

FEB.
15-29,
2012

VOL. 20
#3

\$1.50

people's VOICE

**NO TO WAR
against Iran & Syria**

See page 7

Printed in Canada by union labour
on recycled paper  118-44
Publications Mail Agreement #40011632



The CETA "Trojan Horse" - photo from Council of Canadians, www.canadians.org

The CETA Threat

*"Comprehensive
Economic and Trade
Agreement" with
European Union would
destroy Canadian jobs
and sovereignty*

- page 6 -

Union-busting in Toronto

*Rob Ford's drive to slash
city services and attack
public sector workers*

- page 2 -



Photo by Ed Bil

3 Tricky waters...

Members of Canada's oldest left-labour municipal party met recently to analyse last November's election results, and to debate the way forward for progressive civic activists.

INSIDE

5 Questions for NDP

The Official Opposition party in Parliament has said relatively little about war and militarism, so the Canadian Peace Alliance asks some questions.

9 Deliberate misquote?

Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmedinejad spoke six years ago about Middle East issues. Ever since that time, one misquoted phrase from his text has been used to gear up for war.

Toronto Outside Workers vote on tentative deal

By Liz Rowley

On Feb. 5, the City of Toronto and Local 416 CUPE announced a tentative agreement that 6,000 outside workers will be asked to ratify. The terms had not been made public at PV press time, but the city's Feb. 2 final offer included a base wage increase of 1.75% in 2015, preceded by three lump sum payments of 1.25% in the first year; 1.50% in the second year, and 1.75% in the third year; job security provisions would only apply to permanent employees with 22 years or more of seniority; the city gets the unilateral right to make shift changes; plus reductions in sick days and in optical and dental benefits.

The union had offered in January to roll over the existing collective agreement, effectively freezing wages for three years. Local 416 President Mark Ferguson said the union did not want to strike, and wanted to negotiate a settlement and continue to deliver uninterrupted city services to residents. On the crucial issue of job security, which Mayor Rob Ford has called "jobs for life", the union offered to give up job security for employees with five years seniority or less.

A mass campaign by Ford and the right-wing on Council, together with the business and financial sector, has vilified the 30,000 unionized city workers for months with lies and distortions, suggesting that they live the life of Riley, with high wages, perks galore, and the hash-tagged "jobs for life".

The reality is that about 15,000 city workers (about half) are part-timers, most without any benefits, and many paid not much over the minimum wage.

Deep budget cuts and contracting out of garbage collection in the western half of the city had already factored in hundreds of job losses. Local 416 warned that the City was pushing for a lock-out and aimed to gut their collective agreement. Ferguson called it union-busting.

On Feb. 3, the City announced it would impose new terms and conditions of work starting at 12:01 am on Feb. 5, when the old contract was no longer legally in force. The new terms and conditions would be those laid out in the City's final

offer. But at 8 am on the 5th, after extending bargaining through the night, the tentative agreement was announced.

Nothing is settled until the 6,000 members of Local 416 debate the details of the tentative deal, and cast their vote for or against. Their decision will set the pattern for bargaining with the three other Toronto Locals, and the overall results will ripple through municipalities across the country.

If they reject, CUPE members will almost certainly be on the picket lines within days, either on strike

or locked out, where they could be joined by other Locals within a couple of weeks.

Either way, their decision will impact on the 24,000 city workers still in bargaining, including Local 79 (inside workers), the much smaller Local 4948 (Public Library Workers), and a fourth local representing about 100 workers.

If Local 416 votes to accept, the city will present the deal as the pattern the other Locals want to overturn. If they reject, the ante goes up for a united and coordinated fight by all the city Locals, who could be pounding the pavement together for a while.

Maureen O'Reilly, President of Local 4948, said she doesn't want the Toronto Public Library to be turned into Walmart: "I'm facing a 17% staff cut. Fifty percent of my members are part-time workers, many of them with no benefits, and some of them with low-paid work. I don't want the TPL to become the Walmart of public libraries."

During the City Budget fight, the Mayor and his brother Councillor Doug Ford vowed to close library branches "in a heartbeat", but were forced to settle for reduced hours and staffing. Mass public opposition and author Margaret Atwood were crucial in defeating the worst of the cuts, which is encouraging for Library workers, who were seeking conciliation as PV went to press.

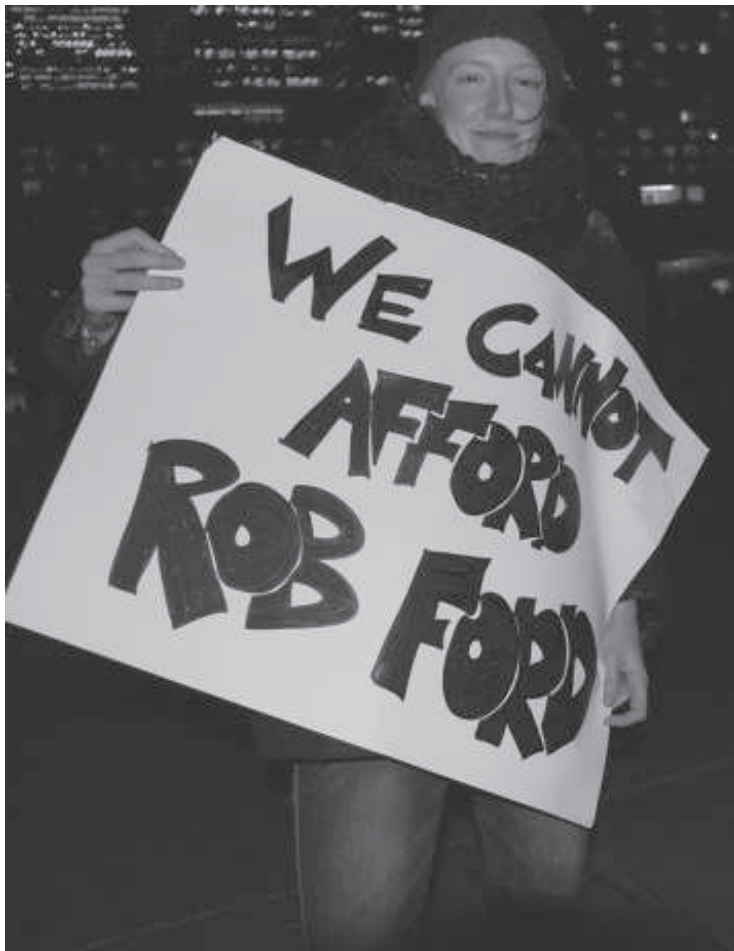
Local 79 was still in talks, but all Locals reported that the City was refusing to negotiate key issues pending a final settlement with the outside workers.

So far the Mayor is declaring it a "great day - a fantastic day - for taxpayers", by which he means the banks and financial institutions infesting the downtown core, and the big corporations in the suburbs. Deputy Mayor Doug Holyday claims the deal was achieved as a result of the city's hard bargaining positions. But homeowners and tenants are about to lose many more services if the Mayor has any more "great, fantastic days".

There needs to be a united front of labour and its allies around these Locals, tying their rights and living standards to the level of good services in the city. The budget battles brought the public out in droves, once they understood what they were about to lose.

A January poll showed that 84% of those surveyed want the city to maintain or increase spending on services over the next four years. That link has its opposite which must be exposed: contracting out and privatization, which is all about profits and getting less while paying more.

Doug Ford himself said he (and Mayor Rob) wanted to contract out everything that wasn't nailed down in Toronto. This is how they're doing it. Stay tuned. ●



Protesting Toronto budget cuts. (PV photo: Ed Bil)

2012: 90th anniversary of the working class press



We continue our series of historic front pages of the working class press with issue #4 of the Canadian Tribune, dated Feb. 10, 1940. The Canadian Tribune, published weekly by EverReady Printers in Toronto for over fifty years, took the place of the Clarion, which was banned by the federal government in November 1939 under the "Defence of Canada Regulations." The Tribune's editor was A.A. Macleod, leader of the Canadian League Against War and Fascism, who was elected to the Ontario legislature from 1943 to 1951 as a Labor-Progressive Party MPP for the riding of Toronto Bellwoods. The editorial board included R.L. Calder, a lawyer and CCF member; Charles Herbert Heustis, a science writer and anti-fascist; R.A.C. Ballantyne, head of the Montreal Civil Liberties Union; the poet and communist activist Margaret Fairley; and writer H.K. Gordon. This issue includes several articles on the defence of democracy during the "phony war" period when Britain and its allies, including Canada, focused on suppressing the labour movement rather than fighting Hitler fascism. One article reports on a letter opposing the Defence of Canada Regulations, signed by prominent labour and church activists from Toronto. Another gives details of an attack by right-wing students in Montreal against an assembly of student groups opposed to conscription. Miners at the Teck-Hughes gold mine in Kirkland Lake, members of the Mine-Mill union, voted 383-247 in favour of strike action, according to another front page report. ●

Winnipeg transit fare fight

PV Manitoba Bureau

A petition and leaflet campaign to reverse a 20 cent hike in bus fares is receiving support among anti-poverty and student groups. Harvey Smith and Ross Eadie, two members of City Council, launched the campaign on January 31.

The fare hike was pushed through Council in December, after Councillor Justin Swandel moved a surprise motion to raise fees to help pay for Winnipeg's new rapid transit system. The revenue will pay for a fraction of the system's cost, but impose a huge burden on the working poor and students who rely on public transit.

The growing list of groups supporting the campaign includes Winnipeg Harvest, Social Planning Council, The University of Winnipeg Students' Union, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, the Rapid Transit Coalition and Women's Council of Winnipeg.

Groups and individuals are urged to speak about rescinding the fare hike at a public works committee meeting on Feb. 28. To find out how to help build the campaign, visit <http://fairbusfares.wordpress.com>, email janellefreed0@gmail.com or call Harvey Smith's office at 986-5951. ●

NIAGARA NEWS BULLETIN

People's Voice Niagara Bureau

- * Yet another patient at a Niagara Falls hospital died from the latest C-Difficile outbreak, with 16 more still infected there, and 19 in other Niagara hospitals. The deaths continue, after 38 died in previous outbreaks, while the administration responds with anything other than restoring services, staff, and beds which were cut earlier. Hospital workers and unions have warned that without the resources they need the root cause won't be addressed.
- * 8,000 Port Colborne residents whose land was poisoned by Inco have filed their case with the Supreme Court of Canada, after an Ontario court overturned their reparations because even though Inco is responsible it was within environmental laws.
- * The Niagara Catholic District School Board is still refusing to recognize Gay-Straight Alliances and is trying to side-step the issue of homophobia by instead having "Respecting Differences" clubs, which dilute the issues of homophobia and patriarchy into bullying in general.
- * Students occupied Brock University's Schmon Tower lobby on Feb. 1 as part of a movement to reduce tuition fees.
- * St. Catharines is considering reducing Sunday bus service because uploading services has not been done sufficiently to relieve the municipal budget.

Less than promised from CLBC review

By Kimball Cariou

Last August, British Columbia's Liberal government secretly initiated an internal review of Community Living BC. Now available (only on request!), the 139-page Queenswood Consulting report is being used by Premier Christy Clark as a prop to announce minor tinkering with CLBC, which provides services to developmentally disabled adults. As often happens, the mainstream media has accepted the Premier's claim that the government is boosting CLBC funding by \$40 million, rather than the actual figure of \$9 million.

Fortunately, the Queenswood report has been analysed by Dawn Steele of Moms on the Move, a grassroots group which advocates for the disabled and their families. (See <http://momsnetwork.ca>)

One example is the statement that "a more cost-effective model" of service delivery would be made possible by switching from the Ministry of Children and Families to CLBC, with options like "individualized funding, increased role of families, and an increased use of generic and community services."

As Steele points out,

"contrarian" groups warned that the "grand promises and visions" announced by the Liberals were a smokescreen for cuts to funding. This is proven in figures contained in the Queenswood report, particularly the impacts of a review of contracts following the switch to CLBC.

Here is an excerpt: "As of August 2011, 696 reviews of staffed residential and community inclusion program contracts had been completed, with another 888 contract reviews still in process. The total amount of savings identified in completed reviews stood at \$24.87M (on contracts with a total value of \$145.45M)... (As a result) 64 homes have closed in staffed residential services, with 169 people moving into different residential arrangements. In community inclusion service contracts, 33 locations have closed. Where the existing service continued, 166 contracts had no reduction in funding, while 301 had funding reduced. Along with the 888 reviews still underway (estimated savings: \$16.05 M on total contract values of \$234.63M)... There is not yet an estimate of potential savings with respect to the 1,303 reviews still pending."

In plain language, the province has slashed spending on the most disadvantaged adults in B.C. by at least \$40 million, with over 1300 reviews still pending. These savings have been achieved by cutting supports for many individuals, and by closing 64 staffed residential group homes.

Some pundits have quoted the Queenswood finding that waiting lists for services for the developmentally disabled are shorter than stated by advocates and community groups. But the actual demand is far higher than the report shows. Many families involved with CLBC have been told by staff that there is simply no point in trying to place relatives on lengthy waiting lists.

The following quote illustrates this point: "Beginning in the summer of 2009, CLBC... increased efforts to manage and address unrealistic client and stakeholder expectations." In other words, don't bother asking for help which will never arrive.

The government does aim to provide corporations with cheap labour. As the Queenswood report says, "...CLBC estimates (very roughly) that about 50% of its current clientele is employable, but

have grown up in a system that assumes they will not work, and fails them by not teaching relevant skills and abilities.... CLBC is now exploring ways of promoting employment readiness and employment support services."

Many developmentally disabled adults (those with IQs below 70, autism/Downs, serious health issues, and no verbal ability) would love to have proper training and a decent job. The reality is that 112,000 unemployed British Columbians are currently chasing just 26,400 vacant jobs, according to Statistics Canada (which also notes that the vacancies are largely

in mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction).

The internal report echoes the government's view that "in the context of increasing demands and scarce resources, governments must address daunting financial restraints in a different manner."

The message is clear: "Don't expect us to raise taxes on the rich and the corporations to improve social programs. Stop whining, get over to Burger King and work for minimum wage, or else just stay home and watch TV."

So much for life in "The Best Place On Earth" - as the B.C. Liberals call British Columbia. ●



Rally against underfunding of CLBC (Photo: K. Cariou)

Tricky challenges for Vancouver civic activists

PV Vancouver Bureau

The call by the Coalition of Progressive Electors for municipal election reforms is a good example of the role that Canada's oldest left civic party can play, even without a sitting member on city council.

Elections in Vancouver have become the most expensive in Canada, topping \$5 million last fall, or more than seven dollars per resident. In the last three campaigns, the right-wing NPA and the centrist Vision Vancouver have spent millions, making it increasingly difficult for COPE and smaller parties and independents to mount a serious challenge.

Unfortunately, the "Vancouver Charter" gives the province legal authority over Vancouver municipal election regulations, allowing previous governments to ignore referendum votes in favour of a ward system.

While COPE supports the general thrust of a motion by Vision to ask the government to amend the Charter, it also proposes giving teeth to the request, by making it much more detailed. This could prevent attempts by larger parties to find loopholes in new regulations. Another option, COPE argues, could be an informal agreement among civic parties.

There are other key issues during Vision's second term at City Hall, such as taxation. After three years of following the direction of the 2005-08 NPA administration, which began shifting an increased share of the tax load from businesses to homeowners, Vision has changed gears. For the 2012 budget, Mayor Robertson's party plans to reduce the scale of this shift, which was highly unpopular with homeowners.

Relations with the city's workforce, represented by CUPE and other unions, will also be on the agenda. The labour movement

remains an important backer of both Vision and COPE. Robertson and his fellow councillors (unlike Rob Ford's regime in Toronto) hope to avoid any confrontation when collective agreements come up for renewal.

Significant debates will revolve around the crucial issues of development and housing. Vancouver's director of planning Brent Toderian was removed on Jan. 31, sparking intense speculation. Some wonder if Toderian was seen as too abrasive by certain developers - some of whom also support Vision. The Mayor, however, says a change was necessary to focus on the city's housing crisis.

While some of the steps taken by Vision have reduced the numbers of homeless people on the streets, there are still thousands of residents surviving in shelters or tiny, dirty rentals. A project to redevelop the Little Mountain lands - the site of Vancouver's first social housing after World War

Two - has done little to reassure housing advocates. The latest plan calls for 234 social housing units among 1800 condos, finally replacing the homes bulldozed several years ago. But this would not mean any net gain in affordable housing for the poor.

These issues were on the minds of 100 COPE members at the party's Jan. 22 consultation, which reviewed the 2011 campaign and discussed the way forward. Those present were unanimous about making electoral reform an urgent issue.

There was also agreement that COPE must focus on building grassroots alliances, working with community groups to advance progressive policies at City Hall and School Board. Most thought it was too early to adopt an electoral tactic for 2014.

But there were differences over COPE's approach to other civic parties. Some argued that the Toronto experience shows that the main danger to working people at

the municipal level is the emergence of mayors and councillors linked to the Harper Tories. These far-right forces are behind the drive to slash local services and to impose lower wages and benefits on civic employees. In Vancouver, this means the NPA, which was defeated last November by the Vision/COPE slate - although Vision reaped the benefits.

Others argued that Vision is the real enemy of working people in Vancouver. One panellist bluntly called Vision "part of the one percent", while COPE represents the "99%". This was a direct condemnation of the labour movement and forces on the left,

such as the Communist Party, which have supported electoral unity of left and centre forces to block the NPA.

COPE's annual meeting on Feb. 19 (2 pm at the Ukrainian Church, 354 W. 10th) will elect a new executive. With only one elected official (school trustee Alan Wong), COPE will mainly be an oppositional force during this term. But an all-out war against Vision could alienate COPE from thousands of voters who see the Mayor's majority as a positive alternative to the NPA threat. The new COPE executive will have to steer a careful course through these tricky waters. ●

COPE urges electoral reform

The Coalition of Progressive Electors is calling for Vancouver City Council to embrace specific targets that will make municipal elections more transparent, more equitable, and less dominated by big money. While supporting the spirit of Councillor Reimer's motion calling for reform, COPE says the city's request to the province should be a more specific proposal to amend the Vancouver Charter by imposing a \$1.50 per registered voter spending limit for electoral organizations along with a per person contribution limit of \$500.

Former COPE councillor Ellen Woodsworth says that specific changes are necessary. "We need to take the big money out of our system, and with a \$1.50 per voter limit - a figure in line with Elections Canada - we can start to move in that direction."

However, Woodsworth noted that the B.C. Liberals have ignored all three Vancouver parties when they called for changes. "This government ignored COPE in 2005, the NPA in 2007, and Vision in 2010. The issue isn't Vancouver, the issue is the Province."

COPE is also calling for public hearings around individual donation limits, third party spending, bringing in wards, and making donations tax deductible. "The City needs the authority to make changes to how we elect our officials," said Woodsworth. "Once we have that authority, it should be up to voters, not just City Hall." ●

MAY DAY 2012 GREETING ADS

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

Ad rates (based on 5 column page):

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

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

EDITORIALS

The real issue: jobs or profits

With the next federal budget looming, the question must be asked: will the Harper Tories put jobs or profits first?

The so-called "recovery" from the crisis of 2007-08 is sputtering to a halt across the capitalist world, including in Canada. Yes, stock prices and corporate revenues have rebounded, but the ominous signs of slowdown are mounting, including an alarming loss of full-time employment.

Officially, unemployment in Canada ticked up to 7.6% in January, significantly higher than the 6% levels in mid-2008. This figure only includes the 1.4 million who are "actively looking" for work. Add those waiting for a recall from a previous employer, who have given up looking for non-existent jobs, or who are stuck working part-time, and unemployment would soar to 10.6%, or some two million people.

Back in 2008, only 12% of unemployed workers spent six or more months looking for a job. By 2011, 21% cent were in this category. The average length of an unemployment spell has jumped from 14.8 weeks to 21.1 weeks. Why? According to Statistics Canada, the ratio of unemployed people to job vacancies stood at 3.3 to 1 last fall. If every job opening was filled tomorrow, over 1.5 million Canadians would still be looking for work.

Several policy options could address this crisis. One is an emergency plan to build low-income housing across the country. Another would be to shorten the work week with no loss in take-home pay. A third idea would be to roll back post-secondary tuition rates and increase education and training for jobless Canadians. Number four: start processing raw materials here in Canada, instead of exporting jobs.

But the Harper Tories, as hardline ideologues of unregulated capitalism, will use their budget to help the bosses inflate profits at the expense of working people. As the saying goes, "Tory times are hard times." It will take a big dose of "people power" to save the country from their disastrous agenda.

Fascist cancer still spreads

For years, police forces and governments in Canada have chosen to ignore violent racist hate groups across the country, or even to make sickening comparisons between these fascists and the anti-racists who courageously expose their activities. But recent events make it more difficult to cover up for thugs like the "Blood and Honour" gang.

Three "alleged" ("self-proclaimed" would be more accurate) white supremacist hate group members are on trial in British Columbia, charged with the burning of a Filipino man and assaults on Black, Hispanic and Native people. These violent crimes coincided with the increased visibility of "white power" fascists on the streets of Vancouver and nearby cities.

At the same time, the names and addresses of 74 white supremacists in Canada (and many more in other countries) were recently leaked by anti-racist computer hackers in Europe. The hackers revealed emails, secret websites and blogs, photos of children giving Nazi salutes, confidential legal documents and displays of Hitler tattoos.

This will not surprise our readers, who are well aware of crimes by Blood and Honour supporters such as the series of bloody attacks against Calgary anti-racists Jason and Bonnie Devine.

If hackers in Europe and activists across Canada can identify the dangerous fascists in our midst, why are the police so slow to act? Will the trials in Vancouver mark the end of efforts to bring these criminals to justice? Or will the authorities be compelled to make a serious effort to eradicate this cancerous tumour within Canadian society? The answer may depend largely on our ability to mobilize against the white supremacist threat.

PEOPLE'S VOICE

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

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

Volunteers and contributors for this issue:

Dave Arland, Ed Bil, Wally Brooker,
Miguel Figueroa, Sam Hammond, Darrell Rankin,
Liz Rowley, Gurpreet Singh, Saleh Waziruddin,
W.T. Whitney, and our mailers in Vancouver & Toronto.

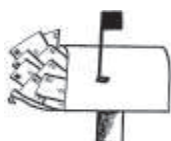
Editor: Kimball Cariou Business Manager: Sam Hammond

Editorial Board: Kimball Cariou, Miguel Figueroa,
Doug Meggison, Naomi Rankin, Liz Rowley, Jim Sacouman

LETTERS

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

People's Voice articles may be reprinted without permission provided the source is credited.



Letters to the Editor

It Still Moves

Imperialism and financial capitalism are in a deep crisis, rather worse than the great depression of the 1930s.

At the same time, international capitalism strives for domination to keep this blood-soaked and bloodthirsty predatory system which has been going over the last 100 years. Humanity has lost millions of people in the wars alone.

In the present capitalist economic crisis, ordinary people have been asked to carry the burden. The ordinary people without any assistance, guidance and leadership are actually beginning to rebel against this racket; hence the occupation of Wall Street

and various financial centres all over the world.

Ideally we would like the Communist Party to be connected with these movements, leading them in the direction of Marxist-Leninist ideology and socialism.

The Wall Street protesters do not mention "socialism". They say they are just fighting against the "greed" of the bankers. In fact it is not the greed of the bankers; it is the greed of the capitalist system.

We are followers of Marxism-Leninism. Galileo, on his death bed dared to say in defiance of the Pope and church "It still moves" i.e. the Earth moves around the Sun.

Harjit Daudharia, Surrey, BC

Lies told to western farmers

Farmers expecting something substantial in their Christmas stocking were sorely disappointed at the end of 2011. Not only was there nothing left in their stocking, but what they had was stolen by Harper and his henchmen Ritz and Anderson, and given to Viterra, ADM, Louis Dreyfus, Cargill & Parrish & Heimbecker.

The lies these three spread are unbelievable, eg. Western farmers now have the same opportunity as other farmers (referring to the former Ontario Wheat Producers Marketing Board started by farmers in 1958). What they haven't told farmers is:

Ontario wheat farmers: ended their single desk through a farmer-led DEMOCRATIC process; produce wheat that is used for pastries, cookies and cakes; produce less than one-tenth the volume of wheat that prairie farmers produce; sell about 90% of their product within Canada and northern USA; have low transportation distances and costs; now pay grain companies more to handle their crops.

Prairie wheat farmers: voted in favour of keeping the CWB, and face having it taken away against their will; produce hard red spring wheat used for bread and durum used for pasta; produce 80% of Canada's wheat; must pay freight costs to transport grain long distances to inland terminals and to port; rely on the CWB to ensure fair market access for all, including users of producer cars.

Ritz and his supporters such as Western Canadian Wheat Growers

Association (WCWGA) continue to promote Marketing Freedom - "the right to sell to whomever, wherever & whenever I want". Yet a supposedly intelligent WCWGA past president signed a contract (through her Broker? At what cost?) to deliver 1000 Tonnes of #1 CWAD 13% to the delivery location (Assiniboia Grain) or ANY alternative location as may be notified by the company (so much for wherever). This must be delivered between Oct. 1, 2012 and Oct. 31 2012 (so much for whenever) at \$8.35 per bushel.

What about the 70+ countries that the CWB can sell to at handling cost of about 9 cents per bushel? Why and from whom, is Viterra expecting to make eight-figure gains from CWB deregulation?

Another lie is about the farmers "jailed for selling their own wheat into the U.S." These farmers went to jail because they contravened the Customs Act. In fact one of them stole his tractor unit from the compound where it was impounded!

The stupid thing is that those wanting "marketing freedom" can sell to whoever they want. They just can't sell for a price lower than what the CWB is getting.

In truth, Harper, Ritz & Anderson with all their lies, illegal acts and breaking of Canada's laws should be among the first to be charged under their own "Tough on Crime Bill C10"!

Joyce Neufeld, Waldeck, SK

Iran and nukes?

With respect to "Intelligence officers condemn war drive" (PV, Feb. 1-14), it should be added that the hype over possible nuclear weapons for Iran is completely bogus. The Ayatollah Ali Kamenei has issued a Fatwa against nuclear weapons, on the grounds that these weapons cannot possibly discriminate between military and civilian targets - a position also taken by the latest Roman Catholic Catechism.

Iran has had a public debate on the advisability of nuclear weapons, and decided against them. No western power has dared to do likewise. It should be noted that for most western powers, nuclear weapons are more for threat than for any possible use. Actually to use such weapons would make the perpetrators a pariah state.

Why then the hype? Neocons and the Israeli lobby in the US have used the pretext of possible nuclear weapons to distract attention from the real reason for the push for war on Iran: as we saw in the 2006 invasion of south Lebanon, the Israeli Defence Forces no longer have absolute power, even though the IDF is the biggest military power in the region. They were stopped in 2006, by Hizballah, which is supported by Iran. The IDF can no longer commit crimes of aggression with impunity, except in Gaza and the West Bank. For this reason, the Israeli lobby in the US, as well as Republican candidates, want a war with Iran. Israeli military and intelligence figures know better and have consistently opposed a war on Iran.

It looks very much as if the neocon elements, the pro-Israeli lobby, and assorted war mongers are in fact Israel's worst enemies. The much-desired war on Iran would be a disaster for Israel and for the people of Israel.

One should add that Iran would be quite receptive to the notion of a Nuclear Weapons-Free zone in the Middle East. One need have no illusions about the present Iranian government to recognize that a war on Iran, or even the present regime of sanctions will succeed in uniting opposition movements in Iran with the government.

Jordan Bishop, Ottawa, ON

Peace Alliances raises militarism issues with NDP

With the federal NDP leadership vote coming up on March 24, the eight candidates have largely avoided the issues of war and militarism, where their party has a mixed record. Fortunately, the Canadian Peace Alliance has sent several important questions to the candidates. This welcome initiative may help raise these crucial issues at a time when the NDP is the Official Opposition in Parliament, and hopes to win the next federal election expected in 2015. People's Voice will report on the responses from the leadership candidates.

1) Military Spending - THE CANADA FIRST DEFENCE STRATEGY earmarks \$480 billion for military spending by 2025. This is the largest increase in military spending since WWII and makes Canada the 13th largest military spender in the world. Simultaneously, the government of Canada is calling for austerity and plans an \$11 billion cut to public services in their next federal budget. The Canadian Peace Alliance has launched a campaign called Peace and Prosperity - NOT - War and

Austerity to redirect that spending.

Question: What would you do to counter this imbalance and call for a redirection of money, allocated for the military to public services, health, veteran rehabilitation, education and environmental programs?

2) Afghanistan - The Government of Canada has extended Canada's troop presence in Afghanistan until 2013. This is the third time they have extended Canada's participation in the war. In poll after poll, the majority of Canadians have shown that they want all of our troops removed from Afghanistan now.

Question: What would you do as leader of the opposition to raise this issue and to call for the immediate removal of all Canadian troops including troop trainers from Afghanistan?

3) Sanctions and war on Iran - There are signs that the US, Israel and other NATO countries not only are planning a fifth round of severe sanctions but also a possible nuclear military attack on Iran's nuclear facilities. Any use of

military force against nuclear installations in Iran will be dangerous and illegal under international law. As was the case with Iraq, sanctions and war created a humanitarian crisis with more than 1.5 million dead and a country in ruins.

Question: Would you oppose further sanctions and a military attack on Iran?

4) Civil Liberties - The Conservative government has a record of attacking those who dissent - in particular, criminalizing Muslims as so-called "Islamists"

and criminalizing Aboriginal people who try to assert control over their traditional territories. Now the government has said it will reintroduce anti-terror legislation which had expired in 2007 including clauses in bills C-36 and C-42 which suspend the rule of law and allow for people to be arrested and detained without charge.

Question: What would you do to stop the Conservative plan to set back civil liberties in Canada and work to rescind those elements of bills C-36 and C-42 that have been extended?

5) NATO - The NDP is on record calling for Canada to withdraw from NATO. Canada's NATO membership has resulted in our armed forces being embroiled in conflicts, such as the war in Libya, during which NATO far exceeded its regional and military mandate. The Libya mission, under NATO, morphed from a call for a limited mission into an aggressive war for regime change.

Question: Do you think Canada should continue to be part of NATO? If yes, why? If no, why? •



Canadians are still waiting for the eight NDP leadership candidates to present detailed positions on the key issues of war and peace raised by the Canadian Peace Alliance. Photos from candidate debate in Toronto, clockwise from top left: Niki Ashton, Nathan Cullen, Paul Dewar, Thomas Mulcair, Brian Topp, Martin Singh, Romeo Saganash, Peggy Nash. (PV photos by Ed Bil)

MLA sets example by wading into lives of the poor

By Gurpreet Singh

As the occupy movement against one percent super rich and in solidarity with 99 percent of the working class and downtrodden continues across North America, a New Democrat MLA from British Columbia, Jagrup Brar, has set an example by wading into the lives of homeless and poor.

Brar accepted a challenge from an anti-poverty advocacy group called Raise the Rates and lived on \$610 during January. That's the amount a person surviving on B.C. welfare gets. Raise the Rates had thrown a challenge before the BC MLAs to survive on this meager amount for a month.

Brar was the second MLA to accept the challenge after Emery Barnes, who survived on the welfare money 25 years ago. Incidentally, both men were from visible minority groups. Whereas Barnes was black, Brar is an Indo-Canadian.

As part of the challenge, Brar resided among the homeless and

needy both in Surrey and in Vancouver. At his Surrey room where he stayed during the first half of January, visitors were greeted by the picture of Barnes, who became a role model for Brar during the experiment. While doing so Brar gained first hand experience of what it means to be poor in a province that government ads claim to be the best place on earth.

In his hometown of Surrey, Brar had to survive on Food Bank and met with a number of people without jobs, homeless, single mothers and refugees. A big map dotted with population relying on Surrey Food Bank also welcomed visitors at his small room. The only washroom in the building was shared by other occupants. The room rent was about \$400. Another room offered to him for \$300 was as big as a closet but wasn't available immediately.

The life in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside was worst where Brar lived among 55 single room occupants. The building has five floors with 11 single rooms on every floor for each individual. They all shared one washroom, and each individual was required to take care of personal hygiene. The room rent was \$410 a month and Brar lived on free food served by a Church next door. "Nobody can survive on such a small amount when the lion's share of the welfare money is spent on renting a room", he said in an interview with this reporter at his stinky and suffocating room which had a broken fridge.

The line up at the free lunch and dinner at Church and a long wait for one's turn to get a shower takes a lot of time from the schedule of a poor person who is on a job hunt. Brar came to understand closely how the myths about these people have demonized the poor in the mainstream media. He wrote his daily experiences in a diary and took notes of the testimonies of

the people he met.

Within his own Indo-Canadian community such myths continue to prevail and Brar was also attacked by many callers during open line radio talk shows. "Many Indo Canadians think that this is the problem of the mainstream whereas I also came across many Punjabis on welfare. The Indo-Canadians don't know this because those on welfare in our community are scared to tell the truth and do not share their stories with others fearing humiliation and ridicule."

At the end of this journey Brar broke financially. What gave him strength was a greeting card from his daughter Noor hanging from one of the walls. Though he was aware that it was not real for him, as he would eventually return to his normal and comfortable lifestyle, yet he faced occasional hardships. He refused to accept a samosa from a kind-hearted landlord at his temporary home in Surrey. He barged into Brar's room when a media interview was in progress. "I am supposed to kill my urge and not to accept such luxuries. Others might accept them but I can't and that makes this experience real for me."

The occupy movement was partially sparked by the vacuum caused by lack of leadership. Only more humanist politicians like Brar can reassure people who are disappointed and disillusioned with the system. While some critics accuse Brar of trying to take political mileage out of this experience, they are missing a point that politicians cannot survive by ignoring the strength and expectations of the voters. What is important to remember is whom the politicians are trying to please? The elite and the corporate or the poor and needy? If a good deed is performed to attract votes, it is better than trying to attract votes by performing a bad deed. •

CAW outraged at Electro-Motive closure

From www.caw.ca

CAW President Ken Lewenza has expressed his anger and frustration at the "callous move" by Caterpillar to suddenly close its London Electro-Motive Diesel plant, announced on Feb. 3.

Sadly, the closure doesn't come as a total surprise to the union. "Caterpillar had no intention of keeping this plant open," said Lewenza. "From day one, we believed that Caterpillar was trying to provoke a crisis, by forcing deep cuts that were not possible," said Lewenza. "Our members would have happily continued working under the previous conditions, but that wasn't enough for this incredibly profitable company."

Caterpillar locked out approximately 465 workers on January 1, after tabling a final offer that would cut wages and benefits in half. In late January, Caterpillar announced \$4.9 billion in annual profits, the highest in its 86 year history.

Lewenza also pointed the finger squarely at government inaction in allowing the closure. He said that 465 workers and another 1,700 workers employed in spin-off jobs are now the casualties of an outdated and dysfunctional Investment Canada Act, that attaches no commitment to Canadian jobs to corporate take-overs.

"The Stephen Harper government is entirely in the pocket of the corporate elite and has shown absolute disregard for Canadian workers and their families," said Lewenza. "I am disgusted at this government and its indifference towards the suffering of workers and the unemployed. The Harper government was elected by Canadians, but only seems able to represent multi-national corporations."

"Even though we predicted that the plant could close, it's devastating when it actually happens," said CAW Local 27 President Tim Carrie. "This is truly rotten behaviour. Now we're going to do everything that we can for our members."

CAW Electro-Motive chairperson Bob Scott said that members learned this morning that the plant would close - the company gave the union absolutely no advance notice. "Imagine the shock that our members felt at hearing about losing their job, on the radio," said Scott. "It's unbelievable that Caterpillar would string our members along and lock them out in the cold for six weeks, when it had no intention of reopening the plant," said Scott. "This is absolutely sickening behaviour on the part of this corporation." •



Renew today!

Check your label

Please check the address label on the front page to see if it's time to renew. Subscribers who find "2012/02/02" on their label, for example, will have their subscriptions expire with this issue, February 15-29, 2012

Don't miss a single copy - renew today!

CETA talks: what's the big hurry?

PV Vancouver Bureau

Like a freight train racing downhill without brakes, the "Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement" negotiations between Canada and the European Union (EU) are picking up speed, yet most Canadians have little idea of CETA's potential impact on our lives. Groups like the Canadian Union of Public Employees and the Council of Canadians are trying to stop CETA before it's too late, but a ninth round of negotiations has been completed. The federal government says that "significant progress has been made across the board, including the areas of goods, services, investment, government procurement and many others. The negotiating text is now well-advanced, with many chapters closed or parked pending further development, and issues in the remaining chapters narrowed down to key differences where solutions are now being

Failure to protect water services

Recently leaked documents show that Canada and the provinces have failed to protect drinking water and wastewater services from trade rules that would encourage privatization.

The documents, made public by the Quebec Network on Continental Integration (RQIC) and the Trade Justice Network, show Canada's initial services and investment offers to the EU. They list policy areas or sectors that are to be spared from "liberalization," (deregulation or re-regulation on market-based terms favourable to multinational investment). Water services are not on the list, which means they are automatically included in the deal.

"The two biggest private water utilities in the world are European and eager to use CETA to gain access to Canada's still public water systems," says Maude Barlow, national chairperson with

Trojan Horse in front of City Hall on Jan. 26 to warn about the hidden dangers of CETA.

"This agreement with the EU has far reaching implications for city policies and could hurt our ability as councillors to promote local jobs or small business, create incentives for investment in Toronto, protect the environment or otherwise use public spending as a way to stimulate growth," said Councillor Glenn de Baeremaeker.

"From what I can see, the CETA would be all risk and little reward for Toronto," said Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam. "We're here to ask the executive committee to support the idea of trying to exclude Toronto from any unnecessary limits in the EU deal on how we make policies to benefit our community."

Wong-Tam and de Baeremaeker spoke in support of a motion recommending that City Council request the Province of Ontario to issue a clear, permanent exemption of Toronto from the CETA, and "protect the powers of municipalities, hospitals, school boards, utilities, universities and other sub-federal agencies to use public procurement, services and investment as tools to create local jobs and otherwise support local economic development."

As a participant in the CETA negotiations, Ontario has made promises to open certain sectors and to bind certain municipal governments and other provincial agencies to procurement rules that would forbid buy local or "Buy Canadian" requirements or any other preferences for small businesses on some contracts.

The Trojan Horse appeared before the gates of Parliament in Ottawa during the last round of CETA negotiations in October 2011. It has also joined a protest outside the Quebec National Assembly demanding transparency and debate before the deal is signed. In each case, the Horse represents the hidden dangers inside what is being misleadingly called a trade agreement.

Already over 20 municipal governments have requested to be excluded from the EU deal.

Investment Canada Act trampled

The federal government has been accused of ignoring Canadian law and approving the takeover of Canadian book publisher McClelland & Stewart by a multinational corporation, to help clear obstacles for CETA.

"It would seem that the government is running roughshod over the Investment Canada Act in order to smooth the way for CETA talks to be concluded," says Maude Barlow. "If the government denies the takeover, the issue will become an impediment to conclusion of the CETA talks, since Bertelsmann AG, owner of Random House and its affiliates, is the world's largest trade book publisher and an influential German company."

Questions remain about the legality of the McClelland & Stewart takeover, approved behind closed doors by Minister of



The CETA "Trojan Horse" at Toronto City Hall

Canadian Heritage and Official Languages James Moore. Reports indicate Moore was approached by Random House to seek an exemption from provisions of the Investment Canada Act which require a review of foreign takeovers of Canadian publishing firms to ensure these are of "net benefit to Canada."

"This development highlights the reason we need a complete cultural exemption from the CETA," says Garry Neil, Executive

Director of the Council of Canadians. "The federal government should force Random House to offer the 75 percent stake in McClelland & Stewart previously held by the University of Toronto to the highest Canadian bidder."

Established in 1906, McClelland & Stewart has published books by Maude Barlow, Margaret Atwood, Farley Mowat, Margaret Laurence, Pierre Berton, L.M. Montgomery, Michael Ondaatje, and many other Canadian authors. •



actively explored."

Stressing their goal of "resisting protectionist pressures in challenging economic times," the Harper Tories want to wrap up talks quickly, with the aim of concluding CETA this year.

What's the big rush? It's all about money, markets, and profits. With a population of 500 million and a GDP of \$17 trillion, the EU member states represent Canada's second largest trading partner. In 2010, EU countries bought \$49.2 billion in Canadian exports of goods and services, and imports from the EU to Canada were \$55.3 billion. The EU is also the second largest source of foreign direct investment in Canada, totalling \$146.9 billion at the end of 2010. Canadian investment in the EU reached \$145.2 billion in that year, or 23.5% of Canada's direct investment abroad.

Canada and the EU announced plans in 2009 for a "free trade" type of agreement, even more comprehensive than the Canada-US deals which removed most restraints on the cross-border flow of capital and profits.

While the Harper government claims to "appreciate the input of all Canadians" in this process, only the business sector has actually been consulted. Working people who will pay the price through lower living standards, lost jobs, and increased environmental degradation have been kept completely out of the loop. Here are some examples of the potential impacts.

the Council of Canadians. "Harper's message to these companies is that Canada is 'open for business' when it comes to water privatization. The very notion of water as a public good and a human right is at stake."

"Canadians hold a great deal of trust in publicly owned, operated and delivered water and sanitation systems," says CUPE National President Paul Moist. "Water and other essential services like health care, public transit, postal services and energy are vital to our communities. If European negotiators are prepared to protect those sectors why isn't Canada? We need to debate this deal right now."

CUPE and the Council of Canadians are asking that provincial governments correct their mistake by fully excluding drinking water and wastewater services from trade offers. The organizations also urge the provinces to withhold support for the CETA negotiations until the public and opposition parties have had a chance to study and make revisions to these offers and the broader Canada-EU agreement. There could be many other areas, for example public transit, health care, education, etc., which should be protected but which the provinces have not carved out of the CETA.

Hidden threats to municipalities

Toronto councillors and community groups hauled a giant

What is a CETA, and why should we be worried about it?

By Larry Brown,
Secretary Treasurer of
National Union of Public
and General Employees

list of things that governments can't do if they interfere at all with the corporate sector's unfettered right to make a profit.

2) This proposed deal would for the first time apply directly to Provinces, and cities, and crown corporations, and school boards, and hospitals. In particular the European Commission wants access to 'procurement' by all these levels of government. Procurement is the purchase of goods, like buses, and services. That means that Provinces, and cities, would lose their right to use taxpayers' money for the benefit of local taxpayers. The proposed CETA would prohibit governments at all levels from spending tax dollars to encourage local development. Bids would have to be open to European companies and the only consideration allowed would be the cost of the bid.

Pretty much everyone who looks at CETA comes to the same conclusion. Hydro Quebec has a Research Institute. They studied CETA and concluded that CETA would limit the ability of government agencies to use public spending to achieve social goals like economic development

see CETA, p. 10

The Canadian Government is well down the road, with the European Union, towards negotiating a Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA). They tell us that CETA will have everything that NAFTA has, plus more. They say that like it's a good thing.

But the more one looks at this Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement, the more there is to dislike. NAFTA cost us hundreds of thousands of manufacturing jobs, plus made our regulations and our social programs vulnerable to challenges from US and Mexican companies. The proposed CETA is all of that and more, with a much larger economic bloc.

Here are just some of the reasons to be very concerned about CETA.

1) Like most such agreements, the proposed CETA is not so much about trade as it is about putting limits on the ability of governments to control the actions of large corporations. It's not really about tariffs and borders, it's about adding to the

Act to prevent war against Iran and Syria

By Darrell Rankin

The Middle East is the epicenter of the militarization of relations between China and Russia on one side and NATO's imperialist, or advanced capitalist countries, on the other. Imperialist countries which twice plunged the world into war in the last century are getting ready for round three. The arms race is growing around the globe and the battle lines are getting clearer.

Even without considering the potential for a new global war, fear and tension are flowing from the threat of smaller wars of regime change and occupation in Iran and Syria. Positions are hardening on both sides of the intervention issue. So far, China and Russia will veto any UN Security Council resolution that may trigger military action, but that may not be enough.

It may be only a matter of weeks or months before imperialism targets Syria or Iran, adding to its list of imposed regime changes which are not approved by the UN. For the Security Council to even talk about military action against sovereign countries signals that imperialism (NATO and Japan) dominates world politics. And if imperialism acts outside the UN, as in Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Haiti and Libya, it is another nail in the coffin to the actual words of the UN Charter.

Imperialism: source of the war danger

Protecting civilians is a monstrous argument for starving, bombing and invading a country. So what is really behind imperialism's rising bloodlust?

A arrogance cannot fully explain imperialism's growing dependence on its enormous military potential. The answer to the problem is that capitalism is in deep trouble and the most reactionary forces in all imperialist countries are preparing to use war as a way to wipe out all resistance at home and abroad.

If we are to believe our corporate media, the U.S. military will enjoy early and sudden success in a future limited war. After all, the U.S. succeeded in Iraq and very quickly in Libya, the troop surge is helping in Afghanistan, and no one else has the same high quality of weapons, trained troops and leadership. Vietnam was then; this is now.

The main brake to prevent these wars is still public opinion in the imperialist world, filtered through considerations like Obama's chances for re-election. The governments that are most pro-war such as Canada, Israel, France and Britain are acting like they are immune to public opinion, making the task of strengthening the peace movement harder and more urgent.

War spells danger and ruin to workers of all lands

We need to realize that war is placing all civil rights and democracy on the chopping block. Under a dictatorship, it is

easier to impose the full burden of capitalism's great problems on the working class, farmers and small capitalists. In the global capitalist system, war protects and hikes corporate profits. Imperialist war crushes popular and revolutionary movements whose aim is to solve unemployment, famine and climate change.

Every new war creates more difficulties to begin shifting the balance of forces against imperialism. Wars are extremely unpredictable; adding to the list of current wars is a straight path to a new world order of corporate fascism.

Despite the foolish belief in quick and predictable success, hundreds of thousands and possibly millions of Iranian and Syrian lives would be lost in a serious war, especially if the countries are occupied. We should recall Hitler's expectation that Britain would surrender after a drastic bombing campaign. It was unrealistic and the Nazis had to conclude Britain would surrender only if it was fully occupied.

Western imperialist countries should draw the obvious conclusion that a war of regime change will not be easy and will involve lengthy occupations. But their whole scenario is based on flawed strategic concepts - fast wars and victory through air power and powerful new weapons. The West will have to pay a large military, economic and political price, even if they are restricted to a serious bombing campaign. The stakes for people in Iran and Syria are incredibly higher.

In Canada, the labour movement and all people must act now to prevent imperialist aggression, at home and abroad.

To avoid war, we need the strengthened coordination and unity of non-aligned and developing countries, larger sections of the international working class movement, the resistance in imperialist countries, and communist and working class parties, including the left social democratic variety who should reject the further appeasement of imperialism's drive to war. The global anti-war, anti-imperialist movement must be strengthened.

Every new war makes creating international unity more difficult.

More wars, more uncertainty

Each new war of occupation by imperialism carries the seeds of a more general war, a violent continuation of its efforts to dominate and exploit all sovereign countries which do not bend to its will. In addition to the expansionist aims of all imperialist countries, there is also the counter-revolutionary purpose of imperialist war and aggression. Each has its own dangers.

Imperialism's increased aggression to divide the world builds rivalries that may erupt into another inter-imperialist war. More immediately, the spread of war in the Middle East is the greatest enemy of the Arab Spring revolutions and the genuine

aspirations of the broadest masses of people.

Imperialism's flawed strategic concepts for war against Syria or Iran add to the unpredictability of the outcome. Several recent wars are spreading to new countries; for example, the Afghanistan war is spreading to Pakistan. Pro-NATO Libyan armed groups say they will move to Syria.

Most western imperialist countries see attacking Syria as a stepping stone for war against Iran, but Israel wants Iran to be the first target. Either way, Israel's position towards Syria is clear. An official state of war has always existed between the two countries. Equipped with a strict reading of the United Nations Charter, Syria has always viewed Israel as an illegal, imposed state.

In the Arab League, recent votes on both Syria and Libya show that Saudi Arabia and the small emirates dominate the leadership, with the support of Egypt's military regime and other anti-popular

also explains why imperialism is resorting to sudden, blitzkrieg-style operations. For example, Libya was a sudden war associated with a barrage of propaganda that helped stop opposition from developing. However, the expectation of sudden victory can easily be dashed when met by firm resistance.

Build the anti-war movement

With the most powerful imperialist countries close to launching new wars in the Middle East, the anti-war forces need to be strengthened quickly. The corporate media and governments are carrying out a frenzied drive to justify the need for regime change, dismissing the ability or actual wishes of the Syrian and Iranian peoples to manage their own affairs.

Yet there are weaknesses and potential divisions in imperialist circles, which may help the anti-war movement. NATO may not

these must be encouraged, including in the ranks of the NDP, a situation which will help mobilize protests and opposition outside parliament.

Protests must become large enough to block Canada's entry into a new imperialist war. The NDP and the labour movement have said virtually nothing about the looming war danger. Monte Solberg, a former Reform/Conservative MP, studied the NDP's position and wrote last fall that "the little Iran problem didn't merit a single mention" in the party's statements, speeches and media releases (*Toronto Sun*, November 13, 2011).

Yet the NDP's actual position supports the Harper government's war effort against Syria and Iran. Asked to comment on the Conservative government's decision to send a warship to the Mediterranean for possible use against Syria, the NDP foreign affairs critic said "I don't have a strong opinion about that" and urged "tougher pressure" on the Syrian government (*Toronto Sun*, November 21, 2011).

By focusing only on the Syrian government, the NDP has an unbalanced approach to resolve the country's civil conflict, has no real objection to sending military forces into the region that could invade or attack Syria, and lists sanctions as the only diplomatic remedy. The way is left open for the NDP to conclude at a later date that sanctions are not working, so it's time for foreign intervention. The NDP policy on Syria indicates how it will behave towards Iran.

Peace groups have made some good statements and some are starting to mobilize and build alliances against a new war. More attention needs to be paid to parliament, where there has been no serious debate yet on Syria or Iran (if it will happen at all before a war), but it is important to prepare and lobby as if a debate might happen soon. It is important to pressure all opposition parties to reject a war and at least force a debate.

Despite the war mongering, broadly-supported efforts against war can and must grow, at the local and cross-Canada levels (days of action, meetings, open letters, etc.). Waiting for a war to start is the wrong approach. All peace groups should be working on this. There needs to be more effort to pin down the positions of NDP leadership candidates on the issue of intervention against Syria and Iran. There should be immediate work to strengthen opposition to war in the labour movement and in all popular activities to raise the need to oppose war, well beyond International Women's Day and May Day.

War can be prevented. (Darrell Rankin is the Manitoba leader of the Communist Party of Canada, and a longtime anti-war activist.)



Feb. 4 anti-war demonstration in Toronto. (Photo: Ed Bil)

governments.

Last year's Arab League vote to suspend Syria as a member was a clear invitation for imperialism to target the country. The vote fell short of formal support for war because such a move is opposed by the broad working masses. So why are most Arab League members ignoring the war danger and aligning themselves with the most pro-war countries in the region, including Turkey, which is a base for anti-Syrian forces, and Israel?

The national bourgeoisie in the Arab League are more afraid of the growing popular unrest than of a war instigated by imperialism against Syria and Iran. They do not fully realize the threat that spreading imperialist occupations brings to the sovereignty of all Arab League countries.

At the expense of their own sovereignty, the Arab national capitalist classes are united in the expectation that a limited war against Syria would help them crush the Arab Spring and remove the threat of fundamental democratic and social change. Until the anti-imperialist forces in the region gain strength and effectively support each other, the sovereignty of Iran, Syria and all Arab League countries is in danger or, in the case of the Palestinian people, is completely submerged.

The lack of popular support in Arab countries for using war to promote democracy and progress

achieve consensus on a decision to attack Iran or Syria, preventing its official participation. So only a handful of NATO countries and Israel are likely to participate. About Syria, Israel could stay out of a fight if the outcome could jeopardize its continued occupation of the country's Golan Heights.

The parties of the Socialist International, such as the NDP in Canada, are making a monumental mistake by lining up to support aggression against Syria and Iran. Opposition to war in all NATO countries will grow one way or the other and become much sharper than over Libya. In the end, the rise of anti-war forces will deal a heavy blow to the Socialist International by exposing social democracy's bankrupt collaboration with imperialism.

The anti-war movement must be strengthened throughout the imperialist camp, especially in Canada and the U.S. Although no serious divisions exist now in the U.S. Congress or in our parliament,

REDS ON THE WEB

www.comunist-party.ca

www.peoplesvoice.ca

www.ycl-ljc.ca

www.solidnet.org



GLOBAL CLASS STRUGGLE

Privatization spreads in U.S.

Privatization and contracting out are becoming even more pervasive across the United States, according to the Public Interest resource center. A recent commentary from the group says "It seems there's no public service or piece of property that private companies are not eyeing as potential revenue streams... Companies like Corrections Corporation of America, Waste Management, Maximus, Intuit, Laidlaw, Northrup Grumman, Koch Companies, Macquarie Capital Advisers, Pinnacle West, and United Health Care are hoping to use government as their candy store."

Here are some recent examples. The Emergency manager of Flint, Mich., is considering selling off its revenue-generating water and sewer systems to the highest bidder. Long Island's Nassau County is proposing to privatize its sewage treatment system and is selling the Long Island Bus company to Veolia Transportation.

The Texas Lower Colorado River Authority is selling 18 retail water and wastewater systems in the Hill Country and in its southeast service area to [Canada-based] Corix Infrastructure.

School districts are planning to contract out custodial, clerical, cafeteria and bus services. The real state industry wants in on profits from charter schools. Entertainment Properties, a real estate investment trust, primarily a movie theater landlord, now owns 34 charter-school properties and sees huge growth potential.

The liquor industry is pushing hard to take control of state systems that generate funds for cash-strapped governments. Ohio Gov. John Kasich is privatizing the state's liquor distribution system in a \$1.4 billion dollar deal. The Idaho Federation of Reagan Republicans has submitted a citizen's initiative that would privatize liquor sales in Idaho and eliminate the state Liquor Division.

Michigan Gov. Snyder is proposing to deregulate the state's alcohol distribution system, which generates an estimated \$330 million for the state's general fund.

On the other hand, record profits at state-owned liquor stores in Virginia may have scuttled Gov. Bob McDonnell's proposal to privatize them.

More unionists killed in Philippines

At hearings in Washington, the Secretary-General of the Alliance of Progressive Labor (APL), refuted claims of the Philippine government that it has done a lot to resolve trade union killings.

Josua Mata, testifying on Jan. 25, stated that two years after the visit of an ILO High Level Mission, none of the killings have received justice. Of 39 cases filed before the ILO, only three are currently on trial, and these involve only the hired guns, not the real masterminds in their corporate offices.

According to labour surveys, six trade unionists have been killed

from 2010 to 2011, under the administration of President Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino.

"Before we say that the new guidelines are working, show us the proof that violations are no longer happening, or at least are actually going down," testified Mata.

Mata also supported assertions at the hearings about the rampant abuse of contractual labor in the country, which prevents workers' from enjoying their rights, including their right to join unions. He cited



two cases, that of Philippine Airlines and of Hanjin Shipping. "Of the 21,000 workers (Hanjin) now employs, all of them are contractual employees who are hired by 16 subcontractors, (and) many of these companies, have interlocking directorates with the same officials of Hanjin."

General strike greets EU leaders

The first general strike to hit Belgium since 1993 started late on Sunday, Jan. 29 and continued through the next day, shutting down much of the country as European leaders gathered for a meeting in Brussels.

Public transportation, including the entire rail network, was affected by the strike. Intercity Express (ICE) trains and trains on the Thalys network that originate in Germany also experienced interruptions in service. Deutsche Bahn, Germany's rail operator, used busses to carry passengers to Brussels once they reached the Belgian border. Some flights at the Brussels airport were cancelled, and the smaller Charleroi airport south of the city closed entirely.

A military base near Brussels became the new landing site for visiting heads of state, who were driven 40 kilometers to the meeting.

Schools and shops shut and production stopped at the factories of many companies including carmakers Audi and Volvo, Coca Cola, and imaging group Agfa-Gevaert. At Europe's second busiest port, Antwerp, all container and some bulk cargo terminals were shut, with shipping traffic suffering delays due to suspended harbour services.

Belgium's major unions called the strike to protest moves to raise the age of retirement and other belt-tightening measures demanded by the EU. They urged the EU to issue joint eurobonds to ease the interest pain for weaker nations and said the rich should shoulder more of the austerity burden.

Another Honduran unionist killed

The two-year war against thousands of peasant families and their organizations fighting to defend their lands and cooperatives and to reclaim land stolen by large oil palm growers in the northeast Honduran region of Bajo Aguan has taken yet another life. On Jan. 20 two gunmen on motorcycles murdered Matõas Valle, former vice president of the United Peasants Movement of Aguan (MUCA).

According to MUCA General Secretary Yoni Rivas, "There's no doubt this new murder is connected with the current land conflict in Bajo Aguan and the large landowners. They want to pressure us into accepting the proposal from the government and the private banks to buy these lands. We have rejected this agreement already, because what they're really trying to do is strangle us financially. They want to put us into debt so they can then come and take away the land that has cost us so much sacrifice."

Valle was vice president of MUCA until mid-2011, and a member of the negotiating committee which in 2010 signed the first agreement with the government in an attempt to regulate the conflict. In August 2010 Valle and another peasant leader, Marõa Gutierrez, were invited to a meeting of the Latin American Federation of Coca-Cola Workers (FELATRAC), to give their testimony of the peasant struggle in Bajo Aguan.

The labour movement estimates that 45 people have been killed during the ongoing political and economic struggles in Honduras.

"Liberated Iraq"

A controversial new Iraqi government directive tells women public employees to wear "modest" clothing: no close-fitting T-shirts, tight trousers, short skirts, or sandals, and no ostentatious or glittery clothing in general.

Many civil servants see the directive as unnecessary. Few women in Iraq dress to attract attention to themselves in a society where many men have been radicalized by violence and self-appointed gender police intimidate women on the street. But the new directive does not come from religious authorities or fundamentalists. Instead, it comes from a commission presided over by Iraq's minister for women's affairs.

"Is this really what the minister for women's affairs thinks?" one female public employee asked. "Is this really the policy of the Ministry? Is... clothing really the problem women face? There are actually many important problems that women suffer from!"

Minister for Women's Affairs Ibtihal Kasid al-Zaydi claims the directive is necessary due to complaints from government offices that some female employees are not professionally attired.

"Actually, we do not restrict women and their freedom; we do not have the right to do so," she says. "The freedom to choose

one's attire and other freedoms are guaranteed by the constitution and do exist in Iraq. However, we tell women in the civil service that they should wear clothes in accordance with their specific position, as is usual all over the world."

"It's enough that Iraqi women go out to work, risking their lives every day for the sake of rebuilding the country," says rights activist Sundus Abbas, from the Women's Leadership Institute. "At the moment, in 11% of Iraqi families, women are the main breadwinners. And in 74% of these families, where women are widowed, they are the sole earners."

Portuguese transport strike

Public transport workers in Portugal held a 24-hour strike on Feb. 2 to protest austerity measures. This was the third such strike since November. In the capital, Lisbon, the metro shut down at midnight and ferry services were stopped during rush-hour traffic.

The 24-hour action was launched to "protest against the strategic plan for transport," said Jose Oliveira, the coordinator for the Federation for Transport Unions (FECTRANS). Included in the plan are measures to reduce salaries, cut jobs and privatize some of the state-owned mass transit companies. The public will also be affected with planned service reductions and price hikes.

The center-right government is imposing a financial plan dictated by the European Union and International Monetary Fund. Portugal was given a 78-billion-euro bailout last year in May 2011, following earlier bailouts of Greece and Ireland in 2010.

The Feb. 2 strike was

undermined by Portugal's second-largest umbrella union, the UGT, which reached an agreement with the government and employers to make it easier to fire workers. The social democratic UGT leadership argues that the agreement will give unions greater clout in future "economic reforms."

But the larger Communist-led CGTP federation disagrees. "Prices are soaring, they are robbing the people and sinking the country. Reject the pact of aggression," read banners during the Feb. 2 rallies in Lisbon, in reference to the accord signed by the UGT.

Still "temps" after 25 years

The Turkish Statistical Institute's (TUIK) 2,500 employees are struggling to make ends meet without any job security, since they are considered temporary survey employees and their contracts are renewed on an annual basis. On Feb. 2, the TUIK employees, who track macro economic data like inflation, growth and unemployment, hit the streets to demand better working conditions and compensation.

TUIK employees do not even receive the lowest civil worker wage, which is 1,635 Turkish Liras (about \$930). High school graduates earn 965 liras (\$550) per month and those with a university degree earn 1,050 lira (\$600). These wages do not include a food or transportation allowance which some Turkish workers receive.

Some TUIK employees who have worked for as long as 25 years are still considered "transitory". Those whose contracts are terminated do not receive a severance package and there is no compensation for overtime work.

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

Send me information on the Communist Party of Canada



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

Central Committee CPC
290A Danforth Ave, Toronto, ON, M4K 1N6
416-469-2446 <info@cpc-pcc.ca> www.comunist-party.ca

Parti Communiste du Quebec (section du Parti communiste du Canada)
5359 Ave Du Parc, Suite "C"
Montreal, QC, H2V 4G9
Email: pcq@cpc-pcc.ca Tél: 438-338-8890

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

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

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

Saskatchewan CPC
Email: mail@communist-party-sk.ca

Ottawa CPC
Tel: 613-232-7108

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

Ontario Ctee. CPC
290A Danforth Ave., Toronto, M4K 1N6
Tel: 416-469-2446

Hamilton Ctee. CPC
265 Melvin Ave., Apt. 815
Hamilton, ON, L8H 2K3
Tel: 905-548-9586

Atlantic Region CPC
Box 70, Grand Pré, NS, B0P 1M0
Tel/fax: 902-542-7981

U.S. unions turn to political prisoners and peace

By W.T. Whitney Jr.

Increasingly, politically-motivated incarceration threatens Colombian unionists, human rights workers, and political activists. They are already too familiar with killings and disappearances at the hands of armed enforcers. International solidarity with victims has grown over recent decades, with the labour movement taking on a prominent role in defending human rights in Colombia. British trade unions have been instrumental in bringing the fact of 7500 Colombian political prisoners to the world's attention.

Some time ago, the U.S. and Canadian United Steelworkers union (USW) combined with the British union known as Unite the Union (itself the merger between British Amicus and Transportation & General Workers Unions) to establish the world's largest union, with 3.4 million workers, known as Workers Uniting. The planning agreement for that merger, signed in Ottawa in 2007, outlined five overall objectives. One identified, "Projects [that] might include, but are not limited to, support of Columbia's trade union movement in the face of continued attacks on labor and human rights." (Other projects would involve "partner unions in Africa," ship breakers in India, and outreach in China.)

British unions created the Justice for Colombia group, notable

for pushing Colombian authorities to honour prisoners' rights, and the USW has joined the Justice for Colombia group as well. One of the priorities for Justice for Colombia and Workers Uniting is the freeing of political prisoner David Ravelo, and they have called on the Colombian government - as well as its chief military patron, the U.S. - to "take all measures necessary to protect his life and the life of his family."

As USW Senior Counsel Daniel Kovalik explains, "Mr. Ravelo, a human rights activist with CREDHOS (a partner of Christian Aid) in Barrancabermeja as well as a former leader of the Patriotic Union - a political party which has suffered literally thousands of assassinations over the years - has been held in jail, without charge, for 14 months now." Kovalik explains that "before being sent to prison, Mr. Ravelo received numerous threats against his life."

Ravelo once publicized a video showing ex-President Alvaro Uribe hobnobbing with paramilitaries. He had directed the local branch of the Movement of Victims of State Crimes, helped build the left-leaning Alternative Democratic Pole electoral coalition, and once served as Barrancabermeja city councillor. He belonged to the Communist Party's Central Committee. The Catholic Church honoured Ravelo for 35 years of dedication to human rights. Interviewed in April 2011,

he explained, "They are getting even for my longstanding, relentless work in defense of victims and for my unbreakable position against injustice."

The pretext for Ravelo's detention was conspiracy alleged in the murder 21 years ago of mayoral candidate David Nunez Cala. That accusation came from imprisoned paramilitary chieftain Mario Jaimes Mejia, who reportedly is seeking a reduced sentence.

USW solidarity with Colombian political prisoners, via Workers Uniting, is no surprise. The USW had long opposed the recently approved U.S.-Colombia free trade pact, condemned Drummond Corporation's impunity in the deaths of coal mine workers, and sued Coca Cola for complicity in the murders of unionists employed by Colombian affiliates.

USW Senior Counsel Dan Kovalik has travelled to Barrancabermeja and met with CREDHOS on several occasions. Questioned via email in connection with this article, he replied:

"We are working in close conjunction with Justice for Colombia in Great Britain on the political prisoners campaign. While there may be 7500 political prisoners and prisoners of conscience in Colombia, Mr. Ravelo's case is particularly compelling as he is a leading human rights advocate being held without

charge. We believe that his release would be a crucial part in the effort to begin releasing the thousands of political prisoners in that country."

Kovalik added: "The U.S. labour movement has been unanimous in its opposition to U.S. military assistance to Colombia since 2000 in light of its abysmal labour and human rights practices which, among other things, has claimed the lives of over 2900 unionists - a

figure unprecedented in the world. I believe that an important step now is for U.S. unions to join the voices of labour, human rights and other social groups in Colombia who are calling for a peaceful, negotiated settlement to the armed conflict in that country. That is probably the greatest contribution we can make to Colombia at this time, and the release of political prisoners is a key step in this direction." •

Greetings from Liliany Obando

The Communist Party of Canada recently received this postcard sent on Nov. 5, 2011, from the Buen Pastor Women's prison in Bogota. The delay is no doubt related to efforts by the Colombian authorities to obstruct international solidarity work.

Dear Comrades,

Please receive our revolutionary greetings and my wishes that your work, in search of greater advances for your people and for a better country and world, is successful.

From my prison cell I have been able to read the articles published in People's Voice concerning my country, the conditions of the political prisoners, of both genders, and the status of my case. I know your interest is sincere and that your position is one of militant solidarity. In the name of all the political prisoners, and my own, our greatest gratitude. I also have learned of your different expressions of solidarity with me and towards my family, which I sincerely appreciate.

Here, despite the fact that we are constantly assailed by many harsh turns, which sadden our hearts, we remain constant in our commitment to our goal - a Colombia with Social Justice and Peace - and always maintain our spirits in high morale.

A sisterly hug to all and "hasta siempre" (until always),

Liliany Obando, Political Prisoner

The misquote paving the road to annihilation

Special to PV

The preparations for military aggression against Iran echo the build-up to the devastating and illegal war against Iraq. The parallels include wild accusations of "weapons of mass destruction," claims that the target country is planning to attack its neighbours, and a massive propaganda campaign to demonize the leaders and people of each country.

The latter tactic proved effective on two occasions in Iraq, before the first Gulf War of 1991, and again during 2002-2003. While anti-war actions were broad and powerful in both cases, the pro-war camp argued that Saddam Hussein was a modern day Adolph Hitler who "must be stopped." This lie distracted many from seeing the real threat posed by the most reactionary sections of the U.S. ruling class, who were preparing (like Nazi Germany) to commit the ultimate war crime of unprovoked military aggression.

One of the most frightening aspects of the current situation is the similar accusations hurled at the leaders of Iran. Most recently, Canada's foreign minister John Baird compared statements by Ayatollah Ali Khomeini to Hitler's infamous book *Mein Kampf*.

This just the latest in a years-long string of unsupported accusations that the Iranian leadership says that "Israel must be wiped off the map." Despite ample proof that these words were never uttered, they are presented daily in the North American mass media as "proof" of the need for preventive war against Iran.

This dangerous rumour was demolished convincingly by Arash Norouzi, in a Global Research commentary first published on Jan. 20, 2007, but it bears repeating today.

On Oct. 25, 2005 at the Ministry of Interior conference hall in Tehran, newly elected Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad delivered a speech titled "The World Without Zionism". Large posters surrounding him displayed this title in English. Below the title was a graphic depicting an hour glass containing planet Earth at its top. Two small round orbs representing the United States and Israel are shown falling through the narrow neck of the hour glass.

As Norouzi points out, the "quote" in question was itself a quote from the late Ayatollah Khomeini, the leader of the Islamic Revolution of 1979. Ahmadinejad's quote is not only unoriginal, but represents a viewpoint in place before he ever took office.

Ahmadinejad's actual words in Farsi were: "Imam ghoft een rezhim-e ishghalgar-e qods bayad az safheh-ye ruzgar mahv shavad."

One word in this sentence may sound familiar to English-speakers: *rezhim-e* is the word "regime", pronounced like the English word with an extra "eh" sound. Ahmadinejad did not refer to Israel the country, but the Israeli regime, using the phrase "*rezhim-e ishghalgar-e qods*" (regime occupying Jerusalem).

Nor was the word "map" used on this occasion. The Persian word for map, "*nagshah*", is not contained anywhere in his original Farsi quote, or in his entire speech.

Nor was the western phrase "wipe out" ever said. Yet we are led to believe that he threatened to "wipe Israel off the map", despite never

having uttered the words "map", "wipe out" or even "Israel".

Translated directly to English, the full quote reads: "The Imam

said this regime occupying Jerusalem must vanish from the page of time".

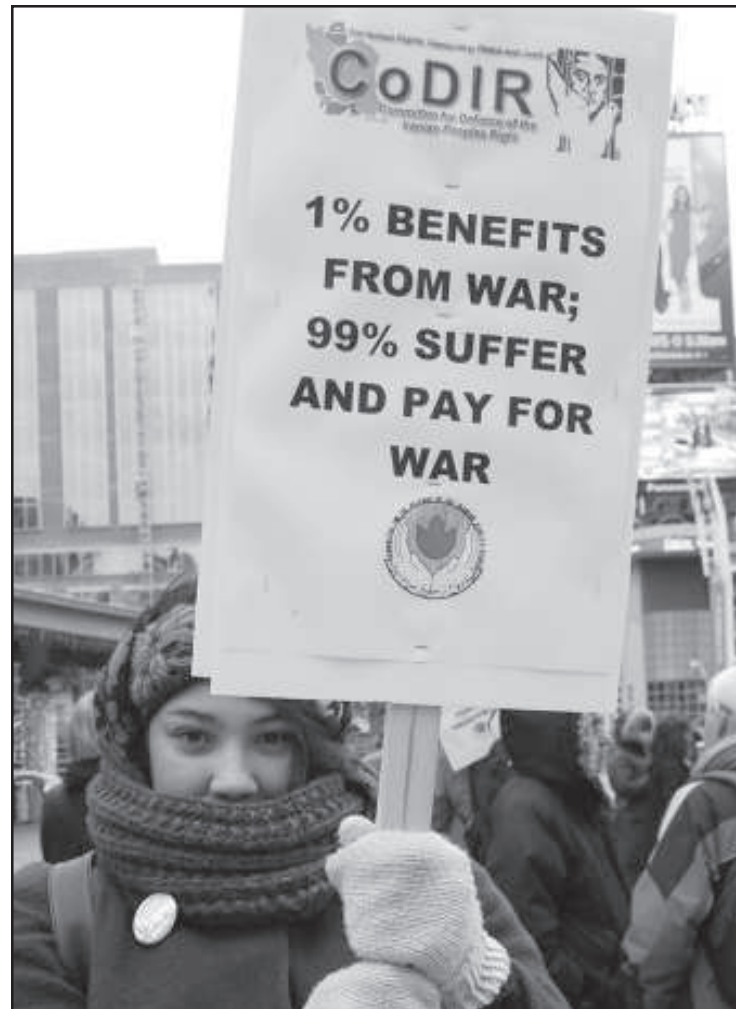
Here is a word by word translation: Imam (Khomeini) ghoft (said) een (this) rezhim-e (regime) ishghalgar-e (occupying) qods (Jerusalem) bayad (must) az safheh-ye ruzgar (from page of time) mahv shavad (vanish from).

In his speech, Ahmadinejad declared that Zionism is the West's apparatus of political oppression against Muslims. He said the "Zionist regime" was imposed on the Islamic world as a strategic bridgehead to ensure domination of the region and its assets. Palestine, he insisted, is the frontline of the Islamic world's struggle with American hegemony, and its fate will have repercussions for the entire Middle East.

As Norouzi elaborates, Ahmadinejad has often avoided giving a direct answer when questioned about the controversial statement, preferring to focus on the Palestinian struggle for self-determination.

However, this "misquote" has been deliberately repeated *ad infinitum* to justify military aggression. War by the U.S. and Israel (and likely Canada) against a well-armed Iran would be far more catastrophic than the attack against Iraq, which left an estimated one million dead and a country in ruins.

Canadians must tell our own government - and the opposition parties, which refuse to take a consistent anti-war position - that we are not willing to support yet another criminal war in the Middle East, especially one based on outright lies. •



Anti-war organizations across the United States and other countries rallied on Saturday, Feb. 4, to protest the rising threats against Iran. "No war, no sanctions, no intervention, no assassinations!" was the slogan on the lead banner of the New York demonstration, which was sponsored by an ad hoc committee of several groups. Rallies were held in several Canadian cities, including Toronto (above). PV photo by Ed Bil.

Celebrating the artists (and evading the issues?)

By Wally Brooker

Musical genres such as folk, blues, jazz, classical and world music, are in part valued because they offer an alternative to the glut of musical distractions disseminated by the mainstream (i.e. monopoly capitalist) entertainment industry. Professional musicians and the enterprises that support them (recording companies, performance venues, festivals etc.), are driven to carve out niches in the competitive world of the cultural industries.

One tactic is the genre-oriented award show, which provides recognition to artists and other players in a given segment of the music business. Whereas the mainstream Canadian music industry has been represented for decades by the glitzy JUNOs, niche music awards are a relatively new phenomenon.

Take the Canadian Folk Music Awards, for example. The CFMA acknowledges that folk music takes on many forms and that contemporary artists are expanding the genre. It rightly aspires to recognize achievement in all the styles found within the multicultural world of Canadian folk and roots music.

A glance at its sponsors provides an outline of the "industry." Prominent among the patrons are the copyright collective SOCAN (the Society of Composers, Authors and Music Publishers of Canada),

two government-funded arts agencies (the Canada Council and FACTOR), and the inevitable bank (TD in this case). However, the initiative and driving force comes from long-established non-profit folk festivals (Mariposa, Ottawa, Edmonton, Calgary), as well as the Ontario Council of Folk Festivals, several folk clubs and music stores, a music magazine, an indie record company and a summer folk music and dance camp.

The CFMA's seventh annual awards gala, held at Toronto's Isabel Bader Theatre on Dec. 4, was hosted by CBC radio personality Shelagh Rogers and Quebecois musician Benoit Bourque. The bilingual format was refreshing. Rogers and Bourque spoke their lines without translation and occasionally slipped into good-natured "franglais". Welcome too was their



acknowledgement that the awards were being held on the traditional land of the Mississauga First Nation of Port Credit.

Awards were presented in 20 categories, the spaces between filled with a talented lineup of performers. The full-house (about 400 people) was impressive when compared to Canada's National Jazz Awards, cancelled after 2009 largely due to poor attendance. Musicians gathered around the "folk and roots" banner appear to have more cohesion, perhaps because they reflect stronger elements of Canadian nationalism (with a multicultural twist) than in the jazz community.

The selection of gala performers showed that organizers were attentive to regional and cultural diversity as well as artistic accomplishment. Veteran Vancouver blues singer Jim Byrnes and guitarist-producer Steve Dawson led things off with some down and dirty blues. Maritimes singer-songwriter Rose Cousins, like Byrnes a previous CFMA winner, held the audience spellbound with her mix of sad songs nicely offset by an engaging comic banter. Toronto's African gospel acapella group Soul Influence impressed with its sophisticated arrangements and tight harmonies. Neo-traditional Quebecois ensemble De Temps Antan generated strong audience response with a game performance that transcended audio difficulties. Ever-popular Celtic singer Loreena McKennitt, accompanying herself on piano and harp, and joined by

guitarist Brad Hughes and violinist Hugh Marsh, was entrusted with the finale.

The big winners, with two CFMAs each, were Nova Scotian Dave Gunning (Traditional Singer and New/Emerging Artist), whose songs frequently evoke working-class experience; Quebecois ensemble Genticorum (Ensemble of the Year and Traditional Album for Nagez Rameurs); and Bruce Cockburn (Contemporary Soloist and Contemporary Album for Small Source of Comfort).



Bruce Cockburn: no longer an anti-war folksinger?

Indo-Canadian singer Kiran Ahluwalia (World Solo Artist for her album Am Zameen: Common Ground), paid tribute to the folk festival in her acceptance speech: "I learned to play music in India," she told the crowd, "but I learned to collaborate musically at the festivals in Canada, and to not be afraid of different styles and genres,

to know that I had something to offer."

Amid all the hoopla, this observer was struck by the absence of a defining characteristic of the music. Outspoken concern for social justice and opposition to militarism, as folk music historian Gary Cristall pointed out in his 2008 CBC Radio series "The People's Music", was an important feature of the Fifties and Sixties. Groups like The Travellers and The Milestones arose out of left-wing organizations and unions. Singers like Bonnie Dobson ("Morning Dew") and Buffie Sainte-Marie ("Universal Soldier") were passionately anti-militarist. Does the "people's music" still exist in today's folk and roots music community?

In an age of economic and environmental crisis, attacks on the working-class and unpopular imperial wars, but with growing protest including the "occupy" movement, how is it that the awards ceremony of the "people's music" fails to reflect the temper of our times? The Canadian folk music scene appears to be self-involved, perhaps a little complacent, even calculating, as if in fear of provoking a right-wing federal government and jeopardizing the flow of its share of arts funding.

One award winner's album did carry political overtones, but you wouldn't have known it, because its aggressive political content was ignored at the ceremony: Bruce Cockburn's "Small Source of Comfort." Canadians have been inspired by Cockburn's political stands, notably his 1980s work that exposed the complicity of the IMF and World Bank in perpetuating underdevelopment, and the criminal U.S.-sponsored counter-revolutions in Central America. It's disappointing that this talented musician openly supports Canada's role in the U.S.-NATO imperial war in Afghanistan.

CFMA judges honoured an album with an instrumental piece called "Comets of Kandahar" that perversely likens a celestial phenomenon - historically replete with mythical portent - to the glowing tailpipe cones of NATO jet fighters in the evening sky. Another song, "Each One Lost," displays a compassion for fallen Canadian soldiers that's sullied by a chauvinistic declaration: "some would have us bow in bondage to their dreams of little gods who lay down laws to live by." To this insult Cockburn condescendingly adds "all of these inventions arise from fear of love and open-hearted tolerance."

Cockburn's pro-imperialist drift is a barometer of our current malaise. It reflects the contradictions within the contemporary Canadian peace movement as well as the opportunist drift of the NDP towards collusion with an aggressive military bloc. There is urgent need for a wider conversation about Canada's commitment to the NATO war machine. Otherwise there will be many more ramp ceremonies for Canadian soldiers, not to mention countless grieving relatives of the victims of our firepower. A folk music community that reaffirmed its historic roots in the fight for peace and social justice would play a significant role in that conversation. ●

CETA: why should we worry about it?

continued from p. 6

and regional employment.

3) Crown corporations, like provincial power companies or liquor boards, would be up for grabs. The EU has made it clear it wants access to crown corporations and for example has complained about the way provincial liquor boards display and sell their products; they claim Canadian producers are favoured, and they don't like it. But step two will be an attack on liquor sales monopolies, otherwise known as privatization - and serious commentators don't even pretend that's not on the agenda.

4) Drug costs in Canada, already one of the biggest factors in rising health care costs because of the sweetheart deal our brand name companies get on patent protection, would rise even higher if CETA is signed.

Pharma companies are trying to expand their patent rights under the cover of CETA. They want to use the Canada-EU trade deal to gain rights that they have been unable to get from Canada's Parliament. These companies are actively encouraging the EU to demand provisions in the proposed trade agreement that will expand their patent rights and ultimately boost drug prices. If they succeed, brand name drugs, at their higher prices, will be protected even longer against cheaper generic drugs, and that will cost our public health care system and Canadians billions of

dollars more. \$2.8 billion more per year, by one study.

5) The proposed agreement would include the right of individual companies in the EU to challenge decisions of our democratically elected provincial governments, city councils, and so on. We've already seen the effect of this provision under NAFTA; Canada has paid millions of dollars to companies for deciding to ban toxic waste, and for banning a gasoline additive that was a known carcinogen, and for taking back the water and timber rights of a company that walked away from its obligations in Newfoundland - all because those decisions supposedly interfered with a company's right to make a profit. Because CETA would apply to the provinces and municipalities, all their decisions would now be subject to the same kind of challenges, and they would likely bear the cost of damages.

6) The biggest private water companies in the world are in the EU. CETA would give those companies a huge club to use against cities to make them open up their water systems to privatization. The decision would be taken away from city council and city residents, and would be made by an obscure and trade-oriented disputes panel.

7) Contrary to the completely unsubstantiated claims by the Canadian government, a CCPA study by Jim Stanford shows that a free trade deal with the EU would cost Canada between 28,000 and

150,000 jobs. Those are cautious conclusions; the actual result would likely be much worse.

8) The proposed deal would include a provision that says anything not listed as exempt from the free trade agreement would be automatically covered. That means that if a city or province makes a small error and forgets to list any of the thousands of programs they deliver, that program is covered by the deal, and EU companies will be able to bid on the delivery of the service. If a province or city wants to develop a new program, like pharmacare or home care, it will automatically be covered by the rules of free trade, and that includes compensation for any company whose right to make a profit is

affected by a new social program.

CETA is a dangerous and potentially destructive new international agreement, based solely on the desires of European and Canadian companies. But it is not a done deal. It can be stopped, and if Provincial governments, and city governments, and hospital boards, and the citizens for whom all these agencies exist, figure out just how bad a deal this is, the federal government will never be able to consummate it.

We can stop this sell-out of our right to democratically govern ourselves, we can refuse to be governed by corporations that want to profit from our every need. We need to speak up, and we need to stand up. ●

Win a Trip For Two to Cuba!

Annual Norman Bethune Dinner

Sat., Feb. 25, 7 pm

290 Danforth Ave., Toronto

Tickets just \$5, available across Canada from supporters of media sponsor People's Voice. Door prize: all-inclusive trip for two to Cuba! Info: 416-469-2446.

Communists demand takeover of Caterpillar's Electro-Motive Plant

TORONTO, Feb. 5, 2012 - The Communist Party of Canada (Ontario) is demanding that the provincial government take over the Electro-Motive Diesel plant in London, Ontario, owned by the super-profitable transnational Caterpillar Corporation, immediately seize control of machinery and equipment at the plant, and run the operation as a crown corporation with the existing workforce.

Further, the provincial government should hit Caterpillar with the full force of the law for bargaining in bad faith and skirting labour laws with its threat at the opening of negotiations to close the London plant if unionized workers refused a 55% wage cut, followed by the Feb. 3 announcement that the plant was closing. Allowing this company to pull up stakes and depart without a strong and immediate reaction from governments makes a mockery of free collective bargaining and Canadian sovereignty and independence.

The CPC (Ontario) is also demanding the federal government use all of the levers at its command to stop Caterpillar from closing the London plant and moving operations out of Canada, starting with enforcement of every provision in the Investment

Canada Act, and recall the \$5 million in corporate tax breaks this company received from Harper in 2008. The federal government must act to protect Canadian workers, Canadian jobs and our industrial and manufacturing base, and Canada's sovereignty and independence.

With quarterly earnings up 58% and record breaking profits reaching an astonishing \$5 billion, a big chunk of it connected to the acquisition of Electro-Motive Diesel, there is absolutely no justification for Caterpillar to close this plant, tossing workers and their families overboard. The only reason for closing the London operation is to re-open in Muncie, Indiana where union-busting right to work legislation has just been passed, ensuring that workers at the Muncie plant will have no union and will be compelled to work for \$16.50 an hour, with few if any benefits or pension.

This is all about union-busting, getting around Canada's labour and investment laws, closing down the competition and harvesting EMC's design and tech secrets, increasing Caterpillars already enormous super-profits and extending its monopoly control over locomotive production and sales in North America.

We fully support the CAW's

decision to occupy Caterpillar's EMC plant in London, in its continuing efforts to protect and defend the interests of EMC workers.

Furthermore, this voracious Caterpillar is doing these things, because it can. What's astonishing is that the provincial and federal governments would stand by and let them do it. Provincial Economic Development Minister Brad Duguid's statement that while his thoughts are with the workers, he understands Caterpillar's obligation to its stockholders is enough to demand his resignation. If he can't tell the difference between the public interest and corporate profits, he should resign now.

Further, the Premier's belated call on the federal government to do something is little more than a sound bite designed to get the Liberals' minority government - under pressure from the Mayor and people of London and the labour and social justice movements - off the hook. They need to do much more than that. The NDP should use its numbers in the Legislature to call for nationalization to stop the Fat Cat and to keep the plant running and the jobs here in Ontario.

The Legislature should also adopt plant closure legislation with teeth to force corporations to appear before public tribunals and show just cause before any closure is permitted. The Tribunals should have the legal teeth to stop a closure, levy fines, and even jail terms where warranted.

Workers' rights to belong to a union (free association) are protected in Canada's Charter of Rights, and must be protected by the province as well as the federal government.

Provincial Tory leader Tim Hudak is blaming the Liberals' tax policies for the loss, but in fact Ontario's corporate taxes are already well below rates in the US.

This is not so much about (low) corporate taxes, as it is about Canadian sovereignty, jobs, and workers' rights to a living wage, to benefits and pensions, to belong to a union, and to free collective bargaining. These have all been lost in the US right to work states, and they're under sharp attack in Ontario and across Canada. ●



The Fifth of the Month to Free the Five

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

E-mail: president@whitehouse.gov

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

Phone 1-202-456-1111

Fax 1-202-456-2461

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

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

What's Left

Peace Congress tour

NATO and the danger of war, speaking tour by Dave McKee, President of Canadian Peace Congress, in Victoria (Feb. 27), Surrey (Feb. 28), North Vancouver (Feb. 29), and Edmonton, Calgary, Regina. For details, call 416-535-6586.

Victoria, BC

History Has Not Ended, forum and entertainment with musical duo Tapestry, singer Art Farquharson, BC Communist leader Sam Hammond, Gilberto Mayen, and Kevin Neish, Friday, Feb. 24, 8 pm, 1923 Fernwood Road. Organized by Central America Support Ctee., FMLN Ctee, Scottie Neish Club (CPC).

White Rock, BC

Social Justice Film Festival, Feb. 24 (7 pm) and 25 (starting 10 am), at First United Church. By donation, details at whiterocksocialjusticefilmfestival.ca.

Surrey, BC

NATO and the danger of war, with Peace Congress President Dave McKee, Tue., Feb. 28, 6:30 pm, Strawberry Hill Library, 7399-122 St. For info, email shazkhan1@hotmail.com, or call Nazir, 604-940-0420.

Vancouver, BC

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

Afghanistan: the war is not over, film "Tour of Duty" and discussion, Sun., Feb. 19, 6 pm, Rhizome Cafe, 317 E. Broadway, organized by StopWar coalition.

COPE Winter Gala, Wed., Feb. 22, 7 pm, at Performance Works. Tribute to outgoing COPE members of City Council, School Board and Park Board. Tickets at www.cope.bc.ca, phone 604-255-0400.

Left Film Night, 7 pm, Sun., Feb. 26, Centre for Socialist Education, 706 Clark Drive. Admission by donation, call 604-255-2041 for details.

Winnipeg, MB

Forum on Enbridge Pipeline, Thurs., Feb. 16, 7 pm, Richardson College (U of Winnipeg). Organized by Manitoba Eco-Network, Green Action Centre, Climate Change Connection, Council of Canadians, and others.

Toronto, ON

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

Dinner and Evening in praise of Dave Rigby, Sat., March 17, mark your calendar now! Auspices: Central Committee, CPC. For tickets and info, call 416-469-2446.

Freedom Waves tour

Report Back on Freedom Waves to Gaza, forums with David Heap and Ehab Lotayef, Canadians on the Tahrir which was seized by Israeli forces last November. Events in Halifax (5 pm, Feb. 15, Just Us Cafe 2nd Floor), Sackville University (Feb. 16, 1 pm, Bennett Lecture Hall), Fredericton (Feb. 16, 7:30 pm, UNB Carleton Hall Rm. 139), Moncton University (Feb. 17, 7 pm, Centre Aberdeen), Saint John (Feb. 18, 1 pm, 1 Bayard Dr.), Vancouver (Feb. 18, 7 pm (VPL, 350W. Georgia), Nanaimo (Feb. 19, 1:30 pm, Bowen Park Complex), Victoria (Feb. 19, 7:30 pm, UVic Hickman Bldg. Rm. 105). Tour organized by the Canadian Boat to Gaza, visit www.tahrir.ca for full details.

People's Voice deadlines

March 1-15 issue: Thursday, Feb. 16

March 16-31 issue: Thursday, March 1

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

Revolution from the South

2012 People's Voice Calendar

honouring the centennials of the ANC and the Communist Party of Chile

Now available, \$5 plus \$2 shipping, from People's Voice, 706 Clark Drive, Vancouver, BC, V5L 3J1 For info on bulk orders, call 604-254-9836 or email pvoice@telus.net



TORONTO
Saturday, March 17
Dinner and Evening
In Praise of Dave
Rigby

Mark your calendar now!

Ausp: Central Committee, CPC
For tickets and info, call 416-469-2446

Free-Market Medicine: A Personal Account

By Michael Parenti

When I recently went to Alta Bates hospital for surgery, I discovered that legal procedures take precedence over medical ones. I had to sign intimidating statements about financial counseling, indemnity, patient responsibilities, consent to treatment, use of electronic technologies, and the like.

One of these documents committed me to the following: "The hospital pathologist is hereby authorized to use his/her discretion in disposing of any member, organ, or other tissue removed from my person during the procedure." Any member? Any organ?

The next day I returned for the actual operation. While playing Frank Sinatra recordings, the surgeon went to work cutting open several layers of my abdomen in order to secure my intestines with a permanent mesh implant. Afterward I spent two hours in the recovery room. "I feel

like I've been in a knife fight," I told one nurse. "It's called surgery," she explained.

Then, while still pumped up with anesthetics and medications, I was rolled out into the street. The street? Yes, some few hours after surgery they send you home. In countries that have socialized medicine (there I said it), a van might be waiting with trained personnel to help you to your abode.

Not so in free-market America. Your presurgery agreement specifies in boldface that you must have "a responsible adult acquaintance" (as opposed to an irresponsible teenage stranger) take you home in a private vehicle. I kept thinking, what happens to those unfortunates who have no one to bundle them away? Do they languish endlessly in the hospital driveway until the nasty weather finishes them off?

You are not allowed to call a taxi. Were a taxi driver to cause you any

harm, you could hold the hospital legally responsible. Again it's a matter of liability and lawyers, not health and doctors.

One of the two friends who helped me up the steps to my house then went off to Walgreen's to buy the powerful antibiotics I had to take every four hours for two days. I dislike how antibiotics destroy the "good bacteria" that our bodies produce, and how they help create dangerous strains of super-resistant bacteria. I kept thinking of a recent finding: excessive reliance on medical drugs kills more Americans than all illegal narcotics combined.

So why did I have to take antibiotics? Because, as everyone kept telling me, hospitals are

coasts. Among other things, the nurses were complaining about "being disrespected by a corporate hospital culture that demands sacrifices from patients and those who provide their care, but pays executives millions of dollars." (*New York Times*, 16 December 2011). One cold-blooded management negotiator was quoted as saying, "We have the money. We just don't have the will to give it to you".

As for the doctors, both my surgeon and my general practitioner (GP) are among the victims, not the perpetrators, of today's corporate medical system. My GP explained that it is an endless fight to get insurance companies to pay for services they supposedly cover. Feeling less like a doctor and more like a bill collector, my GP found he could no longer engage in endless telephone struggles with insurance companies.

There are 1,500 medical insurance companies in America, all madly dedicated to maximizing profits by increasing premiums and withholding payments. The medical industry in toto is the nation's largest and most profitable business, with an annual health bill of about \$1 trillion.

Along with the giant insurance and giant pharmaceutical companies, the greatest profiteers are the Health Maintenance Organizations (HMOs), notorious for charging steep monthly payments while underpaying their staffs and requiring their doctors to spend less time with each patient, sometimes even withholding necessary treatment.

I am without private insurance. And my Medicare goes just so far. Like many other doctors, my GP no longer accepts Medicare. For a number of years now, Medicare payments to physicians have remained relatively unchanged while costs of running a practice (staff, office space, insurance) have steadily increased. So now my GP's patients have to pay in full upon every visit - which is not always easy to do.

Our health system mirrors our class system. At the base of the pyramid are the very poor. Many

of them suffer through long hours in emergency rooms only to be turned away with a useless or harmful prescription. No wonder "the United States has the worst record among industrialized nations in treating preventable deaths" (*Healthcare-NOW!* 1 December 2011).

Too often the very poor get no care at all. They simply die of whatever illness assails them because they cannot afford treatment. An acquaintance of mine told me how her mother died of AIDS because she could not afford the medications that might have kept her alive.

In Houston I once got talking with a limousine driver, a young African-American man, who remarked that both his parents had died of cancer without ever receiving any treatment. "They just died," he said with a pain in his voice that I can still hear.

Living just above the poor in the class pyramid are the embattled middle class. They watch medical coverage disappear while paying out costly amounts to the profit-driven insurance companies. I was able to get surgery at Alta Bates only because I am old enough to have Medicare and have enough disposable income to meet the co-payment.

For my out-patient operation, the hospital charged Medicare \$19,466. Of this, Medicare paid \$2,527. And I was billed \$644. The hospital then writes off the unpaid balance thus saving considerable sums in taxes (amounting to an indirect subsidy from the rest of us taxpayers). Had I no Medicare coverage, I would have had to pay the entire \$19,466.

I was informed by the hospital that the \$19,466 charge covers only hospital costs for equipment, technicians, supplies, and room. So besides the \$644, I will have to pay for any pathologists, surgical assistants, and anesthesiologists who performed additional services. I am waiting for the other shoe to drop.

How much does my surgeon earn? Not much at all. He gets about \$400 to \$500 for everything, including my pre-op and post-op visits and the surgery itself, an exacting undertaking that requires skills of the highest sort. He also has to maintain insurance, an office, an assistant, and an increasing load of paperwork.

My surgeon pointed out to me, "If you ask people how much I make on an operation like yours, they will say \$4000 to \$5000, and be wrong by a factor of ten." He noted that in a recent speech President Obama criticized a surgeon for charging \$30,000 to

replace a knee cap. "The surgeon gets a minute fraction of that amount," my doctor pointed out.

To make matters worse, there is talk about cutting Medicare payments to physicians by 27 percent. If this happens, it is going to be increasingly difficult to find a surgeon who will take Medicare. Still worse, the private insurance companies will join in squeezing the physicians for still more profits.

I was able to meet my payment (\$644) not only because my operation was heavily subsidized by Medicare but because it was a one-day "ambulatory surgery." I don't know how I would fare if I had to undergo prolonged and extremely costly treatment.

So much for life in the middle class. At the very top of the class pyramid are the 1%, those who don't have to worry about any of this, the superrich who have money enough for all kinds of state-of-the-art treatments at the very finest therapeutic centers around the world, complete with luxury suites with gourmet menus.

Among the medically privileged are members of Congress and the U.S. president. They pay nothing. They are treated at top-grade facilities. They enjoy, how shall we put it, socialized medicine. No conservative lawmakers have held fast to their free-market principles by refusing to accept this publicly funded, medical treatment.

John Mackey, CEO of Whole Foods, cheerfully announced that medical care is not a human right; it should be "market determined just like food and shelter." Nobody has a higher opinion of John Mackey than I, and I think he is a greed-driven, union-busting bloodsucker. Nevertheless I will give him credit for candidly admitting his dedication to a dehumanized profit pathology.

The U.S. medical system costs many times more than what is spent in socialized systems, but it delivers much less in the way of quality care and cure. That's the way it is intended to be. The goal of any free-market service - be it utilities, housing, transportation, education, or health care - is not to maximize performance but to maximize profits often at the expense of performance.

If profits are high, then the system is working just fine - for the 1%. But for us 99%, the profit lust is itself the heart of the problem. ●

Michael Parenti's recent books include: *The Face of Imperialism* (2011); *God and His Demons* (2010); *Contrary Notions: The Michael Parenti Reader* (2007); *The Assassination of Julius Caesar* (2004). For information, visit: www.MichaelParenti.org.

The U.S. medical system costs many times more than what is spent in socialized systems, but it delivers much less in the way of quality care and cure. That's the way it is intended to be. The goal of any free-market service - be it utilities, housing, transportation, education, or health care - is not to maximize performance but to maximize profits

seriously unsafe places overrun with Staph infections and other super bugs. It's a matter of self-protection.

Two days after surgery I noticed a dark red discoloration on my lower abdomen indicating internal bleeding. I was supposed to get a follow-up call from a nurse who would check on how I was doing. But the call might never come because the staff was planning a walkout. "We have no contract," one of them had told me when I was in the recovery room. So now the nurses are on strike - and I'm left on my own to divine what my internal bleeding is all about. What fun.

Fortunately, it didn't turn out that way. A nurse did call me despite the walkout. Yes, she said, it was internal bleeding, but it was to be expected. My surgeon called later in the day to confirm this opinion. Death was not yet knocking.

A few days later, there were massive nurses strikes on both

For information on the fight to save universal Medicare in Canada, visit <http://healthcoalition.ca>

NEWS FOR PEOPLE, NOT FOR PROFITS!

Every issue of PEOPLE'S VOICE gives you the latest on the fightback from coast to coast. Whether it's the struggle to defeat the Harper Tories, resistance to social cuts, solidarity with Cuba or workers' struggles around the world, we've got the news the corporate media won't print.

And we do more than that—we report and analyze events from a revolutionary perspective, helping to build the movements for justice and equality, and eventually for a socialist Canada. Read the paper that fights for working people—on every page—in every issue!

people's
VOICE

- \$30 for 1 year \$50 for 2 years
 Low income special rate: \$15 for 1 year
 Outside Canada: \$45 US or \$50 Cnd for 1 year

Name _____

Address _____

Postal Code _____

Send to: People's Voice,
706 Clark Drive, Vancouver, BC, V5L 3J1

12/03

