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people's VOICE

Intervention looms in Mali

See page 9

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Idle No More!

*...turning up
the heat on
Harper Tory
government*



December 10 - Students in Vancouver organized one of the first Idle No More rallies, marching from the Native Education Centre to the Art Gallery. (Photo: K. Cariou)

see reports and commentary on pages 6 & 7



People's Voice
photo: Ed Bil

"Ontario Teachers are on the front line of defending labour rights"

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Nadeau-Dubois convicted

In an appalling attack on free speech and democratic liberties, Quebec student leader Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois has been convicted on a contempt of court charge for urging respect for picket lines.

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Rape double standard?

The gang rape and murder of a student stirs a powerful backlash across India, and raises questions about social double standards.

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Rideau Canal workers

180 years after carving the Rideau Canal out of bush and swamps, the immigrant labourers who built this National Historic Site will be recognized for their work and sacrifices.

Ontario Government must resign: let electors kill Bill 115

Statement from the Communist Party (Ontario), Jan. 7, 2013

The Communist Party (Ontario) has called on the government to resign following

Education Minister Laurel Broten's action this week. The Education Minister has unilaterally and illegally suspended free collective bargaining between elected Public School Boards and

teachers and educational workers' unions across the province. She has imposed wages and conditions of work modeled on the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA) deal - a deal that is currently being appealed in the courts by OECTA locals whose members were not allowed to vote on the deals agreed to by OECTA officials.

CPC (Ontario) leader Elizabeth Rowley said: "With Parliament suspended by the Premier, the Minister and government have no right to take such sweeping, arbitrary and anti-democratic action affecting fundamental rights and freedoms of workers in this province, affecting the rights of public school supporters and elected School Boards to local autonomy and democracy, and severely and negatively impacting

over one million public school students, their parents and families.

"The Premier must reverse Broten's actions, call an election, and let the people decide.

"The government has misread public opinion on Bill 115 from the start. The by-election defeat in Kitchener Waterloo was proof that the government was way off in right field with this Bill. The public does not support cuts to public education, attacks on labour and democratic rights, and cuts to wages and working conditions.

"By adopting the austerity agenda of the 1% and driving it into the 99%, the Liberals hope to regain the support of Big Business which has shifted to the Tories. The Liberals' only hope is to shift away from the right, by repealing

Bill 115, by restoring free collective bargaining, and by adequately funding public education, healthcare, cities, social programs, and public services in Ontario.

"The Communist Party will join thousands of protestors at the Liberal Party Convention January 26th to demand exactly this agenda, and the doubling of the corporate income tax rate and restoration of the capital tax as the best and fairest way to pay for it.

"Further, we reiterate our long-held demand - now supported by a majority of Ontario electors - for the phasing out of Catholic school funding, and for the establishment of a single, secular, and quality public school system, open to all regardless of religion, gender, sexual orientation, or nationality." ●

DEMAND GOOD JOBS, PUBLIC SERVICES, WORKERS' RIGHTS & THE RECALL OF THE ONTARIO LEGISLATURE

RIGHTS **JOBS**

COMMUNITY **DEMOCRACY**

SERVICES

ALLAN GARDENS TORONTO 1:00 pm Saturday Jan. 26, 2013

RALLY FOR RIGHTS & DEMOCRACY

PROTEST AT THE ONTARIO LIBERAL CONVENTION

ONTARIO FEDERATION OF LABOUR **WWW.OFL.CA**

SPEAKING FRANKLY

The attack on teachers is an attack on all working people

PV Ontario Bureau

If the basis of all real wealth - the real economy, past, present and future - is the application of human labour-power to material from the natural environment, why has the most draconian use of state power been summoned up as a weapon against the Ontario Teachers Unions? Most people would argue that teachers do not produce wealth. In fact, in the anti-teacher propaganda blasted by the capitalist media and whispered in a thousand dark corridors, this slander against an honoured profession is perpetrated: why should people who are essentially a drain on the public purse be compensated so generously?

What is it about this area of collective bargaining that would cause the ruling elite to instruct their political lackeys to suspend parliament, to violate constitutional law and go to direct one party rule?

The capitalist state has undemocratically dispensed with parliament in Ontario, to launch an unhindered attack on the teachers' unions and their ability to exercise collective bargaining. The instrument of direct class intervention is the Ontario Liberal Party, with the Tories trying to be even more hawkish, and the NDP sitting on their hands.

Now the silk gloves have been shed for the naked fist, dispelling any illusion that these three parties protect parliamentary democracy. If the NDP had called for massive public resistance, they could have done a service to all working people, especially if the trade union leaders who belong to the NDP had organized labour unity across the board with the Teachers.

Any Marxist will see immediately the relationship of teachers to the real economy. Their vital role to the ability of capitalism to create and expropriate surplus value is the reproduction of labour-

power, the primary human ingredient in the creation of wealth. The scientific and technological revolution demands an ever higher level of education and training for working people. This is about productivity and the rate of exploitation. This is about the uncountable wealth of the one percent.

No educated person (the product of teachers) would vulgarize the value of the teaching profession as only an instrument to maintain and expand the parasite role of the one percent. But we live in a class society. The historic service of teachers against the mental pauperization of

awareness of the Occupy movement, from the mental hunger and sense of wrongness and violation that is surging through our youth and through the indigenous people.

The viciousness of the attempted destruction of collective bargaining in Ontario can only be understood clearly with a world view of the antagonism between the capitalist class in the advanced stages of imperialist decline, and the possessors of labour-power, the global working class. Teachers worldwide develop a consciousness that makes their students much more than units of labour power, an awareness of self that will become an awareness of class, an awareness that labour power is also the essential ingredient in building the shared wealth of a non-exploiting socialist alternative.

The crisis of capitalism will continue to destroy whatever stands in the way of its drive to buy more life for an obsolete and historically unnecessary system, at war with its own productive forces. In the crosshairs everywhere are those who teach our children and youth, those who preserve and pass on knowledge. The capitalists cannot dispense with teachers, but they seek to break their relative independence and their dedication to humanity. They want to turn teachers into trainers who prepare our young for more efficient and profitable exploitation. This struggle is about much more than sick days, wages or classroom size. These issues might be the field of battle, but the stakes are much higher.

The Ontario Teachers are on the front line of defending labour rights. They will decide on the extent of their resistance, on their tactics, where to attack and where to retreat. The Communist Party calls for one hundred percent support, now and in the future. ●



PV photo: Ed Bil

capitalism, their resistance to the increasing demand to produce literate industrial and social drones, instead of people armed with a sense of themselves and a demand for a better future, is a direct threat to the one percent.

It is also no accident that generations of women have dominated and transformed the profession. Witness the power of their efforts embodied in the courage and unity of the Quebec student's strike. Witness the threat to the capitalist state when student activists are a major part in the defeat of a governing political party. You cannot separate teachers from students, from the

Communist Party issues call for 37th Central Convention

Meeting shortly before the holiday season, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Canada issued a call for the party's 37th Central Convention, to take place April 5-7 in Toronto. Founded in 1921, the CPC currently holds central conventions every three years; between conventions, the Central Committee functions as the party's highest body.

Over the next three months, party clubs and committees will hold intensive discussions on the main political resolution for the 37th Convention, and make nominations for the incoming leadership positions. Delegates to the convention will be elected over several weekends in March, at meetings held in several provinces. Those meetings will also consider proposed amendments to the draft political resolution, a process which will be finalized in Toronto.

The CC's Dec. 15-16 gathering spent much of its time analysing the main trends in the global crisis of the capitalist economies, the dangerous tendency towards new imperialist wars, and growth of fascist movements which are part of the ruling class strategy to smash working class resistance against neoliberal policies. As the CC members noted in the discussions, that resistance has taken several notable forms in Canada, especially the Occupy movement which began in the fall of 2011, last year's massive and successful Quebec student strike, and most recently the Idle No More upsurge sparked by Indigenous grassroots organizers.

The draft political resolution puts these militant actions in the context of the wider political fightback against the corporate agenda in Canada. The resolution argues that the main shortcoming of this fightback in recent years has been the reluctance by the top leadership of the Canadian Labour Congress to take the initiative to build a broad, united popular resistance struggle, in contrast to many countries where trade unions have held huge general strikes and protests.

The most important way to help overcome this weakness, the resolution says, is to strengthen the Communist Party, which has historically played a key role in helping to move the labour movement towards militant strategies.

The draft political resolution and other documents for the CPC's 37th Central Convention will be posted on the party's website, www.communist-party.ca. ●

Legal groups respond to Oppal Report

PV Vancouver Bureau

Almost a year after it was originally expected to go to the Attorney General, the final 1500-page report of the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry, "Forsaken", was released on Dec. 17, 2012.

Three progressive legal organizations - the BC Civil Liberties Association, Pivot Legal Society, and West Coast LEAF (Legal and Education Fund) - had warned that the inquiry was built on a series of profound mistakes, including the appointment of a commissioner, Wally Oppal, who had stated he saw no need for an inquiry. They noted the lack of community consultation on the terms of reference, and the failure to fund groups granted participant status at the inquiry. These errors, they warned, undermined the ability of the Inquiry to bring forward voices that have been silenced, rebuild relationships, and promote trust and healing. However, they also hoped that the evidence of the families,

independent legal council for the Vancouver Downtown Eastside, and the police themselves would lead to useful recommendations for change.

"Forsaken" includes 63 recommendations on equality, community engagement, collaboration and accountability. Commissioner Oppal also urged the BC government to commit to two immediate measures: funding for existing centres that provide emergency services to women engaged in the sex trade, to enable them to remain open 24 hours per day; and an enhanced public transit system to provide a safer travel option connecting communities along Highway 16 where many women have been killed or gone missing. The province has already allocated \$750,000 the first measure, far less than it spent on lawyers for the commission.

As the three groups noted, since this Inquiry focused on the internal workings of the police and criminal justice system, "the vast majority of the recommendations are focused on technical questions

related to information sharing and other bureaucratic protocols of the criminal justice system. In spite of this... buried in the report are a number of important recommendations that could make our justice system significantly more responsive to the needs and realities of vulnerable women, as well as accountable to marginalized communities and to the public as a whole."

These include equality-promoting measures which have "the potential to address the biases within the criminal justice system (which sadly were replicated in the Inquiry process), whereby those women most vulnerable to violence are not considered credible as witnesses as a result of those precise vulnerabilities."

For example, Oppal urges steps to counter the bias of police, lawyers and judges against people who are affected by drug and alcohol use, and against women in the survival sex trade. His report calls for changes to better allow vulnerable witnesses, including those who have been sexually

assaulted or suffer from addictions, to take part in court processes. Another important recommendation urges that the RCMP should be included in the provincial police complaints process.

But the groups say that these and other equality-promoting measures are recommended by the Commission, it is unclear how these changes will be implemented and enforced.

Some of Oppal's recommendations go in a negative direction, such as steps to promote "informal" methods of police discipline, particularly in marginalized communities. As the groups point out, "stressing alternative discipline when there has still not been a single police officer who has ever been disciplined for failing to investigate the missing and murdered women in this province is an insult to all involved."

In this context, it is shocking that Oppal's only finding of misconduct was levied against Cameron Ward, "the lawyer given the herculean task of representing all of the families in the face of dozens of police and government lawyers."

Perhaps most significant, as the legal community and other progressive movements have stressed, the Oppal Inquiry had no mandate to address the systemic

racism behind the wave of murders and disappearances of Aboriginal women in British Columbia.

How different would the situation have been if unemployment among Aboriginal people wasn't in the fifty percent range, or if society provided a guaranteed livable income and decent low-cost housing for all? Such policies could have allowed many of the murdered women a much wider range of options to survive, and some hope for their futures.

Instead, Oppal's exclusive focus was on the criminal justice system. It may be that his report will encourage police forces to take quicker action when Aboriginal women are attacked or go missing. From this perspective, perhaps the most significant outcome of this Inquiry is the determination by Aboriginal peoples and their allies that violence against women must be challenged in a more direct way than in the past.

As seen by the massive Aboriginal opposition to the Enbridge pipeline project, and the upsurge around the Idle No More movement, the struggle against systemic racism and colonialism in Canada is on the rise. This will inevitably include much sharper scrutiny of racist actions by police forces, and that represents real progress. ●

Corporate tax breaks are not the answer to hunger in Canada

This opinion piece by Elaine Power, Graham Riches and Valerie Tarasuk first appeared in the Toronto Star on Dec. 19.

Could a corporate tax break help feed hungry Canadians? Ottawa is now considering a proposal by Food Banks Canada allowing food businesses donating surplus food to food banks to write off up to twice the cost of producing the food. It sounds like a win-win-win proposal.

Given that food banks never have enough food to meet the needs of hungry Canadians, why not offer such an incentive? Corporations would win because they get more reward for the food they donate. Food banks would win by having more food available to distribute to hungry Canadians. And food bank users, 38 per cent of whom are children, would win because they would be less hungry. At least that is how it appears.

The first problem is that it gives tacit government approval to a charitable "solution" to hunger. But food banks are not a solution to this problem. While they may alleviate immediate hunger for the people they serve, research studies have clearly shown that most Canadians who use food banks still go hungry despite this assistance. That is because the occasional receipt of charitable food assistance does nothing to change deep-rooted problems of poverty that cause people to need food assistance in the first place.

Moreover, survey data also show that about three-quarters of those who are hungry never even go to a food bank. Though millions of pounds of food are donated every year and hundreds of thousands of hours are volunteered, these efforts don't begin to respond to the needs of

the 2.5 million Canadians who were food insecure in 2011.

Food banks are not a solution. Perversely, such food charity allows governments to look the other way and ignore the hunger problem.

The second problem is that tax breaks undermine government's fiscal ability to actually address the problem in any serious way. Taxes provide the revenue that run social programs, the programs that could



effectively reduce the poverty that is the real cause of hunger in this country. The Harper government has already cut corporate tax rates from 22.1 per cent in 2007-08 to 15 per cent today. Why do food corporations need another tax break? They already get a tax break when they donate food, the same tax break they would get for dumping surplus food in the landfill. Food Banks Canada argues that an additional incentive would help ensure the food goes to charity rather than the garbage. They estimate that their proposal would cost the government up to \$15 million per year.

At this time of festive giving, we don't want to play Scrooge by denying hungry Canadians access to food. To the contrary, all Canadians have a right to physical and economic access to safe, sufficient and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences. The federal government made this

commitment in 1976 when it ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. By so doing, it agreed to comply with its obligations under international law. We need to ensure the human right to adequate food and nutrition for all Canadians - especially the most vulnerable.

Over the past 30 years, the charitable food bank model has failed to effectively respond to domestic hunger. That's because of one inescapable fact. Hunger is deeply rooted in widespread poverty.

Hunger has significant health consequences in compromised nutrition, the increased risk of chronic disease and the stress of being unable to adequately feed oneself and one's family. Canadians hold a collective value in ensuring that no one in our midst goes hungry. That is why we have food banks in the first place and why they have enjoyed so much popular support. But it is time to hold governments accountable to ensure this collective value and legal obligation.

More surplus food will not solve Canada's hunger problem. What we need is a rebuilt social safety net that ensures income security. We need jobs that provide a living wage and adequate income supports so that all Canadians can purchase the foods of their choice and live in dignity - not dependency. A tax incentive for food corporations will further entrench a response to hunger that is demonstrably ineffective.

(Elaine Power is Associate Professor, School of Kinesiology & Health Studies, Queen's University. Graham Riches is Professor Emeritus, UBC School of Social Work. Valerie Tarasuk is Professor, Department of Nutritional Sciences, University of Toronto.) ●



Unity and the Fight for a People's Alternative!



Miguel Figueroa, leader of the Communist Party of Canada, is touring the country to speak with working people about the fight against austerity policies. He is presenting the Communist proposal for a People's Alternative to check corporate power and put people's needs before profit!

Brampton, ON

Sun., Jan. 13, 2:30 pm - Brampton Soccer Centre, Room #1, 1495 Sandalwood Parkway East
Info: Harinder, 647-818-6880

St. Catharines, ON

Wed., January 16, 7 pm
St. Catharines Public Library, Mills Rm., 54 Church St.
Info: Saleh, 289-995-0017 or Salehw@yahoo.com

Toronto, ON

(with Johan Boyden, Young Communist League)
Sunday, January 20, 2 pm
OISE, Room 5-250, 252 Bloor Street West
Info: 416-469-2446

Guelph, ON

Tuesday, January 22, 5:30 pm
University Centre, Room 442, U. of Guelph
Info: Drew Garvie, 519-767-8411

Ottawa, ON

Sun., Jan. 29, 7 pm - McNabb Community Centre, 180 Percy St. (at Gladstone), Community Room
Info: Stuart Ryan, 613-232-7108

EDITORIALS

Canada: prison house of nations

The Idle No More movement has done all working people an enormous favour, by mobilizing popular anger against the pro-corporate Harper Tories. The slumbering leadership of the Canadian Labour Congress could certainly learn how to resist the neoliberal offensive, just by following the examples of Idle No More, the Quebec students, the Occupy movement, and opponents of the tar sands pipelines.

These struggles have all drawn attention to economic inequality, social justice, and environmental devastation. But Idle No More has gone further, tearing down the curtain hiding an ugly sight: the festering issue of national inequality within the Canadian state.

For generations, the ruling class has painted Canada as a happily unified country where everyone gets a fair shake, including immigrants and Aboriginal peoples. From time to time, an Oka crisis or a sovereignty referendum in Quebec temporarily dispels this Potemkin village scenario, then it's back to business as usual.

Not today. When Stephen Harper meets with Assembly of First Nations leaders on Jan. 11 (under intense pressure from Idle No More and the courageous Chief Theresa Spencer) he will try to buy some time with empty promises of more funding. But that simply won't cut it any longer. The brilliant achievement of the grassroots Idle No More has been to make it absolutely clear that Canada was built on the theft of Aboriginal lands and resources, and that only genuine equality of all the nations in this country, large and small, can begin to overcome this genocidal policy.

No nation can liberate itself while holding another in chains. Canada is literally a prison house of nations, and the prison doors must be smashed. A unified People's Coalition against the Harper Tories is needed to accomplish this goal, and the moment to build such unity has arrived, thanks to Idle No More.

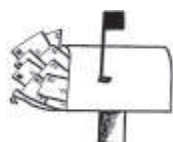
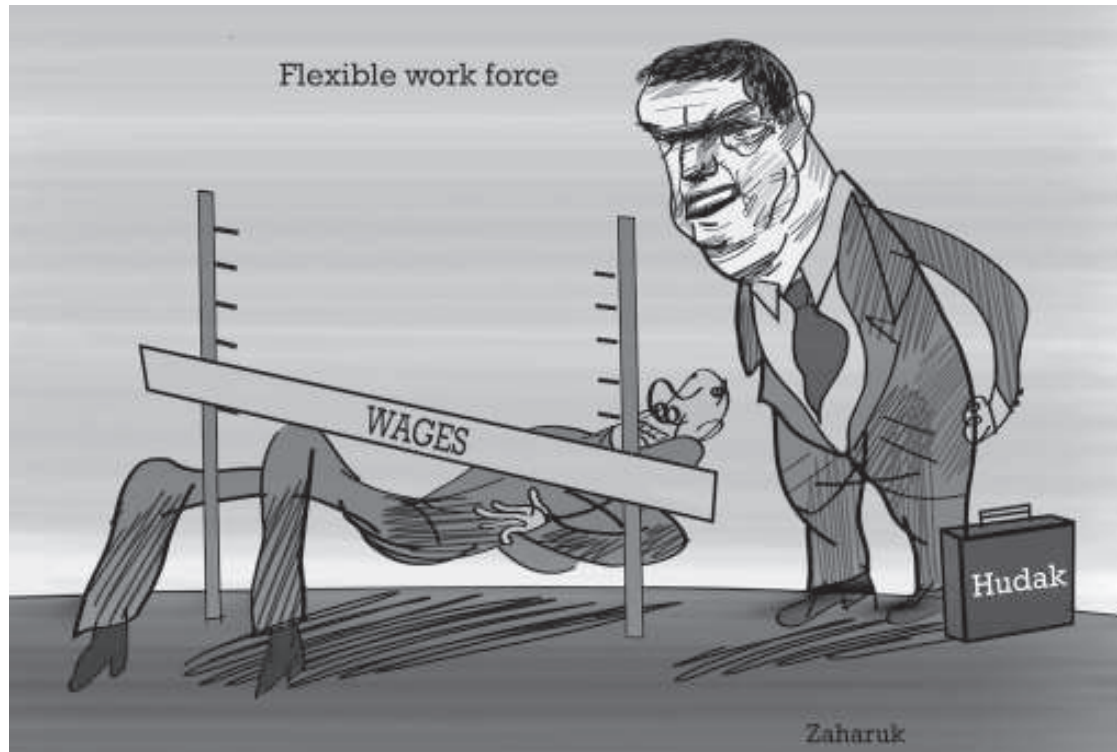
Leaving a mess in Afghanistan

For years, Canadians have been bombarded with propaganda about the humanitarian accomplishments of our military mission in Afghanistan. But somehow, we don't expect Christy Blatchford to join the troops for a follow-up report on the mess Canada leaves behind. That tougher job has been left to journalists who understand that their job is to report news, not to lick Stephen Harper's expensive footwear.

As the New Year begins, we recall one genuine expose of the grim realities, as reported recently by the *Toronto Star's* Paul Watson. Writing from Baqi Tanah just across the Pakistan border, Watson reminds readers that Canada hoped to win the hearts and minds of local villagers by building a new school just two years ago. Village elder Haji Abdul Raziq named the school after himself and took credit for the project. Now the school is falling apart because Canada did not provide enough money for maintenance: "the concrete walls are cracked and crumbling around the flimsy wooden door frames... There isn't a stick of furniture in any of the classrooms, and a single, metal-framed blackboard sits propped against the front wall, the rough concrete floor covered in a layer of dirt that blows in through cracked windows."

As Watson writes, Afghanistan was Canada's largest recipient of development aid until Ottawa sharply cut back funding last year. Not only schools and clinics are affected. He points to the Dahla Dam and irrigation system, which still doesn't supply enough water to desert farms crucial to Kandahar's economy. These and other "signature projects" were built to score media points, not to provide long-term benefits to Afghanistan's impoverished rural areas.

Over the past decade, taxpayers have wasted over \$20 billion to wage war in Afghanistan, and nearly \$2 billion on such "aid" scams. Shameful? That doesn't begin to describe the nauseating truth about Canada's murderous role in the Afghan debacle.



Letters to the Editor

First Nations and Prime Minister Harper

There is vital historical background related to the present First Nation militant confrontation over legislative actions of the Harper government. Firstly, the term "aboriginal" was never the choice of the indigenous peoples who live here. That came from the government bureaucracy; it was lifted from Australia. First Nations is more appropriate, since when the treaties were signed, under the aegis of the Royal Proclamation of 1763, it was understood that both parties had "nation status." Sections 25 and 35 of the Canadian Constitution, repatriated in 1982, clearly recognize the status of First Nation peoples and their treaties with the Crown.

There is a prevalent attitude in Canada that says the key reason why First Nations are at odds with the federal government is over the Indian Act. Furthermore, there is a belief that the Indian Act is racist and negatively impacts the people. "Indian status" as described in the Constitution and the Act is not a racist concept. The relationship between the indigenous people and the federal government is a "one to one" - "nation to nation" arrangement. Erring historians and ill-informed media people have long perpetuated this false racist interpretation.

The First Nations in North America have all been colonized. Immigrants came in wave after wave and sought land for agriculture, forests and minerals for industry. They got what they wanted and, in the process, the indigenous peoples were dispossessed of their resources and became the victims of cultural oppression. It wasn't just because their skin was brown; it was because their social and economic values were vastly different, and strategies were devised to take over more and more of their land and robbing the people of their indigenous languages.

The following quotation demonstrates what the colonization process was aimed to do: "In the year 1920, the Deputy Superintendent-General of the Department, Duncan Campbell Scott, told a Special Committee of

the House of Commons in discussions concerning school and enfranchisement: 'I want to get rid of the Indian problem. Our object is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic and there is no Indian question, and no Indian Department; that is the whole object of this bill (Indian Advancement Act)'."

In 1969, the Trudeau government attempted to unilaterally accomplish over a five-year period the same end in their White Paper on Indian Policy. Intense opposition by the First Nations, with the support of understanding other Canadians, blocked that path. The Harper government has in mind a similar objective, but is using a gradual, definite strategy of legislative manipulation. The effect is to erode First Nation status and the

internationally recognized treaties. When this is done unilaterally, for example through undemocratic omnibus bills, First Nation folk feel threatened and react militantly.

The summary repeal of the Indian Act, as proposed by some in the majority government, would cause absolute chaos. That step has been advocated time and time again in the past. They see the Indian Act as a yoke capable of doing untold damage to the people. The rest of us in Canada live under Municipal Government Acts that regulate land use, elections, taxation systems, provide transportation and policing, etc. Without such legislative mandates, we could not exist.

Accountability for First Nation governments is essential, just as it is for ours. Federal social and economic programmes have been

see FIRST NATIONS, p. 11

Another view of New Union Project

I would like to comment on a recent article from the November 16-30 *People's Voice*, "NUP: A step forward or just another merger," by Sam Hammond.

I found Hammond's commentary on the NUP to be very interesting: with a major contradiction at the centre of the principal argument. While it included a rather blistering (and totally appropriate) critique of the NDP, it failed to analyze/identify the fundamental appropriation of the actual social democratic policies which lies at the heart of the CAW's (and CEP's) approach to political issues and policies.

No magic mass movement is going to force the CAW or the CEP to become class struggle centres. They need a basic transformation that perhaps could come from a combination of socialists working on the outside and inside; work with the activist core and rank and file levels; and a change of leadership to allow this process to potentially happen. Without any real critique of what has been occurring within these organizations, communists (and I am including all of us) simply

sound like we are only attacking the support for the electoral work of the NDP, rather than calling for a different set of policies, approaches and practises that would necessary for change.

Herman Rosenfeld, Toronto

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LETTERS

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

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Pitting taxpayers against pensioners

By Jean Kenyon

In cities across Ontario an alarm is being raised in the weekly local papers. The cost of municipal employee pensions is growing out of control, we are told. The demographic time bomb is ticking, as more and more retirees live to a ripe old age. Taxpayers can't afford a defined-benefit pension plan any more! Cities will be bankrupted! The sky is falling!

In December a Waterloo city councillor decided to put these ideas to a balanced discussion. She organized a public forum with speakers from CUPE, the right-wing group Fair Pensions for All, and OMERS - the Ontario Municipal Employees Retirement System.

The right-wingers had their say first. A local man known for heading up a taxpayers' committee said defined-benefit plans are "flawed" and are leading to problems "everywhere in the world".

Then Bill Tufts of Fair Pensions for All really started working the crowd. The OMERS plan has a \$10 billion deficit and it's being dumped on the municipalities! People are getting 70% of their salary, when they only paid in 15%! And some



of them even live to be 100! At this, a retired teacher shouted from the back of the room, "What are you going to do, shoot them?"

Finally Mike Robinson from OMERS had a chance to explain how the plan is managed. OMERS has assets of \$55 billion, and current pension obligations are paid 70% from return on investments and 30% from current contributions by employees and employers. Two boards keep an eye on actuarial trends, and adjust contributions and benefits to keep

the system stable. Taxpayers aren't on the hook for anything except making the day-to-day contributions to the plan, the same as any employer should do.

Fred Hahn, president of CUPE Ontario, which represents most municipal employees, explained that good pensions are a boon to the whole community. Far greater than the risk of paying taxes to contribute to city staff pension plans, would be the risk of letting our seniors retire into poverty. Who would pay for affordable

housing for them, and home care and long-term care?

CUPE calls for the Canada Pension Plan to be strengthened for all workers, so that separate pension plans like OMERS would no longer be necessary. Even Canada's finance minister Jim Flaherty - no friend of public pensions - said that the CPP is actuarially sound. So why doesn't he simply double it, as the Canadian Labour Congress calls for?

The problem is that employers don't want to pay payroll taxes, including CPP contributions. So they set up private pension plans - if they set up any at all - and then under-fund them. We all witnessed the heartbreak of Nortel retirees, including those with disabilities, being shoved to the back of the line when the bankrupt company's assets were divided by the courts.

But when public pension plans build up surpluses, the funds get siphoned off by governments. In December the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that surplus funds, which the Mulroney and Chretien governments took from public service pension funds to pay down the national debt, do not have to be returned to the public

service unions.

In Ontario, Hahn explained, the Harris Tories in 1998 downloaded a lot of costs to municipalities, then "compensated" the cities by declaring a 5-year contribution holiday to the OMERS plan. It was simply robbery from OMERS to make the provincial books look good, he said.

So if the plans make too much money, the government is allowed to dip into them. And if their earnings fall, as in 2008-9, the ideologues howl that they're unsustainable and a burden to taxpayers.

The rhetoric against public service pensions is only going to be stepped up, as PC leader Tim Hudak continues rolling out his months-long campaign for an Ontario election he hopes to trigger in the spring. We must not be fooled by the right wing's attempt to dismantle one of the biggest assets that workers in Canada have - namely stable pension plans like OMERS.

It's important for now to defend public service pension plans, even as we dream of the day when workers' pensions will no longer have to be sustained through investments in the stock market. ●

Overturn the conviction of Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois

The Central Committee of the Communist Party of Canada strongly condemns the conviction and sentencing of student leader Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois, on a charge of contempt of court, by Quebec superior court Justice Denis Jacques.

Nadeau-Dubois is the former co-spokesperson of the *Coalition large de l'Association pour une solidarité syndicale étudiante* or CLASSE - the main student union coalition behind the 2012 Quebec student strike called to defend the right to accessible education.

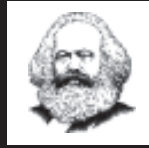
During this magnificent and historic struggle that saw over 300,000 students walk out of their classes and equally large street mobilizations, the Quebec government attempted to break the resistance by denying students their long-established right to autonomously and democratically organize through general assemblies, strike votes and picket lines. Instead, the previous Charest Liberal government encouraged and directly facilitated anti-democratic injunctions by the minority of students who opposed the strike, campus-by-campus.

The charge of contempt of court arose in this context. On May 13, 2012, Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois stated in a Radio Canada interview "I think that it is completely legitimate for students to undertake the means necessary to respect the democratic choice to strike ... It's completely regrettable that a minority of students are using the courts to go around decisions that were made collectively. If students need to form picket lines to ensure that their strike votes are respected, we think that's completely legitimate."

Therefore he has been convicted for expressing a political opinion. Justice Denis Jacques has been exposed as a donor to the former Charest Liberal government. It is not a coincidence that he explicitly based his decision on another anti-democratic ruling that attacked the rights of working people and organized labour: the 1972 court case which tried to smash the ten-day general strike by the *Front commun* of Quebec trade unions through injunctions and imprisoning union presidents.

The Communist Party of Canada strongly decries the conviction of Nadeau-Dubois and sees it as a serious attack on freedom of speech, civil liberties as well as democratic, labour and student rights. The conviction continues the repressive and anti-democratic policies of the previous Charest Liberal government, which sought to criminalize the right to free speech and assembly. It should also be seen as part of the serious and escalating attack on the right to protest across the country.

The decision has also drawn attention to the hundreds of students still facing charges from the Quebec student strike last fall. The fact that Nadeau-Dubois quickly received an outpouring of donations to launch a January appeal is an indication of the strong support of the Quebec people behind his case. We call for the conviction to be overturned and that the Quebec judiciary drop all charges against the student strikers. We also reaffirm our support to freeze, reduce and eliminate all tuition fees, replace student loans with living-stipend grants, and for a system of free, quality, public, not-for-profit and accessible education from cradle to grave. ●



Marxist Theory

Every nation has the right to self-determination

The election of the sovereigntist Parti Quebecois government in Quebec and the emergence of the Idle No More movement are proof that Canada is not "one nation," but rather a country which has always included many nations. We reprint here excerpts on this topic from Chapter 4 of "Canada's Future is Socialism," the program of the Communist Party of Canada. Adopted in 2001, this program presents the long-held view of the CPC that equality of the nations is an essential goal of the working class movement within Canada.

Canada includes small and large nations, each of which is an historically-constituted community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and national consciousness manifested in a common culture. Nations come into existence and pass out of existence, by forcible and peaceful historical processes, or a combination of both. It is a dynamic process in which, in each case, the path of development into nationhood is specific and different. As a result, the struggle for a democratic solution to the national question requires an understanding and respect for these objective differences.

Amongst the smaller nations in Canada are groups of Aboriginal peoples who are exercising their right to sovereignty with the demand for autonomy and self-government. Amongst these are the Northern Cree in Quebec, the newly created territory of Nunavut, the Nisga'a on the west coast, and others. The Acadians in the Maritimes also constitute a smaller nation in Canada. The two largest nations are English-speaking

Canada and Quebec.

At the heart of the crisis of confederation is the refusal to recognize the right of every nation to self-determination up to and including the right to separation; that is, the right to choose the form of sovereignty which the majority of the people of that nation desire. Sovereignty may be expressed in a free national choice of one of three following forms: a separate state, a confederation of equal nation or states, or autonomy...

The Aboriginal peoples have been in Canada for thousands of years when the first white settlers arrived... Colonization and capitalist industrialization in Canada developed at the expense of its original inhabitants. The resistance of the Aboriginal peoples to colonial encroachment was brutally crushed. A policy of genocide was adopted by the state, which continues today in economic, social and cultural forms. There was the extermination of the Beothuk in Newfoundland, the scalp bounty on the Mi'kmaq in the Maritimes, the enslavement of some and the deliberate starvation and infection of others with deadly diseases, their forced relocation onto remote and impoverished reserves, the abduction of their children and consignment to residential schools where many were sexually assaulted, and brutalized for speaking their own language, and the organized suppression of their culture, including the banning of the communal Potlatch. Such is the record of Canadian history.

Presently, Aboriginal peoples have the highest rates of suicide, infant mortality, impoverishment, and incarceration in Canada, with a life expectancy of less than 50 years. Deprived of their human

rights, their equality rights, and their inherent rights to land and self-government, Aboriginal peoples continue to be victims of state sponsored policies of genocide.

Even today, the state, acting on behalf of finance capital, refuses to recognize the status and national rights of Aboriginal peoples. This has produced acute poverty and oppression on the reserves and other areas inhabited by the Aboriginal peoples. Denied an adequate land base, acceptable living standards, the ability to live in their traditional manner, or the opportunity to mount successful cooperative commercial operations where they live, Aboriginal people for many years have migrated to urban areas where they face high unemployment, discrimination and the further destruction of their cultural identity.

The Communist Party struggles for immediate redress of historic injustices to Aboriginal peoples. This must include preferential treatment in the provision of housing, health care, education, and job creation, as a priority. Furthermore, immediate achievement of national rights, just and early settlement of land claims and self-government will help to improve the prospect for the fuller development of Aboriginal peoples as nations, a process that the Communist Party fully supports...

Today, there is a renewed spirit of insurgency among the Aboriginal peoples. There is increasing unity between various Aboriginal peoples in their individual and particular struggles against the capitalist state. The Communist Party supports the increasing unity of the Aboriginal peoples in their just struggle. ●

"Canada must demonstrate genuine respect"

On Jan. 3, *Indigenous and human rights organizations issued the following statement of support and solidarity with Theresa Spence and with the Idle No More movement.*

Indigenous and human rights organizations stand in solidarity with Chief Theresa Spence in her appeal for full respect for Aboriginal and Treaty rights by the government of Canada. There is an urgent need for Canada to demonstrate genuine respect and long-term commitment, initiated by a meeting between First Nations' leadership, the Prime Minister and the Governor General.

Full honour and implementation of Indigenous peoples' Treaties are crucial to the evolution of Canada and the principle of federalism. Cooperative and harmonious relations cannot be achieved by devaluing Treaties or by unilateral government actions.

We firmly support grassroots actions of the "Idle No More" movement. It has put the spotlight on federal policy and legislative agendas that are trampling the inherent rights of Indigenous peoples affirmed in domestic and international law.

Human rights - not colonialism

In 2012, the Supreme Court of Canada highlighted "the history of colonialism, displacement, and residential schools and how that history continues to translate into lower educational attainment, lower incomes, higher unemployment, higher rates of substance abuse and suicide, and

... higher levels of incarceration."

Canada must abandon outdated, discriminatory approaches from the colonial era, especially in relation to Indigenous peoples' lands, territories and resources. What is urgently required is a principled framework consistent with international human rights law.

Currently countless amendments and laws are being adopted that undermine Indigenous peoples' human rights, including Treaty rights. These legislative measures were developed with little or no consultation with Aboriginal peoples and without their consent. Such actions erode democracy, the rule of law and integrity of Parliament.

Indigenous peoples' rights and

related government duties are an integral part of Canada's Constitution. They are affirmed in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The government should address this grievous situation in good faith. Justice, peace and reconciliation remain crucial objectives.

The omnibus budget bill C-45 introduced far-reaching changes. Amendments include changes to complex land provisions in the Indian Act that compound existing problems. It also re-writes environmental laws, including Navigable Waters Protection Act, Fisheries Act and Hazardous Materials Information Review Act, which were used to promote and protect a sustainable environment, clean water and healthy oceans.

The integrity of the environment is being assaulted, to the detriment of present and future generations.

Canada is estimated to contain nearly 32,000 major lakes and more than 2.25 million rivers. Yet a new Navigation Protection Act reduces federal environmental oversight and covers only 3 oceans, 97 lakes, and portions of 62 rivers. Certain key rivers in British Columbia along the path of the proposed Northern Gateway pipeline are not included.

Resource development projects on traditional lands of Indigenous peoples will be much less likely to be subject to rigorous public environmental impact assessment. These changes are on top of cutbacks on environmental safeguards already passed in the previous omnibus budget bill C-38. As concluded by the David Suzuki Foundation: "In reality, amendments to environmental laws account for about half of the 452-page bill. These amendments will weaken Canada's capacity for environmental governance, threatening our land, climate and water."

International human rights

standards require that decisions affecting the rights of Indigenous peoples be made with their full and effective participation. In the face of very serious issues concerning lands and resources of Indigenous peoples, the appropriate standard is free, prior and informed consent.

Canada's Supreme Court has said that the "Crown ... cannot cavalierly run roughshod over Aboriginal interests." There must be "reconciliation" between the power of the state and the pre-existing sovereignty of Indigenous peoples. "In all its dealings with Aboriginal peoples ... the Crown must act honourably. Nothing less is required."

It is tragic that a hunger strike and Canada-wide protests are necessary, in order for Indigenous peoples to bring attention to violations of their dignity, Treaties and human rights. Our organizations strongly support human rights education. We urge all Canadians to engage with Indigenous peoples, to help educate others, and to support the current movement of awareness raising and ensuring vital reforms. ●



Idle No More protesters march in downtown Montreal on December 28. Photo from The Link (Concordia University), <http://thelinknewspaper.ca/article/3776>

For information on events in your area:
www.idlenomore.ca

Supported by: Amnesty International Canada; Arctic Athabaskan Council; Assembly of First Nations; Assembly of First Nations of Québec and Labrador/Assemblée des Premières Nations du Québec et du Labrador; British Columbia Assembly of First Nations; Canadian Friends Service Committee (Quakers); Chiefs of Ontario; Dene Nation/AFN Regional Office (NWT); Earthroots; Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations; First Nations Summit; First Peoples Human Rights Coalition; Grand Council of the Crees (Eeyou Istchee); Haudenosaunee of Kanehsatake; IKANAWTIKET; Indigenous World Association; KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives; Lawyers Rights Watch Canada; Maritime Aboriginal Peoples Council; Mining Watch Canada; National Association of Friendship Centres; Native Women's Association of Canada; Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs

Communist Party urges full solidarity with the "Idle No More" movement

Resolution adopted by the Central Committee, Communist Party of Canada, December 15-16, 2012, Toronto

On December 10, the United Nations International Human Rights Day, Aboriginal peoples took to the streets by the thousands, in cities and towns across Canada. The Central Committee of the Communist Party of Canada sends our deepest solidarity to the "Idle No More" movement which initiated this historic struggle against Bill C-45 and the entire racist agenda of the Harper Tory government.

The December actions, which reflect a significant surge in protests by Aboriginal peoples, have blown the lid off the arrogant colonial lie that Canada is a country of equality, fairness and social justice. In Canada today, Aboriginal peoples suffer high rates of poverty, unemployment and incarceration, and dramatically shorter life spans. In Attawapiskat and on other reserves, and even in urban centres, many live in terrible housing conditions. Over 100 First Nations communities lack clean drinking water. In Manitoba, over 2000 members of

the Lake St. Martin First Nation remain homeless 18 months after their reserve was deliberately flooded to save Winnipeg and other communities from the massive floods of 2011. Despite centuries of broken treaties promising fair treatment, and decades of protests and reports, this situation has not improved. In the latest examples, Bill C-45 is removing federal environmental protections for thousands of lakes, streams and rivers which are crucial for the well-being of Aboriginal peoples in all parts of Canada, and the Tory government is trampling the land and water rights of First Nations which oppose the expansion of tar sands exports.

Refusing to accept these genocidal policies, four Aboriginal women in Saskatchewan took the initiative this fall to begin the Idle No More campaign, using social media tools and teach-ins to spread the word. Their courageous example helped inspire a number of chiefs to take their case directly to PM Stephen Harper, only to be barred from entering Parliament. Now this movement has taken root in communities in every part of the country.

The Communist Party of Canada calls for the strengthening

of solidarity by the labour and other democratic movements with the Idle No More movement and with the overall struggle for Aboriginal rights, including the hunger strike by Chief Theresa Spence of Attawapiskat and the fasting relay by other women.

The manifesto of Idle No More truthfully places this struggle in the context of the national question within the Canadian state. As this statement says, "The Treaties are nation to nation agreements between Canada and First Nations, who are sovereign nations. The Treaties are agreements that cannot be altered or broken by one side of the two Nations. The spirit and intent of the Treaty agreements meant that First Nations peoples would share the land, but retain their inherent rights to lands and resources. Instead, First Nations have experienced a history of colonization which has resulted in outstanding land claims, lack of resources and unequal funding for services such as education and housing. Canada has become one of the wealthiest countries in the world by using the land and resources. Canadian mining, logging, oil and fishing companies are the most powerful in the world due to land and resources. Some

of the poorest First Nations communities (such as Attawapiskat) have mines or other developments on their land but do not get a share of the profit. The taking of resources has left many lands and waters poisoned - the animals and plants are dying in many areas in Canada. We cannot live without the land and water. We have laws older than this colonial government about how to live with the land. Currently, this government is trying to pass many laws so that reserve lands can also be bought and sold by big companies to get profit from resources. They are promising to share this time... Why would these promises be different from past promises? We will be left with nothing but poisoned water, land and air. This is an attempt to take away sovereignty and the inherent right to land and resources from First Nations peoples. There are many examples of other countries

moving towards sustainability, and we must demand sustainable development as well. We believe in healthy, just, equitable and sustainable communities and have a vision and plan of how to build them. Please join us in creating this vision."

This profound manifesto challenges the destructive agenda of the Harper Tories, and presents an alternative which puts the interests of people and the environment ahead of corporate profiteering. The Communist Party of Canada welcomes this manifesto for the future of the peoples of this country. We pledge to strengthen and find new ways to build the alliance of the labour and democratic movements with Aboriginal peoples, whose aim is full justice and national rights for Aboriginal peoples in Canada, and the creation of a fairer, anti-racist society for all. ●

REDS ON THE WEB

www.comunist-party.ca

www.peoplesvoice.ca

www.ycl-ljc.ca

www.solidnet.org

What is the Idle No More Movement ... Really?

Excerpts from a commentary by Pamela Palmater, one of the organizers and spokespersons of the Idle No More movement, in response to questions posed by Al Jazeera, CBC, Rabble.ca, CTV, and the Ottawa Citizen. For the full text and related links, see Palmater's blog at www.indigenous-nationhood.blogspot.ca.

I have been honoured by the request of the Idle No More Founders to be one of their organizers and spokespersons. Working within this movement was a natural extension of the work we already do in First Nations with leaders and citizens. In the last few weeks, many of the media's questions related to how the movement started, what do we want and where it might be headed. I have done my best as one of the spokespeople to answer these questions based on the views shared with me by some of those in the movement.

The Idle No More movement is part of a larger Indigenous movement that has been in the making for several years now. Indigenous activists all over the country have been monitoring the political and legal scene in Canada at both the federal and provincial levels and making a concerted effort to help inform First Nation community members and leaders about any potential threats. We noted a clear assimilation agenda that emerged within the Conservative government and we started planning on how we could address that if Prime Minister Harper insisted on putting his plan into action.

We of course worked very hard to try all the usual channels to address our growing concerns, which included lobbying, letter-writing, testifying before Senate and Parliament, endless meetings with MPs, Senators, Ministers and others - all to no avail. The Harper government was not interested in talking to us, let alone consulting or getting our consent. Harper decided instead to use the Assembly of First Nations as his primary vehicle to call all the shots. Harper's government set the agenda, they drafted the joint action plans and they alone decided what was and was not on the table. In other words, Harper managed to bully his assimilation plan onto the First Nation agenda with hardly a squeak of opposition at the political level.

At the co-called Crown-First Nation Gathering (CFNG) last January 2012, Harper promised First Nations his government would not unilaterally amend or repeal the Indian Act. After the CFNG, he broke that promise and proceeded with an aggressive legislative agenda that will include upwards of 14 bills that will devastate our First Nations in various ways. It is the White Paper 2012 with a twist - instead of it being a policy, like the 1969 White Paper, which wanted to assimilate Indians, Harper's plan will be law. This is the spark that ignited the Idle No More movement into action.

We always knew action would be required at some point, but the legislation posed an imminent threat and required immediate mobilization. That is how a movement was born. In the early days, some were calling the Idle No More movement, some calling it an Indigenous rights movement, but we all agreed that we needed to immediately oppose Harper's assimilatory legislative agenda. So

many of the early activities included teach-ins which helped explain the legislation's potential impacts on First Nations and more importantly, what we could do to oppose it. Early protests started out as opposing the massive omnibus Bill C-45, but later came to include the whole suite.

The Idle No More movement, initially started by women, is a peoples' movement that empowers Indigenous peoples to stand up for their Nations, lands, treaties and sovereignty. This movement is unique because it is purposefully distanced from political and corporate influence. There is no elected leader, no paid Executive Director, and no bureaucracy or hierarchy which determines what any person or First Nation can and can't do. There are no colonial-based lines imposed on who joins the movement and thus issues around on & off-reserve, status and non-status, treaty and non-treaty, man or woman, elder or youth, chief or citizen does not come into play. This movement is inclusive of all our peoples.

To my mind, the true governing power of our Indigenous Nations has always been exercised through the voice of our peoples. The leaders were traditionally more like spokespeople which represented to views and decisions of the people. In this way, the Idle No More movement, led by grassroots peoples connects very closely to our Indigenous traditional values. But it is not a movement where the people stand alone, their elders, elected leaders and traditional leaders stand with them. This movement is not in competition with any First Nation political organization or elected leaders. This movement is focused on the critical issues before us, not power-struggles, political games or competing for government funding. Everyone so far has donated their time, money, energy and skills to making this work despite the inevitable critiques, push-back and misinformation.

Yet, what makes this peoples' movement so unique, is also what makes it so difficult for many Canadians and the media to understand. Generally speaking, people understand that each government, group or organization has a leader, a clearly defined hierarchy and rules about who can say and do what. This movement on the other hand, is very organic in nature and first and foremost respects the sovereignty of individual Indigenous peoples and their Nations to participate how and when they choose, if at all. This will mean that some First Nations leaders will choose not to participate, but some of their members will. It could mean one First Nation community organizes teach-ins whereas First Nations peoples living in urban areas will get together and organize flash mob round dances.

Think of the many ways in which this movement has already developed. We had teach-ins at Louis Bull, Saddle Lake and other First Nations. We have posted information, publications and

videos online for all to access. We have engaged the media to help educate the public about why this impacts them as well. The Chiefs organized a protest during the AFN assembly to oppose the legislation (including Bill C-45). Chief Spence is on a hunger strike standing up for all First Nations and the treaty relationship which Canada has forgotten. Kids in schools have held Idle No More Rallies and there have been marches, protests and temporary traffic and railways slow downs. The core unifying theme to all of it has been that they are peaceful activities meant to help educate Canadians about how this is in all our interests.

We do have structure, we are organized, we work very closely with one another across the country to strategize and we are growing. We have worked with active First Nation leaders on the ground since the very beginning and many of us continue to do so. Our allies increase every day as more and more organizations are joining the

provide for one's family. These are important things, and our ancestors did their best to ensure that we would have a prosperous future. Many even negotiated these provisions in some of our treaties. But, it is not good enough for us to simply be comfortable, at least not as long as we have brothers, sisters and community members who live without food, water or housing. Right now, many of our Indigenous peoples are facing multiple, overlapping crises that require emergency attention. The very grassroots people standing on the front lines of this movement are there because they are the ones without clean water, housing or sanitation and the politicians have done little to address this.

This movement is set apart from any other before it. Unlike the Occupy movement, this movement involves peoples with a shared histories, experiences, goals and aspirations. We as Indigenous peoples are all related, we all care about each other's futures and we share the same responsibility to

Because only First Nations have constitutionally protected Aboriginal and treaty rights which mandate Canada to obtain the consent of First Nations prior to acting. These rights are also protected at the international level with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

When First Nations organize in Idle No More to oppose this legislation, they do so to protect all of our interests - First Nation and Canadian alike. The most precious resources in the near future will be farmable lands and drinkable water. If there is no clean water, this impacts everyone. We are standing up not only to protect our lands and waters, but we are also standing up to restore justice for First Nations and democracy for Canadians. We can work together to defeat this threat to Canada and find a way to share the lands and resources as the treaties envisioned.

When asked what do we want, that question can be answered in two parts:

(1) In the short term, Canada must withdraw the suite of legislation impacting First Nations, amend those omnibus bills which threaten our lands and waters, and restore the funding that was cut to our First Nation advocacy organizations and communities; (2) In the long term, Canada must set up a Nation to Nation process whereby First Nations and Canada can address many of the long outstanding issues related to the implementation of treaties and sharing the lands and resources.

Ultimately, we want to be free-free to govern ourselves as we choose; free to enjoy our identities, cultures, languages and traditions - i.e., to live the good life as we see fit. This means Canada must respect our sovereignty and get out of the business of managing our lives. Given that Canada has worked hard to put us in the situation we are in, Harper will have to come to table with some good faith and offer some solutions to address the current crisis facing many of our communities in relation to the basic essentials of life - water, sanitation, housing, and education. If Harper can do no more than appear at a meeting on January 24th as requested by the AFN, our most vulnerable citizens will not see justice.

What Idle No More means to me is the coming together of Indigenous peoples from all over Turtle Island to work together to restore pride in our peoples, to stand up for our rights and live up to those responsibilities we have to one another and Mother Earth.

It is inspiring hope, when many had lost hope that anyone would ever stand on their behalf.

It has inspired pride in who we are as Indigenous peoples because our peoples are beautiful and something to be cherished and defended.

It has inspired leadership in those who thought they had nothing left to offer their Nations.

It has inspired a reconnection of youth to elders, citizens to leaders and men to stand beside their women.

It has inspired the most oppressed peoples to stand up and exercise their voices.

We are alive again and the spirits of our ancestors are walking with us on this journey.

I believe in the power of our peoples - we can do this! ●



movement. Now we have widespread international support which also grows everyday. Pretty soon you will see more and more prominent figures stand up to put pressure on Canada to come to the table in a real, meaningful way.

To me, Idle No More is a responsibility - a responsibility to live up to the sacrifices of our ancestors, to the duty we have as guardians of the earth, and to the expectations that our children and grandchildren have of us to protect them. Every single one of us has that responsibility, though, at any given time, we all have different capacities, skills and opportunities in which to fulfill it. Regardless of our situation, I believe that we all carry that responsibility from the very moment the Creator blesses us with our first breath until our last.

This responsibility means that it is not good enough to work hard, get an education, find a job, and

protect our rights, cultures and identities for our seventh generation. This movement also has a special spiritual significance in that this was prophesied - that the seventh generation would rise and restore the strength of our Nations, bring balance and see that justice was restored to our peoples.

This movement is also unique in that it includes Canadians as our allies. Just as the early days of contact when the settlers needed our help to survive the harsh winter months, and seek out a new life here, Canadians once again need our help. They need our help to stop Harper's destructive environmental agenda. First Nations represent Canadians last best hope at stopping Harper from unfettered mass destruction of our shared lands, waters, plants and animals in the name of resource development for export to foreign countries like China. Why?



GLOBAL CLASS STRUGGLE

Tunisian UGTT backs compensation demand

Residents from the Tunisian town of Redeyef are demanding that the National Constituent Assembly compensate families of those killed during a 2008 uprising. The Tunisian General Labor Union (UGTT) led a general strike on Jan. 4 in Redeyef, two weeks after the NCA adopted Decree 97 in which only the families of the martyrs and wounded of the 2010-11 "Jasmine" revolution will be compensated.

Local UGTT organizers said the strike surpassed expectations, with virtually the entire city participating. All businesses and administrations, excluding the hospital and pharmacies, went on strike, reported state news agency TAP.

But this success did not get an immediate response. This was not a surprise for the UGTT, which says the government's tactic is a "policy of silence" hoping to spread despair until people give up. The union says it will continue to collaborate with civil society to ratchet up the demands of Redeyef's residents until the government responds.

The primary purpose of reviewing Decree 97 is to establish "the historical truth" of the Jasmine revolution's timeline, says the UGTT. Redeyef residents undertook the 2008 uprising to protest against unjust hiring practices by Gafsa Phosphate Company after a round of hiring was announced in January 2008. Five locals were killed and 41 wounded in the ensuing unrest. For Redeyef, the uprising laid the foundation upon which the Jasmine revolution began on December 17, 2010 in the town of Sidi Bouzid.

SA farmworkers call for boycott

After the failure of wage talks with farmers in the Western Cape province of South Africa, a strike by farmworkers resumed on Jan. 9. According to COSATU regional secretary Tony Ehrenreich, speaking at a news conference, the strike would continue indefinitely until the workers' demands were met, including a R150-per-day wage (\$17.30 Can.) and a "coherent land reform programme".

In November 2012, table grape workers in De Doorns started striking against low wages of around R70 (\$8 Can.) per day, and job actions spread to 15 other towns. The strike was called off in December after the Agri-SA employers group agreed to negotiations on a farm-by-farm basis.

Several organisations, including the Food and Allied Workers Union (FAWU), Women on Farms and the Commercial Stevedoring Agricultural and Allied Workers Union (CSAAWU), say the initial strikes were not organised by the unions, but they had undertaken to negotiate with the government and Agri-SA on the workers' behalf. However, the negotiations on a farm-by-farm basis had not gone

ahead after farmers stalled the process. In the few cases where farmers had been willing to negotiate, "no substantial progress had been made", said Ehrenreich.

The strike is taking place primarily in the Western Cape, but may spread to other areas since the R150-per-day demand is a national issue. The organisations are appealing for an international boycott of South African fruit and wines to compel the farmers to raise wages.



Unemployment 18% in Bulgaria

The actual unemployment rate in Bulgaria is exceptionally high, over 17-18% of the active population, according to Dimitar Brankov, Deputy Chair of the Bulgarian Industrial Association. In a Jan. 4 interview, Brankov commented that the unemployment rate had dropped in the period 2004-2008 due to an investment credit boom in construction and other sectors.

"However, once that investment boom was over, our economy and employment returned to their previous rates," he noted, claiming that this pointed to structural problems which had not been caused by the economic crisis but by the economic structure, and the laws and regulations applying to businesses. Brankov urged the adoption of a "Bulgaria 2020" National Program for development to create jobs, within the framework of the European Union. Such a program, he claimed, will require nationwide consensus among political parties, trade unions, employers, and other groups.

However, he did not mention the steep rise in unemployment in many EU countries which have followed the neoliberal model. Unemployment was eliminated during the post-war socialist era in Bulgaria, returning only after the restoration of capitalism during the early 1990s.

Labour unrest in Singapore

After 26 years without a strike, labour unrest over low wages and appalling living conditions has roiled Singapore, drawing attention to the country's often-exploited migrant worker community. Over the past month, several groups of Chinese migrant workers staged strikes, protests and sit-ins. Earlier in 2011, a group of 200 Bangladeshi construction workers launched a seven-hour sit-out to protest unpaid salaries and

the dismal food served by their employers.

In response to a strike of 171 Chinese bus drivers in November 2011, the Singaporean government deported 29 people and imposed \$2,000 fines and jail terms for several others for instigating "illegal" action.

Singapore's acting minister for manpower, Tan Chuan-Jin, criticised the bus drivers' strike, saying, "We have zero tolerance for such unlawful action because disrupted essential services not only affected the workers in the industry, but also affect the daily life of all in the community."

The minister's comments reflect the odds against migrant workers in Singapore, a wealthy city-state that which is home to some of capitalism's worst excesses. The luxurious lifestyle of its rich citizens depends on more than one million migrant workers. Singapore has nearly 1.5 million foreigners, many of whom provide cheap, menial labour in the construction, shipyard, transportation and garbage refuse industries.

While labour protests are still a new phenomenon in Singapore, foreign workers often see staging strikes as ordinary. Many Chinese workers have experienced industrial conflicts in China over the past decade, learning that protests can often be an effective tactic.

While the government defends its immigration policies as "adaptive" and "practical", Singapore's Manpower Ministry recently pledged it would do more to help foreign workers, in an effort to silence critics of policies that discriminate against migrants.

Fears grow for Iranian unionist

Concerns are mounting over the fate of jailed Iranian transport trade unionist Reza Shahabi, who began a hunger strike December 17. The Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company (Vahed) union treasurer began his protest two days after his latest health scare since being locked up in Evin jail's notorious Ward 350 for "political" prisoners. Guards took Shahabi to hospital but refused to let doctors perform an MRI scan. Instead they dragged him back to his cell.

Last August, Shahabi was raced to hospital for surgery to his neck and spine, injuries which his wife said were the result of severe beatings during interrogation. Doctors advised that he needed at least two months' rest at home following the critical operation, saying that he was "incapable of withstanding any further punishment." Instead he was hauled back to Ward 350.

Vahed members have mounted protests in recent months over unpaid wages and unequal treatment, and to demand the dismissal of the Tehran Bus Company managing director. But Shahabi, who was sacked by the bus firm in 2006, and other trade unionists have paid a high price, facing jail and intimidation. Shahabi has been locked up since June 2010. An April 14 ruling confirmed that he would serve a

six-year term on charges of "propaganda against the regime" and "assembly and collusion against national security."

The Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company has more than 17,000 employees. All executive board members of the Vahed union have been persecuted, dismissed, or jailed since the formation of the union in 2005.

India dockers call national strike

Workers and employees at 13 of India's major ports are to join in a nationwide strike on Feb. 20-21 to oppose corporatisation of major ports, and to demand hirings to fill jobs left vacant since 2007. A strike notice was announced following a joint meeting of key dockworkers unions, including the Indian National Port & Dock Workers Federation (INTUC), the All India Port and Dock Workers' Federation, Water Transport Federation of India and Port and Dock Water Front Workers Federation of India.

The unions are also demanding proper implementation of various settlements, regularising of contract workers, an end to outsourcing and contracting out of regular port-related activities, and exclusion of major ports from the purview of the Tariff Authority for Major Ports.

Arrests at minimum wage rally

Police arrested 21 people on Jan. 5 as more than 200 demonstrators marched in Chicago demanding a higher minimum wage. Supporters of the Fight For 15 movement, along with members

of several other groups took to the streets chanting, "we can't survive on \$8.25" and singing modified Christmas carols highlighting wage disparity between CEOs and rank-and-file workers. The day culminated in 21 arrests during a sit-in at Water Tower Place on Pearson Avenue.

"We're struggling to make ends meet, we are struggling to pay bills and we are just asking for a liveable wage of \$15 an hour so that we can be able to support our families," one demonstrator told the media.

The organizations Action Now and Stand Up! Chicago have released reports arguing that the minimum wage could be raised to \$15 with little impact on the profits of many downtown businesses. They estimate that the cost of raising wages for all downtown workers in retail and food service would cost \$103 million, and would spur an extra \$179 million in economic activity. Additionally, for every 25 workers getting a wage bump, one full-time job would be created.

David Vite, head of the Illinois Retail Merchants Association, claimed that the plan would "wipe out" the less than 2 percent profit share he said retailers typically take in. CEOs for downtown stores average an hourly compensation rate of more than \$4011, which Vite said they receive for "the value they bring to the company."

A second report, published in conjunction with the Chicago Teacher's Union, found that a wage increase would lead to improvements for students in public schools. According to the report, a one parent/one child family would have to earn \$35,859 annually to meet basic needs, more than double the earnings of a person taking in \$8.25 an hour.

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

Send me information on the Communist Party of Canada



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

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

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

B.C. Committee CPC
706 Clark Drive, Vancouver, BC, V5L 3J1
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Calgary CPC
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Calgary, AB, T2A 4L7 Tel: 403-248-6489

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

Ottawa CPC
Tel: 613-232-7108

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

Ontario Ctee. CPC
290A Danforth Ave., Toronto, M4K 1N6
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Hamilton Ctee. CPC
265 Melvin Ave., Apt. 815
Hamilton, ON, L8H 2K3
Tel: 905-548-9586

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

US, EU prepare for intervention in Mali

By T.J. Petrowski, Winnipeg

A consequence of the western imperialist powers' intervention in Libya in 2011, under the guise of the Responsibility to Protect doctrine (R2P), which cost the lives of thousands of civilians, was the destabilization of the west African state of Mali.

The US and EU, especially France, the former colonial power, are seeking to militarily intervene in the ongoing conflict. On Dec. 20, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 2085, authorizing deployment of an African-led International Support Mission (AFISMA) in northern Mali. The Harper government is hinting that Canada may take part in such an intervention.

The Republic of Mali, like much of Africa, has a long history of European colonialism and western-backed military coups, which have left the people in extreme poverty and despair.

Following the defeat of Gaddafi, thousands of his Tuareg fighters returned to northern Mali heavily armed and with a deep sense of frustration over their living conditions.

An estimated 1.2 million Tuareg people inhabit the Saharan interior of Africa, living as nomadic pastoralists in Mali, Algeria, Niger, Libya, and Burkina Faso. Since the European powers first colonized the region, causing wide-scale displacement and suffering, the Tuareg have struggled for better living conditions and the right to self-determination. They have continued this struggle against the Western-backed leaders of their now independent nations.

In January 2012, with the experience and resources acquired in Libya, they began the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), an armed insurgency against the Malian government. (Azawad is the territory in northern Mali consisting of the federal regions of Gao, Kidal, Tombouctou, and Mopti.) With them was an influx of radical Islamists who cooperated with NATO to oust Gaddafi, many of them from Sudan, Yemen, Algeria, Egypt, and other Muslim nations.

On March 21, 2012, US-trained Captain Amadou Sanogo, who maintains close ties with US

intelligence, ousted President Amadou Toumani Touré. The circumstances leading to the coup d'état included social discontent by the mass of peasants and students. Mali was experiencing a food crisis, a consequence of the sellout of arable land to foreign capitalists. After the coup, emergency law was enforced, with the constitution suspended and a curfew imposed on the people.

Soon after the interim government of Dioncounda Traoré was installed, the MNLA unilaterally declared their secession from Mali as the state of Azawad. Although its members are predominately Tuareg, MNLA leaders have said their movement represents all Saharan peoples, seeking independent, secular representation for those neglected by

the federal government in Bamako.

Now the US and EU are using the "war on terror" ruse to justify a military intervention in support of the interim government. The official pretext is the seizure of Azawad by the Islamist organizations Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and Ansar Dine. The Islamists taking

control of northern Mali from the MNLA - an area the size of France - can be directly linked back to the imperialist intervention in Libya. Under Gaddafi, Libya invested heavily in sub-Saharan nations, which made him incredibly popular throughout the continent. He also mediated the conflict between the Tuaregs and the Malian government, and opposed radical Islamist groups such as AQIM. With Gaddafi gone, Islamists from the Middle East are converging to fight for their vision of Sharia law in all of Mali, not strictly Azawad.

Of course, the real aim of imperialism is to further exploit the extensive natural resources in Mali, including gold, uranium, cotton, and suspected oil reserves. France's nuclear industry is especially dependent on uranium from West

Africa, and the French ruling class wishes to recolonize its former colonies, having recently intervened in the Ivory Coast. The US, France, Germany, other European states, and China are all competing for these resources, in yet another "Scramble for Africa."

Direct investment from China in particular has increased 300-fold in Mali over the last decade. Along with South Africa, Zambia, and Egypt, Mali has some of China's largest direct investments in Africa. The US seeks to reduce China's influence in the region, to reestablish its hegemony, just as the intervention in Libya was in part to deny China access to North African oil. Oblivious to the mass starvation and malnourishment that plagues Malian civilians, a foreign intervention would undoubtedly result in a new quagmire for the imperialists, similar to the situation in Afghanistan, and could further destabilize the region. The people of Mali have the right to determine their own socio-political structure without foreign intervention. ●



Gang rape story should stir class and caste debate in India

By Gurpreet Singh

The outrage caused by the recent gang rape of a 23-year-old student in Delhi should also stir a class and caste debate within Indian society. The victim was not only raped in a bus but also beaten by the assailants. She succumbed to her injuries at a Singapore hospital where she was shifted amidst violent protests that rocked the Indian capital.

The anger was partially caused by the fact that Delhi has witnessed over 500 rapes since last year, earning it a reputation as a capital of rapes. While this outrage and subsequent activism are justified, poor and so-called "low caste" women continue to suffer sexual violence almost every day in rural and tribal India, outside the urban and fortified setting of Delhi and other big cities. It's very rare to see outrage over the rapes of such women in Indian society, which largely claims to be puritan and ethical in character. The stories of rapes involving poor women during recent weeks did not gain a matching attention.

While Indians (particularly Hindus) revere goddesses, other religious groups like Sikhs claim themselves to be the protectors of the modesty of women.

The sexual violence against women from the marginalized sections of society goes on in spite of the fact that India has been led by a female Prime Minister, the late Indira Gandhi, and its first woman President, Pratibha Patil. Several provinces have also been led by female politicians at different times.

Following the Delhi incident, some prominent female politicians broke down in tears while debating in parliament. But this will not end the vulnerability of women, especially those who come from the weaker sections. Obviously, poor women in a class and caste based society become double victims when a sexual crime is committed against them. In many instances, political goons and security officials have committed sexual crimes against them with impunity.

The Delhi incident that captured international media attention has reopened an unwanted debate on capital punishment, with some suggesting the death sentence to rapists. However, this would encourage a rapist to murder the victim to destroy evidence. In fact, Indian society and the justice system need to provide moral support to the victims of sexual violence, instead of protecting the perpetrators.

Often the victims of rape are harassed by the police and the courts, discouraging them to testify against the offender. A case in point is that of a 17-year-old Dalit rape victim in Punjab state who recently committed suicide after being harassed by the police. Apparently, the police were not taking action against the culprit. Instead the victim was accused of concocting a story of rape.

Such is the plight of victims of sexual violence in an orthodox male-dominated Indian society.

Instead of comforting the victims, the system tries to protect the perpetrators. The grievance of rape victims should be heard passionately by the police and the courts, instead of putting the onus to prove the crime on them.

But what can one expect from an establishment whose lawmakers are either accused of such crimes or shamelessly make sexist remarks by blaming the victims? A Hindu right-wing BJP Party

legislator recently went to the extent of suggesting a ban on skirts in schools to save girls from potential molesters, while a minister belonging to the Congress party cautioned women not to take public transport at night. Instead of shedding tears, the least women politicians can do is to make such male chauvinist politicians accountable, and try to bring the rapists enjoying state patronage to book. ●

Robert Fisk lecture tour on Arab Spring

Veteran foreign correspondent and author Robert Fisk will tour Canada starting on January 21. Dr. Fisk's lectures, entitled "Arab Awakening, But Are We Hearing the Truth?" will focus on media coverage of the "Arab Spring" and related upheavals in the Middle East.

The ambitious ten-city tour is being organized by Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME), with some events co-sponsored by other groups.

"We are delighted to offer Canadians the opportunity to hear such an incisive, experienced and intellectually rigorous analyst," says CJPME president Thomas Woodley.

Based in Beirut since 1976, Robert Fisk has been the Middle East correspondent for the British newspaper *The Independent* since 1988. He is the author of five books, including *The Great War for Civilisation: The Conquest of the Middle East* (2005), *Pity the Nation: Lebanon at War* (1990) and *The Age of the Warrior: Selected Writings* (2008). He is highly a respected writer for his direct and uncompromising reporting. A pacifist, he believes the role of the journalist is to investigate and challenge authority, especially when an authority wishes to conduct a war.

Dr. Fisk has covered dozens of international trouble spots over the past 40 years, including Iran, Lebanon, Afghanistan, Iraq, Algeria, Palestine and Israel. On assignment, he has interviewed Saddam Hussein, Ayatollah Khomeini, Osama Bin Laden and other influential and controversial figures. He has received the most British and international awards of any journalist.

Dates and cities for the tour include: **North York**, Monday, Jan. 21 (afternoon); **Toronto**, Monday, Jan. 21 (evening); **Ottawa**, Tuesday, Jan. 22; **Montreal**, Wed., Jan. 23; **Quebec City**, Thursday, Jan. 24; **Hamilton**, Monday, Jan. 28; **London**, Tuesday, Jan. 29; **Calgary**, Wed., Jan. 30; **Edmonton**, Thursday, Jan. 31; **Victoria**, Friday, Feb. 1; **Vancouver**, Sat., Feb. 2.

For details of lecture dates, times and locations, visit the CJPME website: www.cjpme.org.



The Fifth of the Month to Free the Five

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

E-mail: president@whitehouse.gov

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

Phone 1-202-456-1111

Fax 1-202-456-2461

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

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

Eight charged in Victor Jara murder

On December 27, Chilean Judge Miguel Vasquez charged two officers, Pedro Barrientos and Hugo Sanchez, in the 1973 murder of Chilean communist folk singer Victor Jara; six others have been charged as accomplices in the murder.

Four of the eight accused took courses at the School of the Americas, the U.S. military base which trained thousands of officers for pro-Yankee regimes across Latin America.

The four SOA graduates include Pedro Barrientos, the second-in-command of the National Stadium which was turned into an open-air prison following the coup led by Gen. Augusto Pinochet; Raul Jofré took the same Officers' Orientation course as Barrientos in 1968; Edwin Dimter Bianchi took a Combat Arms Orientation course in 1970; and Jorge Smith Gumucio took a Combat Arms Orientation course in 1972. An international arrest order has been issued for Pedro Barrientos, who now lives in Florida, and was in charge of the squad which killed Jara.

December 2012

Four Chilean SOA Graduates Charged with 1973 Murder of Folk Singer Victor Jara!



The Pinochet dictatorship launched its coup d'état on Sept. 11, 1973, with the bombing of the presidential palace, and the killings of thousands of opponents. Jara was detained in Santiago on the day of the coup, taken to a concentration camp in the stadium,

subjected to brutal torture, and had his fingers and wrists broken by soldiers. He was then murdered by machine gun fire, and his body left on the street to be discovered by passersby. But Jara's powerful music lives on; many of his songs can be found on YouTube. ●

Victor Jara of Chile

(lyrics by Adrian Mitchell, music by Arlo Guthrie)

Victor Jara of Chile
Lived like a shooting star
He fought for the people of Chile
With his songs and his guitar
His hands were gentle, his hands were strong
Victor Jara was a peasant
He worked from a few years old
He sat upon his father's plow
And watched the earth unfold
His hands were gentle, his hands were strong
Now when the neighbors had a wedding
Or one of their children died
His mother sang all night for them
With Victor by her side
His hands were gentle, his hands were strong
He grew up to be a fighter
Against the people's wrongs
He listened to their grief and joy
And turned them into songs
His hands were gentle, his hands were strong
He sang about the copper miners

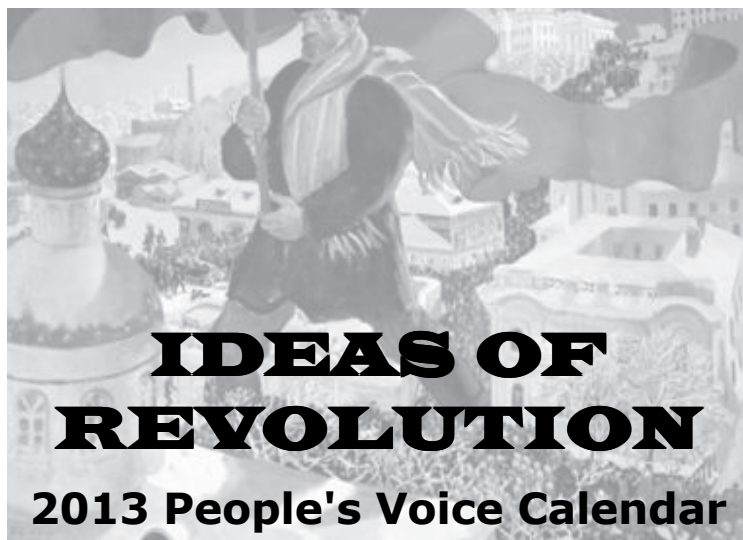
And those who worked the land
He sang about the factory workers
And they knew he was their man
His hands were gentle, his hands were strong
He campaigned for Allende
Working night and day
He sang "Take hold of your brothers hand
You know the future begins today"
His hands were gentle, his hands were strong
Then the generals seized Chile
They arrested Victor then
They caged him in a stadium
With five-thousand frightened men
His hands were gentle, his hands were strong
Victor stood in the stadium
His voice was brave and strong
And he sang for his fellow prisoners
Till the guards cut short his song
His hands were gentle, his hands were strong
They broke the bones in both his hands
They beat him on the head
They tore him with electric shocks
And then they shot him dead
His hands were gentle, his hands were strong
(repeat first verse)

Boycott UAE Olympic plan

The International Trade Union Confederation will lobby to boycott a United Arab Emirate (UAE) Olympic Games if the Gulf state does not improve conditions for migrant workers. The ITUC, which has already called for a boycott of the 2022 FIFA World Cup in nearby Qatar, says it would be "appalled" if the International Olympic Committee awarded the UAE an Olympic Games.

A UAE official said recently that it will bid for the 2024 summer Olympics. The emirate, famous for its luxury hotels, has spent billions of dollars on sports facilities for international events including the Dubai Desert Classic and the Dubai World Cup.

Qatar, the world's biggest exporter of liquefied natural gas, plans to invest about \$88 billion to build stadiums, hotels and transport for the 2022 World Cup. A report last year by a Qatar-based rights group found 70% of migrant workers were only paid US\$302 a month, while 30% received just US\$219 a month. Accommodation for about 43% of them was on the basis of six beds in a room. ●



The People's Voice Calendar for 2013 - "Ideas of Revolution" - is now on sale. Dedicated to the struggles of the international working class for peace, liberation, equality and socialism, this year's calendar features quotations by a wide range of revolutionaries, artists, and writers, such as Nelson Mandela, Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, V.I. Lenin, Tim Buck, Soong Ching Ling, Germaine Greer, Evo Morales, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, Claudia Jones, Fidel Castro, Jose Saramago, and Frida Kahlo. The 14-month calendar (Jan. 2013-Feb. 2014) also includes notable dates from the history of the people's movements, and statutory holidays and celebrations for the year.

"Ideas of Revolution" can be ordered by mail for \$10 in Canada, or \$15 in the United States (price includes mailing costs). Send a cheque to People's Voice, 706 Clark Drive, Vancouver, BC, V5L 3J1. For information on bulk orders of five or more calendars, contact our Vancouver Editorial Office: <pvoice@telus.net>, tel. 604-255-2041.

Residents of Ontario can order directly from the Ontario Bureau of People's Voice, 290A Danforth Ave., Toronto, M4K 1N6, ph. 416-469-2446. The Calendar will be on sale at our Manitoba Bureau (387 Selkirk Ave., Winnipeg), and our Quebec Bureau (5359 Ave. du Parc, Montreal).



MUSIC NOTES

By Wally Brooker

Music fest flees Mali conflict

Mali's "Festival in the Desert" will take place in exile because of political instability and violence in the north African country. Organizers have announced that the annual music festival (www.festival-aud-desert.org), originally scheduled for Timbuktu Feb. 20-22, will become a "caravan of artists united for peace, tolerance and human dignity." Caravans will visit Mauritania, Algeria and Niger before converging on Burkina Faso for the three-day celebration, to feature renowned Malian musicians Toumani Diabaté and Samba Touré. Resolution of the longstanding aspirations of the Tuareg people for autonomy within Mali has been complicated by the US-NATO war against the Gaddafi regime in Libya, which opened the north of Mali to Islamist extremists and provoked a military coup in the south.

Canadian musicians vs. bullying

A group of musicians calling themselves Artists Against Bullying have recorded a charity version of Cyndi Lauper's 1986 hit "True Colors." Released in November to coincide with Bullying Awareness Week, the song reached #1 on Canadian singles charts with proceeds going to Kids HelpPhone (www.kidshelpphone.ca). Artists Against Bullying includes Pierre Bouvier (Simple Plan) and Jacob Hoggard (Hedley), Kardinal Offishall, Fefe Dobson, Lights, Alyssa Reid and Walk Off the Earth. Meanwhile 16-year-old Ottawa student Meagan Landry has produced an excellent homemade video of her original anti-bullying song "Stronger." Both "True Colors" and "Stronger" can be found on YouTube. They come in the aftermath of the suicide of Amanda Todd, the 15-year-old Port Coquitlam student who took her life in October after posting a heart-wrenching video online of her struggle with bullying.

Stan Rogers re-mastered

Toronto folk label Borealis has been diligently re-mastering the catalogue of the great Stan Rogers. The fourth and latest album in the series is *Northwest Passage*, perhaps his most iconic work. The project is overseen by long-time Rogers producer Paul Mills and the late singer's wife Ariel. Stan Rogers was a brilliant artist who painted the landscape of English-speaking Canada and populated it with vivid and sympathetic portraits of working people. His 1983 death in a fire aboard an Air Canada flight came when he was only 33. But his legacy is rich. It's a good bet that Rogers' songs will continue to inspire for years to come. Word is that the sound quality of this series is exceptional. For info: <http://borealisrecords.com/>.

K'Naan on artistic self-censorship

Canadian hip-hop star K'Naan engaged in a little self-criticism last month with a *New York Times* op-ed entitled "Censoring Myself for Success." K'Naan was referring to his latest album *Country, God, or the Girl*, an effort that betrays a drift towards mainstream pop. He describes being called by his record label for "a little talk" before recording the album, and being warned to avoid "subjects too far from fun and self-absorption." K'Naan suggests that he censored himself. "I may never find my old walk again," he writes, "but I hope someday to see beauty in the graceless limp back towards it." Keinan Abdi Warsame was born in Somalia in 1978. His family fled the war-torn country when he was a child and eventually settled in Toronto.

"Meanwhile in Afghanistan"

Radical singer-songwriter David Rovics has just released *Meanwhile in Afghanistan*, an album he calls "a folk-punk manifesto in twelve parts." It's a departure from his earlier mostly acoustic recordings. In this outing, thanks to a successful fundraising campaign, Rovics expands his sound with keyboards, bass, drums, backup vocals, and guitars (including a cameo appearance by rock star Tom Morello). *Meanwhile in Afghanistan* is by turns indignant, denunciatory, poignant, and playful. Listeners who only think of Rovics as a writer of protest songs might be pleasantly surprised by contemporary love songs like "Adelaide" and "Syrian Princess", and humorous tracks like "Watch Out for the Cops" and "If Only It Were True." For info: <http://davidrovics.com>.

Ravi Shankar: 1920-2012

Sitar virtuoso Ravi Shankar died on December 11th. Shankar was celebrated for his encounters with extraordinary western musicians like violinist Yehudi Menuhin and Beatles guitarist George Harrison, but before achieving international fame he had already been music director of All-India Radio and composed film music for Satyajit Ray's classic *Apu Trilogy*. While his role as organizer (with Harrison) of the 1971 Concert for Bangladesh is well-known, his other political interventions have been ignored in the obituaries. In the 1940s Shankar was active in the radical Indian People's Theatre Association, a left-wing cultural group that promoted independence from Britain, solidarity with the USSR and relief for victims of famine. In 1992 he attended an "Artists Against Communalism" concert in Mumbai, and issued a strong statement against that sectarian political trend. Both of India's major communist parties have issued condolences. For info: www.ravishankar.org.

The last remnant of British imperialism

By John Wight, *Morning Star* (UK)

The longstanding dispute over the sovereignty of the Falkland Islands in the south Atlantic is once again in the news - this time as a result of an open letter to David Cameron from Argentina's President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner. Her letter accuses Britain of having taken possession of the islands, known in Argentina as Las Malvinas, in a "blatant exercise of 19th-century colonialism."

Any objective rendering of the history of the Falklands reveals that she is right.

Located 300 miles from Argentina and over 8,000 miles from Britain, the Falkland Islands have long been the subject of territorial dispute. At the beginning of the 19th century, Spain held sovereignty over the islands, occupying them for 40 years up until 1811, after which its former colony of Argentina asserted sovereignty.

The Islands came under British control in 1833, when seized by force. Britain's act of colonialism over its seizure of the islands has been admitted to in private by various British officials over time.

For example, then head of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's American department John Troutbeck outlined the problem surrounding Britain's control of the Falklands in a memo

in 1936. He wrote that "our seizure of the Falkland Islands in 1833 was so arbitrary a procedure as judged by the ideology of the present day. It is therefore not easy to explain our possession without showing ourselves up as international bandits."

In 1982 the war against the then Argentinian government's attempt to seize back the islands by force cost the lives of 258 British and over 600 Argentinian servicemen. It proved a turning point in the fortunes of the nascent and up to then deeply unpopular Tory government led by Margaret Thatcher.

Jingoism swept the country, allowing Thatcher to press ahead with the structural adjustment of the British economy, which in the process devastated working-class communities and delivered a resounding defeat to the trade union movement over the course of a series of hard-fought strikes and industrial disputes throughout the early and mid-1980s.

Yet what we know now, thanks to recently released government papers, is that Thatcher's projection of steely determination when it came to asserting Britain's right to the islands in truth belied a willingness to seek a diplomatic solution with the Argentinians prior to their military assault.

The argument against British sovereignty of the Falklands was harder to make in 1982, as back then Argentina was governed by a

brutal military junta which had ruthlessly suppressed any and all dissent to its authority at home.

Three decades on, however, the situation is markedly different. Argentina is now a centre-left democracy, one of a series of progressive governments that have swept the region over the past decade or so, and is pursuing its claim over the islands diplomatically. Its claim is also supported by its neighbours and fellow members of Mercosur, the trading bloc of south American states.

Regardless, the current British government refuses to negotiate, citing the democratic rights of the 3,000 British citizens who currently inhabit them.

It should be noted that according to a census carried out on the Falkland Islands in 2006 only a third of its residents were born there. It should also be noted that the same rights were not granted to the inhabitants of another distant British colony, the islands of Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean.

The islanders in question, Chagossians, were forcibly repatriated 1,000 miles away from their home to Mauritius to make way for a US airbase in the mid-1960s. Subsequently, the islanders and their dependants fought and won a historic High Court judgement in 2000, declaring their expulsion illegal.

However, in response the Blair government promptly rejected any possibility of them being allowed to return to the island, citing Britain's treaty with the US which had handed the islands over for use as a military airbase.

That the former inhabitants of Diego Garcia happen to have dark skin while the 3,000 residents of the Falkland Islands are white, English speaking colonists, is of course completely irrelevant.

The truth is that when it comes to the Falklands self-determination is being used as a smokescreen. The real issue is the sizeable oil and gas deposits located in waters close to the islands, where drilling began by British oil companies in 2011.

In 1995 both countries signed a joint declaration to co-operate on off-shore oil explorations in the south Atlantic. In 2007 Argentina voided the declaration because Britain refused to view it as a step towards meaningful negotiations over sovereignty.

Any British government must be aware that it risks precipitating a Latin American trade embargo if it continues with an obdurate and intransigent stance of refusing to budge from the status quo.

This is a region which has emerged from centuries of European and north American domination and is determined to assert its rights accordingly. Seen in this light the ability of 3,000 people living on a tiny group of islands in the south Atlantic to dictate the foreign policy of a nation of 60 million over 8,000 miles away, up to and including war, is surely absurd.

The Falkland Islands constitute one of the last remnants of British colonialism, part of a history of economic piracy stained with the blood of millions who suffered as a consequence. The sooner this history is brought to a closer the better. ●

What's Left

Surrey, BC

Idle No More rally, Sat., Jan. 12, 12 noon, Surrey Central Mall, everyone welcome.

Vancouver, BC

No Consent to Tar Sands Pipelines, demo for Joint Review Panel hearings on Northern Gateway project, Monday, Jan. 14, 5 pm, Victory Square (E. Hastings & Cambie), endorsed by wide range of Indigenous, environmental and other groups.

Justice, Not Charity 2.0, follow-up from COPE conference on defending public education, 7:30 pm, BCTF building (5th & Cambie), with guest speaker Heather-jane Robertson of Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. Info: www.cope.bc.ca.

La Trova Nuestra, Friday, Jan. 25, 8 pm, monthly peña with Latin American performers, \$10, refreshments available, at the CSE, 706 Clark Drive.

Left Film Night, Sunday, Jan. 27, 7 pm, Centre for Socialist Education, 706 Clark Drive. Screening of "Petropolis", documentary on the impact of tar sands projects in northern Alberta. Free, donations welcome, call 604-2455-2041.

Saskatoon, SK

Saskatchewan Women's Forum 2013, Jan. 18-19, a coalition of women and equality-seeking organizations will meet at the Bessborough Hotel. Registration \$50 (reduced rate available). For details, contact michelle.beveridge@oxfam.ca or ph. 306.242.4097.

Winnipeg, MB

Buffy Sainte Marie, speaking on years of political suppression and continued activism through

music, art and education. Tues, Jan. 29, Noon at U of Manitoba, University Centre MPR room.

Marxism Course, Contact CPC Manitoba Committee to join up. 586-7824 or cpc-mb@changetheworldmb.ca

Toronto, ON

Protest at Ontario Liberal Convention, Sat., Jan. 26, 1 pm, rally at Allan Gardens (Jarvis & Carleton), followed by march to Maple Leaf Gardens. For information, visit <http://ofl.ca>

Montreal, QC

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

NO TO AUSTERITY & WAR TOUR - ONTARIO

Speaking tour with Miguel Figueroa, leader of the Communist Party of Canada, see ad on page 3 for more info. Ontario dates include:

BRAMPTON, Sun., Jan. 13, 2:30 pm, Brampton Soccer Centre, Room #1, 1495 Sandalwood Parkway East, 647-818-6880

ST. CATHARINES, Wed., Jan. 16, 7 pm, St. Catharines Public Library, Mills Rm., 54 Church St. 289-995-0017

TORONTO, (with Johan Boyden, Young Communist League leader), Sun., Jan. 20, 2 pm, OISE Room 5-250, 252 Bloor St. West, 416-469-2446

GUELPH, Tuesday, Jan. 22, 5:30 pm, University Centre Room 442, U. of Guelph, 519-767-8411

OTTAWA, Sun., Jan. 29, 7 pm, McNabb Community Centre, 180 Percy St. (at Gladstone), 613-232-7108

First Nations & PM Harper...

continued from p. 4

devolved to First Nations for only about the past forty-five years. It is recognized that many First Nation administrations have good records in financial administration. Some over-expend, trying to respond to the rising expectations of their citizens. I ask you, how long has it been since the Government of Canada was debt free? In the past ten years, how many deficit free budgets have there been?

The United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Indigenous Peoples, says in Articles 18 and 19 that the indigenous peoples (First Nations) have an unequivocal "right to participate in decision-making in matters which affect their rights," and "States shall consult and cooperate in good faith

with the indigenous peoples concerned through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free, prior and informed consent before adopting and implementing legislation or administrative measures that may affect them." The Harper government reluctantly ratified the Declaration, with the addendum that the approval was conditional. The widespread national political reaction spawned, because the protestors believe the current federal government would like to abandon its fiduciary responsibility and rapidly assimilate First Nations who want to preserve their unique legal rights.

Roy L. Piepenburg, Hon. Senator, *Indian Association of Alberta* (1986)

OUR STORY
stuff they don't tell you!

WORKERS VIEW OF HANES NUDE LOOK

Women expose injustice
When Hanes Stockings advertised The Nude Look, they didn't count on their workers taking them literally. As more women worked, organizing them in small hostile plants was hard and Hanes proved it. The anti-union American firm killed the bid but due to this strike, the Labour Standards Act of 1971 put the government behind equal pay for equal work.

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1971: Kingston Pen riot lasts 4 days, 2 dead.

People's Voice deadlines

February 1-14 issue: Thursday, Jan. 17

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

La Trova Nuestra

Friday, Jan. 25, 8:00 pm

"La Peña Nuestra"
Centre For Socialist Education, Vancouver
706 Clark Drive (Clark and Georgia st)
\$10 Entry

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

How the Pentonville Five dockworkers changed British labour history

By Graham Stevenson,
www.morningstaronline.co.uk

Vic Turner, who died on December 30, is perhaps most famous as one of the Pentonville Five dockers imprisoned in 1972. The Pentonville case was a high water mark during a period of stunningly effective working-class militancy against the attacks of the 1970-74 Tory government - a period it is worth learning from as we face renewed class war by a Tory-led administration.

Between 1970 and 1974 there were two national miners' strikes and two national dockers' strikes. The nation's postal workers and construction workers also went on strike. Council-house tenants launched a wave of rent-strikes and there was even an abortive general strike.

This took place in the context of the Tory plan to diminish the value of workers' incomes through the 1971 Industrial Relations Act, which met its biggest test during the Pentonville case. In the words of then Communist Party trade union organiser Bert Ramelson, after Pentonville the Act simply became "inoperable."

The dockers' strikes led to the Ted Heath government imposing states of emergency. A measure of how sensitive they were lies in the revelation from Cabinet papers that Heath received regular reports from secret agents and had phones tapped and bugged. Meetings between dockers' shop stewards and leading Communist Party officials were detailed for him - as were internal discussions about the editorial line of the *Morning Star*.

It later emerged that a leading London docker, who later became the chair of the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU), was an MI5 informant.

The key battle for dockers was over "containerisation," the move towards shipping goods in large standard-sized steel containers. Only 15 men handled a container ship, compared with the 150 required by a conventional vessel. Job numbers were dropping drastically.

Dockers weren't fighting

containerisation itself, but campaigned for a designated zone around registered docks where container-handling would be done by organised labour.

In Merseyside a joint committee of TGWU dockers and lorry drivers obtained agreements from March 20, 1972, with 35 transport firms.

But one firm, Heaton's, which moved containers to inland depots to "stuff and strip" them at half the usual cost, went to the special court set up by the Act - the National Industrial Relations Court - for an injunction against picketing.

In London, action focused on a ramshackle container depot in Stratford less than two miles from the London docks - the now defunct London International Freight Terminal on the site of what today is the Olympic park.

In July 1972, five shop stewards were imprisoned in Pentonville Prison for criminal contempt of court. The case was recorded as *Midland Cold Storage (MCS) Ltd v Turner and Others*. MCS was owned by Lord Vestey, the head of a massive meat shipping company. It was said that the Vesteyes did not just live off the interest on their invested capital, but on the interest on the interest.

MCS had sought an injunction to end picketing. A private detective agency, Euro-Tec, was asked by Special Branch to establish the names of the rank-and-file leaders. One Euro-Tec agent later revealed that thousands of shop stewards and union officials, their families and friends were regularly monitored by the agency on behalf of MI5.

The five who were arrested and imprisoned on July 21, 1972, were Conny Clancy, Tony Merrick, Bernie Steer, Vic Turner and Derek Watkins. Turner and Steer were both prominent Communist Party members and Steer was also lay secretary of the unofficial national ports shop stewards committee.

The day the men were sent to prison 35,000 dockers walked out on strike. That weekend saw a massive mobilisation across the country, with phone lines ringing red hot in preparation for a total

stoppage in all ports.

By the time the dockers were released on July 26 at least 250,000 workers had taken unofficial strike action. Newspapers and public transport were almost totally shut down. Some coalmines came out. Customs, immigration and social security offices were severely affected. There was almost no milk available that week - it was then



Vic Turner of the Pentonville Five (Morning Star photo)

almost exclusively delivered by drivers organised by the TGWU.

It was this tremendous pressure which led the Official Solicitor - then as now a fairly unknown part of the state judicial system - to apply to the Appeal Court, which ordered their release. But the House of Lords immediately backed a counter-appeal from the haulage companies. This prompted the TUC general council to call a one-day general strike for Monday, July 31, unless the five were set free.

The general strike didn't happen because the Official Solicitor succeeded in having them released. But a number of unions, including the National Graphical Association, held one-day protest strikes anyway.

The Cabinet was informed that the proposed general strike was "bound up with tactics to secure the acceptance, by the dockers' delegate conference taking place

that day, of the recommendations in the interim report of the joint special committee on the future of the dock industry."

That was a problem, since the emphasis of the Aldington-Jones report was on improved severance - mainly for unfit and older dockers - coupled with some temporary work-sharing, which many saw as the thin end of the wedge.

a national strike!" a massive roar shook the streets around Transport House. Bernie Steer was lifted onto shoulders and paraded around to chants of "Heath Out!" Thousands of dockers appeared from nowhere to march in an orderly fashion to Tower Hill for a rally.

As Tony Merrick roared: "We were asleep for five years while they took jobs away from us. Even now, the victory has not been won."

From July 28, 42,000 registered dockers began the quietest and most solid, successful dock strike ever. The settlement after three weeks of strike action saw major improvements in conditions and also staved off deregulation for 15 years.

Eventually the Containerbase Federation Ltd. made an agreement with the TGWU road transport (commercial) trade group, preferring a devil they could do business with. It opened our roads to a world of box containers.

Shaken by Pentonville, the nation's capitalist newspapers set to work to portray the Communist Party as the source of the problems in British industry. The *News of the World* launched a major campaign against Ramelson.

The national dock labour scheme was abolished in 1989. Since then the union has fought back to regain a key role, but much casual work still abounds in Britain's ports. ●

Rideau Canal workers finally win recognition

Based on an article by David Butler from the Ottawa Citizen.

Six years after they were nominated, the workers who built the Rideau Canal will finally be recognized as historically significant. The thousands of labourers - mostly Irish immigrants and French-Canadians - who carved the 202-kilometre waterway through bush, swamps and lakes will be formally recognized for their contribution.

The existing designation of the 180-year-old canal as a national historic site will be expanded to commemorate the workers. Larger-than-usual plaques and interpretive panels will be erected at the Ottawa locks and Jones Falls to tell their story.

"The workers are integral to the story of the Rideau Canal, which is why I decided that the original designation should be expanded to honour their contributions," said a news release from Environment Minister Peter Kent.

The Rideau Canal, declared a UNESCO world heritage site in 2007, was first designated a national historic site in 1925. However, the canal workers were not formally recognized in the original designation.

It is estimated that between 5,000 and 6,000 labourers were involved each year during the main construction period from 1827 to 1831. The Rideau Canal, which extends from Ottawa to Kingston, opened in 1832 and

was one of the largest construction projects in 19th century British North America.

The labourers worked with tools such as axes, picks and shovels for 12 to 16 hours a day and six days a week in summer, clearing brush, excavating lock pits and channels, quarrying stone, erecting wooden weirs and bridges and building rubble embankments and masonry locks and dams.

They had to deal with the threat of disease, especially malaria, then called "ague" or swamp fever. Due to illnesses and accidents as many as 1,000 are believed to have died, though no reliable statistics were kept.

Many of the workers settled in Eastern Ontario, where up to 100,000 descendants still live, but winning recognition for them was an uphill struggle.

In 2010, the Historic Sites and Monuments Board rejected an application from the Celtic Cross Commemorative Group, saying the labourers weren't of national historic significance because their work "represented a typical and common form of labour at the time, and that it was not unusual, nor was it remarkable."

But after a *Citizen* story on the rejection triggered a torrent of criticism, the Board - which is supported by Parks Canada - reversed its position. When no announcement was forthcoming, the group's Kevin Dooley went public with his concern that recognition of the workers had "gone off the radar." ●

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