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# people's VOICE

## BDS victory in Montreal

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## Global wealth gap: Billionaires take half of all income

*see page 12*



# WANTED



## for attacks on civil rights and free speech

"Under the cover of "safe-guarding our freedom from terrorism", the Harper government is moving to escalate militarism and aggression abroad, and further erode democratic liberties – especially the right to dissent – at home.

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**TDSB under fire**

The latest right-wing attack against public education and local democracy is underway in Toronto, where Trustees are under orders to sell off schools and ignore the interests of staff, students, parents and communities.

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**Cuba's future**

In the wake of the historic release of the Cuban Five patriots, President Raul Castro outlines new challenges faced by the country.

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**Greek election**

The Jan. 25 parliamentary elections in Greece saw a victory for the anti-austerity SYRIZA party, but by itself, this outcome may not bring the results many working people hope to achieve.



# Liberal Government attacks TDSB, orders 133 school closures

## PV Ontario Bureau

Forty-two deputants and many more parents, students, teachers and supporters of public education gave the Toronto and District School Board a strong message on Jan. 26 not to comply with 13 directives that would see up to 25% of the city's public schools close, and profoundly alter the role of locally elected Trustees. Minister of Education Liz Sandals issued her directives on Jan. 15, with an implementation deadline of Feb. 13, leaving the newly elected Board reeling and the public still largely in the dark.

Sandals commanded the TDSB to close 133 schools which the Ministry claims are under-utilized and must be sold off, to cover \$3 billion in capital costs to repair hundreds of schools in various states of disrepair after 25 years of provincial under-funding. The closures add up to almost a quarter of the 588 schools in the system.

The Directives also command the Board to immediately close Trustee offices, lay-off part-time Trustee assistants, and ban Trustees from all involvement in the selection of principals and superintendents, as well as any involvement in the schools they are responsible for, or in the administration of schools system-wide. Sandals states that the Ministry is proposing to dismantle the Board, but has not yet decided how or what to replace it with.

The Board's initial January 19 meeting voted to comply with the Directives after the TDSB's lawyer advised that the government had amended a Regulation to give themselves the power to override the Education Act. The message was that the Board had no legal choice, but to comply.

With 11 of the 22 Trustees newly elected and in office only 46 days, the politics of fear and intimidation took hold. Almost the entire Jan. 19 meeting was spent trying to figure out how to accomplish compliance by the deadline, just 25 days away. Only one Trustee, Howard Kaplan, voted against compliance, urging the Board to consult with parents and educators and to test public opinion before making any decisions.

Kaplan was successful in getting the Board to hold the Jan. 26 public meeting, at which 41 of the 42 deputations came armed with facts

and figures that exposed the folly of the Directives. The sale of TDSB properties to date showed an average of \$6 million generated on each sale, while the cost of building a new school is \$15 million. According to TDSB's own figures, it would never be able to buy back these properties, many of which are prime downtown real estate.

The calculations of under-utilization used by the province also exclude space used by childcare centres, as well as space used for services to youth and new Canadians, such as English as a Second Language, and other vital programs that the community has fought for decades to hold in Toronto schools. Schools declared "under-utilized" are actually being fully utilized, serving as desirable community hubs that are lauded in the media and promised by politicians running for office.

Several referred to the Mike Harris Tories, who in 1995 declared war on public education. Their aim was to "create a crisis" that would open the door to a wholesale change in education funding, governance, labour relations, and curriculum. The results included increasing the drop out rate with racist "zero tolerance" policies, an attack on liberal arts education, and elimination of grade 13.

Several spoke about boondoggles over the gas plants, ehealth, ORNGE, Bill 115, and other scandals, pointing out the Liberals have no moral authority to attack the TDSB. Toronto Trustees represent constituencies that are twice as big as provincial ridings - which have six times the staff and budgets, and full-time elected

representatives.

Toronto District Labour Council President John Cartwright called on the Board to reject the Directives, as did representatives of OSSTF, CUPE and the ETT, the main unions at the TDSB. Teachers spoke about the losses their students would suffer, and parents from across the City expressed their distress at the consequences for their schools and neighbourhoods. Domenic Bellissimo told Trustees they were the voice of parents and communities who were counting on them.

Former Trustees Elizabeth Hill and Liz Rowley pointed out that when previous provincial governments tried similar things, the Board and Trustees had refused to comply, showing courage and integrity, with the support of their communities. Hill thanked Howard Kaplan for voting against compliance, and urged the Board to do likewise.

Liz Rowley spoke about the provincial budget and the Liberal plan to cut \$500 million from education this year and to freeze public sector wages. This will create turmoil in the schools, and the public will blame you, she told the trustees, saying "Don't do it!"

With the public still discovering what the Directives will mean for their children and grandchildren, the Board has agreed to organize meetings in Scarborough and at the old York Board of Education building in the west end. This is the opportunity for the public to give a clear direction to the Board, not to comply with the latest attack on public education. ●



Democratic rights are for everyone, including the right to elect your local school board. (PV photo by Ed Bil)

## LABOUR NEWS

### Challenges for U.S. unions

The release of annual union membership numbers by the U.S. Bureau of Labour Statistics shows that workers are either seeking good union jobs or taking matters into their own hands by forming unions to raise wages and ensure that new jobs are good jobs.

That was the view of AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka, pointing out that "In 2014, workers made great strides and confronted great challenges, including major organizing wins at American Airlines, multiple state legislative victories on the minimum wage and innovative campaigns conducted by carwash workers, among others. We recognize, however, that right-wing billionaires' extremist politics, a rapacious Wall Street and insufficient advocacy from political leaders thwarted further progress."

Trumka noted that President Obama's recent State of the Union address said the U.S. economy has seen 58 consecutive months of job growth, but also that there is a need for laws that strengthen unions and give workers a voice. As Trumka said, "The most important question is not simply how many jobs we're creating, but are we creating jobs that raise wages for all? A strong recovery must be built on family-sustaining, not poverty-level jobs."

Key Labour Statistics trends include: union density edged up for workers 16 to 24, from 4.2 to 4.5%; some growth in public sector union density, largely due to higher numbers of women members; union density growth in the leisure and hospitality industry, and among Latino men, Asian American women, and Black women and men.

Last year, more than 92,000 U.S. workers joined AFSCME, including 20,000 home health care workers, and 14,500 customer service agents who work for American Airlines voted for union representation with CWA after the merger with US Airways. This victory was especially significant for 9,000 former American Airlines agents who have been part of a 19-year long organizing effort. Workers at an Alabama Copper parts plant voted to organize into the United Steelworkers, despite extensive political intimidation. Nurses and hospital workers voted to form unions at two hospitals in Connecticut, overcoming intimidation by hospital administrators.

### Beer Can Boycott Expands

Ontario beer drinkers are being urged to join a growing boycott of beer cans produced by a union-busting American corporation. The boycott, endorsed by the Ontario Federation of Labour, is expanding with radio ads and Beer Store demonstrations in communities across the province.

The boycott supports Toronto factory workers forced on strike in 2013 by U.S. multinational Crown Holdings, one of the world's largest beer can manufacturers. After provoking the strike, Crown hired replacement workers to operate the Toronto plant and prolong the dispute, which is now into its 17th month.

Crown forced the dispute by demanding huge concessions from its workers, despite increased profits and recognizing the Toronto factory as its top plant in North America. Crown's demands included wage cuts of up to 42 per cent for young workers to create a two-tier workplace eradicating decent jobs for future generations.

"This is a brutal example of a profitable, giant corporation attacking decent working and living standards that built our middle class," said Marty Warren, Ontario Director of the United Steelworkers. "Despite 17 months on the picket line, these men and women continue to fight for a middle-class future for their families and for the next generation of workers. That's why we're encouraging consumers to send a message to this company. By buying bottled beer rather than cans, they can help working families get a fair deal to end this dispute."

From [www.bottlesnotcans.ca](http://www.bottlesnotcans.ca)

### Alberta health workers reject cuts

Front-line workers are not to blame for Alberta's financial woes and will not accept wage rollbacks, said the President of the union representing 25,000 health care professionals on Jan. 26.

"The ink is barely dry on our new contract with Alberta Health Services (AHS), so to hear Premier Prentice attacking our wages has infuriated our members," said Elisabeth Ballermann, President of the Health Sciences Association of Alberta (NUPGE). "If this government was surprised by the strength of protests over the attack on our pensions last year, they haven't seen anything yet. This attack on our livelihoods will not go unchallenged. We are not to blame for the Conservatives' failure to manage provincial finances for decades."

"Volatile oil prices aren't a surprise. To use them as an excuse to force wage rollbacks is inexcusable. The real issue in Alberta is the unfair tax regime that has given unnecessary massive tax breaks to the wealthy and profitable corporations."

A total of 17,000 HSAA members working for AHS recently approved a new contract that saw raises below cost-of-living increases. "They simply won't accept ripping up that contract to accept pay cuts," said Ballermann. "Albertans know this is unfair and don't like it. If the premier calls an early election this spring, this will be the defining issue. It's time for all Albertans to pay their fair share."

Alberta health care workers accepted a wage rollback during the Klein years on the promise that it would mean there would be no layoffs. That promise was broken, said Ballermann, but the workers will not be fooled again.

## Defend the rights of teachers in Iran

The UK-based Committee for the Iranian People's Rights (CODIR) reports that thousands of Iranian teachers joined an unprecedented strike on Jan. 20-21 to protest against hardship, job insecurity and the economic policies of the Iranian regime. Teachers marched in the capital and other cities, and a number were arrested.

Teachers fear that the government is planning to limit their salary increase to below the rate of inflation. In the draft budget for 2015/16, spending on education is seriously limited, while the budget for favoured departments, such as the Islamic Guards Corps, has increased by 60%.

Earlier in January, 6000 teachers signed a petition demanding the "elimination of discrimination and establishment of justice between teachers and other employees".

Teachers are concerned that privatisation is also on the agenda, as the government seeks to meet IMF requirements to deregulate the economy. As part of its restructuring programme, during the next ten years, the Islamic Republic intends to cut the number of school teachers from over 1,000,000 to 750,000, a 25% reduction. The government intends to diminish the status of teachers by drafting in retired teachers, university graduates and volunteers to fill any gaps.

CODIR Assistant General Secretary, Jamshid Ahmadi, stressed the significance of the current action, saying "Teachers in Iran find themselves living on the breadline... The short-sighted approach of the leaders of the theocratic regime has led to the turning out of a poorly educated, low paid workforce rather than investment in the skills necessary to enable the Iranian economy to grow. Keeping teachers on low pay and cutting their numbers underlines the lack of vision of the leadership of the Islamic Republic and its inability to forge a path independent of the strictures of the IMF."

- From [www.codir.net](http://www.codir.net)



# Political focus of BC Labour – the main issue

## BC Labour Committee CPC

In his farewell speech last November to delegates at the BC Federation of Labour, which he led for 15 years, retiring President Jim Sinclair highlighted the many positive actions of the Federation under his leadership: defending health care, education and social services in the face of massive government cuts; criticizing the outrageous tax cuts for big business and the wealthiest in the province; working with community allies in campaigns on these issues.

Although not directly stated as such, the main theme of his speech reflected the differing approaches to the question of the political role of the BC Fed. Should the main organization of labour activism in the province have an independent political voice for the working class, or simply concern itself with trade union issues and leave political affairs to the New Democratic Party? This was the

opening shot in the leadership debate that dominated the five-day convention.

The only contentious resolution of note was one submitted by CUPE-BC calling on the BC Fed to reject strategic voting, and to reaffirm its total support for the NDP. Not surprisingly, because of the political undercurrents in play due to the leadership contest, this resolution drew a considerable amount of attention and debate. Despite strong opposition from many delegates, the resolution narrowly passed.

The two sides of this issue were clearly evident in the leadership contest. Irene Lanzinger from the BC Teachers Federation, and the federation's outgoing Secretary Treasurer, represented a continuation of the activist policies established under Sinclair. She had the support of some of the largest affiliates widely considered to be more militant or left-leaning, such as Unifor, Hospital Employees



The new President of the BC Federation of Labour, Irene Lanzinger (Photo from Tyee.ca)

Union, CUPW, the BC Teachers Federation and local labour councils.

Amber Hockin from CUPE, currently the CLC's Pacific Region Director, was the other candidate. Her approach advocated a return to the political policies in effect under the previous leadership of Ken Georgetti, who was defeated last May as CLC president after a contest reflecting similar debates. Hockin's campaign was endorsed by the BCGEU, COPE 378, CUPE BC, the IBEW Provincial Council, and IAMAW 250.

Both campaigns spared no effort to bus in as many supporters as possible, inflating the number of credentialed delegates to a whopping 2227 on voting day, the largest convention ever. In a close vote, illustrating the political divisions in the BC labour movement, Lanzinger won by just 57 votes when the counting was done.

Lanzinger deliberately chose to not campaign together with a candidate for Secretary Treasurer, rejecting the concept of "slates" as undemocratic and not needed in the labour movement. The Hockin campaign partnered with Aaron Ekman, Northern Regional Coordinator with the BC Government and Service Employees' Union, as her running mate for Secretary Treasurer. This set up a clear contest for President, but until just before the close of nominations for Secretary Treasurer, it appeared that Ekman would be un-opposed.

Many believed that based on Ekman's history in the Vancouver

area as the chair of the VDLC Youth Committee, he would be an acceptable choice for Lanzinger's supporters. There were even some buttons circulating that said, "Lanzinger and Ekman – The Dream Team". However, Ekman distanced himself from this supposition, with critical comments directed towards Sinclair and his record, suggesting that the outgoing president's policies were partly responsible for the decline in labour density in the province. Both campaigns expressed their concern around this issue, identifying it as a major problem, but only Lanzinger clearly linked the decline to mass layoffs, plant closures, and the attack on unions by big business, and also to government cuts, contracting out and legislative changes which have made it harder for unions to organize.

A lot of the goodwill towards Ekman was diminished during the campaign when he identified himself with traditional economist, right social-democratic attitudes to working class politics. Many of his key interventions reinforced the political positions of the affiliates who supported the Hockin-Ekman team, surprising some observers.

The response was the last minute nomination of Howard Huntley from the Grain Workers Union for the position of Secretary Treasurer. He received an impressive 722 votes to Ekman's 1027. Clearly this was a tactical move intended to send a message that many delegates were wary of the attempt to shift away from the strategies advanced by Sinclair and

Lanzinger.

The working class of British Columbia will be best served by the continuation and expansion of the political direction established under Sinclair. This provides a jumping off point for real and productive resistance to the attack on the working class and its most organized section, the trade unions. It remains to be seen if Lanzinger and Ekman will develop the close partnership necessary to carry this work forward.

The debate over which political trend will become dominant in the labour movement is clearly not settled. This is and has been for some time the debate among labour activists across Canada, a debate which actually screens the much deeper and more important divide between collaboration/tri-partism versus class struggle strategies to defend working class interests. Unqualified support for the NDP, or independent labour political action, can be two sides of a coin only if the latter means mobilization and extra-parliamentary struggle in the here and now. If the departure from exclusive support for the NDP is only a shift towards strategic voting collaboration with the Liberals – one section of big business – the class struggle is weakened, not strengthened.

Within this context, the BC Fed convention delegates gave a clear mandate that the majority approve of class-based, independent labour activism. The job of the new leadership is to act on this mandate immediately, not simply prepare for the 2017 provincial election. ●

## Feb. 21 Dinner Celebrates Ontario Party Builders!

A unique Dinner and Evening is being organized in Toronto to celebrate the 2014-15 Builders of the Communist Party in Ontario. Delicious food in a restaurant booked specially for the occasion, will be one of several highlights during an evening celebrating the many new members who have joined the Party in Ontario in the past 14 months, and the comrades who introduced them to the Party and invited them to join.

This will be an evening to remember! Tickets are \$20, available from the Provincial Office or from CPC Club Organizers. Everyone is welcome, but tickets are limited to those who are new CPC members or who have signed up a new member between January 2014 and February 21, 2015.

Application cards are in plentiful supply and also available from the Provincial Office and Club Organizers.

The Ontario Party Building tour by Central Organizer Johan Boyden has certainly ramped up new interest and plans for recruiting in clubs across the province. Almost every club is recruiting, and new faces and new energy are a reflection of the Party's work in the recent period, and the growing interest in the Party among working people and youth.

The February 21st Dinner and the Provincial Seminar for new members that will take place during that same weekend, have added a note of socialist competition among members who want to be at the Dinner and join in the fun. Friends and supporters who have been thinking about joining, but haven't been asked, or haven't yet applied – there's no time like the present!

Call the CPC for more info, at 416-469-2446, check out our website at [www.comunistparty.ca](http://www.comunistparty.ca), or drop by our office at 290A Danforth Avenue in Toronto.

Join the CPC! Build the CPC! We have a world to win!

## Victoria youth active in minimum wage fight

### PV Victoria Bureau

Youth and student activists joined the labour movement in Victoria, British Columbia for a "Fight for Fifteen" rally on January 15th. This was the first in a series of actions that newly elected BC Federation of Labour President Irene Lanzinger says will take place on the 15th of every month across the province.

"The vast majority of students we spoke with were under little illusion regarding the nature of the current capitalist crisis, and fully recognise the urgent need for change," Tyson Strandlund, who joined the protest, told People's Voice. "Many students who want to make a difference but simply do not know how."

Victoria rally organizer Tara Ehrcke told the Times Colonist newspaper that a living wage – the minimum income necessary for a worker to meet their basic needs – would be almost \$18 an hour in Victoria. (The Communist Party of Canada will be calling for a \$20 an hour minimum wage in the coming federal election.)

The minimum wage is one of the important issues being raised by the Young Communist League club in Victoria is raising, along with rising tuition fees. Strandlund, the organizer of the recently formed Victoria YCL, said they have officially registered at the University and started tabling. "Historians, engineers, economists, scientists and musicians alike each all added

their names to our contact list" he said. For tabling day the club was joined by members from the nearby Vancouver YCL.

"It is our challenge for 2015 to awaken the sleeping giant that is Victoria's vastly underutilized student potential," Strandlund said.

The Scotty Neish Club of the CPC in Victoria is also organizing monthly Marxist educational groups. As part of a renewed effort for party building on Vancouver Island, party organizations in Victoria and Nanaimo recently sent an organizer to visit several communities, as far north as Campbell River, bringing older members back to the party and making new recruits. ●



# EDITORIALS

## Economic crisis and grand larceny

During January, Canada was hit by a series of retail closures and mass layoffs in the energy industry. Even before the so-called "recovery" from the crisis of 2008 brings any genuine relief to working people, it's already over.

This won't stop neoliberal think tanks from repeating discredited theories about the "trickle down effect", or the lie that the super-rich are the drivers of the economy. This nonsense has been shot down by Target, which stomped into the Canadian retail market by replacing the Zellers chain, laying off thousands of unionized employees, and re-opening without establishing adequate supply chains. The predictable result of this genius corporate strategy: an estimated \$2 billion in losses over two years, and then an epic shutdown of 133 stores.

Naturally, heads rolled as a result of this debacle, right? Well, not exactly. Target CEO Gregg Steinhafel was dumped last May over his role in the Canadian expansion mess, and for the massive data breach during the 2013 holiday season that affected 70 million U.S. customers. But for his efforts while the retail giant lost billions, Steinhafel received a total compensation package of about \$61 million, which included severance of \$15.9 million.

In mind-boggling contrast, Target's 17,600 Canadian wage slaves will share an "employee trust package" worth some \$70 million, which is supposed to cover 16 weeks of pay - apparently about \$3181 each on average. If there was any justice, Steinhafel would be headed for a long stretch in prison, with his ill-gotten millions going to workers. But capitalism is a system based on very different principles, including frequent economic crises, and a form of exploitation which some might consider grand larceny. Target's venture into the Canadian market was certainly a "teachable moment," but that's small consolation for employees now paying the price.

## Feb. 14: remember and mobilize

For most Canadians, February 14 is simply Valentine's Day, one of the biggest dates on the retail sector calendar. But in many cities (see on this page), this is now a day to remember over a thousand murdered and missing Aboriginal women and girls. On this date in 1991, the first Women's Memorial March was held in response to the murder of a Coast Salish woman on Vancouver's Powell Street (her name is not spoken in respect of her family's wishes). The March brings thousands through the Downtown Eastside neighbourhood which was "ground zero" for over fifty murders, committed while city police and RCMP shrugged off pleas to track down a serial killer.

Today, the racist attitude behind that official indifference to human lives remains embedded at the heart of our federal government. Despite growing international calls for a fully independent public inquiry into the murdered and missing indigenous women, Prime Minister Harper and other cabinet ministers mouth platitudes about the need for "action, not studies." Their smug arrogance reflects the "we know best" mentality which imposed the reservation system, the potlach ban, residential schools, shocking incarceration rates, and other forms of genocide.

Let's be quite clear. Nobody has ever said that action to address systemic racism should be put on hold during such an inquiry. The people and organizations raising this demand desperately want swift and radical action, including real government support for grassroots initiatives to tackle the consequences of centuries of high unemployment, deplorable housing, inadequate health care and schools, and even the lack of clean drinking water. But this is not in contradiction to the demand that Canada must protect the human rights of indigenous peoples, including a fundamental and serious examination of the reasons behind the violence against Aboriginal women and girls.

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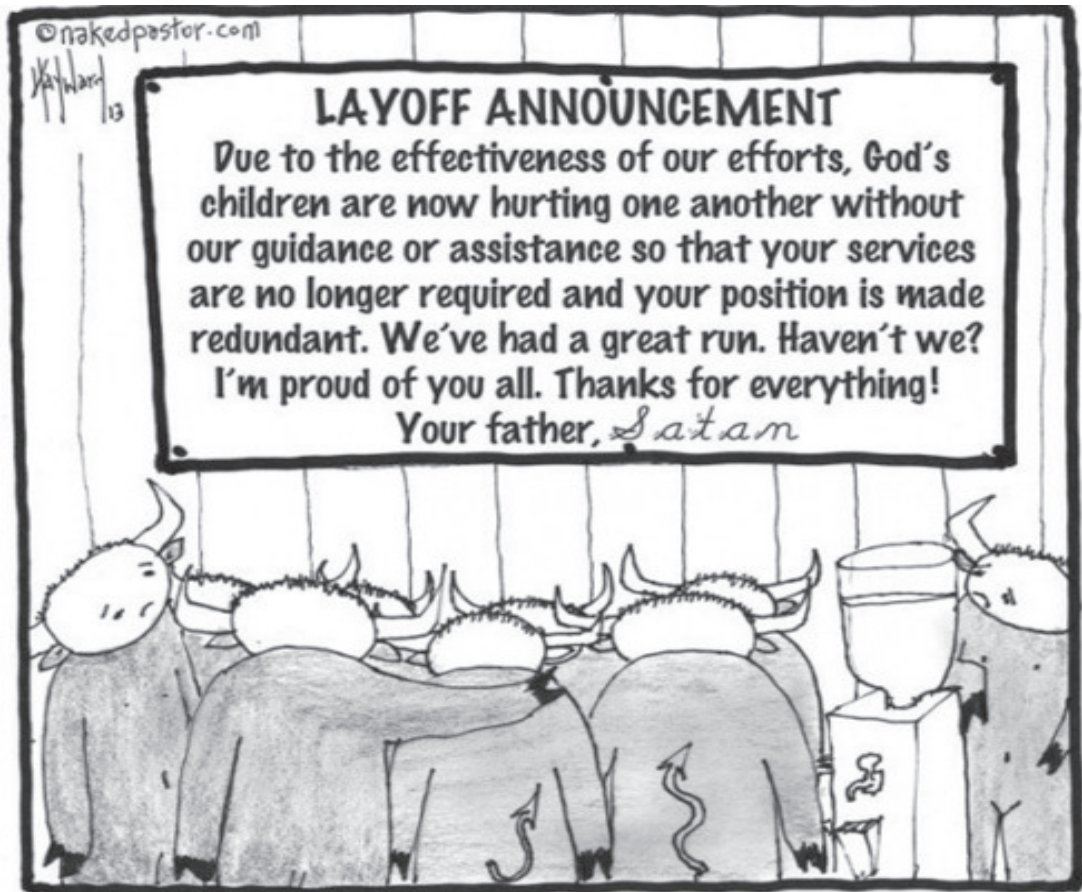
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## LETTERS

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

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## Women's Memorial Marches across Canada

Over the years, the February 14th Women's Memorial March for murdered and missing women has expanded to cities across Canada and the world. The following is the latest list of events posted at the PV deadline. For more details and updates, visit <https://womensmemorialmarch.wordpress.com/national/>

**VANCOUVER, BC:** Saturday, February 14, 25th annual march starts at noon from Carnegie Centre (Main and Hastings).

**TORONTO, ON:** 10th Annual Strawberry Ceremony for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. Saturday, February 14, begins at 12:30 at Police Headquarters, 40 College Street at Bay.

**PETERBOROUGH, ON:** Sat., February 14, starting 1:00 pm in Confederation Square downtown.

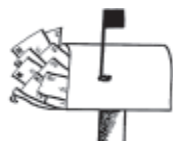
**OTTAWA, ON:** Thursday, February 12, 5 pm. 5th Annual Day Of Justice Feast And Ceremony at the Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health.

**VICTORIA, BC:** Saturday, Feb. 14, 11 am, gather at Our Place (919 Pandora Avenue), noon march to Legislature.

**MISSISSAUGAS OF THE CREDITFIRSTNATION:** Friday, Feb. 13, 5 pm, Vigil at King & Main in Hagersville, followed by Strawberry Ceremony to honour the women, at 659 New Credit Road Community Centre.

**WINNIPEG, MB:** Sat., February 14, 1:30-5:30 pm, Bulman Centre Multipurpose Room, University of Winnipeg. March will commence at approximately 2:00 pm.

**CALGARY, AB:** Saturday, February 14, 7th Annual Women's Memorial March, at Scarboro United Church (134 Scarboro Ave. SW). Speeches 6:30 pm, march begins 7 pm, light meal will follow.



## Letters to the Editor

### A letter to western farmers

Seasons Greetings to all those farmers who voted for the Harper Government!

Harper, Ritz and Anderson stole the farmer-owned Canadian Wheat Board which was run by farmers, paid for by farmers and returned all profits to farmers. It is now in the process of being given to its largest competitor.

Harper reduced the role of the Canadian Grain Commission which protected farmers from unscrupulous grading by multinational grain companies.

He cut funding and eliminated the Canadian Food Inspection Agency's role in protecting consumers from unsafe drugs and food products, false advertising and enforced labelling.

He cut the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration which operated 85 Community Pastures, water management, grants for wells & dugouts and provided trees for farms, community development, municipal governments etc. affecting not only those employed at Indian Head but those that benefited from the nursery. In the spring of 2011 the shelterbelt program shipped nearly 3 million seedlings to 7,500 rural people to create 1200 km of field shelterbelts, 2218 km of yard and 134 km of riparian shelterbelts. These shelterbelts not

only provide habitat for wildlife but also combat pollution.

Then Ritz announced that the government was setting up a 25 million dollar (taxpayer) grant to boost grain shipping through the Port of Churchill - a real windfall for OmniTrax Rail and multinational grain corporations.

In 2011-12 Harper announced \$418 million was being cut from Agriculture and Agri-Food budget.

And now, the federal government has issued a call for proposals to transfer and possibly sell off Agriculture Canada cereal crop research and plant breeding germplasm related to the devastating plant disease fusarium. Can the fate of our Public Research Stations be far behind?

The federal government has already stopped funding public plant breeding beyond the development of germplasm, which must then be sold to private breeders to develop varieties for commercialization. The new varieties so developed are privately owned and subject to plant breeders' rights. Farmers, whose check-off dollars support this research, will pay yet again through the increased royalties that would be granted under UPOV '91. This system of private interests benefitting twice - first by using

public research funding and then by collecting royalties on seed and production - is unjust and against the public interest. Already world renowned scientists are being given the "Harper boot".

In the words of Winnipeg MP Pat Martin, "Has the Minister lost his freaking mind?"

Joyce Neufeld, Waldeck, SK

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# Collective punishment - as Canadian as maple syrup?

By Kimball Cariou

As the global debate over the Charlie Hebdo killings descends into chest-thumping and finger-pointing, Canadians are being treated to the latest round of arguments over how to “defend our values.” For me personally, the term “Canadian values” brings to mind maple syrup, three-down football, Hockey Night in Punjabi, the lyrics to “I see the b’y that builds the boat”, sugar-dipped fried bannock, and similar cultural constructs found only within the borders of Canada. But perhaps this simply reflects my own family and geographic background.

On the political level, the debate revolves around “protecting our cherished freedoms,” and other noble-sounding phrases. Some argue that in these perilous times, we must keep a close eye on potential suicide bombers of a certain... well, let’s be polite and not mention the characteristics shared by these wannabe terrorists, but we all know what we’re talking about, nudge nudge, wink wink. Other more liberal-minded folks are shocked by such talk. After all, Canada is the great land of multiculturalism, the destiny

to mean knee-jerk woolly-minded approval of any horrific massacre committed by the “enemies of liberty.”

Unfortunately, the underlying assumptions which frame such debates are badly flawed. The idea that Canada has always been a country based on protection of civil rights and democratic freedoms is quite contrary to historical reality. From this false starting point, the entire discussion is warped into fantasy land.

In fact, the “preventive arrest” concept echoes doctrines used to criminalize entire sections of the population during previous periods of colonization, war and turmoil. Each time, the underlying strategy has been to justify suspending civil liberties and democracy to allow collective punishment of groups said to “threaten our Canadian values.”

Early in Canada’s colonial history and again after 1867, the targets were Aboriginal peoples who inconveniently insisted that they were the true owners of their historic landbase. Treaties, reservations and residential schools were imposed to put an end to such “barbaric” notions by

and Métis, the Canadian state enticed hundreds of thousands from central and eastern Europe with promises of free land. Imagine the horror of the Anglophile Canadian ruling class when war broke out in 1914, pitting the mother country against “the Hun” - Germany and its allies. The colonial mentality assumed that recent immigrants from countries now at war with England would be loyal to their homelands rather than to Canada. Another “problem” was the lack of enthusiasm among Francophones for the prospect of dying on the battlefields of Europe for the interests of the British Crown, which had after all conquered Quebec. As the slaughter decimated warring armies, one solution was to impose forced conscription on the white working class of Canada.

But another strategy was the War Measures Act, a federal statute adopted by Parliament in 1914, to maintain “security and order”. The War Measures Act gave sweeping emergency powers to the federal Cabinet, allowing it to govern by decree when it perceived the existence of “war, invasion or insurrection, real or apprehended.” During the First World War, the Act was used to imprison Canadians of German, Ukrainian and Slavic descent, i.e. perceived traitor populations. It was next in force from 1939 to 1942, to imprison Japanese Canadians and confiscate their properties, outlaw the Communist Party and 15 other organizations, and to jail over 250 communist and trade union leaders. The Act was dusted off again during the “October Crisis” of 1970, when a state of “apprehended insurrection” was declared to exist in Quebec, in response to two kidnappings by the Front de Liberation du Québec. More than 450 people were arrested, including hundreds of



Image from the cover of a pamphlet against the internment of Communists during WW2.

left-wing and labour activists with no connections to the FLQ; most were later released without any charges. But it took until 1988 to repeal the War Measures Act, which was replaced by the Emergencies Act, giving more limited and specific security powers to the federal government.

There isn’t enough space here to go into the resurgence of racism and Islamophobia which followed the 9-11 attacks in the USA, except to note that from that time, Muslims and Arabs in Canada have been treated with grave suspicion, i.e. as “potential terrorists” subject to police monitoring of their organizations, much closer inspection at airports, etc.

In the wake of the Charlie Hebdo killings, the threat to allow “preventive arrests” escalates the very real tradition of racist scapegoating to a new and dangerous level. And it revives a very old, well-established “Canadian value” - the belief that

certain arbitrarily chosen sections of the population are by definition not truly Canadian. That was the accusation levelled under the War Measures Act against people of German, Austrian, Ukrainian, Japanese and other national origins, as well as against many who were openly critical of corporations and governments. In none of these cases was there ever any proven attempt to attack the Canadian state. Similarly today, random violent acts by a tiny handful of individuals do not translate into any threat requiring governments to scrap democratic rights and civil liberties.

In fact, it could well be argued that one genuine Canadian value is the tradition of resisting arbitrary state attacks on the right to express dissent. That’s a tradition which is well worth keeping alive in these dangerous and confusing times.

(This article first appeared in the February 2015 issue of *Radical Desi* magazine.) ●



Some of the interned Japanese-Canadian men who were put to work building the Yellowhead Highway in Alberta and BC.

all people facing persecution; surely to engage in racial or religious profiling is to violate this sacred tradition. Well, they admit, perhaps its OK a little bit, if we establish proper “safeguards” and “sunset clauses” to avoid “going overboard”.

And so, the stage is set for political drama as Parliament reconvenes. Mr. Harper’s Conservatives have pledged to expand police and spy agency powers, with explicit legislation to permit so-called “preventive arrests”. They will speak as though this is a sad necessity in the face of the “war against western values” waged by the so-called jihadists. The opposition parties will generally agree about the threat, while warning about the need to be “careful”. Perhaps Justin Trudeau and Thomas Mulcair will even speak in vague terms about the tense international climate of wars and inequality, while carefully avoiding any reference to “root causes” of violence, since of course this phrase is deliberately misinterpreted by the Conservatives and the mass media

means of genocide. A similar fate befell the Métis people, twice driven off their lands after confronting the expansionist Canadian state in 1871 and 1885.

But other groups were also targeted at times, especially immigrants like Irish Catholics who were considered insufficiently loyal to the British Crown (imagine that!). Then other immigrants failed to pass the “keep Canada white” skin colour test - notably the Chinese, Japanese and south Asian migrant workers who began arriving on the west coast in large numbers in the late 19th century. Racist “collective punishment” was quickly meted out to these groups, in the form of Vancouver’s anti-Asian riots of 1907, the discriminatory “continuous voyage” law which effectively limited the arrivals of south Asians, bans on family reunification, removal of voting rights, etc.

Other European immigrants also faced collective punishment. By the late 1800s, having exhausted the supply of farmers from the British Isles to populate the prairies stolen from the indigenous peoples

## End racist exclusion: Aboriginal people are workers

Statement from the Communist Party-Manitoba, Jan. 23, 2015

The overwhelming majority of Aboriginal people are workers and they among the most oppressed and exploited part of the working class in Manitoba. Excluding Treaty First Nations workers living on reserves from the Labour Force Survey is an official reinforcement of the racist view that Aboriginal people do not value work or contribute to the economy.

Manitoba and other prairie provinces should stop bragging about their low jobless rate and end the long, agonizing jobs crisis. The racist exclusion of Aboriginal people from the labour force survey is a big reason why Manitoba, of all the prairie provinces, is a low-wage province.

The Communist Party of Canada-Manitoba demands that the Conservative government end the racist exclusion by immediately including all workers in the Labour Force Survey.

The truth is that for centuries Aboriginal people have been the backbone not just of the fur trade but of Manitoba’s industrial, mining, farm labour and

manufacturing industries. And today their racist-inspired joblessness is a weapon for big business to depress wages for all workers.

Refusing to consider Aboriginal people as part of the working class, the Conservative government is whitewashing the real rate of unemployment for all workers.

This is a much more significant problem in provinces with high numbers of Treaty Aboriginal people, such as the Prairie provinces. In Manitoba, the official rate is 5.2% (35,000 jobless).

Counting the labour force on reserves (at an estimated 70% jobless rate and 68.5 participation rate), Manitoba’s real unemployment rate is actually closer to 8.6 per cent, or more than 65% higher (about 64,000 jobless actively looking for work).

[Using similar calculations, Saskatchewan’s unemployment rate grows from 3.6% (21,000 jobless) to 7.6% (48,000 jobless looking for work); about 110% higher. Alberta’s jobless rate grows from 4.7% (114,000 jobless) to 5.6% (137,000 jobless), about 20% higher.]

Aboriginal leaders report that unemployment rates reach 90 per cent on many reserves.

One of the biggest anchors dragging down wages in Manitoba is the high rate of unemployment. The real rate of unemployment should include discouraged workers, people who simply have given up actively looking for work. The real rate of unemployment is higher than the official rate. Adding the officially excluded working class in Manitoba means that the real rate is higher still.

The real challenge for working people is to mount a strong campaign for genuine job-creation policies, such as a shorter work week with no loss in pay or a plan to build 1,000 child care centres and 10,000 homes. All job creation initiatives and hiring must have affirmative action for Aboriginal nations which have higher rates of unemployment, which in all likelihood means all of them.

Unemployment is not only a reckless waste of labour power, it is “a constant dead weight upon the limbs of the working class in its struggle for existence with capital, a regulator for the keeping of wages down to the low level that suits the interests of capital.” (Engels, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*). ●



# On the expanding “War on Terror”

## Unite to defend democracy, peace and equality

*Central Executive,  
Communist Party of  
Canada, January 21, 2015*

Since the terrible events of January 7 and beyond in Paris, politicians and the corporate media in the NATO countries, including Canada, are thundering that “we must all unite” in response to a so-called “declaration of war” by religious extremist groups. But under the cover of “safeguarding our freedom from terrorism”, the Harper and other Western governments are moving to escalate militarism and aggression abroad, and further erode democratic liberties – especially the right to dissent – at home.

To be clear, the Communist Party of Canada categorically condemns all terrorist acts, whether committed by individuals, movements or imperialist states. As we stated immediately after the 9/11 events, “acts of terrorism undermine the struggle for progressive change; they sideline and neutralize the mass movement, create fear and disorientation in the broad people’s fightback, and provide imperialism and reaction with a powerful pretext to intensify repression.”

That said, the most serious threats to peace and security, and to democratic rights and freedoms, are posed by the policies and actions of Western governments themselves, not by a small number of violent criminals who seek to provoke repression in hopes of winning support for their own narrow fundamentalist agenda.

Working people today are being told to “pick sides” in the confrontation between the major imperialist powers and reactionary religious movements. This false choice ignores the reality that the

NATO powers, including Canada, bear the responsibility for creating conditions which encouraged the emergence of fundamentalist groups. In many cases, Western intelligence agencies had a direct hand in their formation. During the 1980s, for example, the United States armed the opponents of Afghanistan’s progressive



government, with the geopolitical aim of destabilizing the USSR. The US and other imperialist powers have intervened in Iraq, Iran, Libya, Syria, Yugoslavia and many other countries, always seeking to undermine progressive forces and to seize control of oil and other natural resources. Israel, the closest ally of US and Canadian imperialism, has likewise continued to occupy Palestinian lands during this period.

Millions of people have died as a result of these imperialist wars and occupations, and the imposition of western-backed neoliberal economic and social policies. This has generated enormous resentment among the peoples of these affected countries, with predictable results. It has also fed the growth of dangerous fascist and anti-immigrant forces across Europe and North America.

We defend the right to free speech, including the right to criticize religious beliefs, but we also note that the contents of Charlie Hebdo often contributed to the deadly growth of bigotry and xenophobia across Europe. The only way out of this downward spiral of hatred and violence is to promote the common action of working people of all national origins and religious beliefs, against the domination and exploitation of the transnational corporations, and to defend national sovereignty.

The fact is that both the imperialist powers and reactionary extremist groups stand for narrow interests which are utterly hostile to working people. The false “clash of civilisations” theory divides and weakens working people, by turning us against each other on the basis of religious outlook

or national origin. Instead, the real alternative is to build unity around a genuine people’s agenda and a strategy to roll back austerity, end imperialist wars of occupation, and defend the environment. Rather than killing each other, the working class of all countries needs to join together for full employment, access to health care, education and social programs, a healthy environment, and peaceful economic development.

The Communist Party of Canada urges the labour and people’s movements to defend civil rights and liberties, and to resist the escalating attacks which target Muslims, Arabs, religious minorities, and racialized communities. In particular, we condemn PM Stephen Harper’s plan to introduce new legislation which would allow “pre-emptive arrests” of anyone considered a potential “threat”. This legislation

is reminiscent of the War Measures Act, adopted during the First World War to criminalize sections of Canada’s immigrant population as “enemy aliens” and to ban left-wing and anti-war literature.

The true intention of this and other ‘national security’ laws is to stifle free speech and to silence critics of right-wing policies and governments. Harper’s real strategy is to turn back the clock, to allow governments the authority to crack down on trade unions, indigenous resistance movements, immigrants, environmentalists, defenders of civil rights, political radicals and others who oppose the corporate agenda of “free trade”, neoliberal austerity and militarism.

The Communist Party demands an end to Canada’s participation in the wars of aggression, including in Iraq and Syria, which can only lead to further violence. We urge the labour and democratic movements to condemn the drive by the Harper government (with the support of the other parliamentary parties) to scrap civil liberties, labour rights and other democratic freedoms in the name of waging

war against Islam and even against citizens of our own country.

Instead, we demand: Canada out of NATO, and out of Syria and Iraq! Elect a government which will adopt an independent foreign policy of peace and disarmament. Don’t send young Canadians to war – fund job creation and social programs, not militarism. Protect minorities and expand social, civil and labour and democratic rights, at home and abroad. Curb the power of the Canadian and international corporations. Scrap the “free trade” deals, and protect and restore the sovereignty of Canada and all other countries.

In today’s volatile situation, Canadians need to reject attempts to manipulate public opinion through fear, police state surveillance, racism and intimidation. The Communist Party urges all who support peace, civil rights and democratic freedoms to speak out – in the streets, in the social media, and at the ballot box – against the escalating state repression which is trying to stifle our collective resistance. It is not too late, but the time to defend democracy is today! ●



Communists protest against militarism and war. (Photo: Ed Bil)

## BDS Victory Story: Naot closes shoe store on St. Denis Street

In 2010, PAJU (Palestinian and Jewish Unity) announced its campaign to make Montreal’s St. Denis Street an apartheid-free zone. The campaign began by targeting Beautyfeel shoes (made in Israel) at Le Marcheur shoe store.

The ultimate target of the campaign was the Naot store, a transnational corporation (Disney is the major share-holder by way of Shamrock investments) with a manufacturing centre in the illegal Gush Etzion settlement block near Hebron. But the choice to begin our picket in front of Le Marcheur made it clear that PAJU was picketing an Israeli product and that there was nothing “anti-Semitic” about the campaign, despite comments to the contrary by the usual circles of support for the illegal Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories.

Thanks to the latter - and their supportive media contacts - the PAJU campaign became front-and-centre in the media, not only in Montreal but across Canada. We had thereby pierced the curtain of silence concerning the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions campaign against the illegal Israeli occupation and its institutionalized

system of apartheid.

At that point, PAJU moved its Saturday picket across the street in front of the Naot shoe store. Soon after, a group of counter-demonstrators began showing up on Saturdays to harass the PAJU picket and to lend their support to the principle of Israeli apartheid. They had the support of both the *Journal de Montréal* and *The*

*Suburban*. Despite this pro-apartheid opposition (the latter stopped showing up around two years ago), the members of PAJU distributed on average around 300 leaflets (French and English) every Saturday to passersby for the two-hour period that the picket lasted.

This continued for four years until the Naot store closed its doors

several weeks ago. From 2010 to 2014, PAJU’s members distributed more than 35,000 leaflets explaining the nature of the illegal Israeli occupation, the purpose of the BDS campaign and the nature of Naot’s manufacturing centres in the illegally occupied Palestinian territories.

PAJU used its campaign to inform and educate the public on

what is happening on the ground in occupied Palestine, and what role the public can play in forcing Israel to respect the rule of international law and the principle of human rights by way of support for the BDS campaign.

PAJU continues its boycott campaign against the Indigo-Chapters bookstore chain whose CEO, Heather Reisman, promotes the HESEGLone Soldier program, which incites young people to enroll in the Israeli occupation army in exchange for educational and social benefits in Israel.

The PAJU Indigo-Chapters boycott takes place every Friday from noon to 1 pm in front of the Indigo bookstore, Ste. Catherine Street corner, McGill College Avenue in Montreal. Come join us.

When hundreds of popular groups and social activists around the world work together in support of the Palestinian people, things change on the ground as they did in South Africa consequent to the BDS campaign against apartheid. The tide is turning against Israeli apartheid. PAJU is proud to be part of that process.

From [www.pajumontreal.org](http://www.pajumontreal.org) (abridged) ●



PAJU supporters holding an Indigo-Chapters boycott action in Montreal. (Photo: Bill Sloan)



# Tudeh Party condemns imperialism and "Charlie Hebdo" terror

## Statement from the Tudeh Party of Iran, published on SolidNet

A few days ago the world witnessed the horrendous crime of murdering writers, cartoonists and staff of the French magazine "Charlie Hebdo" in Paris. The attack of extremist Muslims on the office of "Charlie Hebdo" and the massacre of editorial personnel and staff members of this magazine only because of their views and opinions is an indication of the growth of a very dangerous and destructive phenomenon that the progressive people cannot remain silent about. As a result of the terrorist attacks in recent days in Paris, 14 innocent people, from the staff of the "Charlie Hebdo" magazine to the customers of a Jewish kosher shop and 3 police officers- one of whom was a Muslim of Algerian descent- were killed. Tudeh Party of Iran strongly condemns this dreadful crime whose objective is to exterminate dissidents and to spread fear and intimidation.

Attempts to physically exterminate and massacre dissidents is nothing new and surprising for us, Iranians, who have been living for years under the chains of a medieval theocratic regime. From Khomeini's fatwa (religious decree) to murder Salman Rushdie, to massacre of thousands of political prisoners for their progressive and freedom-seeking beliefs in the summer of 1988; from serial killings in which prominent figures like Foroozars [Dariush and Parvaneh] and Mokhtari and Pouyandeh and other political activists and dissidents were slaughtered by the security forces of the regime, to arresting and jailing and persecution of dissidents and screams of "suppress them, crush them" by the Supreme Leader to silence any dissenting voice; all are similar ways to deal with opposition views, which has caused our nation to suffer for three decades. Thousands of freedom-loving and progressive people, scientists, writers, translators, artists, and social and union activists have lost their lives because of that.

It is interesting that under the pressure arising from strong repugnance in world public opinion, some of the regime leaders and figures had no choice but to condemn terrorist actions and the attack on the "Charlie Hebdo" magazine. For instance, Ahmad Khatami, the Friday prayer Imam of Tehran and one of the most dark-minded advocates of the theocratic regime, said in his sermon on January 9th: "We strongly condemn the terrorist attack in France and believe that Islam does not permit the killing of innocent people. It does not make any difference if these innocent people are in Paris, Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Pakistan or Afghanistan."

These words come out of the mouth of someone like him when he and his like-minded allies, such as Jannati and Larjani (Speaker of the Parliament) and others, in recent weeks have reconfirmed their support for the bloody

suppression of the people protesting against the 2009 election coup, and have asked for execution of the leaders of the Green Movement, Mousavi and Karrubi, who are still under house arrest, for their opposition to that coup. Jannati, the spokesperson of the Guardian Council, said in an interview with an Islamic Republic TV station: "These perpetrators have been treated with favour. If they are tried, any educated and fair judge would sentence them to death. No country treats such people who oppose the system - not the President or a Minister or a judge, but the system - like we did. Therefore we have done them a favour. For whatever reason, such as Islamic kindness, their punishment was reduced. Otherwise, if this was anywhere else in the world, they would have been executed."

The Paris terrorists claimed that the reason for killing the writers and cartoonists and staff of the magazine was their "publication of offensive material against Islam." While we believe that all religions and schools of thought have to be respected and the faith symbols of people must deal with diligently, we also believe that the idea of exterminating dissidents stems in medieval thinking, when individuals were killed because of casting doubt on and questioning religion (then the Rome Catholic Church), or were forced to confess against their own beliefs and burned, as in the case of Galileo. Emergence of such ways of thinking and behaviour in the 21st century and in the present stage of the development of the human society is a horrific and destructive phenomenon which has to be opposed and confronted by any progressive person and advocate of human rights.

Following the emergence of the "political Islam" and its view points about the role of Islam in today's world and the aspiration to establish an "Islamic Empire", such conducts gradually transformed from political protests into state policies and took the shape of a global order for Jihad against the opponents of "political Islam". One of the most notorious and controversial examples of such conduct was Khomeini's fatwa against Salman Rushdie in 1989.

A point to reflect upon is that a few months before this fatwa, Khomeini had issued another fatwa for mass killing of thousands of political prisoners in Iran, which at the time was mainly ignored by the European leaders, who practically turned a blind eye on it. The double standard [of the West] in reacting to these two fatwa was noteworthy. In his 14 February 1989 fatwa Khomeini said: "I am informing all brave Muslims of the world that the author of *The Satanic Verses*, a text written, edited, and published against Islam, the Prophet of Islam, and the Qur'an, along with all the editors and publishers aware of its contents, are condemned to death. I call on all valiant Muslims wherever they may find them in the world to kill them without delay, so that no one will dare insult the

sacred beliefs of Muslims henceforth. And whoever is killed for this cause will be a martyr, Allah Willing. Meanwhile if someone has access to the author of the book but is incapable of carrying out the execution, he should inform the people so that [Rushdie] is punished for his actions."

At the time, Nameh Mardom, the central publication of the Tudeh Party of Iran wrote in an

democratic government of that country at the time - with the financial and moral support of the US and Britain imperialism and under the direct supervision of the intelligence service in Pakistan, and with the cooperation and financial aid from the local reactionary forces, such as the Saudi Arabian regime, created and mobilized a horrible beast in the world which revealed itself in the bloodiest way in the West in the

will and interests of the people of the region and the world.

Another important point to note is the growth of fascist and racist views in European countries, including France, which provides grounds for the growth of extremism in various forms and shapes. The results of the recent EU parliamentary elections and the unprecedented and dangerous growth of racist forces, from Germany to France and England and Greece and Holland and East European countries, is a serious indication of a social crisis which is spreading widely every day on the ground of the capitalism economic crisis and its efforts to impose neoliberal policies on the world. The demonstrations of racist groups in Dresden and other German cities in recent days, which were opposed by the progressive forces and ordinary citizens, and also the events in Ukraine and the support of the imperialists of fascist forces in that country proves that contrary to what the Western leaders say, it is not the governing capitalist system that defends the human rights, equality and fraternity and "liberté" in France or anywhere else in the world.

While categorically condemning the horrendous crime of terrorists affiliated with the Islamic extremists in killing writers, cartoonists and staff of the "Charlie Hebdo" magazine, our party does not believe that the way to save the world from the scourge of terrorism is a religious crusade and transforming the cities of Europe and North America to military bases; the answer is in the fair and just solution of the crisis in the Middle East, implementing people-oriented socio-economic policies, and in putting an immediate stop on the adventurist and destructive policies of imperialism to impose its hegemony over the Middle East region. The presence of millions of French people in the streets of various cities of France and the solidarity of the progressive and humanitarian people around the world in memory of the victims of this horrific crime and in defence of freedom of thought and expression does not mean that they defend the devastating policies of the imperialist states in the Middle East and Africa.

From Nameh Mardom, Central Organ of TPI, No. 964, January 12th 2015 •

**"We do not believe that the way to save the world from the scourge of terrorism is a religious crusade and transforming the cities of Europe and North America to military bases..."**

article titled "Khomeini and Rushdie": "... during the recent massacre of political prisoners, religious judges were calling on the prisoners and asking them whether they believe in god or not; whether they were still insisting on their views and beliefs or not. If they were not getting their desired response, they would immediately issue the death sentence... [The news published in Nameh Mardom] might have created this doubt for those who are unfamiliar with the "culture" and "logic" of the theocratic regime of Supreme Leader that we had exaggerated in circulating these news... The order to kill Salam Rushdie, the author of *The Satanic Verses*... proved that when these guys don't like an opinion or belief (rightly or wrongly) and consider it "offensive", they cannot like any other civilized person deal with it in a logical and scientific manner, so they decide to kill the person."

### The context: growth of terrorism & extremism in the region and the world

While unconditionally condemning such medieval and destructive beliefs (mentioned above) in dealing with the dissidents, we cannot ignore the objective context of the growth of this phenomenon which is directly related to the destructive and adventurist policies of the global imperialism in the Middle East in the recent decades. The founding of the terrorist group "Al Qaeda" in Afghanistan during the "cold war" - with the aim of toppling the

terrorist attacks of September 11 of 2001, and its continuation could be seen today in bloody civil wars in Syria and Iraq.

The military attack of the US and its allies on Afghanistan and then Iraq, and the continuing bloody suppression and violent violation of the rights of the Palestinians by the state of Israel, have in general laid the ground for the growth of religious extremism and intensification of tensions and bloodshed not only in the Middle East region, but also all around the world.

A careful and critical review of the news in the recent months about the raids of ISIS in Iraq and Syria, and then the recent terrorist attacks, indicate this undeniable fact that imperialists and their allies have supported these same criminals as "freedom fighters" in Syria in the past two years, and have provided all kinds of financial and military assistance to them. The revelation that the French terrorists have been training and transferring "jihadists" to Syria and Iraq under the guidance of the France security forces in the past few years, and the European states turning a blind eye on the fact that terrorist organizations have been recruiting warriors in the European capitals in order to organize "jihad" in the Middle East countries, backed by the billion-dollars financial support of the Saudi Arabia and Qatar regimes, are indications of the destructive consequences of a policy that strives to impose its hegemony, in this very sensitive and high-tension region at any cost, and without any consideration for the



Anti-fascist demonstrators in Dresden call for unity against racism and intolerance.





# GLOBAL CLASS STRUGGLE

## West Africa's "nurse-killer"

Ebola has been called "the nurse killer" in West Africa. The disease has claimed more than 8,000 lives in the largest outbreak since the disease was first discovered in 1976. What is also unprecedented is the high proportion of "doctors, nurses, and other health-care workers who have been infected" according to the World Health Organization. As of Jan. 7, WHO reported 820 health-care workers have been infected and 488 have died.

Ebola is not an airborne disease and can only be spread through direct contact with bodily fluids of an infected person or animal. But contagious disease expert Dr. Mark Nicas says it's "biologically possible" for the Ebola virus to spread through small droplets. "If I can be hit in the face with one of those particles as a projectile, then it's coming close enough to me that I can also inhale it."

Nicas says when it comes to a disease as acute and deadly as Ebola it is best to follow the precautionary principle and ensure health-care workers are provided with the best possible protection. Many health agencies recommend health-care workers wear a disposable respirator classified as "N95" in high risk scenarios such as aerosol-generating procedures (AGMPs), which include things like intubation and open respiratory/airway suctioning.

Bonnie Castillo works with the biggest nurses' union in the U.S. and is worried that the N95 leaks and allows fluids to get through. "We know it leaks... We have experience in terms of having to constantly re-adjust. As you re-adjust you contaminate, and to contaminate with a deadly disease? You don't gamble like that. You're literally gambling with nurses lives."

Dr. Nicas calls the policy "ridiculous" because it allows too much risk: "It's a fatal disease. If it's in the air then you can inhale it. And if you can inhale it then you can become infected. That's what I believe. You're wearing a respirator an N95 filtering face piece. It's not an adequate respirator to wear in an environment where you can be infected by inhalation transmission."

Some nurses unions are demanding another respirator known as a powered, air-purifying respirator (PAPR) during AGMPs on confirmed Ebola patients. PAPRs can cover the entire face and use a powered fan to bring air in through a filter. But this technology is not widely available for health care workers in North America, and certainly not in West Africa.

## Brazil airlines hit by work stoppage

Pilots and flight crews in Brazil stopped airline operations for an hour on Jan. 22 to demand higher wages, triggering flight delays and cancellations while underscoring tensions in a stagnant economy. State airport operator Infraero said

19 percent of domestic flights had been delayed and 8 percent had been cancelled by 9 am local time. Its report did not include the two biggest airports in the state of Sao Paulo, which are run under private concessions.

The one-hour strike was a way for workers to press airlines on additional flight safety measures and demands for an 8.5 percent salary increase, while the companies are offering a 6.5 percent increase in line with inflation, according to the union. Rising tensions in Brazil are grabbing headlines this year as unions battle layoffs in the auto industry and stagnant salaries across the board after years of real wage gains.



## Iran teachers mobilize for pay raises

Teachers from across Iran have begun strike actions to protest low wages, and in response to news that the education ministry will only get a 14-percent budget increase in the coming year. News reports indicate that teachers in Eslamshahr, Robat Karim, Shahr-e Qods, Karaj, Shahriyar, Shiraz, Shahroud, Saqez, Baneh and Marivan did not attend classes on January 20 and 21.

On the first day, hundreds of teachers gathered in front of education ministry offices in Shahroud, and the next day in front of the education ministry offices in Marivan to demand better wages. Teachers' rights activists have told the media that they are concerned that the 14-percent increase proposed in the administration's new budget is not enough to support an appropriate wage increase.

Six thousand teachers signed a petition earlier in January addressed to the speaker of Parliament, Ali Larijani, protesting inadequate wages and calling for pay equity with other government employees.

## Italy's ER doctors & workers rally

Emergency room health workers across Italy took to the streets in protest on Jan. 23, some even lying on stretchers and donning oxygen masks, to raise awareness of ER overcrowding. The event took place in several cities including Rome, Naples, Florence, Milan and Bari, organized by labour union CGIL. According to the group, Italian ERs admit 65,000 patients a day, one-third of whom are

"inappropriate" and some of whom visit the ER to avoid more costly diagnostic exams and analyses elsewhere.

"The burden of paying for a ticket (the public health system's co-pay) has become impossible for a large majority of the population, and the ER is seen as a place where one can do all sorts of exams all together, without paying anything. This creates overcrowding for those who have a real need," said Massimo Cozza, secretary for CGIL's doctors union, speaking at a demonstration outside Rome's San Camillo Hospital. Cozza also cited the problem of "super heavy" public healthcare spending cuts, totalling 31 billion euros between 2011 and 2015.

## Union leaders bring demands at Davos

A group of union leaders attended the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, demanding that workers' rights and issues cannot be ignored. The labour leaders met representatives of the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development), ILO (International Labour Organization), United Nations, IMF (International Monetary Fund) and UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) to help drive home the labour movement's demands.

The unions demand that global leaders must address urgent global risks to democratic rights and freedoms; freedom of speech; freedom of association; and an end to slavery and the kafala system in the Gulf, which binds a foreign worker to the employer in contradiction to labour law. They called on governments, corporations and financial institutions to create quality jobs and decent work, raise wages and social protection, tame corporate power and eliminate slavery, act for climate justice and make economic governance fair for all.

Speaking from Davos, Steve Cotton, the new general secretary of the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF), said: "It is good to hear so many diverse, well-informed views contributing to the development of corporate, regional and environmental strategies that will greatly impact all workers, not only transport workers... Sadly, at this time of geo-political instability, it is also vital that corporations and governments increase investment to create jobs that bridge the poverty gap, in order to tackle the rise of extremists."

Sharan Burrow, ITUC general secretary, added that the outlook for 2015 was bad for growth and jobs. She commented that inequality was increasing, and that the global economy was working well for 100 million people, but not for the other six billion. She concluded that the world needed a new business model as the current one was corrupted, putting workers, families, economies and the very nature of capitalism at risk.

## Two day strike at Greek fish farms

The Greek Federation (PAME) and the Federation of Workers in Food and Drinks Industries have called on all trade unions to express their solidarity and support with the strike of workers in Greek fish farming industry.

The fish farm workers are demanding to be paid their accrued unpaid salaries of many months, to cancel company layoffs, and to stop the aggression of the employers. The workers launched a strike on Jan. 21, continuing it the next day.

## Norway unions vs. anti-labour laws

Norway's major trade union federations are planning for a widespread political strike, to demonstrate their unhappiness over the conservative government's proposed changes in work rules. The unions intend to disrupt public transport and daily life nationwide in late January.

The strategy calls for all trains grind to a halt just before the afternoon commuter rush on Wednesday, Jan. 28. State railway NSB has already warned that its union members won't work between 3-4pm. No alternative transportation will be offered, to avoid strike-busting charges.

Union members are instead urged to attend rallies due to take place in Oslo, Stavanger, Bergen, Trondheim and Tromsø. The strike, scheduled to last for two hours, will involve an estimated 1.5 million members of unions attached to the labour federations LO, YS and Unio, which represent a wide range

of workers in both the private and public sectors.

The labour movement is protesting the government's proposed changes to the law called arbeidsmiljøloven, which regulates working conditions in Norway. The changes will raise the risk of more forced overtime and more weekend work, and allow employers to hire more temporary workers instead of offering them full-time jobs. Labour leaders also fear a decline in job protection for those already in full-time positions, and claim the changes will shift more power to employers at the expense of employees.

The government and corporations claim the changes will create more jobs and provide more flexibility. Employers, they argue, will hire more people if they don't have to offer full-time positions. Other changes include the option of longer work shifts, and raising the mandatory retirement age from 70 to 72. The government has even described the changes as necessary to "ensure a secure, flexible and family-friendly work environment."

LO leader Gerd Kristiansen says that more demonstrations will follow, likely later this spring. "We're warning the Parliament in the strongest of terms against approving the proposed changes," Kristiansen told the media. "They will harm the fundamental security of Norwegian work life. Norwegian workers want secure, permanent jobs."

The labour movement is directing its efforts especially at the small Liberal Party (Venstre), one of the government's two support parties which has backed the work rules changes so far. The government depends on support from the Liberals to form a majority in Parliament.

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

## Join the Communist Party of Canada



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

### Central Committee CPC

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# Raul Castro speaks to Cuba's National Assembly

*Four days after the Dec. 17 announcement of a new understanding between the governments of the USA and Cuba, President Raul Castro addressed the Cuban parliament on the changing relationship between the countries, and on the situation and prospects of the Cuban economy. The following excerpts are from the official translation of Raul Castro's speech.*

As has been the usual practice in the sessions of our Parliament, it is now my turn to make a review of the country's economic performance throughout the year that is about to conclude, as well as of the economic plan and budget for the year 2015, which have been thoroughly discussed by deputies in all the 10 commissions of the Assembly and also in yesterday's plenary session....

We have known about the well-intended and not very-well intended opinions that are being expressed both inside and outside the country about the rhythm of the process to update our economic model.

There has also been an open encouragement from abroad to speed up privatization, even of the main production and service sectors, which will be equal to laying down the flags of socialism in Cuba.

It seems as if the latter have not bothered to read the Guidelines which clearly states as follows, and I quote: "The economic system that shall prevail in our country will continue to be based on the people's socialist ownership over the fundamental means of production, governed by the socialist principle of distribution: "from each according to his/her capacity to each according to his/her contribution", end of quote.

We will continue to implement the agreements adopted by the Sixth Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba in a responsible and firm way, at the speed that we may sovereignly determine here, without jeopardizing the unity of Cubans, without living anyone to his or her own fate, without resorting to shock therapies and without ever renouncing the ideals of social justice of this Revolution of the humble, by the humble and for the humble.

Next year we will initiate the preparations for the celebration of the Seventh Congress of the Party in April of 2016. Prior to that there will be a broad and democratic debate among all Communist Party members and the entire people about the process of implementation of the Guidelines.

Closely associated to the updating of the economic model is the process for the gradual, I repeat, gradual decentralization of faculties from the ministries down to the business sector.

This is not something that can be done overnight, if we want to succeed. We will require a reasonable time to prepare and train, as we have been doing, our cadres at every level; modify the old-fashioned mentality and get rid of old habits; and work out and implement the legal framework and specific procedures that would enable all of us to see to it that the decisions are adequately implemented and mistakes are

timely corrected, thus avoiding unnecessary setbacks.

Among other steps, a decision was made to expand and make more flexible the social object of the Socialist state-owned enterprises in order to increase their autonomy. The mission assigned to them by the State was redefined and they were entrusted with the faculties required for the marketing of their production surplus. Likewise, the removal of administrative limitations, which will allow for the payment of salaries based on results, was also established.

These transformations shall be gradually implemented, without haste, in an orderly, disciplined and rigorous manner.

The just aspiration of earning higher salaries is a very sensitive question. We can not allow ourselves to make any mistakes, nor letting ourselves be drawn by desire or improvisation.

We would be happy to see that the salaries earned by those workers who work in those sectors recording the most efficient results and reporting benefits of particular economic and social impact are gradually increased.

However, I should state very clearly that we can not distribute a wealth that we have not been capable of creating. Doing so would have serious consequences for the national economy as well as for the personal finances of each and every citizen. Pouring out money into the streets without an equivalent increase in the offer of goods and services will generate inflation, a phenomenon that, among other harmful effects, would reduce the purchasing power of salaries and pensions, which will particularly affect the most humble. And we can not allow that to happen.

*By Ben Chacko, Morning Star (UK)*

Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro pledged socialist solutions to the country's economic problems on Jan. 21, vowing that falling oil prices would not derail the Bolivarian revolution.

In his annual address to the national assembly Maduro denounced the "economic warfare" being waged on the country by business interests desperate to sabotage the socialist project. He acknowledged that runaway inflation was causing problems for ordinary Venezuelans — and announced 15 per cent rises to wages and pensions to help people get by.

Student grants will be raised and 400,000 new houses built for those on lower incomes, Maduro said.

His ambitious measures are a snub to right-wing economists and international bodies which have recommended their usual austerity medicine for economic difficulties, despite the disastrous impact it

The first year of implementation of the new salary policy in quite a few enterprises has revealed that there has been a violation of the salary cost index per every gross



*Cuban President Raul Castro*

value-added Peso. In other words, higher salaries have been paid without the corresponding backing in production. On several occasions I have warned that this should be considered as a serious, very serious indiscipline that should be resolutely confronted by the administrative cadres and trade union organizations.

The fact that in our social system, trade unions defend workers' rights is secret to no one. To effectively do so, trade unions should be the first to look after the interests of any given workers group, but also the interests of the entire working class, which are essentially the same interests defended by the entire nation.

We can not leave any room for selfishness and greed to thrive and consolidate among our workers. We all want and need

better salaries, but first we have to create wealth and then distribute it according to the contribution each one can make....

No one in the world could ignore Cuba's outstanding international record in the course of the year that is about to conclude. Cubans are faced with a huge challenge: We must put the economy on a par with the political prestige that this small Caribbean Island has earned thanks to the Revolution, the heroism and the resilience of our people. Economy remains the most important unresolved matter and it is our duty to place it, once and for all, down the right path towards the sustainable and irreversible development of socialism in Cuba.

As I said at the beginning, the deputies and the entire people feel deeply moved and excited about the possibility of sharing the presence in Cuba of Gerardo, Ramón, Antonio, Fernando and René, which makes true the promise made by Comrade Fidel thirteen years ago. The extraordinary example of firmness, sacrifice and dignity of the Cuban Five has filled with pride an entire nation that struggled tirelessly for their liberation and now welcomes them as true heroes.

I should reiterate the profound and sincere gratitude to all solidarity movements and committees that struggled for their release and to innumerable governments, parliaments, organizations, institutions and personalities for their valuable contribution...

We welcome the decision announced by President Obama to begin a new chapter in the relations between both countries and introduce the most significant changes in the US Cuba policy in more than 50 years. We likewise recognize his willingness to hold

discussions with the US Congress about the lifting of the blockade and his desire to achieve a better future for both nations, our hemisphere and the world....

As I expressed on December 17, a very important step has been taken, but the essential problem still remains unresolved, which is the lifting of the economic, commercial and financial blockade against Cuba, that has been further tightened during the last few years, particularly in the area of financial transactions, through the application of skyrocketing and illegitimate fines on banks from several countries.

Our people should understand that, under the circumstances that have already been announced, this will be a long and hard struggle which will require the international opinion and the US society to mobilize in order to continue calling for the lifting of the blockade.

Every data indicate that the majority of US citizens and an even broader majority within Cuban émigrés favour the normalization of bilateral relations. Within the US Congress, which codified the blockade provisions into law, there is also an increasing opposition to that policy.

We hope the US President would resolutely use his executive prerogatives to substantially modify the implementation of the blockade in those aspects in which Congress approval is not required.

At the same time, we will analyze the scope and the form of implementation of the positive executive measures announced by President Obama. The instructions he has given to review Cuba's unjustifiable inclusion in the List of States that Sponsor International Terrorism is encouraging. Facts have shown that Cuba has been a victim of multiple terrorist attacks, many of whose perpetrators have so far enjoyed

**see RAUL CASTRO, p. 11**

## Wage raises top Maduro's agenda

has had on countries across Europe.

The president did say that petrol prices — the lowest in the world — were a "distortion" that would be impossible to maintain indefinitely, though no immediate rise was announced. The state subsidy for petrol might have to be removed, he warned, adding wryly: "If you want, crucify me, kill me. Yes, we have fewer dollars. But God will provide."

The gap between rich and poor was continuing to shrink, he said, and with assistance from the country's allies — China in particular has been a key source of loans — the immediate financial problems could be dealt with. Even if oil was less valuable than before, the nation should be proud of its independence, he said.

"Imagine if the United States controlled Venezuela's oilfields again. They use oil as a geopolitical weapon to gain a dominant position in the world."

Carping opposition deputy Juan Pablo Garcia claimed the time was right for the "regime" to "leave the



*Andreina Tarazon, the director of Venezuela's Women and Gender Equality Ministry, created to address the issues that the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) takes on internationally, seen here with President Nicolas Maduro.*

country," despite the right's repeated failure to unseat it at the ballot box.

But as Maduro began his speech, the Socialist Unity and Communist majority in the

assembly chanted: "They won't return," referring to the corrupt right-wing governments the country suffered under before the president's predecessor Hugo Chavez was elected in 1998. ●





## The Imitation Game: a powerful anti-fascist drama

*The Imitation Game*, directed by Morten Tyldum, starring Benedict Cumberbatch, Keira Knightley, and Matthew Goode, nominated in eight Academy Awards categories. Review by Peter McLaren, Morning Star (UK)

The struggle to break the WWII German radio code was crucial for an allied victory in Europe. In the 1930s Polish scientists had decoded some intercepted German messages, but after the war started the top cryptographers of Britain, the US, France and the Soviet Union failed to do so.

The messages were encoded by "Enigma" machines and could only be decoded by them. In 1939 Britain received a machine from Polish intelligence, but its encryption settings changed every day. The British had no instruction manual and there were more than 150 trillion possible settings. The Germans believed the Enigma system was unbreakable.

In 1939 Alan Mathison Turing, a 27-year old professor of mathematics from Cambridge, arrived at Britain's main decoding centre, the Government Code and Cipher School, (known to the public as the Bletchley Park Radio Factory). By then many vital shipments to Britain from the US were being lost in attacks by U-boats, which carried Enigma machines to decipher radio messages on the location of allied shipping. Britain faced the prospect of starvation.

Turing (Benedict Cumberbatch) realised that the Enigma settings could only be revealed by an electronic machine which could carry out a massive number of calculations between receipt of the first intercepted messages at 6am and the midnight deadline for expiry of the settings.

Unfortunately, his convictions were not shared by the Bletchley Park authorities, nor by other members of the Enigma team, who lodged a formal complaint about his behaviour. Turing in turn complained about his treatment to Commander Deniston, the frosty bureaucrat who directed the centre. Deniston sneered that if Turing didn't like the way things were done he could complain to the Prime Minister, but Turing took him at his

word and contacted Churchill, who issued directions for Turing to take charge of the group.

When Turing's decoding machine was built it proved inadequate to decipher messages within the time frame. Deniston used this as vindication for an attempt to shut the machine down and sack Turing, but Turing's colleagues, who had become converted to his approach, threatened to resign en masse if he was forced out. The machine finally came good after the team realised that to find the day's settings the machine only had to search for two words which all the messages included. (Guess what they were!)

Turing had difficulty appreciating the emotional responses of other people. He was brilliant at crosswords (and used them with astonishing success to recruit employees), but couldn't under-



*The Enigma machine*

stand metaphors, jokes or double entendres, and consistently accepted the statements of others at face value.

He also had little patience with those who couldn't understand his ideas (i.e. almost everybody), and his tendency to publicly assess others' capabilities with blunt honesty was interpreted as callous or cruel. He was also gay, and homosexual acts were a criminal offence in Britain.

*The Imitation Game* depicts the war years in a series of flashbacks from 1951, when Turing was investigated for suspected involvement in espionage. He was cleared, but the investigation revealed homosexual activity, for which he was subsequently brought to trial. Found guilty, the judge gave him the hideous choice

of going to prison for two years or submitting to chemical castration by hormone drugs.

Turing chose the latter because he wanted to continue his highly successful work in computer development, but found to his horror that he lost not only his sex drive but also to a great extent his mental focus.

In 1954, aged 41, he committed suicide. Britain lost its greatest mathematician, who was also an unacknowledged war hero, the conceiver of artificial intelligence and designer of the first modern computers, and arguably the nation's single most important figure in the field of code-breaking, an essential element in the global struggle to defeat fascism.

According to the film, during the period in which the vicious anti-homosexual law was in force, some 49,000 men were convicted of the "offence".

The film mainly focuses on the desperate drive to get Turing's decoding machine to work in the early war years. The Bletchley Park staff grew to approximately 10,000, and by war's end it contained the greatest store of military intelligence in history. However, the film does not acknowledge the crucial work carried out before the war by Polish scientists, or the contribution of the small army of engineers and technicians who built Turing's machine. Nor does it reveal that in 1942 the Nazis introduced even more complex machines, which caused a delay of almost a year in the Enigma group's operations.

The film lists the defeat of the Nazis at Stalingrad, the Normandy invasion, and the battles in the Ardennes as allied achievements to which the Enigma group's work made a major contribution.

But Turing realised that acting defensively on every message would alert the Nazis to a breach in the Enigma defences. His team spent much of the remainder of the war working out which deciphered messages would maximise the strategic advantage for the allies without alerting the enemy.

The film makes the astounding claim that with the help of the newly-formed MI6 intelligence division the Enigma group concealed from the armed service chiefs the information contained in the other messages. It seems unlikely that such a situation would have prevailed for long, but if it did, it would explain why details of the Bletchley Park operations were not accessible until 50 years after it was closed down.

The film also claims that Churchill refused to pass on crucial information to the Soviet Union, but that MI6 deceived him by intercepting information sent to the Soviets by an Enigma group member, and substituting information that was more limited but would still assist the Soviets without damaging allied interests. Again, this may be true, but it's unlikely that Churchill would not have eventually realised what was going on.

The film has great performances and is well worth seeing, because of its gripping depiction of the Enigma struggle and the fascinating, tragic story of Turing. ●



## MUSIC NOTES

By Wally Brooker

### Sid Dolgay 1923-2014

Sid Dolgay, a founding member of the Canadian folk group The Travellers, died in Toronto on December 25th. He was born in Winnipeg, the son of Jewish immigrants from Czarist Russia. He later moved to Toronto, where he joined the United Jewish People's Order (UJPO). It was in the left-wing UJPO, with its nearby summer retreat, Camp Naivelt, that Dolgay, and the other musicians who formed The Travellers, came under the spell of visiting American folk musicians like Pete Seeger and Paul Robeson. Like them, The Travellers celebrated progressive politics and community singing. In an era when the Canadian music industry was in its infancy, The Travellers sang Canadian folksongs and original works by Canadian folk-oriented songwriters like Wade Hemsworth ("The Black Fly Song"). They also sang people's music from around the world, with a repertoire that was uniquely "multicultural" long before the term was coined. Their biggest hit was their Canadianized version of Woody Guthrie's "This Land Is Your Land". It made them unofficial ambassadors. They even toured the USSR in a 1962 cultural exchange. Dolgay, who sang bass and played the eight-stringed mandocello, left the group in the mid-sixties because the others wanted to make a beer commercial. Check out The Travellers on YouTube - including said beer commercial!

### Protest Tweets sink Strange Fruit PR


Billie Holiday's 1939 version of the anti-lynching song "Strange Fruit" remains one of the most influential protest recordings ever made. That's why it was particularly insensitive when, in 2012, Mary Mickel and Ali Slutsky of Austin, Texas named their fledgling public relations firm "Strange Fruit PR". The two knew about the song, but assumed that enough time had passed that people would not associate the civil rights classic with their company. On December 9, after a barrage of critical Tweets, the two changed their company's name to Perennial Public Relations. "We sincerely apologize to those offended by the former name of our firm," they wrote in a public statement. "In no way did we ever intend for the name of our firm to offend or infer any implication of racism." "Strange Fruit" was written by Abel Meeropol, a member of the CPUSA. It was first published as a poem in New Masses magazine. Later Meeropol wrote a melody and offered it to Holiday. The song has been recorded countless times. In 1999 Time Magazine named it the "song of the century". Incidentally, Meeropol and his partner Anne later adopted Robert and Michael, the sons of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, executed by the U.S. in 1953 in one of the most notorious episodes of the Cold War.

### U.S.-Cuba thaw good for music lovers

If the Obama Administration eases the embargo against Cuba and drops the preposterous claim that the country sponsors terrorism, visa application procedures for visiting Cuban musicians should become much easier. Today, security clearance for Cuban visa applications can take up to four months. Visiting musicians like jazz pianists Gonzalo Rubalcaba and Chucho Valdes have faced a Catch-22 situation: U.S. venues are reluctant to offer a contract to artists lacking a visa, while the U.S. government requires a signed contract before granting a visa. Furthermore, the embargo on currency exchange stipulates that visiting Cuban artists cannot be paid by the contracting party. Instead, they're paid a per-diem of \$50-\$100 by the State Department. This for musicians who fill concert halls throughout the world. The futile U.S. attempt to blockade Cuban music was dramatized in 2004, when The Buena Vista Social Club was not allowed to attend the Grammy Awards ceremony after they had been nominated for Best Traditional Latin Album. (They won). While the complete dismantling of the embargo will require congressional approval, musicians and music lovers in both countries stand to benefit from the expected increase in cultural exchanges. For more info visit <http://en.granma.cu/>.

### Monthly Review remembers Seeger

The American socialist journal, Monthly Review, has devoted its January issue to long-time reader and supporter Pete Seeger (1919-2014). Contributors include Brooklyn-based cultural activist Daniel Rosza Lang/Levitsky ("Don't Waste Any Time In Mourning"), veteran singer-activist Holly Near ("Who Was This Pete Fellow?"), Latin-American solidarity worker and scholar Emily Paradise Achtenberg ("Friends and Neighbors: Remembering Pete Seeger and Camp Woodland"), sociologist Brett Clark and journalist Scott Borchert ("Pete Seeger, Musical Revolutionary"), Amy Schragger Lang and John J. Simon, ("Pete Seeger, Socialist Songster"), plus a reprinted 2006 interview with Seeger by Linda C. Forbes ("Possibility and Hope: Getting From Here to There"). I highly recommend it. The tributes are affectionate and comradely. They explore Seeger's life and work and argue for his enduring relevance. The New York-based socialist journal (which also operates Monthly Review Press) was founded in 1949 and continues to make significant contributions to contemporary socialist debates. To purchase the Seeger issue visit [www.monthlyreview.org](http://www.monthlyreview.org).



## La Trova Nuestra

**Friday, Feb. 27, 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."



## Greek Communists respond to election results

In the Jan. 25 parliamentary elections in Greece, the social democratic SYRIZA party won 36.3% of the votes, taking 149 out of 300 seats, two short of an absolute majority. The incumbent conservative New Democracy (ND) fell to 27.8% and 76 seats (a loss of 53), its worst result ever. The right social-democratic PASOK, ND's coalition partner, was reduced to just 13 seats (from 33 in 2012) and just 4.7% of the total vote, also a historic low.

The fascist Golden Dawn lost votes, but placed third with 6.3% and 17 MPs, many of whom are in jail for various crimes. The newly-created To Potami (The River) centrist party entered parliament with 17 seats and 6.1%. The Communist Party of Greece (KKE) improved on its 2012 results, gaining one percent to 5.5%, and 15 seats, a gain of three.

SYRIZA leader Alexis Tsipras was sworn in as Prime Minister on January 26, after reaching a coalition agreement with ANEL, the "Independent Greeks" who elected 13 MPs with 4.7% of the vote, a decline from 7.5% in 2012. This right wing party, formed largely by former ND supporters, opposes the "Memorandum" deal between Greece, the EU and the International Monetary Fund, but it takes racist anti-immigrant positions and wants a Christian Orthodox education system.

The KKE achieved a net increase of 60,000 votes, and placed third in eleven electoral regions: 2nd region of Piraeus, Samos, Lesbos, Lefkada, Zakynthos, Kefalonia, Kerkyra,

Larisa, Trikala, Prebeza, Boiotia.

In its post-election statement, the KKE leadership said, "First of all, we would like to salute the thousands of working people in our country, the young people that responded to the appeal of the KKE and contributed to its strengthening today, confirming the positive tendency of forces to rally again around the KKE, the tendency to regain votes. This tendency appeared last year, in the EU parliamentary elections, the regional and municipal elections and continued in all the various struggles of the people, in the labour, trade union and wider people's movement.

"In particular we would like to salute the people who voted for the KKE for the first time, because they appreciated its firmness, consistency and selflessness.

"As a whole, the election results reflect the great discontent and anger of the people against ND and PASOK, the parties that plunged the people into poverty and unemployment during the economic crisis.

"Of course they express to a great extent the false hope that the new government of SYRIZA might follow a political line in favour of the people.

"Based on the official statements and positions of SYRIZA before and during the election campaign, the KKE has assessed that the new composition of the Parliament and the formation of a government of SYRIZA – either on its own or in a coalition government – will follow the beaten track: the EU one way street, the commit-

ments to big capital, monopolies, the EU and NATO with the negative implications for our people and the country. Once again the people will pay the price for these choices.

"We consider particular negative the fact that a Nazi party, with specific criminal murderous activity, a party formed by the mechanisms of the system, a party that is clearly against the interests of the people, has received again a significant percentage of the electorate's votes.

"As whole, we assess that the line of counterattack and rupture with the capitalist path of development, the EU and against the policies that support this path through assimilation and passivity must be strengthened among the people and the movement.

"The KKE will increase its efforts and initiatives regarding the acute problems of the workers and the people, with our proposals for the relief of the unemployed, the families from the popular strata, the self-employed, the farmers and the students.

"It will increase its efforts for the regroupment of the labour and people's movement, the construction of the people's alliance in order for the people to realize their hopes and expectations and free themselves for the yoke of the monopolies.

"We will fight both inside and outside the parliament, with the strength that the people gave to our party so as to reveal the plans that are being concocted against the people. We will fight dynamically as the militant workers' – people's opposition, as the

## What's Left

### Vancouver, BC

**La Trova Nuestra**, evening of Latin American music, admission \$10, 8 pm, Fridays, Jan. 30 & Feb. 27, CSE, 706 Clark.

**The Black Power Mixtape**, and other films, hosted by YCL Vancouver, Friday, Feb. 6, 6 pm until late, Centre for Socialist Education, 706 Clark Drive.

**Left Film Night**, "No Justice, No Peace," 5 pm, Saturday, Feb. 7, CSE, 706 Clark Drive. Ph. 604-255-2041 for details.

### Toronto, ON

**Jose Marti Dinner**, Sat., Jan. 31, 7 pm, 1604 Bloor St. West, Cuban dinner and cultural program, dancing with Pablo Terry and Sol de Cuba band. \$35 advance, \$45 at door. Sponsored by Canadian-Cuban Friendship Association Toronto.

To reserve tickets: 905-951-8499 or 416-534-5340.

**Achievements and Challenges of the ALBA-TCP**, presented by the Bolivarian Circle Louis Riel and Canadian-Cuban Friendship Association, with remarks by diplomats from Venezuela, Cuba, El Salvador and Ecuador, and expert panelists. Music and poetry by "Voces Poeticas", refreshments, Sat., Feb. 21, 1:30-4 pm, OISE Peace Lounge, 252 Bloor St. W, 7<sup>th</sup> Floor.

**CPC New Members Celebration**, Sat., Feb. 21, 7 pm, tickets \$20, ph. 416-469-2446 for details (see page 3).

**Bethune Day Dinner**, 7 pm, Sat. Feb. 28, 2015, 290 Danforth Ave. Tickets \$5, door prize all-inclusive trip for two to Cuba. Media sponsor: People's Voice. For tickets, call 416-469-2446.

## People's Voice deadlines

February 15-28 issue: Thursday, Feb. 5

March 1-15 issue: Thursday, Feb. 19

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

organizer and the driving force of the workers' struggle and the people's alliance for the survival of the people and also for the

prospect of a radical overthrow. "We wish strength to all of you. We continue our struggle! Thank you."

## Raul Castro speaks to the Cuban people...

continued from page 9

impunity. As we all know these attacks have taken a toll on thousands of human lives and maimed persons.

The pretexts used to launch those attacks are absolutely groundless, as is known by the entire planet. They only serve political interests under the false pretense of justifying the tightening of the blockade, particularly in the financial sector. Never has any terrorist action against any US citizen, interest or territory been organized, financed or perpetrated from Cuba; nor will that ever be permitted....

I reiterate that it will only be possible to move forward based on mutual respect, which involves the observance of the principles of International Law and the UN Charter, among them, the sovereign equality of States, peoples' equal rights and self determination, the peaceful settlement of international controversies, the principle of refraining from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or independence of any State and the obligation not to intervene in matters which are within the domestic jurisdiction of States, which means that any form of interference or threat to the political, economic and cultural elements of any given State is considered a violation of International Law....

Between the governments of the United States and Cuba there are profound differences which include, among others, different views about the exercise of national sovereignty, democracy, political

models and international relations.

We reiterate our willingness to establish a respectful dialogue on our differences based on reciprocity. We have firm convictions and many concerns about what is happening in the United States in terms of democracy and human rights, and we would agree to talk on the basis of the principles referred to previously, about any issue, and about all what the US might be willing to discuss, about the situation here Cuba but also about the situation in the United States.

No one should expect Cuba to renounce the ideas for which it has struggled for more than a century, and for which its people have shed lots of blood and run the biggest risks in order to improve its relations with the United States.

It is necessary to understand that Cuba is a sovereign State whose people, through a freereferendum held to approve the Constitution, chose a socialist path as well as its political, economic and social system (APPLAUSE).

We will demand respect for our system in the same way that we have never intended the United States to change its political system (APPLAUSE).

Both governments should take mutual steps to prevent and avoid any action that might affect the progress achieved in bilateral relations, based on the observance of the law and the constitutional order of both Parties.

We do not ignore the vicious criticisms that President Obama has had to put up with as a result of the already mentioned announcements by some forces that are opposed to the normalization of relations with

Cuba, including some lawmakers of Cuban descent and ringleaders of counter-revolutionary groups who refuse to lose the means of support granted to them by the several decades of conflicts between our two countries. They will do whatever it takes to sabotage this process. We should not rule out the perpetration of provocations of every sort. On our part, a prudent, moderate and reflexive – though firm – behaviour shall prevail. (APPLAUSE).

In Cuba there are numerous and different mass, trade union, farmers, women, students, writers and artists and social organizations, which have even a representation at the Council of State, as well as non-governmental organizations, many of them represented by several deputies in this Assembly, which will feel offended if they are mistaken for a few hundreds of individuals who receive money, instructions and a breath of air from abroad.

At the multilateral organizations, such as the United Nations, we will continue to advocate for peace, International Law and all other just causes, and we will continue to denounce the threats to the survival of the human species posed by climate change and the existence of nuclear arsenals.

We will continue to promote the exercise of human rights, including the economic, social and cultural rights, by all persons, as well as the right of all peoples to peace and development.

The Cuban Revolution is deeply grateful to the peoples, parties and governments from which it has received an

unwavering and permanent solidarity, and shall continue to orient its foreign policy based on our unshakable allegiance to principles (APPLAUSE).

A symbol of the above are the special relations that we maintain with the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, to which we will continue to offer our support, in the face of the attempts to destabilize the legitimate government that is headed by Comrade President Nicolas Maduro Moros. We reject every attempt to impose sanctions against that sister nation.

...We do not forget that ALBA, with its continued appeal and the support of all countries of the region, managed to remove the old and opprobrious sanctions imposed against Cuba back in 1962 by the Organization of American States, at a meeting held in the Republic of Honduras, where hardly one month later a coup d'état

was perpetrated that ousted Comrade Zelaya, the president of that country.

Comrades all: Within just a few days we will be celebrating the upcoming New Year and the fifty sixth anniversary of the Triumph of the Revolution. Only two days ago, we marked the 58th anniversary of the occasion when we reunited with Fidel at a place called Palmas de Vicana, in the heart of the Sierra Maestra, and Fidel's historical exclamation when he knew that, in total, we had seven rifles to resume the struggle: Now we will for sure win the war!

The unshakable faith in victory that Fidel instilled in all of us shall continue to lead our people in the defense and further improvement of the work of its Revolution.

Happy New Year! We salute the new fifty seventh year of the Cuban Revolution! Thank you, very much (OVATION). ●

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# Oxfam warns of "explosion in global inequality"

## PV Vancouver Bureau

The combined wealth of the world's richest 1 percent will overtake that of the other 99 percent next year unless the trend of rising inequality is checked. That was the message delivered by the Oxfam International agency to the World Economic Forum held Jan. 21-24 in Davos, Switzerland.

This annual meeting attracts the global economic elite, costing \$20,000 to register, and \$600-700 per night for a hotel room. Ironically, Davos 2015's co-chair was Oxfam executive director Winnie Byanyima, who warned that the "explosion in inequality is holding back the fight against global poverty" at a time when 1 in 9 people do not have enough to eat and more than a billion people still live on less than \$1.25-a-day.

**Wealth: Having It All and Wanting More**, a research paper published by Oxfam, shows that the richest 1 percent have seen their share of global wealth increase from 44 percent in 2009 to 48 percent in 2014. Members of this global elite had an average wealth of \$2.7 million per adult in 2014.

Of the remaining 52 percent of global wealth, almost all (46 percent) is owned by the rest of the richest fifth of the world's population.

The other 80 percent share just 5.5 percent and had an average wealth of \$3,851 per adult – that's 1/700th of the average wealth of the 1 percent.

Byanyima asked: "Do we really want to live in a world where the one percent own more than the rest of us combined? The scale of global inequality is quite simply staggering and despite the issues shooting up the global agenda, the gap between the richest and the rest is widening fast... It is time our leaders took on the powerful vested interests that stand in the way of a fairer and more prosperous world.

"Business as usual for the elite isn't a cost free option – failure to tackle inequality will set the fight against poverty back decades. The poor are hurt twice by rising inequality – they get a smaller share of the economic pie and because extreme inequality hurts growth, there is less pie to be shared around."

It appears that major corporate

interests are deeply worried that the "income gap" could spark unrest on a bigger scale than the "Occupy" movement. While most capitalist governments are increasing spending on the repressive elements of the state apparatus - police, security and surveillance, prisons, the military - there are also calls to mitigate the impact of neoliberal policies in

- Introduce equal pay legislation and promote economic policies to give women a fair deal.
- Ensure adequate safety-nets for the poorest, including a minimum income guarantee.
- Agree a global goal to tackle inequality.

Here are some statistical highlights from the Oxfam report, which follows the organization's



hopes of averting political turmoil.

Lady Lynn Forester de Rothschild, Chief Executive Officer of E.L. Rothschild and chair of the "Coalition for Inclusive Capitalism", called on business leaders to play their part in tackling extreme inequality.

She said: "Oxfam's report is just the latest evidence that inequality has reached shocking extremes, and continues to grow. It is time for the global leaders of modern capitalism, in addition to our politicians, to work to change the system to make it more inclusive, more equitable and more sustainable. Extreme inequality isn't just a moral wrong. It undermines economic growth and it threatens the private sector's bottom line. All those gathering at Davos who want a stable and prosperous world should make tackling inequality a top priority."

Oxfam International is calling on governments to adopt a seven point plan to tackle inequality:

- Clamp down on tax dodging by corporations and rich individuals.
- Invest in universal, free public services such as health and education.
- Share the tax burden fairly, shifting taxation from labour and consumption towards capital and wealth.
- Introduce minimum wages and move towards a living wage for all workers.

recent global Even It Up campaign. The numbers are derived largely from data published by Credit Suisse, and from Forbes magazine's annual rankings of global billionaires.

\* In 2014, the richest 1% of people in the world owned 48% of global wealth, leaving just 52% to be shared between the other 99% of adults on the planet.

\* Almost all of that 52% is owned by those included in the richest 20%, leaving just 5.5% for the remaining 80% of people in the world.

\* If this trend continues, the top 1% will have more wealth than the remaining 99% of people in just two years, with the wealth share of the top 1% exceeding 50% by 2016.

\* The billionaires on the Forbes list have seen their wealth accumulate even faster over this period. In 2010, the richest 80 people in the world had a net wealth of \$1.3 trillion. By 2014, the top 80 had a collective wealth of \$1.9 trillion; an increase of \$600 billion in just 4 years, or 50% in nominal terms.

\* Between 2002 and 2010 the total wealth of the poorest half of the world in current US\$ had been increasing more or less at the same rate as that of billionaires; however since 2010, it has been decreasing.

\* The wealth of the richest 80 individuals matches the total owned by the bottom 50% (3.5

billion people) of the global population.

\* In 2010, it took 388 billionaires to equal the wealth of the bottom half of the world's population; by 2014, the figure had fallen to just 80 billionaires.

\* In 2014, 1,645 people were listed by Forbes as billionaires. Almost 30% of them (492 people) are citizens of the USA.

\* Over one-third of billionaires started from a position of wealth, with 34% of them having inherited some or all of their riches.

\* Among this group, 85% are aged over 50 years and 90% are male.

\* A few important economic sectors have contributed to the accumulation of wealth of these billionaires. In March 2014, 20% of them (321) were listed as having interests in the financial and insurance sectors.

\* Since March 2013, there have been 37 new billionaires from these sectors, and six dropped off the list. The accumulated wealth of billionaires from these sectors increased from \$1.01 trillion to \$1.16 trillion in a single year, a growth of 15%.

\* Between 2013 and 2014 billionaires listed as having interests in the pharmaceutical and healthcare sectors saw the biggest increase in their collective wealth. Twenty-nine individuals joined the ranks of the billionaires in this sector between March 2013 and

contributions to federal candidates and parties.

\* Billionaires from the US make up approximately half of the total billionaires on the Forbes list with interests in the financial sector.

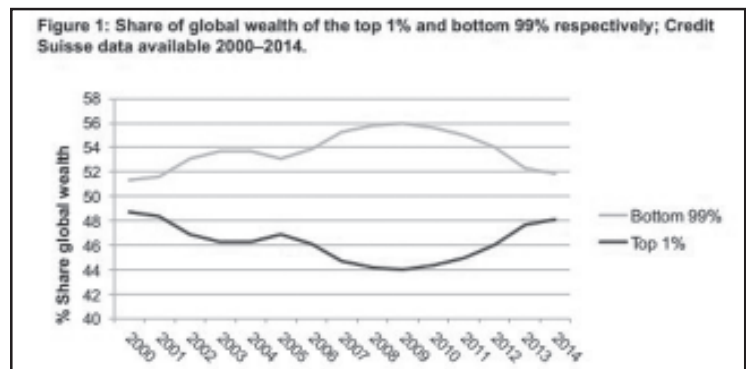
\* The number of US finance billionaires increased from 141 to 150, and their collective wealth from \$535 billion to \$629 billion, an increase of \$94 billion, or 17% in a single year.

\* In the EU, an estimated \$150 million is spent by financial sector lobbyists towards EU institutions every year. Between March 2013 and March 2014, the number of billionaires in the EU with interests in the financial sector rose from 31 to 39, increasing their collective wealth by \$34 billion, to \$128 billion.

\* During 2013, the pharmaceutical and healthcare sectors spent more than \$487 million on lobbying in the USA alone. This represented 15% of \$3.2 billion total lobbying expenditures in 2013. During the election cycle of 2012, \$260 million was spent by this sector on campaign contributions.

\* At least \$50 million is spent by the pharmaceutical and healthcare industry on lobbying each year in the EU, where 20 of the 90 billionaires who made their money from this industry reside, and who together increased their wealth in the last year by \$28 billion.

\* Meanwhile, a health crisis has



March 2014 (five dropped off the list), increasing the total number from 66 to 90, or over 5% of the total billionaires on the Forbes list. The collective wealth of billionaires with interests in this sector rose from \$170 billion to \$250 billion, a 47% increase.

\* The biggest companies from the finance, insurance, pharmaceutical and healthcare sectors achieve extremely high profits to compensate their owners and investors. These resources can also be used for economic and political influence, through the direct lobbying of governments.

\* During 2013, the finance sector spent more than \$400 million on lobbying in the USA alone, or 12% of the total amount spent by all sectors on lobbying in the US in that year. During the election cycle of 2012, \$571 million was spent by companies from this sector on campaign contributions.

\* The financial sector is found by the Centre for Responsive Politics to be the largest source of campaign

erupted in West Africa. The Ebola virus has been threatening the lives and livelihoods of millions of people in Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia in 2014.

\* Three major pharmaceutical companies have collectively donated more than \$3 million in cash and medical products for the Ebola relief effort. But these three companies together spent more than \$18 million on lobbying in the US during 2013.

\* The World Bank estimates that the economic cost of the Ebola crisis to Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone was \$356 million in output forgone in 2014, and a further \$815 million in 2015 if the epidemic is slow to be contained.

\* A single pharma billionaire could pay this \$1.17 billion cost three times over from his new wealth. Stefano Pessina increased his net worth from \$6.4 billion in 2013 to \$10.4 billion in 2014, the largest single increase among the billionaires listed with pharmaceutical and healthcare interests.

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