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Hamilton lockout

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G20 report: "massive compromise of civil liberties"

By Liz Rowley, leader of the Communist Party of Canada (Ontario)

Ontario Ombudsman Andre Marin has concluded that police and government action that led to the arrest, detention and beatings of 1105 people last June 26/27 in Toronto constitute "the most massive compromise of civil liberties in Canadian history".

It's a clear statement that the violence at the G20 protests, and before, was caused by police and directed at protestors and passersby.

Marin's report to the Ontario Legislature on the G8/G20 Summits holds Toronto Police Chief Bill Blair responsible for much of the violence. The Ontario Liberal Cabinet is responsible for giving police extraordinary powers, with a regulatory change to the Public Works Protection Act which effectively allowed police to implement martial law in Toronto.

The Public Works Protection Act is World War II legislation, intended for use in a war situation. Police and parliaments used it to declare war on more than 40,000 Canadians exercising their civil and constitutional rights to legally assemble, demonstrate, and speak out against the Summits, and the austerity policies being imposed across the globe, including in Canada.

Many of those arrested were

beaten and detained without access to phones, legal counsel, food or bathrooms for long periods. Many were subjected to strip searches and body cavity searches intended to frighten, humiliate and intimidate. Most were young, and police appeared to target demonstrators from Québec, pulling buses over on the highway and making mass arrests.

Until Marin's report hit the Legislature, none of the various public bodies looking into the police attacks was able to hold the cops or governments responsible. Thousands of photos showed police beating demonstrators, but hidden faces and badge numbers prevented individual officers from being identified. Civilian police overseers like the Special Investigations Unit (SIU) claimed their hands were tied.

The *Toronto Star* called on the public to send in photos and videos showing the vicious police attack on Adam Nobody, whose case has come to symbolize the brutality and the lies and cover-ups that followed. The response was huge, including new photos identifying the police who beat Nobody within an inch of his life. Still, Chief Blair has resisted arresting the identified officers, claiming internal procedures trump criminal charges against the officers.

In fact, police brutality was so widespread the courts would be



This unidentified cop was photographed beating protesters on two separate occasions during the G20 protests last June.

choked with criminal charges against cops who assaulted peaceful protesters. Many of those assaulted have signed onto a class action suit against all the police forces involved (from across Canada), provincial, federal, and municipal governments, plus named individuals. The issue in this class action is nailed by Andre

Marin: the implementation of martial law in Toronto, the arbitrary mass arrest and detention of 1105 people, and the suspension of civil liberties and democratic rights.

The McGuinty government is now in damage control, debating whether to amend or kill the Public Works Protection Act. With a

provincial election next October, there is fear the Act could be used again by a very right-wing Tory government if the Liberals don't scrap it now.

In a strange twist, the Tories are casting themselves as defenders of democracy as they respond to the Marin Report and attack the Liberals. This is more of the dangerous right-wing populism that snookered Toronto in the civic elections.

The Communist Party of Canada (Ontario) is calling for a full public inquiry, and for scrapping the Public Works Protection Act. The threat to democracy and civil liberties is serious, even more so as civilian oversight bodies responsible for holding police to account have proven incapable and powerless.

Establishing strong civilian controls over police, and democratic controls over Legislatures and Parliaments, is vital. This will be a crucial part of the struggle to curb corporate power in Canada, says the CPC (Ontario). The fight for democracy is at the centre of almost every struggle today. ●

Unite in solidarity with Steelworkers in Hamilton!

Excerpt from a resolution adopted by the Central Committee, Communist Party of Canada, Nov. 28, 2010

The lockout of 900 Steelworkers in Hamilton, which began on Nov. 7, is much more than a local struggle. U.S. Steel wants to shut down production in Hamilton, and seeks to force USW Local 1005 members and 9,000 retirees to switch to a market-based defined contribution pension plan rather than the established defined benefit plan. But the stakes are high for all workers, and for the future of Canada.

This attack is the latest expression of a global offensive by big capital against the working conditions, wages, pensions and quality of life won over generations by the working class...

The attacks on public sector workers by the provincial governments, the theft of their wages and benefits, and the transfer of public wealth into corporate coffers through tax breaks, is part of this stage of the offensive. So were the recent attacks on autoworkers and on Vale-Inco workers. Cheered by the Harper government's reward to Vale in the form of a billion dollar loan, U.S. Steel has launched its attack on USW Local 1005, eagerly choosing the lockout tactic to get the action started sooner. U.S. Steel wears the arrogance of privilege like armour which gives it immunity from its violation of the conditions of its purchase of Stelco, conditions which the Harper government refuses to enforce. This must not be allowed!

The Hamilton Steelworkers, as they have done since their historic strike of 1946, have thrown down the gauntlet. This cannot become another Sudbury - a tactic of "who will last longer" will not bring victory against another giant transnational. This struggle

requires fleet footwork and heavy counter-punching, and this is the part of Ontario where the battlefield favours the workers. Everything needed to fight is here, including working class traditions and a local political environment which opposes U.S. Steel's destructive attacks. What is left of the Ontario industrial heartland cradles Hamilton. Most of the CAW membership is within 100 kilometres. Thousands of industrial workers can reach the picket lines within hours. The catalyst, the muscle, the heart and soul are here

to achieve victory over U.S. Steel.

The Communist Party of Canada urges full support for Local 1005 in its fight to end the lockout, and to defend workers' pensions and their community. The future of Canada's industrial economic base and sovereignty also make it urgent to fight for public ownership and democratic control of the steel industry.

We call on the Ontario trade union movement to close ranks and join this fight, and to rally the labour movement across Canada. With unity and more unity, this crucial struggle can be won! ●

Billboard campaign for locked-out Steelworkers

Locked out workers at Hamilton's US Steel plant are wasting no time getting their message out: the issue with US Steel is about Canadian control of the economy, a Canadian steel industry, and the rights and dignity of labour to decent living standards and quality of life for workers and retirees.

USW Local 1005 is embarking on a campaign to buy billboards in Hamilton that would put the union's position in bright lights, one loonie at a time. Involving the whole community in raising the approximately \$700 per billboard is a way of building unity and solidarity, and pushing back against local media that are not much more than company mouthpieces, say the locked out workers.

In solidarity, the Ontario Bureau of *People's Voice* is contributing \$100 to the union's billboard campaign. "Getting the truth out about US Steel and its attempts to fleece 900 workers and 9,000 retirees by threatening to close up shop in Canada is pretty important," said PV Editor Kimball Cariou. "We're sending \$100 to help the union get the story out, and to show our solidarity with the union and the people of Hamilton in their struggle for jobs, pensions and a future."



Steelworkers in Hamilton are raising funds for billboards "one loonie at a time"

The union is planning a Day of Action on January 29 at the Hamilton Convention Centre, endorsed by the OFL and CLC. Solidarity actions include a call for motions of support from local unions and Labour Councils across the country. Check out the website at www.uswa1005.ca for updates.

Contributions and messages of support to USW Local 1005 can be sent to: 350 Kenilworth Avenue North, Hamilton, ON, L8H 4T3, or by email to info@uswa1005.ca. ●

People's Voice Builders #4



Ed Bil enjoys a rare moment of relaxation at a park in Toronto.

In recent issues, we have written about some of the People's Voice volunteers whose efforts make it possible to publish twice a month.

One such volunteer is Toronto's Ed Bil, a longtime supporter of the *Canadian Tribune*, which folded in 1991. When *People's Voice* began publication early in 1993, Ed stepped forward to offer his assistance. Having retired from his working career as a taxi driver, Ed was looking for creative ways to help build our newspaper.

With his interest in photography, it was an easy choice. Ed began taking photos at picket lines and demonstrations, and his contributions quickly became a regular feature in our pages. He took some courses, learning to develop black and white pictures in his home darkroom to cut down costs.

Ed's skills became invaluable when the so-called "Common Sense Revolution" of the Harris Tories hit Ontario. In response to devastating cuts to social programs, public education, and health care, the people of Ontario were soon in the streets, marching against the far right agenda at Queen's Park. Grassroots resistance blossomed into the famous "Days of Action," a rolling series of one-day walkouts which shut down cities across the province.

At every major Day of Action, Ed Bil was there with his camera. His photos could form the basis of a powerful pictorial documentary of this upsurge of working class political action, which lasted some two years.

A few years ago, Ed reluctantly joined a different "revolution", purchasing his first digital camera. Going digital has made it easier to send photos directly by email to our editorial office.

We also note that Ed has another crucial responsibility, as the volunteer in charge of mailing to our subscribers in eastern Canada. Without him (and his counterpart, Ed Pedersen in Vancouver), we would be forced to pay much more to get the paper to our readers.

Many thanks to Ed from the PV Editorial Board! We look forward to printing your photos for many years to come! ●

BC Federation moves to biennial conventions

By Sam Hammond

The British Columbia Federation of Labour Convention from Nov. 29-Dec. 3 was the swan song of the annual conventions that have been traditional in BC.

The BC Fed changed its constitution to move to a convention every two years. This was done with the passing of a composite resolution that also added provisions for at least two regional conferences outside the lower mainland between conventions, and beginning in 2011 a provincial conference every two years focusing on strengthening and building the union movement. Also contained in the resolution was the proviso that the time, place and delegate entitlement for these activities be determined by the Executive Council.

There had been in the resolution books a resolution from CUPE that called for a Constitutional Convention every year. However, CUPE had pulled its 250 delegates from the meeting and their resolution never made it to the floor. The resolution on the two-year conventions passed with an easy majority of those present. Although the procedure was quite legal, many delegates were surprised that such an important issue was decided in the absence of the CUPE delegates.

Jim Sinclair was re-elected as President, but one change did come at the leadership level, when long-time secretary-treasurer Angela Schira declined to stand for re-election. This avoided an election contest against Irene Lanzinger, former president of the BC Teachers' Federation, which joined the BC Fed a few years ago. The BCTF's reputation as one of the province's more militant unions was bolstered by their two-week strike in 2005, a struggle in which the teachers won broad public support and fought the Campbell Liberals to a draw over the issues of teaching and learning conditions. In her new position, Lanzinger is expected to strengthen the forces which advocate a more

militant stance against the corporate-government agenda.

The Executive Report was a blistering analysis of the corporate attack on the working class in BC, although not placed in exactly those words. It covered the ground thoroughly and made the important connections internationally and Canada wide - the globalization of capital, the spread of recessions, etc. The report highlighted "hard times and hard bargaining", the looming pension crisis, the attack on public education, apprenticeships, health care, social services, women, human rights and the "nightmare in the woods" violations of safety, labour code and human rights. The list is longer than can be dealt with here, but it is a damning indictment of the Liberal corporate agenda. It is a comprehensive, well researched and valuable document, warning that "things will get worse before they get better".

The Political Action Report illustrated the conundrums and contradictions of political action as it is understood - or not understood - in the labour movement. Contained in the main delegate package with the resolutions and other reports, the Political Action Report was more comprehensive than the shortened version given on the floor. The



In one of her first speeches as BC Federation of Labour secretary-treasurer, Irene Lanzinger spoke to a Dec. 11 rally for global climate justice in Vancouver.



There was a sea of 250 empty chairs vacated by CUPE delegates as CLC President Ken Georgetti addressed the BC Fed Convention. (Photo: K. Cariou)

floor model presented labour and its agenda as more of an NDP farm team than a broader and more potent social movement. The report was heavily slanted towards providing money and cadre to the NDP, while avoiding meticulously the political meltdown within the NDP, its lack of working class alternatives, and its continuous courtship of labour's corporate enemies. There was no mention of the need for the kind of street level political action that so many of the militant youth and social activists demonstrated this past year, throughout the Olympics and around a myriad of issues. The HST initiative was dealt with obliquely, reflecting different approaches to this issue within the labour movement.

A couple of well reasoned speeches critical of the report were well received by the delegates. The other speeches were the usual knee jerk plaudits to social democracy.

A few days earlier, NUPGE announced its withdrawal from the CLC because of its discontent over several years of the CLC's failure to effectively deal with the problem of raiding. This caused a major problem in the BC Fed convention.

Although NUPGE declared its intent to remain in Provincial Federations and Labour Councils, Ken Georgetti has called in the letter of the constitution to declare them out federally, provincially and locally after a cooling off or last negotiating period ending December 31. The BCGEU delegates were seated at the convention because they are not officially out till Dec. 31, and there is still time to search for a solution. But CUPE-BC did a very strange thing, removing their delegates from the convention in protest of BCGEU's presence, leaving a huge block of empty seats right in the middle of the convention floor. This unfortunate development robbed the convention of one of the most important public unions in BC. However, the Hospital Employees Union, a CUPE affiliate, stayed on the floor.

This issue deserves a separate analysis in an upcoming issue. The CLC has made rulings on raiding, affiliations and dispute settlement over the years that are quite frankly all over the map. There is a dispute brewing in Ontario with the Elementary Teachers that could have serious repercussions for the

Ontario Federation of Labour and the Ontario Labour Councils. The withdrawal of NUPGE will have serious political and economic vibrations in Labour from coast to coast. Suffice it to say at this time that the "business trade unionism" which creates these antagonisms between competing (raiding) unions is the exact opposite of the kind of unity and singleness of purpose that the entire working class deserves from Labour.

The Executive report correctly said "things will get worse before they get better". The battle plan of capitalism is available from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, and it is simple. We must go without so they can continue to plunder us and our habitat. The weakness of labour, with all due respect to the spirit of resistance that is rippling through the ranks, is the perception that things will get better, that this offensive of capital is one of the cyclical phenomena where the downturn will inevitably bottom out and start its way upward again. It is questionable that this was ever quite accurate except with blinders on, but it is definitely not the case in today's world. The economic, constitutional and policing means underway are methods to control us and make our present conditions the beginning of a new world order; check out the Lisbon Agreement in Europe again. These are not in anticipation of a return to prosperity.

The BC Fed is a good working class organization, but the time we have to analyze what is needed for the protection of working people is constricting. The struggle is on, and our youth cannot wait out their lives while trade union leaders squabble over territory. The concept expressed in the Political Action Report, that working people will agree to pay more taxes if they get value, is a dangerous social democratic falsehood. People cannot pay more. The wealth of the country must be liberated and put at the disposal of social need. Any other approach will drive the people into the arms of the populist right wing and their anti-tax disguise. ●

B.C. NDP: what's behind the divisions?

PV Vancouver Bureau Commentary

Internal strife is nothing new for the New Democratic Party in B.C. The sudden resignation of Carole James on Dec. 6 opens the door for an NDP leadership convention early in 2011. Some pundits have declared that the next election is already over, awarding the B.C. Liberals victory in advance. But the complex situation defies easy analysis or safe predictions.

The same pundits are screaming about "class warriors" trying to take over the party. Considering the brutal attacks by the Campbell Liberals against health care workers, poor people, teachers, students, the disabled, Aboriginal peoples and other targets, the real "class warriors" are the right-wing politicians who have terrorized the province for the past decade.

But this bizarre accusation goes back to the 1930s, when the west coast ruling class, terrified that

CCF "radicals" might challenge their lucrative control over British Columbia's vast resource wealth, closed ranks to fend off electoral threats.

One example was in Vancouver, where the so-called "Non-Partisan Association" united developers and other capitalist interests to prevent CCFers, Communists and other progressives from winning control of City Hall. The Social Credit party was essentially a coalition of Liberals and Conservatives, blocking the CCF (later the NDP) from winning a majority.

Such electoral strategies were backed up by propaganda condemning the labour movement, where the Communist Party had a strong influence in many trade unions, labour councils, and locals across the province.

In 1972, Dave Barrett led the NDP to victory, adopting reforms such as public auto insurance and the Agricultural Land Reserve

during his three years in office. Inconveniently for the "class war" narrative spread by the right wing, Barrett also passed back-to-work legislation against striking workers.

By the time Mike Harcourt won the 1991 election, the traditional "left" within the NDP had lost strength. The NDP governments of that decade did little to challenge the domination of big capital. But despite this reality and the NDP's success in "balancing the books", they were still portrayed by the corporate media as wild-spending kooks and radicals, under the thumb of "big unions." Glen Clark, who rose from an east Vancouver labour organizer to NDP Premier, was a frequent target of such attacks for his progressive rhetoric.

When Carole James was elected leader in 2003, the NDP back-room clique reverted to a social democratic formula which has usually failed: appeal to big business, and shift policies to the right. The new leader "reassured"

corporations that they had nothing to fear. Even at BC Federation of Labour conventions, James spent more time placating the business sector than addressing urgent labour issues.

Voters upset by the destructive policies of the Campbell Liberals nearly gave James an unexpected victory in 2005, when the NDP jumped from two seats to 33.

This return to historic levels of support encouraged the NDP leadership to repeat the same strategy in 2009. But by this time, the Liberals had made a tactical shift, trying to appear less confrontational. Many voters were disappointed when the NDP refused to make a strong commitment to restore spending for public education and health care. The result was a huge drop in voter turnout, and minimal gains for the NDP. Clearly, the party had alienated many traditional supporters, without attracting the centre-right of the

political spectrum.

Premier Campbell immediately handed the NDP a gift, ramming through the HST over howls of anger from British Columbians. But the NDP leadership refused to state that this massive giveaway to the business sector should be cancelled, or to demand reversal of the huge tax cuts to the wealthy and the corporations. The anti-HST campaign was largely taken over by right-wing "anti-tax" forces.

Even so, divisions on the right seemed to point to an easy NDP victory in 2013. But the arithmetic changed dramatically with Campbell's resignation. Suddenly the possibility emerged that a less unpopular Liberal leader might call an early election and defeat the NDP.

Meanwhile, the NDP caucus was warned last summer that the provincial coffers were supposedly

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EDITORIALS

New attacks on free speech

The furious attack against free speech in Canada escalated again in early December, with outrageous slanders in the Ontario Legislature against a university student. On Dec. 7, MPPs Steve Clark and Eric Hoskins spoke to condemn Jenny Peto, a University of Toronto student whose 100-page MA thesis examines pro-Zionist Holocaust remembrance programs. Peto is a Jewish descendant of Holocaust survivors, but this did not prevent these politicians from making wild statements that her scholarship is "astoundingly anti-Semitic."

Not surprisingly, Clark and Hoskins, along with corporate media pundits who jumped in to attack Peto, have never read her thesis. They can't be bothered to check out the facts, such as the reality that the Palestine solidarity movements unite powerful contingents of people from Jewish, Muslim, Arab and many other backgrounds and beliefs. Yes, there are vile expressions of anti-Semitism in Canada, but almost entirely by white supremacist gangs, not human rights activists.

Just before the outbursts against Jenny Peto, pro-Zionist forces tried to disrupt the November speaking tour by George Galloway. Once again, the claim was that Galloway is an "anti-Semite," a lie which fell flat when thousands heard the former British MP speak about the tragic Israeli occupation of Palestine.

These cases are part of a vicious campaign led by the Harper Tories and other anti-Palestinian forces to criminalize any criticism of Israel's apartheid-style policies. Sadly, some public figures who should know better cave in whenever this anti-free speech lobby comes knocking. And kudos to those who courageously resist these pressures, like Burnaby Mayor Derek Corrigan, and U of T administrators who have defended Jenny Seto's right to engage in scholarly research.

Remember the prisoners

As we prepare to celebrate New Year 2011, it's appropriate to remember the victims of reactionary regimes who remain imprisoned. There are countless such prisoners around the globe; here are just a few of the sisters and brothers whose freedom must be a high priority for the people's movements.

*The Five Cuban Heroes - **Gerardo Hernandez, Antonio Guerrero, Ramon Labanino, Fernando Gonzalez, Rene Gonzalez** - convicted for the "crime" of exposing the plans by CIA-backed exile gangs to commit further terrorist attacks against the Island of Freedom.

* **Liliany Obando**, trade union activist on trial in Colombia as part of the "Farc-politica" frame-up by the regime against those who stand up for labour rights and democracy.

* American Indian Movement leader **Leonard Peltier**, convicted 34 years ago on a phony murder charge, and Indigenous activist **John Graham**, recently found guilty of murder on the flimsiest of evidence in a South Dakota trial.

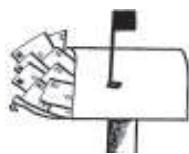
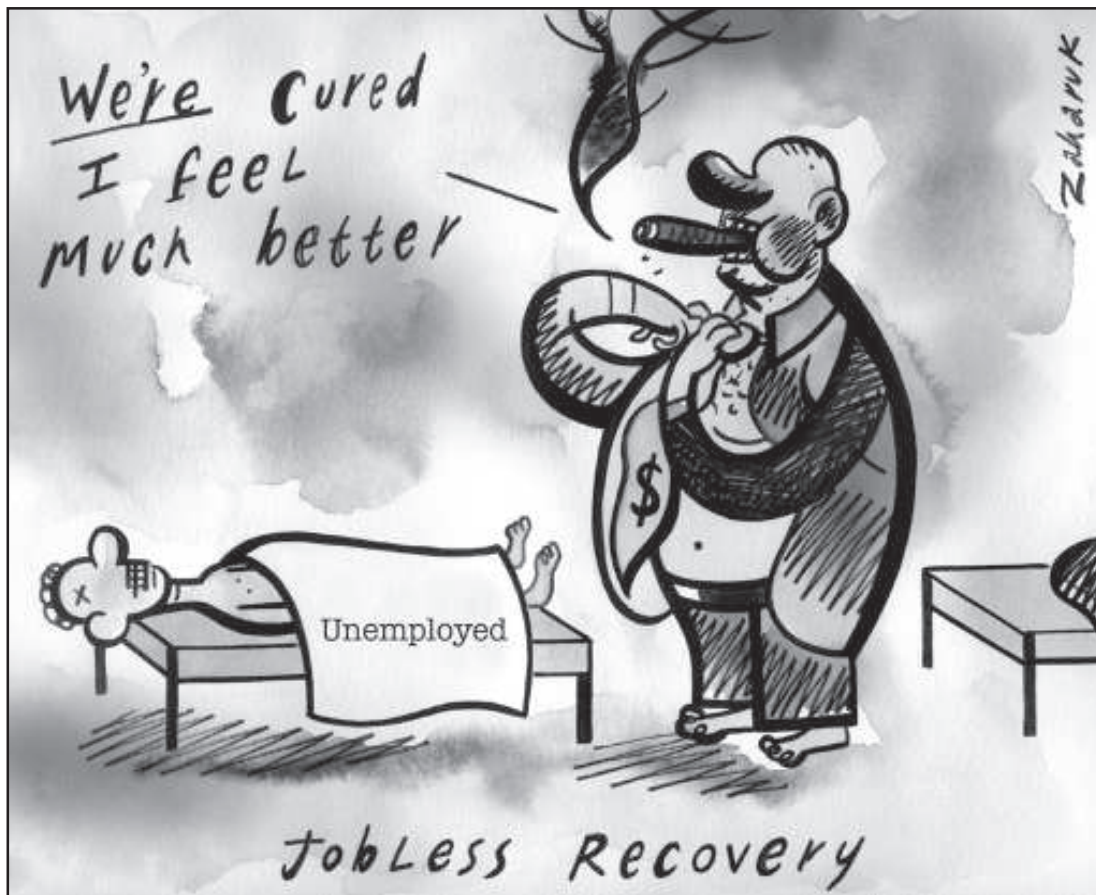
* **Mumia Abu-Jamal**, the Black Panther journalist in Philadelphia whose courageous Death Row struggle for freedom continues 28 years after his original legal lynching in 1982.

* **Mordechai Vanunu**, the scientist jailed repeatedly since exposing the "secrets" of Israel's massive nuclear weapons program.

* **Marwan Barghouti**, the popular Palestinian leader serving five life sentences after trials conducted by the occupation authorities, which he rightly considers illegal.

* **Mansour Osamloo**, leader of the Tehran bus drivers union, repeatedly jailed by the Iranian regime since 2005.

* **Alex Hundert**, anti-G20 activist arrested before the Summit last June, and repeatedly imprisoned since then. (Messages to Hundert can be sent c/o Toronto West Detention Centre, 111 Disco Rd, PO Box 4950, Rexdale ONM9W 5L6.)



Letters to the Editor

Revolution in streets of Haiti

It has been almost a year now since the violent earthquake that shook the Haitian nation in January, and yet despite the billions in "humanitarian aid" that was poured into Haiti at a rate unheard of, the country remains in shambles. Cholera runs ramped throughout Port-au-Prince, and millions of the city's population still live in ad hoc refugee camps and millions more live in substandard housing. Clean drinking water has become a luxury, as has decent food to eat and a paying job. With all this suffering, the flames of discontent among the Haitian people have already been lit. What's now fanned the flames was the most recent travesty that Haiti has suffered - the death of democracy.

Last month, the Haitian national elections were on. During that, thousands upon thousands of legitimate registered voters were prevented from reaching the voting stations once they declared their support for anyone but the hand-picked successor to former president Rene Preval - Jude Celestin. The people were outraged, and the streets

of Port-au-Prince quickly developed into a warzone; on one side the people of Haiti, armed with anything and everything they could find, on the other the Haitian police and military. The riots are still ongoing, as the populist Michel Martelly has declared he will fight the corrupted election and contest Celestin after the declaration of the election's preliminary results.

Yet why is it, that with a period of a month between the election date and the declaration of the election's preliminary results, the people of Haiti rioted continuously for that entire period of time, despite several deaths among the rioters?

This is because what's happening in Haiti is more than just a riot, it's a full blown revolution. The people of Haiti have made a conscious decision that the system they live under doesn't work. This system of corrupted elections, a massive income gap between rich and poor and cruise ships sailing by while people starve on the streets, they recognize that it is not right. And so, they have chosen to fight it, and fight for someone they trust, the anti-American populist Martelly.

However, Martelly may not be the best candidate himself. He is known to have openly fostered a

relationship with many of Haiti's more despised leaders, such as Rene Preval. Though he is against an American presence in Haiti and is extremely active in fighting HIV-AIDS in his country, he was born into and has lived his whole life among Haiti's ruling elite - he even once ran a night club frequented by the country's military leaders, and is the son of a higher-up in a petroleum plant - and remains very much its representative, despite his philanthropy to Haiti's poor.

What will come of the Haitian revolution? Obviously, a political cataclysm is occurring right before our eyes in the battered Caribbean nation of Haiti. But as to whether the people will triumph in this struggle, it is hard to tell. For one, they are being represented by someone who doesn't actually represent their true interests. Secondly, they are faced with some of the best armed men in all of Haiti, when things break down to directly insurrectionary level. For now, we can but watch on as the news images of fire and smoke in the streets of Port-au-Prince flash, and hope for the best for the seemingly perpetually troubled Haitian people.

Michael Oosting, Ontario

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LETTERS

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

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Harper's "tribute"

As reported in the *Globe and Mail* of Oct. 26, 2010, Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper is the latest Canadian politician to pay tribute to victims of a supposedly Russian induced famine of 1933 that starved to death ten million Ukrainians (actual Soviet citizens).

Meanwhile the Saskatchewan party is using the Saskatchewan Legislature to pay tribute to the same phony famine. But, repeating eighty year old Nazi propaganda is proof of nothing.

Why do I have a problem with this particular famine of 1933? Because all the population demographics that can be dredged up for the Ukraine of 1933 show an increase in population, not a ten million population decrease.

This deliberate slandering of the Russian people goes back to the time the Russians overthrew the Czars and established a socialist style government for themselves. (A style of government much hated by capitalists). The Russian people have been vilified and attacked ever since by Capitalist Governments.

Perhaps Mr. Harper could take some time out from paying tribute to victims of a phoney famine and explain why Canada along with some other capitalist countries sent troops to Russia to make war on the new Russian government. For what compelling reason did Canada do that?

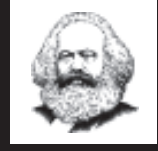
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Marxist Theory Today

Time for a global anti-imperialist front, says Miguel Figueroa

Presentation to the 12th International Meeting of Communist & Workers' Parties, Dec. 3-5, 2010, in South Africa, by Miguel Figueroa, leader of the Communist Party of Canada

Esteemed Delegates, dear Comrades,

Our Party joins with all others in expressing our gratitude to its organizers and especially our hosts, the South African Communist Party for convening this important meeting of our international movement. And we pay tribute to this beautiful land and its resolute people, and especially to its many revolutionary leaders and martyrs - past and present - who have helped to forge a pathway to a brighter future, to a socialist future.

Comrades, our party shares the analysis of the current global economic crisis that has been expressed repeatedly over the course of this any other exchanges since its onset in 2008: that it did not arise as a result of errors, mismanagement or inadequate mechanisms of regulation, but rather as an inevitable consequence of the dynamics of this rotten, exploitative system itself, that monopoly capital is using this crisis not only to protect its interests, but to squeeze even more advantage out of this situation at the expense of the working class and the people; that the struggle of the workers and their allies to defend their jobs, living standards and social/political rights from the impact of the crisis objectively constitutes a challenge to the capitalist system as a whole, even if they are not always or completely conscious of that fact; and finally, that therefore the revolutionary leadership role of the Communist parties in each country is absolutely consequential and decisive.

It is true, as the comrade president of COSATU said yesterday, that in general the working class response has not been sufficiently united, militant and purposeful to seize the initiative, and as a result the ruling classes have so far been able to recover and steer developments to serve their interests.

But the crisis is far from over, comrades. Rather, it has entered its second stage of maturation, one likely to be far more protracted and painful than its opening round. If this assessment is accurate, then it follows that it is still possible to change the outcome of this crisis, to shift the balance of class forces against international finance capital and in favour of the working class and working people on both the national and international levels. But for working class resistance and fightback to grow, and for fresh advances and victories to be achieved, this will in turn require a most unremitting struggle against all shades of reformism, opportunism and class collaborationism which still dominate within the leadership of the trade union movement in most of our countries, and certainly within the leading imperialist states themselves. This is the most important and urgent task facing the Communists today, in our view.

Allow me now to turn to the

related question of alliances, and their critical importance in our work. Some might be inclined to think that conducting a persistent ideological struggle against reformism and opportunism is incompatible with our efforts to build and strengthen alliances with other social, class and political forces within and among the labour and popular forces. On the contrary, both unity and struggle are absolutely essential and dialectically interconnected. The struggle will never advance without the highest level of unity in action within the ranks of labour, and together with its closest social allies. And yet the achievement of such unity requires an unremitting "battle of ideas" against those forces and currents which fear militancy and seek instead accommodation and outright collusion with the class enemy. So we must battle on both of these fronts simultaneously in our political work.

How should we approach the struggle for alliances? Our Party considers it quite wrong to pay 'lip-service' to alliance-building, and then to proceed as if we are the 'only game in town', so to speak - to believe that we alone are privy to the truth, and to behave in a narrow or sectarian manner, as President Zuma reminded us yesterday.

It is equally if not more impermissible however for the Communists to enter into alliances in a self-effacing way, making unprincipled political and ideological concessions for the sake of maintaining unity, and jettisoning the independent role of the Communist Party in the process. This is the route to tailism in the short run, and to liquidationism over the longer term. We go down that road at our peril, comrades.

A few words about anti-imperialist solidarity at the international level. In September of



Communist Party of Canada leader Miguel Figueroa

2009 at an international gathering in Caracas, President Hugo Chavez came forward with an interesting, if also somewhat bewildering proposal for a "New International". Our Party decided to publicly withhold comment on this proposal, as did most other parties around the world. We felt that it was first necessary to learn more about the thinking behind this idea, what its proposed programmatic basis would be, its structure and membership rules, and so on, before taking a formal position. It is now obvious that the idea was not fully thought through, and has been quietly shelved or abandoned. If the intention was to form an International in the spirit of the First International led by Marx and Engels, or of the 3rd Communist International, then the proposal was grossly premature and hopelessly muddled. But what if President Chavez had something else in mind? What if he was thinking about the need to build a structural vehicle for an international democratic and anti-imperialist front instead? What would have been our attitude in that case?

This begs a larger question, comrades. Our Party, and many others sitting in this hall today, have long

spoken of the necessity for such a global democratic and anti-imperialist front of struggle, to defend national sovereignty, to maintain regional and world peace, and to counter imperialism's economic and military aggression around the world. But what have we Communists concretely done to breathe life into this idea? Is it not time, comrades, for our parties to jointly consider this matter in a serious way, and to come forward with some proposals to give a political and organizational expression to the formation of such a front?

Allow me to conclude with some brief comments about our own process - the International Meetings of Communist & Workers Parties. Over the past twelve years, this process has developed both politically and organizationally. The agreement to establish a Working Group several years ago was an important step forward. The Working Group has played a decisive role not only in preparing for our annual meetings but also in

taking some limited but valuable initiatives between meetings, such as drafting and issuing joint party statements on critical regional and international issues.

The Communist Party of Canada has been a strong proponent of this process from the very beginning, and we continue to support its work today and into the future. That said, it is our view that this process is rapidly approaching a crossroad in its development. Like any other social or natural process, our process must either grow and develop, or else it will wither and die...

Comrades, we realize that as a small Communist Party, we are not in the position to contribute many new resources to our collective efforts to deepen our process, but we urge all parties to seriously reflect on this question over the coming period, and leading up to our next meeting. Let us grow and develop, comrades; it is far better than the alternative. ●



IMF, ECB and EU are sacrificing the Irish people to save the euro

Statement by the Communist Party of Ireland, Nov. 29, 2010

The imposed "solution" to the Irish state's growing and deepening crisis is to make every person an indentured servant to the needs and interests of EU finance houses, in particular to German banks. The National Pension Fund is now to be squandered to bail out banks that should have been allowed to go to the wall from the beginning.

The punitive interest rate of 5.8 per cent is unpayable without enormous hardship being inflicted

on the people. There is no other solution than to repudiate this unpayable debt.

It is clear that the Irish establishment put up little if any resistance to the demands being imposed by our so-called "partners" in the European Union. These are the same people who negotiated the Lisbon Treaty while admitting that they had not even read it.

The dependent relationship with the EU that all three main parties have pushed our country into over the last four decades is now being laid bare. They have now put the interests of saving the euro and German bond-holders before those of



Irish Communists at rally against the EU/IMF "bailout"

the Irish people.

Working people will pay a very heavy price over the coming decades for the deal being imposed by the EU and ECB and the IMF. Thousands of jobs will be lost, hospitals will close, class sizes will grow even worse.

Those who still harbour the illusion that the European Union is somehow good for working people,

either here in Ireland or in the members-states in general, need to think again.

It is the first duty of the state to protect all its citizens. We need to break whatever EU rules and treaties are necessary in order to protect the interests of the Irish people, and to set about a fundamental change in economic policy and direction. ●

REDS ON THE WEB

www.communist-party.ca

www.peoplesvoice.ca

www.ycl-ljc.ca

www.solidnet.org



Youth Festival delegates welcomed with fireworks, friendship and solidarity

By Johan Boyden

DECEMBER 13 - The opening ceremonies of the World Festival of Youth and Students wrapped up with a bang, as fireworks exploded over a large sports stadium in a township outside Pretoria. Delegates had just heard President Zuma welcome them to South Africa, and the leader of the African National Congress Youth League called for free public education and putting the economy under the people's control.

Some delegations are still in arrival. The opening gates and registration are a flurry of activity as youth people from all over Africa, but also Asia, Europe, Latin America and North America enter the Festival looking tired but excited.

At the Festival grounds, around the Tshwane University of Technology and the Tshwane Fair grounds, there are some logistical challenges, but a great mood of friendship and solidarity as young people from diverse backgrounds and different ideologies gather.

A word picture for readers is not adequate. Picture a street closed from traffic flowing with young people of all nationalities and peoples, some draped with national flags, others wearing sports jackets in their country's colours, or just casual shorts and t-shirts. Suddenly a group of South African

youth, about fifteen, appear from around the corner of the building in a quick-step run. Their fists are in the air and their voices fill the space with a powerful yet beautiful struggle song in one of South Africa's many national languages.

The delegation gets larger and their chants echo off the big festival hall buildings. Young people join in and follow them. Then another delegation appears with a giant banner - Our country will never again be a colony, it proclaims. The chanting and singing grows. In the background are giant Vietnamese flags.

The South African sunshine is slipping away and bold thunderstorms appear on a horizon of small rolling hills with a beige dried grass. The rain falls and people rush indoors. Turning into a large hall, young people are seated behind a main podium discussing peace, sovereignty and social transformation in their respective countries. The current speaker from Bahrain is declaring the need to break with US imperialism in the Middle East with a series of lengthy but powerful slogans.

There are problems with translation and the delegates are hungry because the food has not yet arrived, but people are excited. Everyone has stories of new countries they have just met, what they have told them, gifts exchanged.

The rain has ended and back out on the street a bus has stopped. Suddenly Latin American music blares as the delegates get off and a dance party appears in the street, joined by a crowd of small South African children dancing with the delegates. As the music fades the scene seems to almost blur in the heat, but the diversity and energy of this tremendous event, the largest anti-imperialist gathering of youth and students in the world, becomes clear.

The delegations from Africa are the largest. There are big groups from Angola, Zimbabwe, Libya, Algeria, and South Africa, but also smaller delegations from countries like Senegal, Mozambique, and Egypt. There are also sizable delegations from Sri Lanka, India, the Democratic Republic of Korea, Spain, France, Brazil, Cuba, and Venezuela.

Forty young delegates are attending from Canada, including youth activists from the Canadian Federation of Students, the Québec solidaire political party, numerous local student organizations, several locals of the Canadian Union of Public Employees and the Canadian Union of Postal Workers, Palestine solidarity activists, queer youth, young Métis and First Nations delegates, Québécoise youth and the Young Communist League of Canada.

In the opening ceremonies the All-Canada delegation proudly

marched behind a banner demanding that a better Canada is possible, and with flags from Québec, Aboriginal nations including the red Mohawk Unity Flag, and the Canadian flag.

We are learning that the young people all over the world do not accept the miserable future offered them by capitalism and imperialism. They yearn for a new world and a different social order, that puts people first. They are from Spain, talking about the strikes and protests. Iraqi Kurds, talking about ending the

occupation and the fight for peace. They are U.S. delegates who denounce their country's foreign policy. They are from Nepal and talking about the struggle to defeat the monarchy and now win democracy and for socialism.

People's Voice will feature interviews from the festival in subsequent issues. Already young socialists and communists from diverse countries such as Palestine, Western Sahara, the United Arab Emirates, Hungary, Paraguay and Vietnam have been interviewed about struggles in their country. ●



Delegate from Bangladesh at the WFYS opening ceremony in South Africa on Dec. 13.

International Communist meeting in South Africa

Special to PV

Over 100 delegates representing 51 parties from around the world came together in early December in the municipality of Tshwane (which includes the city of Pretoria), South Africa for the 12th annual International Meeting of Communist and Workers' Parties (IMCWP).

This meeting chose as its theme the deepening systemic crisis of capitalism and the tasks of Communists in defence of sovereignty, deepening social alliances, strengthening the anti-imperialist front in the struggle for peace, progress and socialism. Miguel Figueroa participated on behalf of the Communist Party of Canada.

The IMCWP was opened by Blade Nzimande, General Secretary of the South African Communist

Party, who welcomed the delegates to this "first ever meeting of communist and workers' parties on the African continent". He thanked the parties for their decades-long solidarity with the cause of national liberation, anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggles.

Nzimande centred his remarks on the current situation in South Africa, noting that the "first democratic election in 1994 was a democratic breakthrough... [but] it was not a final defeat of the totality of reactionary forces, thus signalling that the struggle for the total emancipation of the oppressed majority was far from over."

He added that for South African communists, "the total liberation of the black people of our country, whose majority is still the working class, will not be fully realized unless there is a transition to socialism - the

only system best capable of destroying all the vestiges of capitalist exploitation, gender oppression and the national oppression of the people of our country.

"In other words, the completion of the tasks of the national democratic revolution can only be achieved under a socialist dispensation."

Another highlight of the opening session was the greeting brought by South Africa's President Jacob Zuma. In a frank and thoughtful 45-minute address, Zuma began by welcoming the Communist delegates to South Africa, noting that "your presence confirms our movement's internationalist and anti-imperialist character."

Zuma spoke candidly about the challenges facing the ANC-led government in "grappling with how to quickly translate the freedom attained in 1994 to accelerated access to a better life for our people. The national democratic revolution enjoins us to work together to ensure that the workers and the poor have access to basic needs such as water, education, health services, social security, electricity, roads and other basic necessities."

He said that the Tripartite Alliance - the ANC, the Communist Party and the trade union central COSATU - accepts as its "key responsibility to shape the

economic transformation of the post-apartheid South Africa, to address the deepening inequality and poverty."

He also spoke of South Africa's unshakeable solidarity with socialist Cuba, with the just struggle of the Palestinian people, and with the struggles of the people of Western Sahara.

He even joked with the delegates about a chance encounter with Mikhail Gorbachev. Zuma said he was tempted to ask how Gorbachev had the temerity to single-handedly destroy socialism in the USSR, but decided instead to pose a more diplomatic question: "How did you find the wisdom to single-handedly end the Cold War?" His unscripted remarks were greeted by thunderous laughter.

Over the balance of the three-day meeting, representatives from most of the parties addressed the assembly, following which they turned their consideration to the Tshwane Declaration (see page 7) drafted by the IMCWP Working Group. All delegates had the opportunity to propose amendments, and following a final round of discussion the Declaration was further amended and adopted unanimously, making it the centrepiece and main accomplishment of the meeting.

Despite this heavy agenda, delegates also joined a public rally in Johannesburg in solidarity with the Cuban Five, and many later

attended a 25th anniversary celebration of the creation of COSATU. Following the conference, delegates were taken on tours of the Soweto and Mamelodi Townships, and visited Freedom Park, Mandela House, and various monuments to the struggles and sacrifices of the people, culminating in an emotional visit to the world-renowned Apartheid Museum.

The International Meeting marked the beginning of a hectic month of political activity in South Africa, which included the 3rd National Congress of the Young Communist League, and the 17th World Festival of Youth and Students, organized by the World Federation of Democratic Youth. ●



Some of the IMCWP delegates visiting Mandela House.



SACP leader Blade Nzimande

The Tshwane Declaration:

Capitalism's trajectory threatens human civilization

The 12th International Meeting of Communist and Workers' Parties took place in Tshwane, South Africa from Dec. 3-5, on the theme "The deepening systemic crisis of capitalism. The tasks of Communists in defence of sovereignty, deepening social alliances, strengthening the anti-imperialist front in the struggle for peace, progress and Socialism". 102 delegates representing 51 participating Parties from 43 countries and from all continents came together to take forward the work of previous meetings, and to promote and develop common and convergent action around a shared perspective. The "Tshwane Declaration" was adopted by the parties present at the International Meeting.

Deepening capitalist crisis

The international situation continues to be dominated by the persisting and deepening crisis of capitalism. This reality confirms the analyses outlined in the declarations of our 2008 Sao Paulo and 2009 New Delhi 10th and 11th International Meetings. The current global crisis of capitalism underlines its historical limitations and the need for its revolutionary overthrow. It shows the intensification of the basic contradiction of capitalism between the social character of production and the private capitalist appropriation.

The crisis is systemic - despite pre-2008 capitalist illusions to the contrary, capitalism cannot escape its in-built, systemic tendency to go through cycles of boom and bust. The current global crisis is a particularly severe manifestation of a capitalist downturn occasioned by capitalist over-production. Now, as in the past, there is no answer, within the logic of capitalism, to these periodic crises other than crisis itself, marked by the massive and socially irrational destruction of assets - including mass job lay-offs, factory closures, and the wholesale attack on wages, pensions, social security and erosion of people's livelihoods. This is why, at our previous two meetings, we correctly asserted that the current crisis was not merely attributable to subjective failings, to the greed of bankers or financial speculators. It remains a crisis embedded in the systemic features of capitalism itself.

The persisting crisis is compounded by significant shifts in the international balance of forces. In particular, there is the on-going relative decline of US economic global hegemony, general productive stagnation in most advanced capitalist economies, and the emergence of new global economic powers, notably China. The crisis has intensified the competition between the imperialist centres and also between the established and emerging powers. This includes the US-led currency war; the concentration and centralization of economic and political power within the EU deepening its

character as an imperialist block led by its main capitalist powers; a distinct sharpening of the inter-imperialist struggle for markets and access to raw materials; expanding militarism, including the strengthening of aggressive alliances (for example, the NATO Lisbon Summit with its "new" dangerous strategic concept), the profusion of regional points of tension and aggression (notably in the Middle East, Asia and Africa), coups in Latin America, the intensification of neo-imperialist tendencies of fanning ethnic conflicts and the increasing militarization of Africa through, amongst other things, AFRICOM.

At the same time it has become clear that capitalism's trajectory with its profit-maximising, headlong destruction of natural resources, and of the environment in general poses a grave threat to the sustainability of human civilization itself. The political elites in the dominant capitalist states with their various proposals for "green technologies" and carbon trading at best represent adjustments which increase the profitability of capital while deepening the commodification of nature, and the transfer of climate change crises onto less developed countries. The crisis of the capitalist system that we face as humankind is directly linked to capitalism's inability to reproduce itself except through a voracious pursuit of compound growth. It is a crisis that can only be overcome through the abolition of capitalism itself.

Faced with these realities, everywhere capital fights back, seeking to preserve profits and to transfer the burden of its crisis onto the working class by intensifying exploitation based on gender and age, the urban and rural poor, and a wide range of middle strata. Exploitation is intensified, the state is used to rescue private bankers and financial houses while exposing future generations to unsustainable levels of debt, and there are intensified efforts to roll back social gains.

In the entire capitalist world, labour, social, economic, political and social security rights are being abolished. At the same time the political systems are being made more reactionary, restricting

democratic and civil liberties, especially trade union rights. The retrenchments, including major spending cuts in the public sector are having a devastating impact on workers, especially women workers. There are also attempts to divert popular distress and insecurity into reactionary demagoguery, racism and xenophobia, as well as to legitimise fascist forces. These are expressions of anti-democratic and authoritarian tendencies also marked by the escalation of anti-communist attacks and campaigns in many parts of the world. In Africa, Asia and Latin America we are witnessing the imposition on our peoples of new mechanisms of national and class oppression, including economic, financial, political and military means as well as the deployment of an array of pro-imperialist NGOs.

However, for the mass of peoples, in particular in Africa, Asia and Latin America, it is important to remember that, even before the current global economic crisis, life under capitalism was a continuing crisis, a daily struggle for bare survival. Even before the current global crisis, one billion people were living in squalid slums, and half of the world's population was surviving on less than \$2 a day. With the crisis these realities have been massively aggravated.

Most of these urban and rural poor, along with family members working as vulnerable migrants in foreign countries, are the displaced victims of the accelerated capitalist agrarian development under-way in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Global capitalism, spear-headed by the major corporates in the agro-industrial sector, has declared war on nearly one-half of humanity - the three billion remaining rural people in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

At the same time inhuman barriers are being set up against immigrants and refugees. There is an ever-increasing mushrooming of urban and semi-urban slums populated by desperate marginalised masses typically involved in a variety of activities for survival. The accelerated capitalist agrarian transformation in countries with a lower level of capitalist development has genocidal implications.



Young South African communists at a recent political rally.

Resistance struggles of the working class and popular forces

Across the world, capital's attempts to load the burden of the crisis onto workers and the poor is being met by working class and popular resistance.

Over the past year the anti-people assault on labour rights, social-security rights and wages provoked an escalation of popular struggles notably in Europe. Imperialist aggression in the Middle East, Asia and Latin America continues to meet resolute popular resistance.

In Africa and Latin America, anti-imperialist forces, trade unions, and social movements have escalated their struggles for the rights of the people and against the plunder by the multinational corporations. These struggles have, in some cases, led to the emergence of progressive, popular national governments that declare programmatically for national sovereignty, social rights, development and for the protection of their natural resources and biodiversity, giving renewed impetus to the anti-imperialist struggle.

In the current reality, it is an historic imperative that as Communist and Workers' Parties we participate, to strengthen and transform these popular defensive battles into offensive struggles for the acquisition of broader workers' and people rights and for the abolition of capitalism.

In advancing this strategic agenda, communists stress the significance that the organisation of the working class, and the development of the struggles of the labour movement in a class-oriented direction, have in the struggle for the acquisition of political power by the working class and its allies.

Within the framework of this struggle we attach particular importance to:

- * The defence, consolidation and advance of popular national sovereignty
- * The deepening of social alliances
- * Strengthening the anti-imperialist front for peace, for the right to full-time stable work, labour rights and social rights such as free health and education.

The defence, consolidation and advance of popular sovereignty

In the face of the intensified aggression of transnational capital, the struggle against imperialist occupation of countries, against economic and political dependency and to defend popular sovereignty has become increasingly salient. In these struggles it is important for communists to integrate these struggles with the struggle for social and class emancipation.

Communists, fighting against imperialism, struggle for equitable international relations between states and peoples on the basis of mutual benefit.

The defence, consolidation and advance of popular sovereignty is of particular importance in Africa and for other peoples that have experienced decades and even centuries of colonial and semi-colonial oppression. 2010 marks the 50th anniversary of the commencement of the formal decolonisation of Africa. Yet everywhere, including in the African diaspora, the grim legacy of the slave-trade, of colonial dispossession and plunder persist. Notwithstanding 50 years of formal decolonisation, everywhere imperialist interventions are reinforced, the dominance of the monopolies is being strengthened with the aid of domestic capital. The struggle against them requires the active protagonism and unity of the popular masses, and the broadening of popular democratic rights.

Deepening social alliances

The ongoing crisis of capitalism and its anti-civilisation fight-back are creating the conditions to build broad social, anti-monopolistic and anti-imperialist alliances capable of gaining power and promoting deep, progressive, radical, and revolutionary changes.

Working class unity is a fundamental factor in ensuring the construction of effective social alliances with the peasantry, the mass of urban and rural poor, the urban middle class strata and intellectuals. Particular attention needs to be paid to the aspirations of, and challenges confronting youth.

The land question, agrarian reform and rural development are important issues for the development of popular struggle in lesser developed countries. These are inextricably linked to

see TSHWANE, page 11



12th INTERNATIONAL MEETING of Communist and Workers Parties

Date: 3rd – 5th December 2010

Time: 8h00

Venue: Johannesburg



GLOBAL CLASS STRUGGLE

Minimum wage cuts in Ireland

Workers on Ireland's existing minimum wage can be sacked and replaced by staff on the new lower rate. Finance Minister Brian Lenihan insists the new hourly rate of 7.65 euros would only affect new workers, and anyone on the existing rate of 8.65 euros would be protected. But Michael Noonan of the Fine Gael party says that in the "real world", workers on the higher rate can be "let go" because they were costing employers 40 euros more per week. Rather than making Ireland more competitive, the savings from cutting the rate will go into the pockets of employers, opposition parties warn.

The cuts to the minimum wage were rushed through on Dec. 10, with the Government winning with a comfortable majority. Both Fine Gael and Labour claimed that those on the minimum wage were not on "rock solid contracts" and had very "loose arrangements" with their employers.

David Begg, general secretary of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, described the vote to cut the minimum wage as Ireland's "day of shame".

COSATU seeks action on wages

The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) has asked the government to act against poor wages and the exploitation of workers. Born in 1985 at the height of apartheid, COSATU has been a major force in the post-apartheid workplace and political arena. The federation celebrated its 25th anniversary in Johannesburg in December.

Speaking at the event, President Jacob Zuma stressed the importance of unity among the ruling alliance partners - the African National Congress, COSATU, and the South African Communist Party. But in its role as defender of workers' rights, COSATU has often been at odds with the ANC leadership, especially considering the big increase in unemployment.

COSATU Secretary general Zwelinzima Vavi says the country cannot afford to have a neutral government under such conditions for workers. He has called on the ANC to take part in COSATU's public campaigns.

Zuma told the 25th anniversary celebration that the government's new growth plan seeks to create 5 million jobs over the next 10 years, and called on the unions to support the growth plan. COSATU will campaign for the ANC in upcoming local elections, but has also warned that inept and corrupt candidates will not be supported.

More crackdowns on Iranian unions

The family of a jailed Iranian trade union activist says authorities continue to hold him after bail was posted, Radio Farda reported recently. Reza Shahabi, the treasurer of the Tehran Bus Workers' Union, was arrested in

June. Shahabi was to be released on October 11 after his family posted bail of 60 million tomans (\$57,103). The family said it further agreed to pay a surety of 100 million tomans, but that Shahabi remains in prison.

"They say he is not going to be released for certain reasons," but no one has disclosed those reasons, Shahabi's brother Hassan told Radio Farda on Dec. 9. "He is just a labor activist and his only activity is to support labor rights. If the demand for labor rights and support of the labor is a crime, they ought to say so."

Two other members of the Tehran Bus Workers' Union, Ebrahim Madadi, and Mansur Osanlu, are serving prison terms of three and five years respectively on charges of endangering security.



Meanwhile, Iran has sentenced a prominent journalist to 16 months in jail on charges of insulting President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and undermining the Islamic regime. Mashallah Shamsolvaezin heads the Journalists' Association of Iran and was the editor of several reformist dailies closed in a crackdown on the press between 1998 and 2000.

"I was sentenced to one year in prison on the charge of undermining the establishment for giving interviews to foreign TV networks and news agencies," Shamsolvaezin said on Dec. 11. "I was also given a four-month sentence for calling Ahmadinejad a megalomaniac in an interview with Al-Arabiya TV which the prosecutors misinterpreted as crazy and so insulting the president."

Hyundai strike over

Temporary workers at Hyundai Motor agreed on Dec. 9 to end a one-month sit-in. Since November 15, subcontracted employees had occupied a factory in the South Korean carmaker's largest domestic production base, hitting output of subcompact cars such as the Verna and the new Accent. The strike cost Hyundai \$277 million in lost production, causing it to report the worst November sales among Korean automakers.

"We have agreed to end a strike today and start talks with management," said Kim Sang-min, a spokesperson for the Korean Metal Workers' Union, a umbrella union of Hyundai contract workers.

Labor unrest has often caused disruptions in Asia's fourth-largest economy. Hyundai's union, the most powerful in the

country, decided not to strike this year for the second consecutive year. But temporary workers want job security which employers refuse to deliver so as to cut costs and raise flexibility. The strikers came under mounting pressure from management, as Hyundai filed a combined 16.2 billion won (\$14 million Cdn) in damage suits against them.

Police attack demonstrators in Bangladesh

At least four people were killed and dozens injured in the Bangladesh port city of Chittagong on Dec. 12 after police attacked a crowd of garment workers protesting for higher wages. The Korean-owned Youngone Ltd. in the Chittagong Export Processing Zone (CEPZ) shut all its 11 units for an indefinite period on Dec. 11. Around 10,000 workers at the factories, unaware of the shutdown, went to work the next morning and found the factory closed. They attacked the main gate of the factory and damaged gates and windows of other factories, where workers joined their protest.

Police fired around 600 rounds of rubber bullets, lobbed 150 teargas canisters, and charged with batons to disperse the workers. The protesters retaliated with brickbats, stones and sticks, and then burned tires and furniture to block traffic at the CEPZ, which houses about 70 foreign companies that employ about 150,000 workers.

At least five vehicles were burned and 90 others vandalised, while the demonstrators ransacked 11 factories and 20 roadside buildings. Traffic movement on Chittagong Airport Road and Dhaka Airport Road and Dhaka-Sylhet Highway remained halted for hours. The clashes forced closure of the entire Zone. Two of the deceased were identified as rickshaw puller Ariful Islam, 35, and worker Ruhi Das, 45, of CM Superior Garments.

Workers were demanding a new minimum wage that was promised to be implemented in November. The same issue sparked similar protests in and around the capital, Dhaka, where around 8,000 workers at Kimia Garments, Sunseed Apparels and Eden Apparels gathered to demand higher wages.

In the first increase since 2006, the government raised the official minimum wage to 3,000 takas (\$45 Cdn) a month from 1,662 takas (\$25 Cdn). Garment workers in Bangladesh are among the lowest-paid in the world.

New strikes in Greece

A general strike called for Dec. 15 by Greece's largest private sector labour federation, the GSEE Union, is the latest sign of protest against austerity measures adopted by the "socialist" PASOK government. Unemployment has already jumped to 12% since the measures were adopted, and the government

predicts that unemployment will rise to 14.5% in 2011, the third consecutive year of recession. The Dec. 15 strike was to demand that the government protect jobs and give back pension benefits scrapped under an EU and IMF bailout plan.

During 2010, under pressure from PAME, the All-Workers Militant Front, the GSEE and the public sector union federation ADEDY staged six joint general strikes.

The GSEE also called a 24-hour strike at all retail sales outlets in Athens on December 12. The GSEE objected to a decision to allow shops in Athens to open on the second Sunday of December, calling it illegal and abusive. The labour body urged employees to send a strong message to those "trying to abolish the Sunday holiday during the time of economic crisis and recession, alongside with the slashing of wages, further deterioration of work conditions and complete disruption of labour relations."

The Greek government plans to push through changes to labour contracts and wage cuts at state enterprises, stepping up the attacks to meet conditions of the 110 billion-euro (\$146 billion) European Union-led bailout. The law will be discussed in Parliament under fast-track rules, to take effect on Jan. 1. Workers at state companies including Hellenic Railways and other public-transport companies will have wages reduced 10 percent if monthly salaries exceed 1,800 euros. This will affect about 89 percent of all employees of state enterprises. Gross wages will be capped at 4,000 euros a month. The Cabinet has also approved changes that will allow employers to sidestep industry-wide wage agreements, by establishing wage

and working-time accords with their own staff.

Indonesian migrant workers face abuse

In its 48-page report "Rights on the Line: Human Rights Watch Work on Abuses against Migrants in 2010," Human Rights Watch highlights the abuse and exploitation suffered by Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia and Middle Eastern countries.

"We see the same type of abuse happen over and over again," Nisha Varia, the senior women's rights researcher for HRW, told the *Jakarta Globe* on Dec. 11. She also said the lack of sanctions against abusive employers have caused cases to persist.

The report says local authorities have been slow to investigate or prosecute abusers. The case of Keni binti Carda - an Indonesian domestic worker who was burned with an iron by her Saudi Arabian employers in September 2008 - was only investigated following international pressure. The report also includes testimony from Saminem, an Indonesian maid who told HRW in Kuala Lumpur of her exploitation by her employers.

"I was mistreated by my employers. I woke up at 5 am and went to sleep at 2 or 3 am. I never get a day off. I had no rest. The door was always locked. I could never go out, only when employers go out with me. I slept in the dining room. I never slept in a room ever," she said.

The rights group also called on governments to strengthen migrant protection in 2011 and to ratify the International Covenant on the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Their Families.

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

Send me information on the Communist Party of Canada

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

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Tel/fax: 902-542-7981



How enormous wealth generates inequality

The Trouble with Billionaires, by Linda McQuaig and Neil Brooks, 2010, Toronto, Viking Canada, 272 pages. Available by mail from People's Co-op Books, 1391 Commercial Drive, Vancouver, tel. 604-253-6442.

Review by Kimball Cariou

Although she usually steers away from the terms "capitalism" and "socialism", author Linda McQuaig is rightfully renowned for her exposés of the injustices and inequalities of the system we live under.

Starting in 1987 with *Behind Closed Doors: How the Rich Won Control of Canada's Tax System ... And Ended Up Richer*, McQuaig has now published ten books skewering corporate greed and the right-wing policies which have devastated working people in recent decades. She also churns out newspaper columns which present valuable information to counter the mainstream media propaganda flood.

One of McQuaig's specialties is her ability to create images which leap off the page. One early book presented a startling view of economic equality: a long parade in which the poor and working people are dwarfed by the final few rich and powerful giants.

That image returns in McQuaig's latest book, *The Trouble With Billionaires*, co-written with Osgoode Hall law professor Neil Brooks.

But this time, the parade is even more dramatic: "In today's parade, they [the real giants] aren't just very tall, they're truly gigantic. We can recognize some prominent CEOs in the crowd - except that the faces are

so high up that it's hard to see them. Way up there, for instance, is Siegfried Wolf, CEO of Magna International, with an income of \$13 million, standing 2,054 feet tall - more than nine times as tall as John Armstrong, the tallest person in the 1978 parade. Indeed, Wolf is so immense, he is actually taller than the CN Tower... Then finally, at the very end of the parade, is the tallest man in Canada, Michael Lazaridis, another CEO of Research in Motion, with a take-home pay of \$51 million, standing 8,058 feet tall - more than a mile and a half high. From the viewing deck at the top of the CN Tower, we don't even come up to his knees.

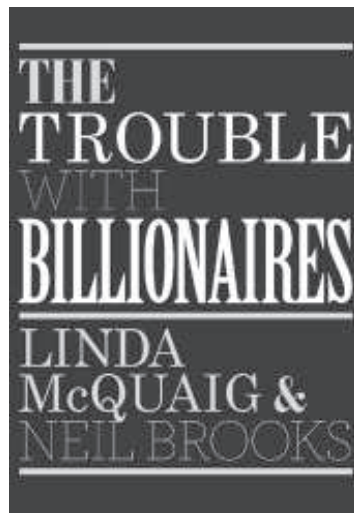
"Most Canadians probably regard extreme inequality as a thing of the past. But while kings and nobles of pre-industrial times enjoyed a standard of living that was wildly lavish and grand compared to the poor in their day, that gap was not as extreme as the one that separates Canadian billionaires from the homeless living in Toronto, Calgary, and Vancouver today."

The Trouble With Billionaires tears apart the lame excuses bandied about by the corporate media for such vast inequalities. In clear, powerful prose, McQuaig and Brooks shred the ideas that the super-rich have "earned" their vast wealth, or that low taxes on high incomes "improve" the economy. Marxists could justifiably note that the authors do not present a full analysis of the inherent contradictions of capitalism, but the book is well worth the price for these brilliant chapters.

My only quibbles are with the final chapter, "Reshaping the Ovarian Lottery," which presents important recommendations such as ways to establish a more progressive taxation system. Given the huge deficit and budget numbers tossed around by Tory finance ministers, it would have been useful if the authors had provided some calculations of the revenues which could be generated by making the rich pay a higher share of the tax burden.

The final recommendation is to enact an inheritance tax which would be used to introduce a new "education trust" for every Canadian child. This would make higher education more freely available, removing a key barrier to economic equality. That may well be, but it seems a limited approach to wind up a very powerful book.

These minor shortcomings aside, *The Trouble With Billionaires* should be required reading for every supporter of social justice and equality. ●



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



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

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

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



MUSIC NOTES

By Wally Brooker

Sounds Like a Revolution

Sounds Like a Revolution, a documentary on contemporary protest music by Canadian filmmakers Summer Love and Jane Michener, highlighted the opening of the 15th Annual Amnesty International Film Festival in Vancouver on November 18. The film, which received its world premier at Toronto's NXNE music festival last summer, features performances and interviews with notable activist musicians including The Dixie Chicks, Steve Earle, Michael Franti, Ani DiFranco & David Crosby. Director Summer Love was inspired to make the film after her "hippie" mother suggested that protest music does not exist in any meaningful way today. The musicians discuss the role of artists in society, freedom of expression and democratic participation in the contemporary world. To see the trailer visit: www.soundslikearevolution.com/.

Say It Ain't So, Arlo!

Woody Guthrie wrote his celebrated anthem "This Land is Your Land" in 1940, in response to the flag-waving Irving Berlin song "God Bless America." It's disappointing to learn that the troubador's son Arlo performed a sanitized version of the song aboard a float in New York City's annual Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. Unlike his friend Pete Seeger, who sang the unexpurgated version at President Obama's inauguration in January 2009, Arlo skipped the most hard-hitting verses, including this one: "As I went walking I saw a sign there/And on the sign it said "No Trespassing/But on the other side it didn't say nothing/That side was made for you and me." The younger Guthrie, famous for his 1967 anti-war classic "Alice's Restaurant" is now a registered Republican and supporter of libertarian congressman and 2008 presidential candidate Ron Paul. Say it ain't so!

Hip-hop artists release Peltier benefit CD

A new hip-hop compilation album, *Free Leonard Peltier: Hip Hop's Contribution to the Freedom Campaign*, has just been released. Proceeds will go to Peltier's legal defence fund. The album contains new tracks by the likes of Dilated Peoples, Talib Kweli, Dead Prez, Immortal Technique & 2Mex. Peltier, an activist with the American Indian Movement, was wrongly convicted in 1977 for the murder of two FBI agents on the Oglala-Sioux Reservation in South Dakota. He's universally recognised as a political prisoner. Amnesty International calls for his release, as do Nelson Mandela, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and a host of politicians world-wide including 50 Canadian MPs. In spite of the blatant vindictiveness of the FBI and U.S. courts Peltier's struggle continues. For info about the album visit <http://axisofjustice.net/>.

Boycotters confront Cape Town Opera

On October 27, South Africa's Cape Town Opera rejected a call from Palestinian and Israeli activists to cancel its Nov. 12 performance of *Porgy and Bess* at the Tel Aviv Opera House. The company defied the pleas of Desmond Tutu and 56 mass-based civil society organizations in South Africa. Patrons arriving at the one-night show were met with a troupe of singing and dancing activists performing parodies of songs from the Gershwin opera. After the show the boycotters confronted members of the company directly, reprising their satirical songs and distributing a letter explaining their actions. Watch the YouTube video of the action and learn more at <http://boycottisrael.info/>.

Composer Ann Southam: 1937-2010

Ann Southam, a pioneering composer of electroacoustic and minimalist music, died on Nov. 23. The Winnipeg native had worked for years as an instructor at Toronto's Royal Conservatory of Music. Southam was first recognized for the soundscapes that she created for Canadian dance troupes such as Toronto Dance Theatre and the Danny Grossman Company. An avowed feminist, Southam co-founded the Association of Canadian Women Composers in 1981 and served as its first chair. She'll be remembered for her considerable achievements on the cutting edge of late-20th century music. Recordings of her later minimalist works by pianist Christina Petrowska-Quilico can be heard on YouTube. Look for Ann Southam's music at your local library.

Connolly on revolutionary music

The Irish are known for songs that commemorate their struggle for independence and social justice. Their great working class leader, James Connolly (1868-1916), a songwriter himself, made a significant contribution to this tradition. It's said that he always sought to begin and end meetings with a rousing song. In 1907 Connolly published *Songs of Freedom by Irish Authors*. In the preface he wrote: "No revolutionary movement is complete without its poetical expression. If such a movement has caught hold of the imagination of the masses, they will seek a vent in song for the aspirations, the fears and hopes, the loves and hatreds engendered by the struggle. Until the movement is marked by the joyous, defiant, singing of revolutionary songs, it lacks one of the most distinctive marks of a popular revolutionary movement; it is the dogma of a few, and not the faith of the multitude."

Communist leadership meets in Toronto

The Central Committee of the Communist Party of Canada met over the Nov. 27-28 weekend in Toronto.

The Political Report adopted by the meeting is now online at www.comunist-party.ca. The report stresses "the continuing global capitalist crisis which, now into its third year, shows no signs of abating. The impact of the crisis, the measures taken by the ruling class to overcome the crisis on their terms and in their interests, and the developing fightback of the working class and its allies together constitute the primary dynamic driving social and political developments at every level across Canada and internationally..."

Presented by CPC leader Miguel Figueroa, the report says the "second stage" of the economic crisis is "likely to be far more protracted and painful than its opening round." The deepening capitalist offensive includes more mass layoffs, wage cuts, the expansion of "two-tier" wage structures to increase exploitation, the gutting of pension plans, and the overall decline of working class incomes. Across the capitalist world, including in Canada, right-

wing and even social democratic governments are pushing ahead with cuts in public services, privatization, and increased user fees for essential services.

But at the same time, "the organized sections of the working class in a number of countries are mounting heroic resistance... most notably in Greece, France, Portugal, and now in Ireland."

The report looks at important struggles during 2010, such as the massive rally last June against the G20 Summit in Toronto. But the fightback movement, it notes, is hampered by the positions of some sections of the trade union leadership: "This is starkly apparent when unprincipled retreats and concessionary agreements are signed, leaving the workers feeling betrayed and abandoned by leadership, or when right-wing elements attempt to sabotage fightbacks either at the workplace or in political action."

The growing and dangerous phenomenon of right-wing populism in several provinces is examined in the report, such as the recent election of Rob Ford as mayor of Toronto.

A federal election is very likely

during 2011, the report says. The Communist Party's participation in the campaign will include nominating 20-25 candidates across the country, aimed at defeating the Harper Tories, blocking a majority for the big business parties, and building support for the "People's Alternative" advanced by the Communist Party.

The CC adopted a number of special resolutions, calling for solidarity with the locked-out steelworkers in Hamilton; immediate withdrawal of the Canadian military mission in Afghanistan; real action on climate change; and defeat of Bill C-49, the Tory legislation which criminalizes refugees.

Another resolution outlined steps to celebrate the 90th anniversary of the Communist Party of Canada throughout 2011. Details of these activities will be reported in upcoming issues of PV.

CC members took part in a Saturday evening social, held together with the Young Communist League, which raised funds to help send delegates to the World Festival of Youth and Students in South Africa. ●

Tshwane Declaration....

continued from page 7

food sovereignty and security, sustainable livelihoods, the defence of bio-diversity, the protection of national resources, and the struggle against agro-industrial monopolies and their local agents. In these struggles, the legitimate and progressive aspirations of indigenous peoples in defence of their cultures, languages and environments have an important role.

Communists in the anti-imperialist front for peace, environmental sustainability, progress and socialism

Imperialism's crisis and counter-offensive are leading to the broadening and diversification of the forces that objectively assume a patriotic and anti-imperialist stand. Everywhere, in our diverse national realities, Communists have a responsibility to broaden and strengthen the anti-imperialist political and social front, the struggles for peace, environmental sustainability, progress, and integrate them in the fight for socialism. The independent role of Communists and the strengthening of the Communist and Workers' parties is of vital importance to ensure a consistent anti-imperialist perspective of broader movements and fronts.

Special attention must be given to the existing relation between various resistance struggles and the necessary ideological offensive for the visibility of the alternative of socialism and to the defence and development of scientific socialism. The ideological struggle of the communist movement is of vital importance in order to repulse contemporary anti-communism, to confront bourgeois ideology, anti-scientific theories and opportunist currents

which reject the class struggle, and combat the role of social democratic forces that defend and implement anti-people and pro-imperialist policies by supporting the strategy of capital. We have a key role to play in drawing the critical links in theory and above all in practice between different arenas of popular struggle in the development of internationalist class solidarity.

We are living in an historic epoch in which the transition from capitalism to socialism has become a civilisational imperative. The all-round crisis of capitalism once more underlines the inseparable nature of the tasks of national liberation and social, national and class emancipation.

In the face of deepening capitalist crisis, the experiences of socialist construction demonstrate the conditions of the superiority of socialism.

The strengthening of the cooperation among Communist and Workers' Parties and the strengthening of the anti-imperialist front, should march side by side.

We, the Communist and Workers' parties meeting in Tshwane, in a situation marked by a massive onslaught against workers and popular forces, but also with many possibilities for the development of the struggle, express our profound solidarity with workers and peoples and their intense struggles, reiterating our determination to act and struggle side by side with working masses, youth, women, and all popular sectors that are victims of capitalist exploitation and oppression.

We reaffirm our appeal to the widest range of popular forces to join us in a common struggle for socialism which is the only alternative for the future of humankind.

We point to the following main axes for the development of our joint and convergent actions:

1. With the capitalist crisis deepening, we will focus on the development of workers' and peoples' struggles for labour and social rights, the strengthening of the trade-union movement and its class orientation; the promotion of the social alliance with peasants and the other popular strata. Particular attention will be given to the problems of women and youth who are among the first victims of the capitalist crisis.

2. In the face of the all-round imperialist aggression and the sharpening of the inter-imperialist rivalries, we will intensify the anti-imperialist struggle for peace, against imperialist wars and occupation, against the dangerous "new" NATO strategy and foreign military bases, and for the abolition of all nuclear weapons. We will extend active internationalist solidarity with all people and movements facing and resisting oppression, imperialist threats and aggression.

3. We will resolutely fight anticommunism, anti-communist laws, measures and persecution; to demand the legalisation of CPs where outlawed. We will defend the history of the communist movement, the contribution of socialism in advancing human civilisation.

4. We affirm our solidarity with the forces and peoples engaged in and striving for socialist construction. We reaffirm our solidarity with the Cuban people and their socialist revolution, and we will continue vigorously to oppose the blockade and to support the international campaign for the release of the Cuban Five.

5. We will contribute, within the specific context of our national realities, to the reinforcement of international anti-imperialist mass organizations like WFTU, WPC, WFDY, WIDF. We particularly welcome and salute the 17th World Festival of Youth and Students to be held in South Africa from 13th-21st December 2010. ●

What's Left

Surrey, BC

Indo Canadian Workers' Association will release its 2011 calendar in partnership with Radio India, dedicated to Comrade Darshan Singh Canadian, shot dead by terrorists in Punjab in 1986. The unveiling ceremony of the calendar will be 1-5 pm, Sunday, Dec. 19, Strawberry Hill Public Library, 7399-122 St.

Vancouver, BC

Haiti's Humanitarian Crisis One Year Later, Friday, Jan. 14, 7 pm, SFU Harbour Centre, 515 W. Hastings, panel discussion and video, featuring Dr. Luma Maxo (Partners In Health), Kaye Kerlande (Hearts, Hands & Minds for Haiti), David Putt (Water for the World), Fatou Jah (UBC Help Hear Haiti). Organized by Haiti Solidarity BC, 778-858-5179.

"Seeing Red," public forum on past and present state repression in Canada, with author Daniel Francis and Micheal Vonn of the B.C. Civil Liberties Association, intro by PV Editor Kimball Cariou, Thur, Jan. 20, 7:30 pm, Room 1800, SFU Harbour Centre, 515 W. Hastings (note date change

since previous issue.) Sponsored by People's Voice and People's Co-op Bookstore, ph. 604-255-2041 for more info.

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

Winnipeg, MB

Marxism course, classes begin early 2011. Pre-register with the Communist Party, 586-7824 or cpc-mb@mts.net.

Toronto, ON

Annual Jose Marti Dinner and Dance, Jan. 29, 2011, 7 pm, Bloor Street United, 300 Bloor St. West. Enjoy the live Cuban band "Los Clave Kings". Advance prepaid tickets \$30, or \$40 at the door. Sponsored by Canadian-Cuban Friendship Association Toronto.

Montreal, QC

Palestinians And Jews United, vigil against the occupation, every Friday at noon, Sainte-Catherine and Union (near Metro McGill).

People's Voice deadlines:

JANUARY 16-31 issue: Thursday, Jan. 6

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

Rebel Youth #11

The latest issue of Rebel Youth magazine is now available at offices of the Communist Party & Young Communist League. See our next issue for a review.

B.C. NDP divisions....

continued from page 3

empty, so the party would make no promises to restore public services. It appears that some MLAs began to wonder how they could encourage their own members to remain active.

The speech by Carole James at the BC Fed on Nov. 30 highlighted the NDP's problem. The leader's entrance was heavily orchestrated, a popular Black Eyed Peas tune blaring to get delegates on their feet. But her speech was a flop. After stressing the burdens imposed by the Liberals on poor people and workers, James promised that a new NDP government would raise the minimum wage to \$10/hour. That got a round of applause, although some Liberals are floating similar promises. From there, she offered minor promises to address problems such as enforcement of Labour Standards.

But James made no promise to restore the funding cuts, or to reverse the tax cuts to the rich. There was no criticism of big business - just a pledge that labour and business would both be invited to the table. By the time James finished, barely half of the

1,000 delegates stood to applaud. The next day, Vancouver-Mount Pleasant MLA Jenny Kwan issued her call for a leadership convention.

Still, there is no simple "left-right" split in the NDP. The "baker's dozen" of MLAs who called for James to step down include some who want a more progressive set of policies, but also others with a more conservative philosophy.

The treatment of former peace activist Mable Elmore may hint at another problem. When Elmore won the NDP nomination in Vancouver Kensington early in 2009, she was ordered by the party brass to issue a public apology for her role in campaigns to oppose the Israeli oppression of the Palestinian people. This episode is widely seen as one example of rigid control over NDP candidates and MLAs.

Will the B.C. NDP elect a new leader who can give voice to the demands by working people for real progressive change? That remains to be seen, but the party's historic trajectory has usually been a drift to the centre-right. So far, the only party which can be counted on to fight for such policies is the Communist Party of BC, which will consider its electoral strategy at a provincial committee meeting in January. ●

Strange outcome of Cancun climate conference

By Martin Khor

The United Nations' Cancun climate conference, which adopted a text early on 11 December had a strange outcome. It was acclaimed by many for reviving the spirit of multilateralism in the climate change system, because another collapse after the disastrous failure of the Copenhagen talks a year ago would have knocked another hole into the reputation of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Convention (UNFCCC).

Most delegations congratulated one another, for agreeing to a document in Cancun. But this Cancun text has also been accused of falling far short, or even going backwards, in controlling the Greenhouse Gas emissions that cause climate change.

The Cancun conference suffered an early blow from Japan's announcement that it would never agree to making another commitment under the Kyoto Protocol (the first commitment period for emission reductions ends in 2012 and the deadline for the second commitment period to be agreed was 2009 in Copenhagen).

The conference never recovered from that blow. The final text failed to ensure the survival of the protocol, though it sets some terms of reference for continuing the talks on the second commitment period next year.

The Cancun meeting in fact made it more likely for the developed countries to shift from the Kyoto Protocol and its binding regime of emission reduction commitments, to a voluntary system in which each country only makes pledges on how much it will reduce its emissions.

The Cancun text also recognised the emission reduction targets that developed countries listed under the Copenhagen Accord. But these are overall such poor targets that many scientific reports warn that the developed countries by 2020 may decrease their emissions by only a little or even increase their level. The world is on track for temperature rise of 3 to 5 degrees, which would lead to a catastrophe.

But even as it prepared the ground for the developed countries' "great escape" from their commitments, the Cancun text

introduced new disciplines for developing countries. They are now obliged to put forward their plans and targets for climate mitigation, which are to be compiled with in a document and later in registries.



It is a first step in a plan by developed countries... to get developing countries to put their mitigation targets as commitments in national schedules, similar to the tariff schedules in the World Trade Organisation... Many developing-country officials were increasingly worried in Cancun about how they are going to implement these new obligations, as a lot of people, skills and money will be needed.

In fact the developing countries made a lot of concessions and

sacrifices in Cancun, while the developed countries managed to have their obligations reduced or downgraded.

Cancun may be remembered in future as the place where the UNFCCC's climate regime was changed significantly, with developed countries being treated more and more leniently, reaching a level like that developing countries, while the developing countries are asked to increase their obligations to be more and more like developed countries.

The ground is being prepared for such a new system, which could then replace the Kyoto Protocol. Cancun was a milestone in facilitating this.

The Cancun conference also agreed on establishing a new global climate fund to help finance the mitigation and adaptation. A committee will be set up to design various aspects of the fund. No decision was taken on how much money the fund will get.

A technology mechanism was also set up under the UNFCCC, with a policy-making committee, and a centre. However, the Cancun text avoided any mention of intellectual

property rights (IPR), which have an influence over developing countries' access to and cost of technology. The United States had insisted that there be no mention whatsoever of the IPR issue, and it got its way in Cancun.

The Cancun conference was also marked by a questionable method of work, quite similar to the WTO but not used in the United Nations, in which the host country, Mexico, organised meetings in small groups led by itself and a few Ministers which it selected, who discussed texts on the various issues.

The final document was produced not through the usual process of negotiations among delegations, but compiled by the Mexicans as the Chair of the meeting, and given to the delegates for only a few hours to consider, on a take it or leave it basis (no amendments are allowed).

At the final plenary, Bolivia rejected the text, and its Ambassador, Pablo Solon, made a statement giving detailed reasons why. Despite there not being consensus on the text, the Mexican foreign minister declared the text was adopted, to which Bolivia

lodged an objection...

The importation of WTO-style methods may in the immediate period lead to the "efficiency" of producing an outcome, but also carries the risk of conferences collapsing in disarray (as has happened in several WTO ministerial meetings) and in biases in the text, that usually have been in favour of developed countries.

When the dust settles after the Cancun conference, a careful analysis will find that its text may have given the multilateral climate system a shot in the arm and positive feelings among most participants because there was something to take home, but that it also failed to save the planet from climate change and helped pass the burden onto developing countries.

From this low base level, much work needs to be done in 2011 to save the world from climate change, and to re-orientate the international system of cooperation to address the climate crisis.

(Khor is the Executive Director of the South Centre. This article was first published in *The Star, Malaysia* on Dec. 13, 2010) •

"We are not here to turn nature into a commodity"

Selected quotes from the Dec. 9 speech and news conference by Bolivian President Morales at the COP16 UN Climate Change negotiations in Cancun, Mexico:

"Our aim here is to look at how to cool down planet Earth. Our planet has a high temperature, it is wounded, and we are witnessing the convulsions of planet Earth. We have an enormous responsibility toward life and humanity... I call on leaders to take responsibility, and make history by responding to the demands of the people."

The Bolivian experience of climate change

"It causes me a lot of a pain as President to listen to my brothers and sisters talking about permanent droughts... Without water, there is

no production, and without production we lack food. It may be easy for us here in an air-conditioned room to continue with the policies of destruction of Mother Earth. We need instead to put ourselves in the shoes of families in Bolivia and worldwide that lack water and food and suffer misery and hunger. I feel that many delegates here have no idea what it is like to be a victim of climate change."

Tackle the causes

"We talk about the effects and not the causes of the multiple crises we face: the climate crisis, the food crisis, the energy crisis. The climate crisis is one of the crises of capitalism. If we address these crises, we are being responsible to our children, grandchildren and future generations."

On the Kyoto Protocol

"If, from here, we send the Kyoto Protocol to the rubbish bin we are



Evo Morales at the climate change talks in Cancun.

responsible for ecocide and genocide because we will be sending many people to their deaths."

Imagine what our planet would look like

"According to the proposals from some powers, they are happy to put forward measures that would lead to an increase of 2 degrees Celsius and some think even of increases to 4 degrees. Imagine what our planet would look like with an increase in temperature of 2 degrees or 4 degrees, given that at 0.8 degrees we already have serious problems in the world."

On the rights of nature

"In past decades, the United Nations approved human rights, then civil rights, economic and political rights, and finally a few years ago indigenous rights. In this new century, it is time to debate and discuss rights of Mother Earth. These include the right to regenerate biocapacity, the right to life without contamination."

"Carbon markets"

"We came to Cancun to save nature, forests, planet Earth. We are not here to convert nature into a commodity. We have not come here to revitalize capitalism with carbon markets."

A global referendum?

"I am convinced that if presidents take on their responsibility, not to certain powers such as multinational companies, but instead to peoples and social movements, we can advance. Why don't states here go to the Peoples' Summit in Cancun, and listen to the concrete proposals of social movements who come here in representation of the victims of global warming? Why don't we agree to a global referendum; take the historic decision of practising global democracy, submitting ourselves to the demands of the people struggling against climate change and for life? If governments don't act, it will be the people who will force their governments to act."

"Planet or Death"

"We are familiar with the slogan 'Country or Death,' but it is better now to talk about 'Planet or Death.' To try and look for an intermediary solution is to trick people. It is the major powers here that need to abandon their arrogance in the face of the peoples of the world. My experience as a social movement leader has been one of frequent attempts to isolate me by the major powers - something I am proud to do - but I will never isolate myself from the peoples." •

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