel. Bugging her phone would surely reveal nothing about terrorist groups, but it could reveal much about German capitalism's approach to US plans to dominate the world's energy resources, about German capital's response to the US push for free trade agreements (giving the US much-needed market access), and about German imperialism's own plans for German domination of south-eastern Europe.

Knowing just exactly what your "friends" are doing in the area of international trade can give a government a trillion dollar advantage, something not to be sneezed at.

It was Henry Kissinger who

memorably said "America has no friends, only interests". Today, all around the world, governments that used to be proud to be numbered among those "interests" are now reassessing their relationship with the American superpower. Just what benefits do they get for allowing their rights to be walked on quite so blatantly?

The present US assault on democratic rights and national sovereignty is meant to be the spearhead of a general capitalist assault on working people, on the poor and have-nots, by a



system that is staring catastrophe in the face. The richest, most powerful capitalist country, the USA, is watching its economic empire crumble. By reducing the bulk of the people to the status of peons, the chiefs of the big corporations hope to ride out the coming crisis with minimum discomfort. But the writing is already on the wall.

Just last week, the ABC ran a short news story about China's financial assets. Pointing to a clutch of high-rise office buildings in one of China's east-coast cities, the commentator observed that the headquarters of many of the world's most important and profitable companies were located in China. "And what is more important", he said, "they are owned by the State."

And it is an important point: whereas in other countries, big corporations tell the government what to do ("to make business conditions better"), in China the government tells the big corporations where it wants capital invested and in what manner.

The Bank of China has more financial assets than the World Bank and the Bank of Asian Development combined. Every fourth thing manufactured in the world is made in China. In the US, manufacturing - once the mainstay of the country's economy - is disappearing down the drain. Look at Detroit: once the epitome of

ascendant capitalism, now almost a ghost town.

US imperialism is in deep trouble. More and more countries are writing their international contracts in currencies other than US dollars, once the universal choice for such transactions. Now, with the US owing trillions of dollars, making it the world's

biggest debtor nation by far, foreign governments have become fearful that a crash could wipe out their foreign reserves as well as the US government's.

It was this potential global threat that prompted Chinese economist Liu Chang in October of last year

to call for the "de-Americanisation of the world". I imagine that did not go down well in Washington!

In all this economic turmoil, there is a growing possibility of an alliance of sorts between the increasingly significant BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) and the EU countries. The latter of course are having all sorts of problems of their own, with austerity measures, raging unemployment and no sign of improvement in the future.

Meanwhile, in Ukraine, the right-wing have been staging mass rallies demanding the government join the EU as a way of overcoming their economic difficulties. The people of Spain, Portugal, France and Greece would probably wonder at the wisdom of that particular approach! (The Right in Ukraine is, of course, more interested in avoiding closer ties to Russia than in whether the EU is really the economic nirvana that they claim it is.)

If an alliance between the BRICS countries and the EU were

to replace the USA as the dominant economic force in the world, the world would still be predominantly capitalist. But there would be a mix of economies, and it would be a multi-polar world. And that would be a big step forward from where we are now.

In the meantime, imperialism is fighting to protect its foothold on power, and that means continued surveillance, continued spying on unions, revolutionaries, even vaguely progressive politicians, governments and movements everywhere around the world, in fact any one any where who might help or hinder US interests. But people, all over the world, have come out in a remarkable show of support for Edward Snowden and against US spying.

In Australia, we have our own spy scandal as we learn of the role of this country's Signals Directorate in spying on impoverished East Timor in order to more easily steal that country's natural gas reserves. How morally bankrupt can Australian capitalism get? ●

Harper's Planeload

By Judy Haiven and Sid Shniad

Headlines in the news trumpet the fact that the Prime Minister has taken a group of 208 (!) supporters to Israel, many at Canadian taxpayers' expense.

Reading through the list is an eye-opener. It includes 21 Jewish rabbis and more than 56 representatives from various Zionist lobbying groups and private Jewish schools. In addition, there are 10 representatives from evangelical Christian groups which unconditionally support the most extreme Israeli positions. The delegation includes members of these groups: the Christian Missionary Alliance of Canada, the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, Trinity Bible Church, Crossroads Christian Communications, and the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada.

The Prime Minister is also taking more than 27 chief



executives of Canadian corporations, lawyers and two Canadian university presidents.

From his own government, the Prime Minister brings six cabinet ministers and eight Tory MPs. In addition, he gave free seats to former Tory cabinet minister Stockwell Day and his wife Valerie. Stockwell Day sits on the board of the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA), the most prominent pro-Israel lobbying group in Canada.

The rear of the plane was reserved for members of the media. The cost - \$8,000 for the flight, hotel and ground transportation for each reporter or photographer covering Harper's trip - gives some indication just how much Canadian taxpayers will be on the hook for this political undertaking.

What will the Prime Minister's huge delegation do? There will be little of substance. But clearly that's not the real purpose of the trip, in any event. Harper's junket is designed to mark the beginning of an unsurpassed effort to align the Canadian government with one of the most aggressive, intransigent, hardline, expansionist governments in the history of Israel.

Why is Harper doing this? The PM is doubling down on his already unprecedented alliance with Benjamin Netanyahu in order to woo Jewish and Christian evangelist voters' support in Canada's 2015 federal election.

It's a pity that, having spent all of this taxpayer money on getting so many of his supporters on this junket, the PM doesn't do something really useful. What the PM should do is get the Israelis to stop expanding their settlements on the West Bank and remove them altogether because they are illegal under international law. The Jewish settlements are a major obstacle to a just and lasting peace. They are what is generating a rising tide of international opposition to Israel.

By ignoring Israel's transgressions and giving unconditional support to the government of Israel, the PM shames us all.

(Judy Haiven teaches at Saint Mary's University. Sid Shniad is retired research director of the Telecommunications Workers Union. This commentary is from the website of Independent Jewish Voices-Canada, ijvcanada.org/2014/harpers-planeload.) ●

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