

JAN. 1-31, 2016
VOL. 24 #1
\$1.50

people's VOICE

Byelections called in BC
Page 3

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

What's next for Planet Earth?

A look at the results of COP21



Analysis and commentary - see page 6



The North Wind and the Sun

Looking ahead at the Liberal economic agenda

- page 2 -

4

Setback for fascists

The new Liberal government has taken an important step to scale down federal support for the anti-communist "monument" planned in Ottawa. They should go further and put this fascist project in the trash.

INSIDE

7

What's up in Oregon?

The occupation of a wildlife refuge in Oregon is another ominous sign of renewed activities by far right forces in the US and Canada.

12

Venezuela solidarity

The Bolivarian Revolution in Venezuela suffered a serious blow in December's legislative elections. But the struggle to defend the gains achieved by the working class and poor Venezuelans continues.

Between the Sun and the North Wind

By Johan Boyden, Montreal

As People's Voice readers and progressive-minded folks across Canada head into the New Year, we are looking at a different political landscape.

Last week, a friend of the Communist Party here in Montreal sent me a cartoon they had drawn with their interpretation of the change. It showed Steven Harper holding a Guy Fawkes-style mask – bearing the face of new Liberal Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau.

A catchy image. But is it entirely correct? To be sure, the "new boss" is "same as the old boss" in terms of class agenda. But people's forces should take heart in the defeat of Harper. The Liberals very carefully and consciously crafted their campaign in response to the public sentiment generated from nearly a decade of popular struggles, which should not be short-changed.

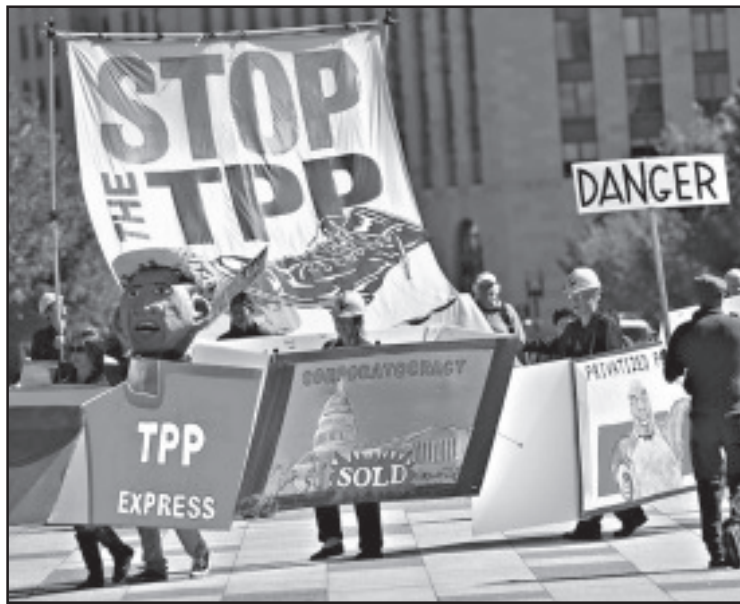
To back up this claim, consider this anecdote from the Canadian Club. (No, not the whiskey: the elite Toronto organization that holds "opinion-shaping luncheon discussions.") Trudeau spoke here in May, and was quick to acknowledge that he was addressing a crowd that included millionaires and billionaires.

"I know people in your position get asked for a lot, and, as evidenced by the thriving and generous philanthropic culture in Canada, you step up," he said, pitching his tax hike on the rich. "Your contributions to Canadian society have been appreciated. I'm asking for one more."

Never mind how perverse is the framework of taxes as charity. Trudeau was talking about the need to shift away from Harper's austerity agenda and instead adopt infrastructure spending to combat the capitalist economic crisis and "secular stagnation."

This economic theory deserves a whole other article, but what is interesting is Trudeau's sales pitch: "If we don't deliver fairness, Canadians will eventually entertain more radical options. All the time I spent with Canadians tells me that the status quo is not sustainable. Change is coming, my friends. What we need is leadership and to plan to shape that change responsibly for the benefit of us all. Either we choose to act now or we will be forced to react later."

Since the election, Trudeau's "responsible change," or "real change," has been re-branded by the media as "sunny ways." The phrase is not original. Justin Trudeau borrowed it from Sir Wilfred Laurier, aka the Liberal Prime Minister on the five dollar bill, who liked to recount the story of The Wind and the Sun as a political parable. Found in the folklore of both ancient Greece and India, it is a fable worth recounting.



The new Liberal government are big supporters of the TPP and other transnational corporate agreements.

The North Wind and the Sun are competing to see who is stronger. The challenge? Make a passing traveller remove his cloak. The North Wind blew and blew. But the traveller only wrapped his cloak tighter to keep warm. Then the Sun shone. The traveller, overcome with heat, soon took his cloak off.

In Laurier's time, the fable meant that persuasion was better than force. So, for Trudeau, are we up against the sun, or the north wind?

A lot has been said about the Liberals' nation-to-nation approach to Indigenous peoples, and their policies on climate change and refugees. All these questions are important for the working people, and whatever has been achieved should be attributed to mass campaigning. Less attention has been given to other class issues. Considered these notes:

In November, Trudeau surprised many by becoming the first Canadian Prime Minister since Diefenbaker to meet with the Canadian Labour Congress. He received a standing ovation, promising to repeal Harper's most vicious anti-labour laws.

A few weeks later, Chrystia Freeland, Minister of International Trade, and Mary Ann Mihychuk, Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, met again with a select group of CLC-affiliated labour leaders about the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade deal.

It is worth noting that Freeland's ministerial mandate letter calls for such consultation, and to "Implement and expand Canada's Free Trade Agreements globally." Mihychuk's mandate letter also states, among other things, that she is to "Amend the Canada Labour Code to allow workers to formally request flexible work arrangements from their employers."

In December, Judy Foote, Minister of Public Services and Procurement, quietly announced that the Liberals will not restore all home mail delivery. Foot's mandate letter simply calls to "Undertake a review of Canada Post." While phase-out of home delivery is currently suspended, 300,000 more addresses were converted into "superboxes" hours before the announcement.

Finally, a day before Christmas Eve, the government announced it

New Year's Day a century ago...

Commentary by Darrell Rankin, leader of the Communist Party of Canada (Manitoba)

What was New Year's Day like one hundred years ago?

The world's large and most powerful imperialist nations were locked in mortal combat. Millions were dying of bullets, pestilence and starvation. The outlook was dreadful.

Yet it was the eve of the 1917 Russian socialist revolution. Resistance to the war and capitalism was growing from Ireland and Russia to Quebec and across English Canada.

This is what James Connolly (1868-1916), the famous Irish revolutionary and Marxist, said on New Year's one hundred years ago: "We should... wish all our readers a 'Happy New Year'... But such a wish rings better when it is accompanied by a belief that the wish may be realised, and at the present moment the signs of a Happy New Year are none too plentiful."

Connolly died fighting British imperialism a few months later, but his ideas are immortal.

The very next year, a socialist revolution took Russia out of the 'great' war and hastened the war's end. Change can happen quickly.

The spread of revolution to parts of Germany, Hungary and beyond, and international working class solidarity with Russia were too great a threat to capitalist rulers for them to rule in the same way, sparking both fascism (Italy and later Germany) or gestures and concessions to the working class, such as the Liberal Party's medicare promise in 1919 after the Winnipeg General Strike. ●

will take no action on enhancing the below-poverty Canada Pension Plan (CPP) and instead consider options in the upcoming year, including to "do nothing."

Making sense of this new political landscape is an important challenge. No doubt it will be at the heart of the discussion at the end of January, when the Communist Party of Canada's Central Committee launches

preparations for the 38th Central Convention.

After all, the creative application of Marxism-Leninism to today's conditions and the elaboration of the way forward is probably the Party's most powerful qualitative contribution to our class in its struggle for socialism.

Johan Boyden is the Central Organizer of the Communist Party of Canada. ●

Stop writing for the Halifax Herald

By Miles Howe, halifax.mediacoop.ca

As much as you might want to contribute an op-ed to the Herald and see your name in print, the Typographical Union is asking you to hold off until they have a new contract.

There's another strike situation looming at the Halifax daily of record, the Chronicle Herald. Talks between the Halifax Typographical Union - representing 61 news employees - and management at the newspaper broke down in late December, 2105. With a conciliator expected to file a report within a few days, the typographical union faces a lock-out situation within about two weeks.

On January 8th, the union issued a press release requesting that freelance writers, contributors and op-ed writers not contribute to the Chronicle Herald until the union is back at work with a contract in hand. According to Ingrid Bulmer, president of the Halifax Typographical Union, Chronicle Herald management has been actively soliciting King's University journalism students, as well as freelance union members, in preparation for a strike situation. ●

Celebrate the father of socialized medicine in Canada!

NORMAN BETHUNE DAY

Saturday, Feb. 27, 7:00 pm

GCDO Hall, 290 Danforth Ave., Toronto

Guest speaker:

People's Voice Editor Kimball Cariou

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



Organized by Bethune Day Committee.
Media Sponsor: People's Voice
Info: 416-469-2446

MAY DAY 2016 GREETING ADS

To mark May Day 2016, People's Voice will print greetings from a wide range of labour and people's organizations in our May 1-15 issue, which will be distributed at events across Canada. The deadline for camera-ready ads will be April 22; if PV is preparing the layout, the deadline is April 21. Please check with us about the format if your ad is being sent electronically.

Ad rates (based on 5 column page):

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

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

REDS ON THE WEB

www.communist-party.ca

www.peoplesvoice.ca

www.ycl-ljc.ca

rebelyouth-magazine.blogspot.com

<http://solidnet.org>

BC by-elections a referendum on Liberal corporate agenda

The Communist Party of BC is urging voters in Vancouver-Mount Pleasant and Coquitlam-Burke Mountain to reject Premier Christy Clark's Liberals in by-elections to be held on Feb. 2. The premier delayed calling these votes for nearly six months, reflecting her political history of contempt for the people of British Columbia and for the right to effective representation in the Legislature.

"These by-elections will be an important occasion for working class and poor people to reject the right-wing, pro-corporate agenda of the BC Liberals," says George Gidora, leader of the Communist Party of BC.

While the CPBC has decided not to nominate candidates in these by-elections, it will be on the ballot in Vancouver-Mount Pleasant and several other ridings in the provincial general election set for May 2017. The party has spoken out strongly against the anti-people policies of the BC Liberals ever since Gordon Campbell became premier in 2001. Communist candidates have been on the ballot in every election, and the CPBC has taken part in fightback struggles by trade unions, anti-poverty groups, environmentalists, First Nations, public education supporters and many other progressive movements over the past fifteen years.

During the Feb. 2 by-elections, the CPBC will distribute materials raising a number of key demands for progressive change in British

Columbia:

- An immediate 50 percent increase in social assistance and disability rates, which were below poverty levels during the NDP of the 1990s and have been frozen for many years under the Liberals.

- Emergency action to build tens of thousands of low-income and social housing units, to help reduce the skyrocketing housing costs faced by residents of Metro Vancouver and other regions of the province.

- Increase the minimum wage immediately to the \$15/hour demanded by the labour movement, and to \$20/hour within two years.

- Expand transit services for the Lower Mainland including a massive increase in the bus fleet.

- Roll back and eliminate tuition fees for post-secondary students.

- Reverse the cuts to provincial funding for public schools and the health care system, and block the growing privatization of public services.

- Reverse the huge tax cuts for corporations and top income earners, which have cost the provincial treasury over \$2 billion annually since 2001.

- Launch a comprehensive plan to shift from reliance on export of resources, towards an economy based on job creation through environmentally sustainable processing of raw materials.

- Full recognition of inherent indigenous rights, including measures to help implement all 94 recommendations of the Truth and

Reconciliation Commission and to end the legacy of centuries of violence against indigenous peoples.

The NDP candidate in the Vancouver-Mount Pleasant by-election is Melanie Mark, a former president of the Urban Native Youth Association, who hopes to become B.C.'s first female indigenous MLA. For several years, Mark worked in the office of BC's representative for children and youth, Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond, who has been scathing in her criticisms of the government's abysmal failure to protect the interests of young people. Mark has a stronger record as a social activist than Green candidate Pete Fry. The Liberal candidate is Gavin Dew, a communications consultant who has worked for the deeply unpopular Trans Mountain pipeline expansion proposed by Texas-based energy giant Kinder Morgan. For these reasons, the Mount Pleasant campaign will be a referendum on the right-wing policies of the Campbell and Clark governments, and the CPBC is urging a vote for Melanie Mark.

Coquitlam-Burke Mountain was formerly represented by B.C. Liberal Doug Horne, who was defeated last October as a federal Conservative candidate. Running for the NDP in this by-election is Jodie Wickens, the executive director of the Autism Support Network, but the candidate with the strongest record of progressive social activism is musician Joe



"Raise the Rates" demo in the Downtown Eastside neighbourhood of Vancouver-Mount Pleasant. Photo by K. Cariou

Keithley for the Greens.

"The Communist Party of BC will use these by-elections to speak about the real issues facing our province, and to urge the defeat of the Liberals," says George Gidora. "The demands we raise will be the focus of our May 2017 provincial election platform to call for people's needs, not corporate greed."

Gidora stresses that "the only sure way to drive the Liberals out of office next year is to build a powerful mass fightback around these and other progressive

demands, uniting the labour movement, indigenous peoples, environmentalists, students, seniors, poor people, and everyone suffering from the impact of the capitalist economic crisis and the Liberal attacks on social programs and education. If the NDP runs yet another campaign based on accepting so-called 'balanced budgets' and other neoliberal policies, the Liberals will likely win a fifth consecutive majority. That would be a disaster for the working class of British Columbia." ●

Jail time for Metron Construction manager sets precedent

The 3½-year jail sentence for a Metron Construction manager found guilty of criminal negligence in the 2009 deaths of four workers is a victory for advocates of corporate criminal accountability in workplace death and injury, say leaders of the United Steelworkers (USW).

"This is a Toronto story but it is a national precedent and has implications for our campaign to Stop the Killing and Enforce the Law," said USW National Director Ken Neumann, noting that the sentence is first of its kind in Ontario.

"Our union has led the fight to have better investigation and prosecution of corporate directors and executives who are ultimately responsible when workers are killed on the job," Neumann said. "We fought for the 2004 Criminal Code amendments that allow for such enforcement, but the minimal application of the law over the last 12 years has not changed the culture that sees workers' lives as expendable and death as a cost of doing business."

USW Ontario/Atlantic Director Marty Warren said workers are still dying at a rate of 1,000 a year.

"If employers see this concurrent sentence (3½ years for each worker) as a deterrent to negligence and to the urge to gamble with workers' lives, then we may see a gradual improvement in health and safety," said Warren. "For too long, workers have been

somehow seen to be at fault for causing their own death and injury. At best, companies are handed fines and move on with their operations, without accountability and without justice for families. That has got to stop."

USW Western Canada Director Steve Hunt said the union has been dealing with the aftermath of workplace killing by

More details on the campaign to Stop the Killing, Enforce the Law, including video testimony from families who have lost loved ones, can be found at www.stopthekilling.ca.



Rotating strikes planned by Montreal civic workers

CUPE has announced that 8,000 white-collar workers of the City of Montreal will be on a rotating strike for 36 days from January 25 to February 29, when various services, offices and boroughs of the city will be affected. This wave will culminate in a general strike day on March 1, the deadline for the payment of municipal taxes. The employees will not do any overtime work during this period, but will provide all essential services prescribed by law.

With this strike, the union says they are protesting "the Coderre administration's determination to open the floodgates to subcontracting and privatization." They want to raise awareness that the city's offensive continues although the workers have been without a collective agreement for more than four years.

"The work of the Charbonneau Commission and their final report has demonstrated repeatedly that the fight against collusion is impossible without a strong, healthy public service. Instead, the white collars find themselves in the midst of an all-out war with the Coderre administration. The administration wants to eliminate any checks on subcontracting and to reduce the total compensation of white-collar workers by 12 to 14%. We will therefore defend Montreal's internal expertise with all our might, as long as the Coderre administration refuses to listen to reason," said Alain Fugère, president of the Island of Montréal white-collar union (CUPE 429).

"The precise words of Recommendation 25 of the Charbonneau Commission are: Internal expertise is an effective bulwark against collusion. Mayor Coderre was elected on the promise that he would strengthen that internal expertise. We want him to explain to Montrealers why he has changed his mind," added the union president.

Specifically, the City wants to contract out all the work performed by a permanent employee in each of the following sectors: logistics of the purchase and distribution of clothing; information technology; printing; sports and recreation; post offices; parking officers; all or part of the activities already under contract (libraries and public works); and finally, all work carried out by auxiliary workers.

With more than 110,000 members in Quebec, CUPE represents about 70% of the province's municipal employees, who account for 31,000 of the union's members. ●

EDITORIALS

Canada's shameful housing failure

Can a wealthy country such as Canada find ways to tackle the massive problems of homelessness and unaffordable housing? On any given night, over 35,000 Canadians are homeless, and one in five households spend half of their income on rent. As long as federal and provincial governments refuse to address this crisis, no serious progress is likely. Instead, municipalities are left holding the bag, usually responding with feeble bylaw changes or "incentives" to urge developers to include a handful of "affordable" units and some public amenities as part of huge new condo projects in major cities.

So it's remarkable to read that China completed 7.72 million units of affordable housing in urban areas in 2015, according to official data reported by the Xinhua news agency. China's Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development adds that last year, 6 million dilapidated urban homes were renovated, with a goal of rebuilding 18 million such homes between 2015 and 2017. The country invested \$237 billion U.S. last year in its affordable housing program, aimed at low-income families that have been priced out of the property market.

This is not to ignore the serious social and economic contradictions which affect China in its current period, including a growing "wealth gap". But these numbers represent a sharp contrast to Canada, even considering that China has 40 times the population of and five times the GDP of our country. Comparable numbers here would mean spending \$6 billion annually, to build 200,000 new units of affordable housing and renovate another 150,000 urban housing units every year. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights signed by Canada includes the right to adequate housing among its provisions. The new federal government should be pressed to establish a national housing program to help achieve this goal.

COP21: half full or half empty?

In the wake of last month's COP21 climate conference in Paris, two schools of thought have emerged. Some argue that by setting targets, establishing a \$100 billion "mitigation" fund to help developing countries adapt, and requiring greater transparency in reporting emissions, the Paris agreement may open the door for an escalating push to prevent a disastrous increase in global warming.

But critics warn that the agreement is not legally binding on the 195 countries which signed up. Why? Mainly because President Obama's administration insisted on this condition, since the Republican-dominated U.S. Congress, loaded with climate change deniers, would not approve a binding treaty. That makes compliance voluntary, hostage to the whims of anti-science, far-right legislators in Washington.

And even if all countries meet their emissions reduction pledges, most scientists warn that temperatures will rise 3 to 4 degrees, spreading homelessness, disease, poverty and death for hundreds of millions of poor people in large areas of Africa and Asia. Rapidly rising temperatures could generate feedback loops with impacts much worse than previously feared, and the mitigation fund is far too small to handle such consequences.

The Paris agreement focusses on proposals to reduce consumption and demand, while doing little to cut the deadly production of fossil fuels. That's no surprise, because the profits of the giant energy monopolies are the number one priority of many of the world leaders who went to France for this crucial meeting.

It would be comforting to believe that the Paris deal set our planet on the path to a secure future. But global warming arises from the relentless profiteering of capitalism. The only good news is that more and more people are grasping the necessity to replace this destructive economic system with a socialist society based on protecting people and nature instead.

PEOPLE'S VOICE

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

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

Volunteers and contributors for this issue:

Dave Arland, Ed Bil, Johan Boyden, Wally Brooker,
Roberto Diaz, Miguel Figueroa, Baldev Padam,
B. Prasant, Darrell Rankin, Liz Rowley,
and our mailers in Vancouver & Toronto.

Editor: Kimball Cariou Business Manager: Hassan Azimikor

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

LETTERS

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

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



Time to scrap anti-communist monument in Ottawa

This letter from Communist Party leader Miguel Figueroa was sent on Dec. 18 to Minister of Canadian Heritage Mélanie Joly:

On behalf of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Canada, I am writing to convey our view with regard to the proposed "Memorial to the Victims of Communism" to be located in the National Capital Region, and to strongly urge your Ministry to deny final approval and withdraw government financial support for this controversial project.

We note your announcement yesterday to refer the proposal back to the National Capital Commission (NCC) for further consideration. In our view however, the current project is far too politically tainted to serve any socially useful purpose in a balanced and historically accurate manner. For this reason, we feel that this particular project should be rejected on principle.

Our Party was among the very first to express its vehement opposition to this highly partisan project when the proposal first went before the National Capital Commission (NCC) for consideration in 2009. In a letter to Russell Mills, Chair of the Board of Directors, National Capital Commission on October 1, 2009, we noted that the proposed monument would besmirch and slander the history of our Party in Canada, and "constitute an unjust attack on the pride Canadian Communists feel for our pioneering contributions to Canada since 1921, such as fighting against fascism, organizing industrial workers into unions, initiating the movements to win Unemployment Insurance, public healthcare and other social programs, campaigning for peace and disarmament, fighting for the full national rights of Aboriginal peoples and Quebec, and in defending Canada's sovereignty."

In that letter, we added:
"This proposal smacks of the

type of vicious anti-communism which plagued our country (among others) during much of the latter half of the last century. [T]hat sordid period of our history was marked by crude, unsubstantiated and unjust slanders and attacks on progressive-minded Canadians, and resulted in a wave of mass hysteria and witch-hunts, social ostracism, and great hardships, including imprisonment, for many of its victims. Most importantly, it had a ferocious 'chilling effect' on public discourse and sharply curtailed the freedom of expression and associated democratic rights of all Canadians. McCarthyism was ultimately relegated to the dustbin of history, and that is where it should remain."

As you are well aware, this "memorial" was not only welcomed by the previous government; it was aggressively championed by former PM Stephen Harper and senior members of his Cabinet for blatantly partisan and self-serving reasons. And when private fundraising for the project fell far short, the former Government offered substantial monetary assistance from the public treasury to finance its construction.

The justification for this "memorial" has been based on highly questionable historical claims. The authors of the proposal have stated for instance that the monument would "honour the 100 million lives lost under Communist regimes". This is a monstrous lie, as demonstrated in numerous objective historical studies. The 20 million Soviet citizens who perished during World War II, for example, died at the hands of the Nazi invasion, and in defending their national sovereignty, not at the hands of 'Communist regimes'. This is a crude attempt to turn history on its head.

But the political implications of this proposal go far beyond its tainted history; it would have international consequences as well, and be widely perceived as a retrograde step contributing to attempts elsewhere to whip up a

renewed atmosphere of anti-communism. In Europe, for instance, anti-democratic attacks have been launched by governments against Communist parties and affiliated organizations in several countries, including the Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Ukraine, Estonia, Greece and elsewhere, without any legal or justifiable basis. The true underlying goal of this campaign is intended to intimidate and isolate progressive parties and movements, and to limit the free expression of ideas.

We would further note that the name for this monument also defames the many accomplishments of communist parties which have formed governments, in countries such as the People's Republic of China, Cuba, and Vietnam, or taken part in governments, including South Africa, India, Venezuela, Brazil, Chile, etc.

We therefore urge you to withdraw all federal support from this controversial project, and prevent this manifestation of anti-communism from becoming a permanent, shameful blot on the capital city, and on Canada as a whole. ●

Renew today!

Check your label

Please check the address label on the front page to see if it's time to renew. Subscribers who find "2016/01/01" on their label, for example, will have their subscriptions expire with this issue, January 1-31, 2016

Don't miss a single copy - renew today!

One year since Cuba-U.S. diplomatic relations re-established

Statement by Cuban President Raúl Castro Ruz on the anniversary of the decision to re-establish diplomatic relations between Cuba and the United States

One year has gone by since the announcements made on Dec. 17, 2014, by the presidents of Cuba and the United States to re-establish diplomatic relations and work to improve our relations.

One year ago, as part of the agreements reached to find a solution to issues of interest for both countries, we were able to announce, to the great joy of all of our people, the return to our homeland of Gerardo, Ramón and Antonio, with which we made true the promise made by Fidel who had asserted that our Five Heroes would return.

On that date, in accordance with our reiterated disposition to hold a respectful dialogue with the Government of the United States, on the basis of sovereign equality, to discuss a wide variety of issues in a reciprocal way, without any detriment to our people's national independence and self-determination, we agreed to take mutual steps to improve the bilateral atmosphere and move on towards the normalization of relations between the two countries.

It could be said that, since then, we have achieved some results, particularly in the political, diplomatic and cooperation spheres:

- Diplomatic relations were re-established and the embassies in both countries were re-opened. These actions were preceded by the rectification of the unjust designation of Cuba as a State sponsor of terrorism.
- High level meetings and visits have taken place.
- The already existing cooperation in areas of mutual interest, such as aviation safety and security as well as the combat against drug-trafficking, illegal migration, alien smuggling and migration fraud has been expanded. The regular and respectful meetings between the military commands of Cuba and the United States in the perimeter of the U.S. Naval Base in Guantánamo have continued.
- New possibilities for bilateral cooperation have opened up in areas of mutual benefit, such as environmental protection, law enforcement, maritime and port security and health.
- New dialogues have been initiated on bilateral and multilateral topics of interest, such as climate change, mutual compensations, traffic in persons and human rights, this latter being the one on which we have profound differences and about which we are having an exchange on the basis of respect and reciprocity.
- We have signed agreements on environmental protection and the re-establishment of direct postal services.

All of this has been achieved through a professional and

respectful dialogue based on equality and reciprocity.

Quite on the contrary, this year we have not made any progress in the solution of those issues which are essential for Cuba to be able to have normal relations with the United States.

Although President Obama has repeatedly stated his opposition to the economic, commercial and



President Raul Castro

financial blockade and has urged Congress to lift it, this policy remains in force. The persecution of Cuba's legitimate financial transactions as well as the extra-territorial impact of the blockade, which causes damages and hardships to our people and is the main obstacle to the development of the Cuban economy, have been tightened.

The steps taken so far by President Obama, although positive, have proved to be limited in scope, which has prevented their implementation. By using his

executive prerogatives, the President could expand the scope of the steps that have already been taken and take new steps that would substantially modify the implementation of the blockade.

Despite Cuba's repeated claim for the return of the territory illegally occupied by the Guantánamo Naval Base, the Government of the United States has stated that it has no intention to change the status of that enclave.

The U.S. Government is still implementing programs that are harmful to Cuba's sovereignty, such as the projects aimed at bringing about changes in our political, economic and social order and the illegal radio and television broadcasts, for which they continue to allocate millions of dollars in funds.

A preferential migration policy continues to be applied to Cuban citizens, which is evidenced by the enforcement of the wet foot/dry foot policy, the Medical Professional Parole Program and the Cuban Adjustment Act, which encourage an illegal, unsafe, disorderly and irregular migration, foment human smuggling and other related crimes and create problems to other countries.

The Government of Cuba will continue to reiterate that, in order to normalize relations, it is imperative for the U.S. Government to derogate all these policies that date from the past, which affect the Cuban people and nation and are not in tune with the present

bilateral context and the will expressed by both countries to re-establish diplomatic relations and develop respectful and cooperative relations between both peoples and governments.

No one should expect that, in order to normalize relations with the United States, Cuba will renounce the principles and ideals for which several generations of Cubans have struggled throughout more than half a century. The right of every State to choose the economic, political and social system it wishes, without any interference whatsoever, should be respected.

The Government of Cuba is fully willing to continue advancing in the construction of a kind of relation with the United States that is different from the one that has existed throughout its prior history, that is based on mutual respect for sovereignty and independence, that is beneficial to both countries and peoples and that is nurtured by the historical, cultural and family links that have existed between Cubans and Americans.

Cuba, in fully exercising its sovereignty and with the majority support of its people, will continue to be engaged in the process of transformations to update its economic and social model, in the interest of moving forward in the development of the country, improving the wellbeing of the people and consolidating the achievements attained by the Socialist Revolution. ●

"Canada Is Back?" Not until taxation is truly fair

By Murray Dobbin, 26 Dec 2015, *TheTyee.ca*

Justin Trudeau is fond of saying "Canada is back," and in some genuinely gratifying ways it seems to be the case. But by far the most important and substantive evidence for this claim is still missing: an indication that the new government is willing to seriously address the issue that a genuine return to normal rests upon. That issue is how do we recover from nearly 20 years of systematic looting of the national treasury through reckless tax cuts for high-income earners and large corporations?

Don't get me wrong. I feel the same relief as every other Canadian that public scientists can now speak their minds, that Stephen Harper's war-mongering is history, that we are overnight no longer a pariah on the world stage, that there is at least hope that Ottawa will take aboriginal concerns seriously and that ministers with a passion for their portfolios are more likely to deliver the goods.

But these are the low-hanging fruit of the "Canada is back" mantra, because none of these initiatives cost much money. The only commitment so far to address the enormous social and other deficits racked up over two decades is a modest tax increase for the highest income earners. Otherwise the cupboard is bare. And past Liberal governments, of course, helped make it so.

To reverse this ideological recklessness, Justin Trudeau will have to demonstrate an extraordinary challenge to his

party's 20-year commitment to smaller government. On whether he even wants to - and if he does, whether he is up to the task - the jury is out. One thing is certain: without sustained public pressure Trudeau's Liberals will be content to administer the fiscal status quo they inherited from Harper.

The first test

Their first test is on the table right now. I am referring to a report produced by the group Canadians for Tax Fairness, or C4TF (disclosure: I am on the board), detailing the extensive damage done to the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) by the Harper government. The report is unprecedented in that it was produced with the cooperation of 28 (current and recently retired) tax auditors, fraud investigators and managers of the CRA. According to C4TF, many of them had approached the group over recent years with revelations of Conservative changes that weakened the agency's ability to collect revenue owed to the government.

Detailed in the report are several allegations by the employees, including:

- * Politicians and lobbyists are increasingly finding ways to influence CRA operations.
- * Corporate lobbying to avoid prosecution is a reality.
- * Employees are aware of political interference about proceeding with investigations.
- * There are high attrition rates of experienced professionals.
- * There has been a reduction or shutdown of enforcement offices

across the country.

The CRA hit back at the allegations in the report, quoting high employee satisfaction surveys and identifying plans to increase "large audit" spending by 12%.

In terms of lost revenue, the key finding in the report was the government's systematic gutting of the tax division responsible for investigating offshore tax havens and recovering the revenue lost to the resulting tax evasion and avoidance. C4TF estimates that there is at least \$199 billion in Canadian wealth hidden in tax havens around the world, resulting in the loss of up to \$10 billion in revenue every year.

The report calls on the Trudeau government to fundamentally change the CRA's priorities—away from harassing charities, NGOs and ordinary taxpayers making errors and onto the wealthy and large corporations where the vast majority of revenue is lost.

The media, however, is not focusing on the billions in lost revenue and the damage done to the CRA detailed in the report, and instead is highlighting the issue of how the 28 CRA employees who gave information have allegedly violated the ethics rules that they agreed to as part of the oath of office they signed. There is whistleblower legislation, but it does not protect employees who openly criticize public policy.

The *Ottawa Citizen* quoted Donald Savoie, an expert in the area, calling on the government to investigate what he sees as a breach of ethics. It should have written and editorial calling for the government to fix the CRA.

Talking the talk

There are some encouraging signs that the government might actually make the issue a priority, though it comes not from the economic ministries. Foreign Affairs Minister Stéphane Dion has made the most encouraging comments: "I'd like to address the global economy. It seems like each time we address the problem, like the circulation of funds, there are businesses using tax havens and

clearly aware of it and under enormous pressure to find revenue that doesn't require actually raising taxes, stating: "We're going to work on this issue and other issues and through that work we would expect that we'll ensure that Canadians and Canadian businesses both large and small will pay their appropriate rate of tax."

Morneau has already changed Canada's position regarding corporate tax dodging. The practice of transnational corporations of transfer pricing and tax shifting—shifting profits made in higher tax countries to low tax locations—robs global governments of between \$100 and \$240 billion a year. The new government signed onto an international agreement negotiated by the OECD and the G20 called Base Erosion and Profit Shifting, aimed at forcing corporations to pay taxes in the countries where the profits are actually made. Canada ranks as the third largest loser in the G20 when it comes to the amount of untaxed corporate revenue.

The government's apparent willingness to go after tax cheats—corporate and individual—is good news. But this is just one step in terms of achieving tax justice and fairness, and in recovering the over \$60 billion a year lost through tax cuts. Letting the need for a genuine national conversation about taxes slip to the back burner would be a mistake. Now that we have a government that says it believes in governing, the question of comprehensive progressive tax reform needs to be front and centre. ●



they are doing things in our countries, but they don't pay tax. It's an enormous problem. Whenever [it comes up], I'm told, 'Well, that's up to the international level to resolve.' I'd like to see what Canada could do."

Dion is an influential minister and has the respect of Trudeau, but it will be Finance Minister Bill Morneau who will ultimately decide how much of a priority to make of the tax haven issue. He is

An initial analysis of the COP21 Climate Agreement

A new draft climate agreement was reached on Dec. 14, the last day of the COP21 talks in Paris. In this preliminary analysis, Council of Canadians political director Brent Patterson writes that "unfortunately, despite the framing of this agreement as ambitious and equitable, it falls well short of what is needed in terms of real commitments to emission reductions, keeping fossil fuels in the ground, adequate financing for mitigation, adaptation, and loss and damage, recognition of human rights, and protection from transnational corporate lawsuits."

Patterson's commentary on the rabble.ca website continues:

1. Emission reductions

We had demanded a legally binding commitment to keep the global temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius. We believe that emission reduction targets and the overall temperature target should be legally-binding on all countries. The United States has opposed this and some commentators have stated there is no "global sheriff" to enforce this (apparently different than multilateral trade agreements which are legally-binding and enforceable). We have also stated that beyond a "target" there needs to be real commitment to meet that target. That would mean committing to a 100 per cent clean economy by 2050 and keeping about 80 per cent of fossil fuels in the ground.

The agreement:

- commits the world to limiting warming to "well below 2 degrees Celsius", and to "pursue efforts" to keep it below 1.5 degrees Celsius.

- requires countries to "communicate a nationally determined contribution every five years" starting in 2020.

- relies on the honour system for emission reduction targets (these "Intended Nationally Determined Targets" or INDTs are not legally-binding).

- requires countries to verify and report on their emissions.

- does not commit to a 100 per cent clean economy by 2050.

- does not commit to keeping 80 per cent of fossil fuels in the ground.

- does not address the problem that country emission reduction pledges submitted for the Paris talks would mean a 2.7 to 3.7 degree Celsius increase by 2100.

2. Mitigation and adaptation

We had demanded adequate funding for mitigation and adaptation. Mitigation means cutting or preventing greenhouse gas emissions (by supporting renewable energy, halting deforestation in developing countries) and adaptation means preparing for future climate change (by building better drainage systems to deal with higher seas and more severe storms, shifting to heartier crops that can withstand higher temperatures and lower rainfalls). Again, beyond the

setting of an amount of funding, governments of developed countries have to commit to paying their fair share of the funds needed for this fund. To date, developed countries have failed to contribute their fair share.

The agreement:



- pledges countries to "mobilize" \$100 billion a year to developing countries by 2020 to deal with the consequences of climate change.

- says this \$100 billion a year is "a floor" and that a new commitment to funding will be set by 2025.

- fails to make the \$100 billion pledge legally binding.

3. Loss and damage

We had demanded the inclusion of a "loss and damage" provision. Loss and damage means developed countries paying compensation to developing countries already

suffering the impacts of climate change. While adaptation is about infrastructure and actions to adapt to the impacts of climate change, loss and damage is about recoverable damages (paying for damaged buildings, roads, power lines) and irreparable losses (loss

of lives, species, land). The United States, Canada and other countries have rejected the "loss and damage" provision claiming it implies a legal liability for them to compensate for this damage.

The agreement:

- includes a loss and damage clause that will allow countries to claim for compensation for financial losses due to climate change.

- rules out legal liability for loss and damage.

4. Human rights

We had demanded the inclusion

of Indigenous rights, migrant rights, the rights of women in the operative text. This would recognize that the rights of the peoples most directly impacted by climate change. Indigenous peoples are very often the front-line communities directly impacted by oil, gas and coal projects. Their right to free, prior and informed consent to stop this devastation is essential. The United Nations has stated that up to one billion people could be displaced through climate change by 2050. And yet refugees fleeing from environmental disasters do not have the same minimal rights as political refugees fleeing war and persecution. And women who often suffer the most from climate change, given their responsibility for children, growing food, securing drinking water for their families.

The agreement fails to fully recognize these human rights, and notes these rights in the non-legally-binding preamble of the text.

5. Investor-state rights

We had demanded that the agreement include a provision that would shield national climate actions from investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) challenges through so-called "free trade" agreements. Corporations have used ISDS to challenge governments over 600 times, and

see COP21, page 11

Climate Change: what kind of world at the close of this century?

By Baldev Padam

The fast melting Arctic, the shrinking Himalayan glaciers and the onset of unexpected rains, floods, droughts, windstorms and tsunamis are some of the known indexes of climate change. But a more treacherous form of it has rather silently been spreading its tentacles, without getting much attention.

Climate change is warming 235 lakes the world over, with more than half of the earth's freshwater supplies, says, a recent study by Professor Sapna Sharma, an Indian-origin researcher from York University. The study funded by NASA and others finds that the lakes are warming at an average of 0.34 degrees Celsius each decade, with profound effects on drinking water and the habitat of fish and other animals.

The pace of warming of lakes is greater than the warming of the ocean or the atmosphere, with life threatening consequences. When

temperatures swing quickly and widely from the normal range, life in lake waters not only changes in form but could even disappear, said Prof. Sharma. Fish from freshwater sources is also an important source of protein, especially in the developing world. The results suggest that large changes in our lakes are not only unavoidable, but are happening already.

Nature, in the course of time, had framed laws to help evolution and sustenance of flora and fauna on our planet, which humanity observed more in violation than adherence, particularly after the industrial era began in Europe. The reckless burning of fossil fuels like coal, oil and natural gas to run industrial units spewed immense amounts of CO2 into the atmosphere. That thickened the greenhouse gasses layer, changing the climate. Global warming was exacerbated by cutting down forests to build big industrial, residential and commercial

complexes. Extensive farming of livestock for dietary purposes has added fuel to the fire.

Climate change is a complex environmental problem which influences our very existence. At the heart of this problem lies the need to reduce emissions.

The UN Climate Change Conference held in Paris took serious note of the existential threat to life on earth posed by ever-increasing global warming, and a carbon emission deal was agreed. This was the first assembly of world leaders to consider ways and means to restrict the deadly march of human-made climate change.

Among many decisions taken, the most crucial was to keep global temperatures from rising another degree Celsius between now and 2100. This was the key demand of poor countries like Tuvalu and others ravaged by rising sea levels, who face extinction soon if oceans continue to rise at the present rate. Such a show of solidarity was not witnessed in conferences held earlier for this cause, say international media reports.

Since the developed countries account for the overwhelming amount of accumulated greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, they were mandated to provide monetary help to the developing and the least-developed nations to adapt to the impacts of climate change. The Paris meeting also bound them to transfer climate-friendly technologies to such countries.

Despite all the good things said and done in Paris, some loose ends remain. For example, the agree-

ment won't bind member states until parties which produce over 55% of the world's greenhouse gas emissions have ratified the deal. There is doubt whether some, like the U.S. with its Republican-dominated Congress, will agree to do that. Achieving a reduction in emissions would involve a complete transformation of ways and means to get energy, and environment activists worry that despite the pledges, countries are not ready to make such profound, costly changes.

As a senior member of my household, I offer best wishes to my grandchildren, but I get a little bewildered to imagine how Canada and the world, because of climate change, might look like in the year 2090, when they too would be grandparents. In my life span, I have observed some disturbing changes in weather conditions. Summers are hotter and more prolonged than before, and according to climate experts, the average night temperature the world over is on the rise. Recently I read a funny report that by the turn of present century "old folks" (born in 1915) in Toronto would take their grandchildren north to experience something they have never seen: snow.

I'm not sure of that, but as I write this in Toronto on December 16, we find no snow on the roads. This isn't the rule here, but an exception. Back home, memories of floods in Kashmir in 2014 and Uttarakhand in 2013, and similar deluges in parts of Pakistan, are still fresh in my memory. But I don't recall that a place like Chennai (Madras) in India was

ever inundated in flood waters as witnessed recently. Why was that happening?

Environmentalists hold that climate change arises from human industrial activity. Skeptics say that nature has changed earth's face many times, arguing that volcanic eruptions or changes in sun's intensity, along with other factors, could be the real climate drivers of climate change. The deniers, however, seem either to be self-styled intellectuals, US Republicans, friends of corporations, or spokespersons of the big oil and coal companies or automakers, whose business could collapse once eco-friendly sources of energy become viable and replace existing fuel-based vehicles.

Though the Paris declaration has projected that our survival depends on how effectively we resist global warming, governments must go in for some binding agreement even if this curtails industrial growth targets. The good intentions of restricted greenhouse gas emissions and monetary assistance to the developing nations mentioned in the final draft need to be translated in action to prevent climate change becoming atrocious in future.

The next few years will indicate if this is followed by the developed world in both letter and spirit. The UN infrastructure to monitor emissions and regulate monetary aid is not yet in place, and environmental conditions continue to deteriorate unabated. But if the world wants to breathe free, self discipline must be imposed. Will this ever happen? That is the million dollar question today! ●



"It's the climate which is in a state of emergency"

The story behind the militias at Malheur Refuge

By Kimball Cariou

New Year 2016 started off with a range of important news developments, ranging from the global impact of stock market losses in China, to the escalating tensions between Iran and Saudi Arabia, and neoliberal political advances in Latin America.

Compared to these stories, the militia takeover of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge seems less significant. But the news from Oregon is another worrisome indication that far right forces are on the offensive in many parts of the world, including North America.

The level of armed militia actions in the United States varies over the long run. After a sharp increase during the late 1980s and early '90s, this phenomenon dropped off for some years following the 1995 terror bombing of a federal building in Oklahoma City by neo-fascists. The mass murder of 168 people - including 15 kids at a day care and four other children - exposed the militias as vicious killers. But the relentless drumbeat of militarist propaganda in the U.S. over the past decade and a half has given wider political scope for neo-fascist gangs to operate. Despite the media focus on extremist "jihadis", most violent terror attacks in the U.S. and Canada are committed by ultra-right groups.

This may be particularly true in the western U.S., which has a long and bloody history of colonial genocide to accomplish the theft of indigenous territories. One result has been the spread of white supremacist and "libertarian" ideologies to justify the activities of so-called militias, even to the point of armed insurrection against the U.S. state itself.

As others have noted, these ideologies tend to feed off the popular discontent arising from very real economic and social distress. Many rural areas of the western U.S. suffer from environmental problems and cyclical economic crises which result in high rates of poverty and the dispossession of homes, farms and ranches.

Writing on the *People's World* website, Patrick J. Foote reviews the background to "a decades-long movement which began as the Sagebrush Rebellion" in response to legislation of the mid-1970s, which placed under federal ownership lands which had previously been opened to homesteading as part of the theft of Native American lands. Ranchers were compelled to pay grazing fees on lands controlled by "Washington bureaucrats". Developers and industrialists suddenly lost the unfettered "right" to mine or drill on vast areas.

The resulting "Sagebrush Rebellion" was backed by Ronald Reagan, who appointed James G. Watt as Secretary of the Interior to roll back the gains of the environmental movement. Watt blocked the transfer of private lands for conservation and multiplied the areas leased to coal mining companies. In 1983, Watt was compelled to resign after a series of racist statements, but the damage was done. Resource corporations fanned the flames of so-called "grassroots activism"

demanding the turnover of all public land to private owners.

These "astroturfing" political tactics soon connected up with the "patriot militias," creating what Foote calls "the modern tip-of-the-spear" for fringe conservative movements like the Tea Party and racist hate groups. Such strategies resonated in Oregon, which was founded as a "white utopia" and became a hub of neo-Nazi groups.

These movements multiplied after the election of Barack Obama, the first black U.S. President. To attract working class support, such forces make populist appeals to pit manual labour against "intellectuals", scapegoat minority groups, or attack "international bankers" using coded anti-Jewish language.

Some, like Nevada rancher Ammon Bundy, who helped instigate the militia occupation in Oregon, are openly racist. Bundy is on record claiming that African Americans "had it better" under slavery, for example.

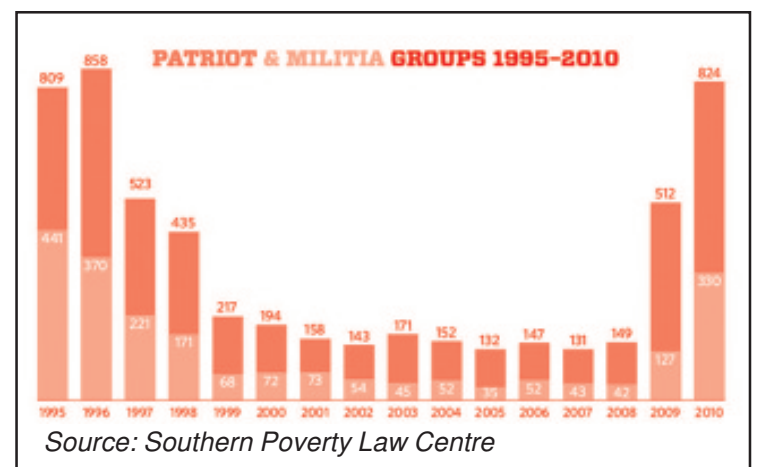
Not surprisingly, however, these forces repel most Oregon residents. Even many who sympathize with the grievances raised by the Bundys want nothing to do with their violent threats and virulent racism.

Behind all these historical and political factors, the truth is that the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge was actually unceded indigenous territory, long before it was taken over by white ranchers and farmers starting around 1900.

The leaders of the Burns Paiute tribe, whose ancestors fought and died to defend this land, want the militias to get out of the Refuge. Speaking to U.S. media outlets, tribal leaders said in early January that they are still fighting over land use, but are also working with the Bureau of Land Management to save archaeological sites.

"We have good relations with the refuge. They protect our cultural rights there," said tribal council Chairwoman Charlotte Rodrique.

"They just need to get the hell



out of here," tribal council member Jarvis Kennedy told a crowd of reporters and local residents. "To me they are just a bunch of bullies and little criminals coming in here and trying to push us around over here and occupy our aboriginal territories out there where our ancestors are buried."

Members of the tribe are descendants of the Wadatika band of northern Paiutes, whose history in the area dates back 9,000 years. Their ancestors lived near the shores of lakes in the U.S. Northern Great Basin, but migrated when those lakes dried up.

The tribe has never ceded its right to the land. In 1868 they signed a treaty with the U.S. government, which promised to prosecute any crime or injury perpetrated by any white man upon the Paiutes. Just eleven years later, the Paiutes say their people were "loaded into wagons and ordered to walk under heavy guard" in knee-deep snow and forced off their land on foot.

"They literally walked our people, children and women off our lands. They had no problem killing us," Kennedy said.

Inside the Malheur Refuge headquarters now occupied by white militias from out of state, there are important official papers that document the tribe's history.

"It gets tiring. It's the same battles that my ancestors had. And now it's just a bunch of different cavalry wearing a bunch of different coats," Kennedy said.

There are now about 200 Burns Paiute tribe members, most of whom work hard at odd jobs to survive.

"It's tough out here. Not a lot of jobs. If any company wants to relocate we'd welcome it," according to Kennedy.

According to media reports, the tribal leaders agree with the tactics used by the federal, local and state law enforcement authorities, who are waiting out the militias. But they also believe that if they occupied the Refuge headquarters, the government's response would be quite different.

"We'd be already shot up, blown up or in jail. Just being honest; they are used to killing us," Kennedy said. "They are white men. That is the difference. That is just how I see it." ●



What lies in the future of capitalism?

By Manuel E. Yepe, a CubaNews translation

US economists of different political orientation have been commenting these days on Robert Reich's new book, *Saving Capitalism: For the Many, Not the Few*, in the *New York Review of Books* (December 17, 2015).

For Paul Krugman "It was gratifying to find the stark candor behind the title of Reich's book. 'Saving capitalism' assuredly implies that capitalism is on the ropes—in danger of expiring—an implication that I both believe and welcome."

Marxist analyst Zoltan Zigedy says that Robert Reich, Paul Krugman, and Joseph Stiglitz share lofty accomplishments in academic economics and constitute the intellectual triumvirate informing the non-Marxist left in the US.

Although they do not agree on everything, they share a core set of beliefs in the viability of capitalism and its need for reform. It is unusual to see Krugman and Reich blatantly suggesting the urgency of saving the capitalist order. The urgency they feel turns on the dramatic increase in economic inequality in major capitalist countries, particularly the US. Krugman stresses that

inequality was an issue that Reich and he "were already taking seriously" twenty-five years ago.

"That may be, but I think it's fair to say that neither was taking the growth of inequality seriously as a structural feature of capitalism until the important work of Thomas Piketty two years ago," says Zigedy.

According to Zigedy, Krugman, Reich, and other non-Marxist economists modified their understanding of the causes of the growth of inequality over the last several decades. Krugman, says Zigedy, describes a currently-evolved capitalism resembling the capitalism that Marxists described well over half of a century ago.

Decades ago, liberal economists believed that rising inequality sprang from a poor match between technological requirements and workers' skill sets—what Krugman calls "skill-based technological change" (SBTC). Education was seen as the great leveler, restoring wealth and income to those falling behind.

But with the correlation between levels of education and compensation broken today, all reject SBTC as an adequate explanation and the key to arresting the growth of inequality. The growth of debt-laden college graduates working in call centers

surely shattered that illusion.

Krugman thus dismisses a technological explanation for the growth of inequality. Instead he urges that we consider the centerpiece of Reich's study: monopoly power. It is the concentration of economic power in the hands of fewer corporate players that accounts for growing economic inequality.

According to Krugman and Reich: "...it's obvious to the naked eye that our economy consists much more of monopolies and oligopolists than it does of atomistic competitors."

Zigedy wonders, why did it take Reich and Krugman so long to arrive at this juncture, a place that Lenin had visited over a hundred years ago? Marxist writers like Paul Baran and Paul Sweezy devoted an entire influential book to monopoly capitalism nearly fifty years ago.

Thus, non-Marxist economists and their political allies have scorned the concept of monopoly power until recently, a concept that Marxists have made a centerpiece of their analyses.

Krugman and Reich reveal another crucial linkage—that between economic power (monopoly power) and political power. They see monopoly power as sustained, protected, and

expanded by political actors. At the same time, they see political actors as selected, nourished, and guided by monopoly power. This creates a troubling conundrum for those seeking to reform capitalism.

Reich's conclusion, in Krugman's words: Rising wealth at the top buys growing political influence via campaign contributions, lobbying, and the rewards of the revolving door. Political influence in turn is used to rewrite the rules of the game in society. The result is a sort of spiral, a vicious cycle of oligarchy.

For Marxists, concentration necessarily begets monopoly capitalism, which subsequently completely fuses with the state, creating a mutually reinforcing synthesis. The state rules in the interest of monopoly capitalism while policing the economic terrain to maximize the viability and success of monopoly capital.

Nothing demonstrates the intimacy more than the crisis bailouts of mega-corporations ("too big to fail") and the increasing monopoly capital's dominance over the two-party political system that rules the United States. ●

- January 8, 2016.



GLOBAL CLASS STRUGGLE

Dutch port strikes

As the first 24-hour strike in 13 years paralyzed the Port of Rotterdam, Niek Stam, head of the port workers' union FN Havens, hoped that the action would compel terminal operators to return to the negotiating table on the union's terms.

"The immediate goal for this strike is to restart the negotiations, but on our demands," he told ShippingWatch.

On January 7, after the strike had been launched, the union was invited to an informal meeting by the Rotterdam port authority, which sought to explore the possibilities of getting port workers and operators, including APM Terminals, to resume negotiations. "If we do not manage to restart negotiations after the first informal meeting, we will ask our members to go on strike again," Stam said.

The union is ready to negotiate on the basis of its own demands, not the final offer made by the operators in December. FN Havens' is backed by port workers in the closest major ports - Antwerp, Le Havre and Hamburg. "If ships are diverted to other ports and we think we should have repercussions for that, we'll pass the name of the ship onto the port, which will then treat the ship with a lot care," explained Stam. "That operation will slow down."

The port workers were originally promised that the automated Maasvlakte 2 terminals, which have a capacity of five million "teu" (20-foot equivalent units), would be used exclusively as additional capacity. But the robots are now cannibalizing on volumes in the older terminals, with capacities of 12 million teu. The worst case scenario is that 800 of 4,000 jobs could be made redundant in the coming years, according to an external study done for port operators.

A union proposal for how to avert these layoffs is based on the fact that the average age for port workers in Rotterdam is 54 years. This means that 632 employees will be retired ahead of 2024. FNV has suggested that older employees could work part time while receiving 95 percent of their salary until they retire. Allowing port workers to handle on-land transport of containers between old and new terminals in Rotterdam would secure another 70 jobs, and other measures proposed by the union would protect 100 more positions. This plan would cost about EUR 53-60 million over the next nine years, but the port employers are not willing to accept the proposals.

The union does not accept the premise that layoffs must be a "natural" development in industries in which manual labour

is replaced by machines. "It's not natural. It's being forced through because the employees are not well organized. We are, and we're proud of that," Stam says.

Public workers sacked in Argentina

Police officers in Argentina violently attacked public workers on Jan. 8 while they were protesting in La Plata, the capital of Buenos Aires province. More than 100 workers demonstrated after newly elected right-wing President



Mauricio Macri announced a mass dismissal of public sector workers. People were protesting against the decision of local Mayor Julio Garro, from Macri's political party, not to renew 4,500 contracts that expired on Dec. 31. Their peaceful actions were violently repressed by security forces.

The total of public sector workers fired in Argentina since the beginning of 2016 hit 10,000 on Jan. 7, as Macri's administration continues its audit of state contracts. Layoffs have impacted workers in various state departments and still more people are expected to be left out of work as the government continues to make cuts.

Burma bosses ignore arbitration

Factory bosses are ignoring rulings by Burma's arbitration council to compensate or rehire axed staffers. Abuses and mass firings followed the new minimum wage instituted last September. Citing productivity concerns and profit margins, several factories rushed to lay off workers and kick out union members and leaders. The workers have only a toothless labour tribunal as recourse. They accuse their bosses of flouting the orders of the settlement body, as well as the law.

Since October, workers at South Korean-owned World Jin garment factory have been feuding about overtime pay as well as a floor manager who attempted to strike some staffers. Nearly half the factory's workforce took to the picket line, but a group of 34

singled out for leading the charge were fired.

"The arbitration council decided that 33 of the fired workers could be laid off with compensation and one employee must be rehired," said Ma Phyo Yu Wai, a former worker representative from World Jin who was among those laid off. "Although we accepted the council's decision, the factory owners haven't complied with the ruling. The owners don't want to pay the compensation," she said, adding the decision would be appealed, dragging the process out even longer.

World Jin factory owner Jaung Ei Sook told The Myanmar Times in October that she didn't want to rehire the fired workers because they were troublesome, and their demands interrupted the factory's productivity.

According to the arbitration council, most complaints filed in the three years of its existence concern terminations, and the caseload has shot up since the minimum wage hike. But the council has been criticised for lacking a means to enforce its decisions. Factories that disobey the non-binding rulings are charged a penalty of up to K1 million (\$1100 Can.), but many appear to prefer the fine. Workers have also accused the settlement body of leaning towards owners when negotiating disputes. Burmese lawmakers have so far rejected requests to introduce prison time as a potential punishment for those who flout arbitration council rulings.

Pension plan protests in Athens

Scuffles broke out in central Athens during a Jan. 8 protest against the Greek government's proposed pension changes. The next stage of Greece's bailout from the EU and the IMF is dependent on huge savings from the pension system. Representatives of the creditors are due to begin a review later this month. Pensions have been one of the main obstacles in the Greek debt crisis negotiations.

Hundred of protesters supporting the Communist-led All-Workers Militant Front (PAME) displayed a huge banner outside the office of Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras on Friday demanding to scrap the proposals. Riot officers fired tear gas after demonstrators broke past a line of riot police near the prime minister's office.

To find savings worth 1.8bn or 1% of GDP in 2016, the Greek government wants to increase employer contributions and merge pension funds, among other measures. Although immediate cuts to pensions are not planned, trade unions argue that the so-called "reform" sets the stage for more future cuts.

"The government tricked the workers and the farmers into thinking that it will create a better society with more justice and less unemployment," Reuters quotes 74-year-old protester Babis Kattis as saying. "Pensioners are about to become beggars."

Alongside shrinking pensions in recent years, the elderly have

already been hard hit by high unemployment, increases in VAT and rising taxes. Before winning last January's election, Alexis Tsipras campaigned with a promise not to cut pensions again. He said on Jan. 3 that his government would not give in to "unreasonable" demands from creditors, but claimed the pension system was "on the brink of collapse" and needs to be overhauled. His government aims to submit the pension bill voted into law by early February.

Win for UK home care workers

Britain's public service union Unison has won an important victory after a home-care privateer was found to be paying its workers less than the minimum wage. Staff at MiHomecare were notionally paid the legal minimum, but not for time spent travelling between clients' homes, meaning that they received less than the minimum wage.

MiHomecare, which provides home-care services in Swansea and Carmarthenshire, carried out a review and said it had found "some errors in calculating travel-time pay" and has agreed to pay staff for travel time. It will also pay back-dated wages of up to £2,500. MiHomecare, part of outsourcing corporation Mitie, said it had completed a comprehensive review for all its care workers to be certain that the company complied with wage legislation.

Home-care workers provide vital support to vulnerable people, such as the elderly and disabled, in their homes, but local authorities have been forced by the government to hand provision of such services to the private sector. Although the agreement affects only around 100 staff, it could have implications for thousands more with MiHomecare, which employs around 6,000 people, and other privateers. An estimated 883,000 people in England and

Wales receive home care and around 500,000 workers are employed in the sector.

Unison Cymru Wales area organiser Richie Lewis said: "Unison has long campaigned for home-care workers to be paid travel time and has developed an ethical-care charter... Home-carers work long hours under increasingly difficult conditions often they end up out of pocket in order to provide the level of care that their clients need. Other private-sector home care providers should conduct a similar review of their processes to ensure that their staff are paid in accordance with UK law."

Pakistan tobacco workers arrested

Thirty-five workers were arrested in the Pakistan city of Mardan on January 6 for peacefully protesting the termination of 141 employees at the Pakistan subsidiary of tobacco giant Philip Morris International. Workers were informed of the mass terminations on November 21 when they arrived to work only to learn that dismissal letters would be sent to them by post.

With the support of the local union, whose President Abrar Ullah was among the arrested, workers launched a continuous round of protests at the factory gate after management refused to discuss the terminations and began pressuring workers to accept the illegal dismissals. To add to the pressure, police were called to the factory gate when the protest began.

On January 6, when workers gathered with their union officers to present a Charter of Demands to management, police arrested 35 protestors under the Maintenance of Public Order law, which allows for up to 90 days detention without charges. The arrested workers were shifted to Bannu Jail, some 250 kilometres from Mardan and notorious as a prison for incarcerating Taliban activists.

Join the Communist Party of Canada



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

Central Committee CPC

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: pcqccc@gmail.com Tél: 438-338-8890

B.C. Committee CPC
706 Clark Drive, Vancouver, BC, V5L 3J1
604-254-9836 <cpinfo.bc@gmail.com>

Edmonton CPC
Box 68112, 70 Bonnie Doon PO
Edmonton, AB, T6C 4N6
Tel: 780-934-7893

Calgary CPC
5421 - 8th Ave. SE
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
Tel: 416-469-2446

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

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

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

The Middle East is “like a barrel of gunpowder”

Statement of the Central Committee of the Tudeh Party of Iran, Jan. 3, 2016

The Tudeh Party of Iran deems the escalation of the tensions between Iran and Saudi Arabia to be against the interests of the people of Iran and the region.

Following the execution of Sheikh Nimr Baqr al-Nimr, the Saudi dissident Shiite cleric, by the Saudi authorities, the political and diplomatic relations of this country with Iran - which have already deteriorated in recent years - have now become very critical and increased the possibility of dangerous conflicts between the two countries.

Subsequent to the calculated and provocative action of the Saudi's reactionary rulers in executing Sheikh Nimr, the Saudi Shiite cleric, on January 2, along with 46 other people - who according to the published news were mostly affiliated with the terrorist group Al-Qaeda - the hooligans associated with the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps and Basij militia and IRI's security forces raided the embassy of Saudi Arabia in Tehran and the Saudi's consulate building in the city of Mashhad. During these raids, besides chanting proactive slogans, some of the demonstrators took advantage of the indifferent police force, entered the grounds of the embassy and set fire to part

of the building and ransacked some of the documents and properties of the embassy. According to the media today (Sunday January 3rd) Adil al-Jubeir, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Saudi Arabia, announced that following the attacks on the buildings of the Saudi diplomatic missions in Iran, Saudi Arabia has severed its diplomatic ties with Iran, and asked that Iranian diplomats leave Saudi Arabia within 48 hours.

The provocative speech of Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, outside of the diplomatic norms, about the execution of Sheikh Nimr, and the attacks and raids on the Saudi embassy and consulate building are politically and diplomatically unjustified. The invasion of the embassy of a State under any pretext is considered invasion of that country and in the eyes of the international bodies, including the UN, is condemned. It must be added that both the President and the head of the Iran's Judiciary labeled the attack on the Saudi embassy as illegal and criticised the action.

It must be noted that the escalation of tensions between Iran and Saudi Arabia stems from the serious disputes between the two regimes about the domestic wars in Syria and Yemen. Last February, the Saudi regime officially invaded Yemen to prevent the victory of Houthi forces and their allies who,

as alleged by the Saudis, are supported by Iran. This action by Saudi Arabia and its allies in the Gulf Cooperation Council was to prevent the fall of the previous Yemeni President who was supported by Riyadh and to control the political developments in Yemen in favour of the reactionary policies of the Saudi regime. With regards to the domestic war in Syria, Saudi Arabia and the reactionary monarchists of the Persian Gulf in alliance with Turkey and the United States and NATO states want to transfer power from Bashar al-Assad, Syria's elected President, to Wahhabi and Salafi terrorist groups who they support. Iran, in a common front with the Russian Federation, Iraq, and Lebanese Hezbollah adamantly and practically support the continuance of Bashar al-Assad government and the foreign policy of the Syrian government.

The trip to Riyadh (on December 28th) of Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, one of the main protagonists in continuing the bloody and destructive war in Syria, could not be unrelated to the decision of Saudi Arabia and the recent executions and the escalation of tensions in the region. Turkey and Saudi Arabia are central to the alliance of the Sunni countries involved in the developments in Syria. During his official talks with

Saudi authorities, Erdogan spoke about the common vision of the two countries with regards to the future of the Syria and shaping the developments in other conflict areas in the regions, including Yemen, and said: “It is clear that steps that are taken without considering the dynamism, sociology, and the history of the region will only end in savagery and brutality.” In this trip, Erdogan officially announced the joining of Turkey to the reactionary alliance of Sunni states engaged in Syria.

What should be clearly stated is that the irresponsible statements of influential figures within the Iranian regime about the recent worrying events do not help in keeping the peace and calm at all and in fact serve the dangerous policies of the reactionary regime of Saudi Arabia. Ali Akbar Velayati, the Head of the Strategic Research of the Expediency Discernment Council in Iran said: “the indications of the Saudi government's dissatisfaction with the events in Yemen and the developments of the region are seen in the execution of the Sheikh Nimr.” He said that he is “sure” that Saudi Arabia will suffer a military defeat in Yemen. Iran's news media released the harshly worded statement of the Guards Corps which alluded to “seeking revenge” for the execution of Sheikh Nimr and threatened to “appropriately respond” to this action of Saudi Arabia. Iran's Military also issued a statement denouncing the execution of Sheikh Nimr and stated that “it is time for an appropriate response to the crimes of the House of Saud.”

The Tudeh Party of Iran condemns the anti-people and reactionary policies of the Saudi regime and at the same time expresses its grave concern about the events of recent days and the dangerous escalation of tensions in the region. If this deepening crisis is not managed wisely and based on the national interests of our nation, it could be exploited by the warmongering circles on both sides and lead to further conflicts, and cause our nation to suffer from its unpredictable

disastrous and devastating consequences. The Saudi regime is determined to take advantage of any escalation of tension against the Islamic Republic of Iran to strengthen its position in the region and to continue and deepen the isolation of Iran which will have huge political and economic costs for Iran. The reactionary and warmongering circles in the power structure of the theocratic regime of Iran could also exploit this tense environment and the possibility of conflicts to reshape the political atmosphere of the country, over the next few months leading to the parliamentary elections [in February], to their advantage and cause new problems and new rounds of devastating sanctions against Iran. Any rise of tensions and any new military conflict in the region could have disastrous consequences for the future of our country.

The Tudeh Party of Iran, which is a longtime critic of the anti-people regime of Saudi Arabia and its human rights record, condemns the provocative execution of Sheikh Nimr Baqr al-Nimr and calls upon the appropriate international bodies like the Human Rights Commission of the UN to seriously deal with the continuing human rights violations in that country. At the same time, we denounce the raids on the embassy and consular building of Saudi Arabia in Iran and the damaging of their properties. The government of the Islamic Republic of Iran is bound to act upon its responsibilities according to the international diplomatic protocols. The Tudeh Party of Iran considers the protection of the interests of the people of Iran its national responsibility and its position is to defend peace and support a peaceful solution to end all disputes and regional conflicts based on the United Nations Charter and respect for the will and demand of the nations. Currently, the Middle East is like a barrel of gunpowder that in the event of any new military conflict could lead to a blood and fire catastrophe for its already hard-hit people. ●

Nazir Rizvi, a true friend of Cuba

In December, the Council of State Friendship Medal was presented to Nazir Rizvi, by Kenia Serrano Puig, president of the Cuban Friendship Institute. This article is from Granma International.

With roots in India, his head in Canada and heart in Cuba - is how Nazir Rizvi describes himself.

Upon receiving the Council of State Friendship Medal, at the Cuban Friendship Institute, the outstanding pacifist, Communist and solidarity activist said that the Cuban Revolution is an example of social justice for the entire world, one which is being independently constructed and advancing, despite aggression from the United States.

A member of the Communist Party of Canada's Central Committee, Rizvi spoke proudly of meeting the historic leader of the Cuban Revolution Fidel Castro in 1995, and of his own passionate devotion to stand by Cuba, and especially to end the criminal U.S. economic, commercial and financial blockade.

Noteworthy in his 86-year personal story are efforts undertaken to donate Braille typewriters and educational materials to blind children in Cuba, and his 15 journeys to the island leading groups of Canadians interested in Cuba's reality and anti-capitalist social model.

Rizvi studied history, political science and economics at the University of London in the early 1960s; devoted years to the struggle against apartheid in South Africa; and travelled throughout that continent, learning of Cuba's

medical mission in Algeria.

His love for the Cuba Revolution grew, and in 1975 he made his first trip to Havana, departing more determined than ever to increase solidarity activities in Canada, especially in Nova Scotia and British Columbia.

He joined the Cuba-Canada Friendship Association, founded in 1961 and the oldest such group in the country, and served as president for over 20 years, most recently contributing to the struggle to free the Cuban Five, unjustly imprisoned in the U.S.

In a brief conversation with Granma International, Nazir Rizvi said he was truly moved by the distinction, and reiterated the importance of work to ensure that the world's youth know about the Cuban Revolution, and solidarity efforts continue, adding, “I never thought I would live to see this new stage with the reestablishment of diplomatic relations between Cuba and the United States, with the opening of embassies in both countries, but there's no stopping now, from now on, we face new challenges.” ●



Nazir Rizvi receives Friendship Medal at a ceremony in Havana

Communist Party of Ukraine banned

The Communist Party of Ukraine (CPU) has condemned the latest developments in the Ukrainian government's move to ban the party.

On December 16, two judgments against the Communist Party of Ukraine were announced. In the morning, the Kiev Appeal Administrative Court rejected the CPU's appeal of a judgment of the District Administrative Court of Kiev (DACK) on the party's lawsuit against the Ministry of Justice (MoJ). This new decision allowed DACK to rule later that day in favour of the MoJ's move to ban the CPU.

Filed by the Ministry in July 2014, the first lawsuit against the CPU was based on “grossly rigged” evidence. Judge Kuzmenko, who was responsible for the case, called the process politically motivated and disqualified himself. His action was followed by all other judges of the District Administrative Court of Kiev. Their recusals led to the transfer of the charges to another court which does not have jurisdiction over such cases. Also, the regime ordered criminal proceedings against Kuzmenko and other judges.

In spring 2015, new laws on “decommunization” were adopted in Ukraine. While these laws are contrary to the country's Constitution, international law, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, and the conclusions of the Venice Commission, they are the basis for the MoJ's suit to ban the CPU.

The suffragette who has been ignored

By Stephen Walker,
Morning Star

The film *Suffragette*, although widely welcomed, has come in for criticism due to its failure to portray black suffragettes.

The film's screenwriter, Abi Morgan, has stated that, due to the low levels of non-European immigrants residing in Britain in 1911-13, there were very few suffragettes of colour, and that those few, such as Indian princess Sophia Duleep Singh, were upper-class women who did not move in the working-class circles in which *Suffragette* is set.

But there is another omission in the film — Sylvia Pankhurst. The daughter of Emmeline was arguably the more radical member of that incredible family, yet she is largely absent from the screenplay.

Sylvia was passionately anti-war and organised a peace campaign in 1916 in the East End of London. The protesters were violently broken up as the government sought to stoke nationalist fervour. She would later write: "Peace and the popular government of the world to end this capitalist system of ruthless materialism, stood out for me as the two great needs of the hour."

This socialist, internationalist and anti-imperialist perspective would come to define her activity in the next few years.

For example after the brutal crushing of the 1916 Easter Rising in Dublin and the execution of leading Republican officials it was Sylvia who championed the cause of Irish secession from the United Kingdom.

It is often forgotten that the

successful Russian revolution of October 1917 began with female textile workers going on strike in St. Petersburg. This protest inspired men from other trades to join in and eventually the troops and sailors who mutinied became a decisive factor in Lenin's success.

Sylvia Pankhurst was one of a few suffragettes who also had a wider political view than her older sister Christabel. She recognised the Russian revolution was a class war and criticised the provisional government established after

the February 1917 uprising, which consisted of those whose leader was a prince who wanted to continue fighting in WWI and sought only superficial political change, and the soviets made up of peasants united with the military and urban proletariat who wanted deeper social changes. She realised there was unfinished business in Russia and that the nascent February revolution should go further and become an anti-war movement.

When the Bolsheviks gained majority control of the Duma (the Russian parliament) after the October victory they immediately pulled Russia out of WWI. This caused the other anti-German powers to change from having welcomed the premature February revolution in Russia and the pro-war provisional government, to condemning the Bolsheviks and begin a propaganda campaign demonising them.

Sylvia campaigned against this propaganda, organising radical groups in the East End of London, was imprisoned several times but helped establish a group who were

to declare themselves the first British Communist Party.

This group, inspired by Sylvia and Jewish organisations in the East End of London, fought against Oswald Mosley's virulent anti-semitism and fascist ideology, laying the foundations for the subsequent election of Phil Piratin as the first Communist Member of Parliament in 1945.

In a detailed analysis of her life, *Sylvia Pankhurst: Suffragette, Socialist and Scourge of Empire*, the author Katherine Connelly challenges the prevailing narrative about the Pankhurst family and how Sylvia has been eclipsed.

For example, she broke away from the middle-class elitism of the suffragette campaign organised by Emmeline and Christabel, instead charting a course that put working-class women at the forefront of fighting for the vote.

Sylvia, in contrast to Churchill's desire to: "strangle the Bolshevik baby at birth," was a strong supporter of the October revolution and was inspired by the soviets which placed power in the hands of ordinary people.

In the 1920s she was one of the first to recognise the danger posed by the rise of fascism at a time when Churchill was expressing his admiration for Mussolini. She was also perceptive in predicting the colonialism that spread across Africa as an inevitable consequence of European imperialism.

Sylvia Pankhurst, the forgotten suffragette, was an inspiring and courageous leader, who recognised that injustices and discrimination against women could not be separated from wider struggles against a capitalist system that seeks to subjugate workers and maintain the power and control of the ruling class. ●



MUSIC NOTES

By Wally Brooker

NHS Choir reaches #1 in U.K.

A single by the Lewisham National Health Service Choir reached number one in the U.K. music charts over Christmas, temporarily beating out Canadian crooner Justin Bieber for the coveted spot. The NHS Choir's chart-topping song, "A Bridge Over You", is a medley of Paul Simon's 1970 song "Bridge Over Troubled Water" and Coldplay's 2005 hit "Fix You". It was released to celebrate U.K. healthcare workers at a time when they face fresh attacks from the Tory government of David Cameron. The choir, launched in 2013, consists of doctors, nurses, porters, physiotherapists, administrators, technicians, and other workers. They sing mostly for patients and the local community. Their video shows healthcare workers in action at South London's University Hospital Lewisham, caring for sick children, elderly people, and those undergoing major operations. The choir's fundraising campaign is worth your support. Proceeds from sales are going to Carers UK (<http://www.carersuk.org/>) and Mind (<http://www.mind.org.uk/>). Both charities support people with health issues not covered by NHS. By the way, Biebs was supportive, tweeting the link to the campaign's website: www.nhsno1.com.

Musicians rally at COP21

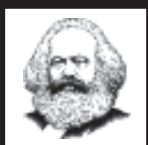
Musicians rallied with climate-change activists in Paris during the UN Climate Change Conference (COP 21), held in the French capital last month. The "Pathway to Paris" concert at the historic Montmartre music hall, Le Trianon, on December 5, featured American rock & roll poet Patti Smith, Radiohead singer Thom Yorke, Tibetan singer-songwriter Tenzin Cheogyal, Red-Hot Chili Peppers bassist Flea, and Congolese star Fally Ipupa. They shared the stage with renowned activists Naomi Klein, Vandana Shiva, and Bill McKibbin. "Pathway to Paris" was founded in 2014 by American composer Jesse Paris Smith and Canadian cellist-vocalist Rebecca Foon. They staged a series of musical events in various cities that built awareness and momentum for the COP21 conference. The Paris concert was the culmination of a process that included a "Pathways" presence at key way stations, including the UN gathering of world leaders in New York on September 21, 2014, and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in Lima, Peru in December 2014. Video highlights of the Paris concert can be viewed at <http://www.350.org/> www.350.org.

What's up with M.I.A.'s "Borders"?

Maya Arulpragasam is an English recording artist and video director, better known to her fans as M.I.A. Born in the U.K. in 1975, she spent her childhood in Sri Lanka, where her father, a Tamil activist, was forced into hiding during the country's civil war. In 1986 she returned to England as a refugee and lived in a housing project in London. Her academic training and early career was oriented to visual arts and fashion design, but since 2004 she's been a best-selling hip-hop artist, creating dance music and video that is celebratory and infused with her concerns: defense of refugees and protest against political repression, war, and gender stereotypes. M.I.A.'s new single, "Borders", and its accompanying video, are both worth investigating. The lyrics reference a series of politicized buzzwords, of which M.I.A. repeatedly asks "What's up with that?" Depending on one's point of view, these lyrics might be interpreted as trivial, evasive, or thought-provoking. The video presents a series of epic (and expensive) scenes of actors representing refugees on land and sea. "Nobody wants to be dancing to political songs," she's said. "I wanted to see if I could write songs about something important and make it sound like nothing." Nothing? So what's up? Is M.I.A. being flippant or is this a provocative artistic stance in an age of iPhone pop?

John Trudell 1946-2015

John Trudell, the esteemed Native-American poet, musician, actor, and activist died on December 8. His acclaimed work as an artist began in earnest only after he had achieved wide recognition as a militant leader of the American Indian Movement in the 1970s. Trudell left Native-American (institutional) politics in 1979 after his activist wife Tina Manning, three children, and mother-in-law were killed in a mysterious and still-unsolved fire, twelve hours after he had set fire to an American flag at a protest in Washington, DC. He turned to poetry and began reciting in public. Encouraged by singer-songwriter Jackson Browne, and a friendship with the great Native-American guitarist Jesse Ed Davis, he launched his career as a recording artist, creating a series of outstanding albums that fused his spoken word poetry with rock and blues. Unlike most poetry-music collaborations, Trudell's albums really rock. His lyrics and voice fit well with the musical forms. The 1992 album AKA Graffiti Man is a good place to start for those who are new to Trudell (with "Bombs Over Baghdad" being a standout track). John Trudell, a member of the Santee Sioux nation of Nebraska, left an important legacy of revolutionary activism, music, books, film, and recorded speeches. Learn about him at www.johntrudell.com.



Marxist Theory

CPI(M): a revolutionary party with a mass line

By B. Prasant, PV
correspondent in India

At a plenum held in Kolkata, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) has declared that it would from now on become a "revolutionary party with a mass line." Hitherto, the CPI(M) has identified itself as a "mass revolutionary" party. Attended by delegates from all the states, the plenum was organised over December 27-31.

The last such party plenum was held back in 1978 in the backdrop of the massive electoral defeat of the Congress in the parliamentary polls, and the emergence of a Socialist-dominated Janata Party government.

The Kolkata plenum was held as crucial elections to the Bengal legislative assembly loom over the horizon, to be held in the summer this year.

On explaining the reasons why the political-organisational character of the party was refashioned, the plenum documents pointed out that the CPI(M) has over the years since 1978 undergone a sweeping increase in numbers, to over a million at present. But there has not been a concurrent qualitative



CPI(M) General Secretary
Sitharam Yechury

change, without which it would not be possible to accelerate and enhance the existing levels of class and mass struggles.

Thus the CPI(M) has chosen to further widen its mass base by calling for a "revolutionary party with a mass line." This vision encompasses the revolutionary character of the party and its mass content. The mass line would never compromise the revolutionary character of the party. Indeed, the plenum stressed that the CPI(M) must emerge as the vanguard of the popular upsurge that must historically happen, towards a social transformation.

The present struggle being organised under the leadership of the CPI(M) to bring about a change in the co-relation of class forces must be augmented. A powerful left and democratic front must be reinforced. The (Dimitrovan) united front tactic must be appropriately implemented, and not merely as an electoral tool. The CPI(M) must set up joint fora with the ongoing social movements. Emphasis must be given to organising the workers, peasants, urban and rural poor, youth, women, and the struggling middle classes.

Two political points were highlighted. First, the left and democratic front must initiate progress towards the task of setting up of a people's democratic front towards a people's democratic revolution. Second, in the developing reality of India, the main axis of the democratic revolution must be an agrarian revolution: the rural poor must be brought within the ambit of class and mass struggles.

The Central Committee of the CPI(M) shall draw up a schedule of implementation of the plenum tasks, and the state committees will follow up the CC directives on a time-bound schedule. ●

Venezuelan communists analyze vote...

continued from page 12

absence of an organic space for the evaluation, critical and self-critical, and for the definition of the public policies, advancing simultaneously in the deepening of the unity of the base of the process," reflected Figuera.

But also, he pointed out, "we have not achieved that the masses acquire consciousness of the confrontation with imperialism and the oligarchy, that is to say, there is still much incomprehension that there exists a sustained and multifaceted aggression against the Venezuelan process, that which we have not successfully unmasked before the people. All of this must make us know how to read the massive message that was expressed in the elections, and that obliges us, together with the forces of the Bolivarian process, to revise and correct all that is necessary; the PCV will work in that direction, and our deputies will express it inside and outside of the National Assembly."

Figuera recognized "the

extraordinary activism and combativeness demonstrated by the organisms and militants of the PCV and the JCV, the political coalitions of masses of workers, campesinos, students, women, and community sectors, and of those who expressed themselves in the Card of the Red Rooster (*the PCV symbol*) knowing that it is a revolutionary class vote, critical and purposeful, and that we will fulfill the commitments that we made."

In the immediate future, said Figuera, all of the PCV candidates, elected or not, will go back through the zones for which they were proposed, to continue struggling and in order to initiate the collective evaluation of the electoral results.

The "Party of the Red Rooster" within the national alliance of the GPP [Gran Polo Patriótico, Great Patriotic Pole, the electoral coalition of government supporters], nominated 20 Communist candidates in the Dec. 6 election. Two were elected, including Oscar Figuera in Guarico, and Yul Jabour, secretary

of International Solidarity of the PCV, in Yaracuy.

Three "substitute deputies" were also elected: Pedro Eusse in District 4 of Portuguesa; Edgar Lucena in District 2 of Cojedes; and Eduardo Linarez in District 1 of Falcon.

Another nine PCV candidates could become substitutes if vacancies arise among the principal or substitute deputies elected by the alliance, including PCV Political Bureau member Carolus Wimmer. •

COP21...

continued from page 6

In numerous cases these challenges are clearly related to health or environmental decisions by governments. While countries may be pledging to take action on climate change, they are also negotiating "free trade" agreements that give corporations the right to undermine climate actions (policies, regulations, legislation) that would impact their future profits.

The agreement fails to include this protection from ISDS challenges.

Our allies have condemned this agreement.

Wenonah Hauter from Food & Water Watch says, "This agreement coming out of the Paris COP falls far short of what is needed to actually address our climate crisis. It doesn't mention the words "oil," "gas" or "fossil fuels" at all - all of which we must swiftly transition away from to avert climate crisis." Nick Dearden from Global Justice Now says, "It's outrageous that the deal that's on the table is being spun as a success when it undermines the rights of the world's most vulnerable communities and has almost nothing binding to ensure a safe and liveable climate for future generations." And Asad Rehman from Friends of the Earth International says, "The draft Paris agreement puts us on track for a planet three degrees hotter than today. This would be a disaster. The reviews in this agreement are too weak and too late. The finance figures have no bearing on the scale of need. It's empty." •

Grace Tickson memorial Jan. 23

As announced in an earlier issue of PV, one of the best-loved members of the Communist Party, Grace Tickson died on Nov. 2 in Nanaimo, BC, at the age of 92. A celebration of her amazing life will take place at 2 pm, Saturday, January 23, at the Coast Bastion Hotel in downtown Nanaimo. A detailed obituary will appear in our next issue. •

C.P. of Ukraine banned...

continued from page 9

By a strange coincidence, this new case was "accidentally" given to Judge Kuzmenko, who had been conscripted to the armed conflict zone in the east of Ukraine but somehow avoided military service. The same judge banned two other communist parties during 2015.

The regime insists that the CPU should drop its communist name and symbols: the star and the hammer and sickle. Calling the "decommunization" law "ill-conceived, populist, undemocratic and anti-European," the CPU notes that "advanced EU countries today

What's Left

Burnaby, BC

Protests Against Kinder Morgan pipeline expansion, Tues. Jan. 19, gather 12 noon at Gilmore Skytrain, march to National Energy Board hearings at Delta Hotel, 4331 Dominion St. (one block from Willingdon Ave. & Hwy. 1). RALLY Sat., Jan. 23, 1:00 pm, at Delta Hotel.

Vancouver, BC

The Struggle for the Land: Café Rebelde forum on land reclamation, food sovereignty and state repression, Sat., January 30, doors open 6 pm, Grandview Calvary Church, 1803 E. 1st Ave. Co-organized by Vancouver Solidarity with Ayotzinapa Committee and others.

Women's Memorial March, annual event to remember murdered & missing indigenous women, Sunday, Feb. 14, 12 noon, from Carnegie Centre, Main & Hastings.

Nanaimo, BC

Celebration of Life for the late Grace Tickson, lifelong CPC member and labour activist, Sat., Jan. 23, 2:00 pm, Nanaimo Coast Bastion Hotel.

Toronto, ON

Annual Norman Bethune Day, Sat., Feb. 27, 7 pm, GCDO Hall, 290 Danforth Ave., (Chester TTC), admission \$5 includes dinner and cultural program. Guest speaker Kimball Cariou, editor of People's Voice. Door prize: trip for two to Cuba. For details and tickets, ph. 416-469-2446.

People's Voice 2016 Fund Drive

Our annual press fund drive begins on March 1. Start planning your fundraising events now, and contact PV at 604-255-2041 for more information.

People's Voice deadlines

February 1-14 issue: Thursday, Jan. 21

February 15-29 issue: Thursday, Feb. 4

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

Bruce Yorke, 1924-2015

Former Vancouver City Councillor and long-time Communist Party member Bruce Yorke died on December 5, at the age of 90. Although he had been out of public life for many years during a tragically long illness, a celebration of his life drew over 150 people on Dec. 20 at the Maritime Labour Centre. The speakers included Bruce's oldest son David, Communist Party leader Miguel Figueroa, former BC Federation of Labour President Jim Sinclair, and former COPE city councillor and Vancouver East MP Libby Davies.

Born on December 10, 1924, Bruce was an excellent athlete, and earned his degree in economics at UBC. While he came from a wealthy family, he devoted his life to the working class movements for peace, equality, and social justice. He spoke out against the internment of Japanese Canadians during WW2, and for peace and disarmament during the Cold War, when he worked for the Trade Union Research Bureau and joined the Communist Party. He helped to form the Vancouver Tenants Council, and became a founding member of the Committee Of Progressive Electors. He was elected by COPE to City Council five times during the 1980s, defending the rights of tenants, homeowners, and citizens opposed to over-development and freeways. As a city councillor he fought for affordable housing and good public transit, supported the city's participation in the massive peace marches of the 1980's. In one particularly memorable campaign, he won a byelection for the final seat on Vancouver City Council, a tremendous victory for a well-known Communist running against Phillip Owen, a prominent leader of the right-wing Non-Partisan Alliance which dominated Vancouver for most of the last century.

Bruce was a strong supporter of the Canadian Peace Congress, the BC Peace Council, and later the End the Arms Race Coalition, and wrote frequently for the Pacific Tribune, one of the predecessors of People's Voice. In all his work, Bruce was a strong advocate of unity of progressive social forces - Communists, left NDPers, labour militants, and community activists - around policies which would serve the interests of working people, rather the those of the business sector, and of a strategy with skilfully combined electoral work with extra-parliamentary organizing at the community level. He will be remembered for his optimism about the struggle for a better, more just, democratic and equitable world, and the achievement of socialism.

Bruce was predeceased by his loving partner Helen O'Shaughnessy, his brother Dennis, and his sister Maureen. He is survived by his first wife Mary Bewick, brother Lorne (Phyllis) and sons David (Pat Sexsmith), Paul (Ingrid Kolsteren), and Michael (Janice Harris) together with six grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

The Editorial Board of People's Voice and the Central Executive Committee of the CPC extend their deepest condolences to Bruce's family, and to all the friends and comrades whose lives were touched by his remarkable life. •

U.S. behind anti-Morales campaign

Bolivian President Evo Morales affirmed that the campaign defending the "no" in the referendum on his right to reelection was funded from the United States, in an interview with the private television channel ATB that aired on Jan. 10.

"I am not sure whether [the money] is sent by the corrupted criminals that fled to the United States, or by the U.S. State Department," he said, referring to the Bolivian opposition leaders that have found shelter in the



President Evo Morales

United States, including fugitives from justice like former President Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada (1993-1997 and 2002-2003), his former adviser Carlos Sanchez Berzain and Manfred Reyes Villa.

According to Morales' information, the country's right-wing sectors are fighting each other over this alleged financial support. The Bolivian opposition is constantly in touch with the U.S. National Democratic Institute (NDI), he said, adding that the U.S. embassy also treated many Bolivian politicians as their "pets."

Moreover, the U.S. embassy recommended Bolivian opposition leaders not to publicly appear during the campaign, to show that his reelection reject mainly came from the population.

"Our campaign is not only against the Bolivian right but the international right," said Morales, as the United States planned to end with "Kirchnerism" in Argentina, "Chavismo" in Venezuela and "Evismo" in Bolivia.

The Bolivian people are scheduled to vote in a referendum due on Feb. 21, in order to decide whether Morales can run for a third reelection in 2019 or not - as electoral authorities ruled that his first term (2006-2010) did not count because it took place during the previous constitution. •

have abolished laws that banned the use of Communist ideology and symbolism of the Soviet period."

In December 2010, appeals from the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania and Romania were rejected by the European Commission, which noted that Resolution 213 (2009) of the European Parliament condemns totalitarian and undemocratic regimes, but does not mention anything about the use of Communist symbols.

The CPU says the legal attack

aims to destroy the only real opposition to the current regime. Appealing for solidarity, the Communists vow to keep up the struggle for the rule of law and democracy, for human rights and fundamental freedoms. They continue to oppose the transformation of Ukraine into a colony, and the social genocide policy imposed by the IMF, including the freezing of salaries and pensions. Not least, they condemn the official campaign to turn Hitler's collaborationists into "heroes" and to insult the memory of the Red Army soldiers who defeated fascism.

Anti-imperialist struggles today

Venezuela: the struggle continues

By Robert Navan and Seán Edwards, *Socialist Voice* (Communist Party of Ireland)

When Obama declared Venezuela to be a threat to the United States he wasn't being absurd. He meant, of course, a threat to US hegemony in the region.

The Bolivarian Revolution in Venezuela was the greatest challenge to that domination since the Cuban Revolution in 1959. The ruling oligarchies in Latin America always needed to ally themselves with the imperialist power, not being strong enough to rule on their own. Ever since Hugo Chávez's election displaced them from office the old Venezuelan political regime strove to overthrow the government by any means, always in alliance with the United States.

With the death of Chávez, and the absence of his charismatic personality, the right-wing opposition saw an opportunity to go on the offensive. The election of Nicolás Maduro was followed immediately by a campaign of street violence instigated by the right, repeated the following year.

When this failed in its objective, the opposition forces concentrated on economic sabotage, manipulating currency, hoarding necessary foodstuffs to create shortages, smuggling state-subsidised commodities abroad to be sold at an enormous profit, and driving inflation into an upward spiral. This caused considerable hardship in working-class communities.

Neither Nicolás Maduro nor Hugo Chávez before him managed to apply an effective policy to protect the currency or to stem the flow of capital abroad. An estimated \$100 billion has been moved out of Venezuela since the election of Chávez. While the effect of this was cushioned by the high price of oil, it was still a huge loss to the economy, and the bourgeoisie always chose to squirrel their profits abroad rather than invest in Venezuela.

The currency controls introduced by the government were generally easily circumvented, and sometimes made matters worse. Likewise, the measures taken to

counter the hoarding and speculation proved inadequate—even the closing of the border with Colombia to stop the smuggling. President Maduro at one point held talks with the Chamber of Commerce, which had no interest in any settlement, only in intensifying their economic campaign.

The Communist Party of Venezuela and others have long advocated a state monopoly of foreign trade to prevent the fraud and manipulation, as all the less radical measures had failed.

Now, for the first time in seventeen years, Venezuela will be ruled by a right-wing government, following the success in National Assembly elections on 6 December of a coalition that goes by the name Mesa de la Unidad Democrática (Round Table of Democratic Unity). As suggested by the name, this is not a unified political party but more a splintered opposition coalition that throughout its existence has been

plagued by factionalism; nevertheless these divisions were successfully papered over to present a united front to the electorate. It is expected that when the new assembly sits, these divisions will reappear.

Among the coalition members there are extreme right-wing elements who are already trying to stop President Maduro completing his term of office, which is not due to end until April 2019. To do this they could try to suspend the constitution. This move would prove very unpopular among much of the general public and could lead to civil unrest. The constitution was written during the presidency of Hugo Chávez, following a huge consultative process with all sections of Venezuelan society, and to have it suspended could be seen as an insult not only to Chavistas but to all sections of the people. Venezuelans from all sides (except the extreme right) are proud, and rightly so, of their constitution.

Another option that is available under the constitution is a presidential recall referendum, which can be initiated three years into the term of office. That option could be exercised in April this year, but there's no guarantee that the vote would be carried.

The opposition is not made up only of extreme right-wing elements: it includes centrists and left-of-centre members. The more sensible groups could be classed as "gradualists," and if they emerge as leaders there may not be an immediate frontal assault on the gains of the revolution; rather, it would happen stealthily and over time.

So far, unfortunately, most noise has been heard from the extreme right-wing elements. An Irish journalist described this section of Venezuelan society as "one of the most unpleasant set of people he had had dealings with anywhere in Latin America." These are the people who led the civil disturbance that resulted in the death of more than twenty people and the wholesale destruction of state property. Health clinics were among the sites that were targets, as with many Cuban doctors working in them, they were seen as one of the main gains of the revolution.

An opposition politician, Henrique Capriles Radonski, has already made statements about ending the Petro-Caribe initiative, which since 2005 has provided neighbouring Caribbean countries with much-needed oil at significantly preferential repayment rates. He has also cast doubts on the future of the Venezuela-Cuba project known as the Bolivarian Alliance for the People of Our Americas (ALBA). This promotes direct non-monetary and fair-trade relations among its eleven member-states, including the exchange of Venezuelan oil for the training of medical personnel by Cuban doctors.

With the continuing fall of oil prices internationally, the incoming government will still have a major task on its hands in trying to improve the lot of the ordinary person. Add to this the fact that previous right-wing governments in Venezuela were

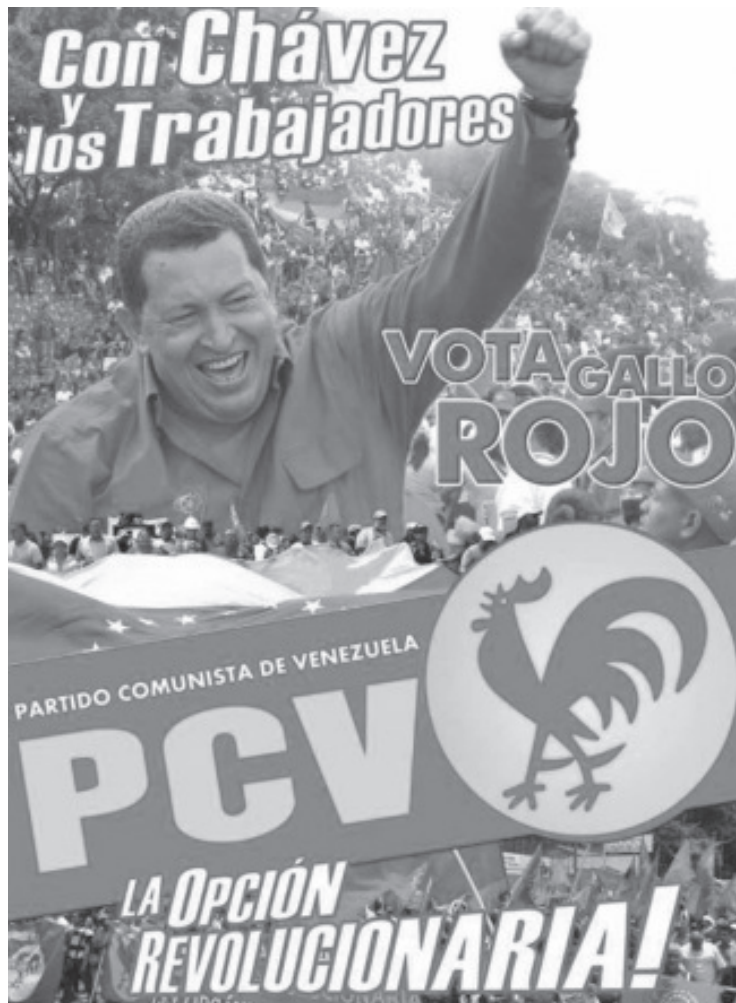
probably the most venal in the world and considered assets such as the state oil company to be their own personal financial kingdoms. We may see the oil that for the last seventeen years has been used to facilitate spending on social schemes now being used to provide lavish condos in Miami and other such items for a minority of the population. This was the situation in pre-Chávez times.

It's worth remembering that Venezuela has already experienced some of the worst excesses of neo-liberalism. In 1988, after a similar fall in oil prices, the government of Carlos Andrés Pérez was elected on an anti-neoliberal platform but went on to implement such a policy, as recommended by the International Monetary Fund. This included privatising state companies, tax reform, reducing customs duties, and diminishing the role of the state in the economy.

As a direct result of these measures there was widespread rioting and a brutal repression that led to death of more than two thousand people. This period in Venezuelan history is referred to as the "Caracazo" (the "Caracas shock"), which refers to the fact that most of the rioting and subsequent deaths occurred in the Caracas area. This bitter experience contributed to the emergence of Hugo Chávez and the Bolivarian Revolution.

What now for the left in Venezuela? Well, as the saying goes, "the genie is out of the bottle." During the years of the Bolivarian Revolution the people, particularly the poor, have seen massive progress in the areas of health, education, housing, and nutrition. Any immediate attempts to reverse these policies would meet with popular resistance.

The gains of the Bolivarian Revolution will be defended. The parties, trade unions and social organisations organised in the Chavista coalition, known as the Gran Polo Patriótico (Great Patriotic Pole), face a daunting task of self-criticism and reorganisation. They have the potential to mount a successful defence and bring Venezuela back onto the path of progress. ●



PCV election poster from 2012

NEWS FOR PEOPLE, NOT FOR PROFITS!

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

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

people's
VOICE

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

Name _____

Address _____

Postal Code _____

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

410-1/16

"Profound rectifications are necessary" - PCV

Excerpts from articles in *Popular Tribune*, newspaper of the Communist Party of Venezuela (PCV), about the Dec. 6 elections.

All the people, especially among the popular sectors, must have clarity that, in its December 6 election triumph, the counterrevolution aspires to reverse the many political and social victories of the almost 17 years of the Bolivarian process of change.

Thus declared Oscar Figuera, General Secretary of the Communist Party of Venezuela (PCV) and deputy of the National Assembly, about the preliminary evaluation made by the PCV Political Bureau concerning the adverse results in the parliamentary elections.

The party leader stated that the PCV shares the approach of President Maduro over the necessity to make a collective evaluation of the electoral result, but that "in that process it is necessary to bring together the evaluation of the conduct or measures of the government and the role that the Great Patriotic Pole (Simon Bolivar) must fulfill in order to establish itself in the collective and unitary leadership of the process."

"There has been a great lack in the process of change, that is, the

see Venezuelan communists, page 11