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people's VOICE

Charter of Youth Rights

See page 3

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Memo to Canada Post:

STOP union-bashing, START bargaining!

- Reports on page 6 -



Photo from Canadian Union of Postal Workers website, www.cupw.ca



B.C. starts HST referendum

Vote "YES" to axe the tax Defeat the HST!

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Decision for COPE

Members of Canada's oldest progressive civic party will vote this month on an electoral agreement to block the right-wing NPA from making yet another comeback at Vancouver City Hall.

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Big men in Ottawa

Puffed up at their "success" in bombing Libya, the Harper Tories are moving to set up Canadian military bases around the world.

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John Graham

Sentenced to life in jail after an unjust trial in South Dakota, indigenous environmental activist John Graham remains determined to clear his name and ultimately regain his freedom.

COPE meets June 26 to launch civic campaign

PV Vancouver Bureau

Vancouver's civic election is already underway, five months before voters head to the polls on Nov. 19. Two of the city's three major parties have nominated candidates, and the Coalition of Progressive Electors (COPE) will meet this month to start up its preparations. (That meeting begins at 2 pm, Sunday, June 26, at the Japanese Hall, 487 Alexander Street.)

Hoping to make a comeback, the right-wing Non-Partisan Alliance has nominated its sole city councillor, Suzanne Anton, for mayor. Several NPA council candidates are getting regular corporate media coverage for their attacks against the Vision majority on city council, and Anton herself is a popular figure, especially among upper-income voters. The NPA has hired a big-time corporate fundraiser to help pull together a multi-million dollar campaign.

So the NPA, which crashed and burned twice in the past decade (the 2002 and 2008 elections) is back in the race. Formed as a big business coalition to keep the left

out of City Hall, the NPA has dominated Vancouver politics for most of the past 70 years. On several occasions, most recently in 2005, the NPA has taken advantage of divisions among centre and left forces to regain office. Suzanne Anton is no Rob Ford, and Vision mayor Gregor Robertson has gone out of his way to keep friendly relations with Victoria, but the provincial Liberal government would certainly prefer a friendly NPA administration in Vancouver.

The cooperation agreement signed in May between the centrist Vision party and COPE is designed to block that possibility. Despite some sharp differences between the two parties, both are well aware that an electoral alliance is necessary to defeat the NPA.

The 50,000-member Vancouver and District Labour Council and key unions in the civic field are focused on stopping the NPA, which locked out CUPE municipal employees for months in a bitter 2007 labour dispute. Without Vision/COPE cooperation, the labour movement would have little reason to put valuable funds and

campaign workers into the civic campaign - especially if a provincial election takes place earlier in the fall as expected.

A loss of labour support would be particularly difficult for COPE, which was formed in 1968 by the Labour Council and a wide range of social justice allies. After tilting towards Vision in 2005 and 2008, the labour movement has slowly been moving back in COPE's direction.

For all these reasons, it appears likely that COPE members will ratify the agreement at their June 26 AGM, just as they gave 90%

backing to a ballot alliance with Vision during the 2008 campaign. The agreement sets out candidate numbers for each party on a commonslate (7 Vision and 3 COPE for city council, 5 Vision and 4 COPE for school board, 4 Vision and 2 COPE for park board).

The agreement also commits the parties to develop joint positions on a few key issues, such as housing and homelessness at the city council level.

On other issues, the parties are free to stake out their own positions, which will overlap in many areas and diverge in others. COPE, for

example, will continue to argue against the ongoing shift of the local taxation burden, which has increasingly been placed on homeowners to give the business sector a break.

Matters are simpler at the School Board level, where the four Vision and three COPE trustees have worked closely for the past three years. Led by VSB chair Patti Bacchus (Vision) and vice-chair Jane Bouey (COPE), the progressive majority on the Board has been a powerful voice against Liberal underfunding of public schools across British Columbia.

If the agreement is adopted by COPE members, the stage will be set for COPE's own nomination meeting in September. Assuming that COPE council incumbents David Cadman and Ellen Woodsworth receive the support of most members, that meeting may see a sharp struggle for the third COPE council spot.

One candidate seeking a COPE nomination is R.J. Aquino, a popular figure in the progressive Filipino community. Another is former councillor Tim Louis, who is widely seen as a more aggressive critic of Vision than of the NPA. Union activists speaking to *People's Voice* fear that if Louis is nominated, it will be nearly impossible for COPE to win serious labour support for its campaign.

(The August issue of PV will report on the COPE AGM and other Vancouver civic election developments.) ●

Courageous stand in Parliament



During the Throne Speech in Parliament on June 3, Senate page Brigette DePape stood up in protest, silently holding a sign that said, "Stop Harper!" Promptly fired for her courageous act, DePape said, "Harper's agenda is disastrous for this country and for my generation."

People's Voice Fund Drive now at 57.9%

Support the Postal Workers!

As this issue heads to the printer, *People's Voice* readers across the country are acting in solidarity with the sisters and brothers who deliver each paper to subscribers. Targetted in the corporate media as "lazy and overpaid," the members of CUPW work around the year, often in terrible weather conditions, carrying enormous bundles of mail. Others work inside, sorting the mail under intense management pressure.

Both letter carriers and inside workers face a range of serious health and safety issues arising from their jobs. They certainly have the right to earn a decent wage, and they deserve benefits like pensions and sick leave. All workers deserve these basics, especially since our capitalist society rests entirely on the vast wealth produced by workers, not bosses.

People's Voice rejects the

corporate-driven flood of dirty insults, slanders and lies directed at postal workers. We will continue to stand in solidarity with CUPW, which has a proud record as one of an outstanding progressive labour organization.

Of course, we have no source of revenue other than subscriptions and contributions from our readers to keep publishing. That revenue stream may be interrupted temporarily by the Postal Workers' labour actions, but it's a small price to pay.

Since relaunching our 2011 Fund Drive after the federal election, we have continued to receive donations. As of June 3, we are at \$28,974, or 57.9% of our \$50,000 Fund Drive target. Ontario remains in the lead, with 64% achieved, or \$13,803 raised towards their goal of \$21,600. Alberta is in second place, with \$1905 raised, or 56% of their \$3400 target. British Columbia

has picked up the pace, with \$10,801 turned in, or 54% of their \$20,000 quota. Our Newfoundland/Labrador supporters are still half-way towards their \$400 goal, and Quebec is at 49%, with \$245 out of \$500 raised. Next are Manitoba (\$1045 raised out of \$2400) and Saskatchewan (\$350 out of \$800) each at 44% of their targets. The Atlantic region has sent in \$325 out of \$1200, or 27%, and another \$300 has come from friends outside Canada.

Toronto-area readers are looking forward to the **Davenport Club's annual People's Voice BBQ, on Saturday, July 9**, from 2 to 5 pm, rain or shine. Tickets are just \$20/person, or \$10 for low-waged and students. Children under 12 eat for free! The BBQ is at 58 Albany Avenue (first street east of Bathurst, north of Bloor). To help prepare the feast, please call the organizers in advance at 416-536-6771.

Sunday, August 14 will be the date for the annual PV Walk-A-Thon organized by our Lower Fraser Club supporters in Surrey's Bear Creek Park. The Walk-A-Thon raises \$3000 or more every year, and participants look forward to the walk around the park followed by a delicious south Asian lunch. Mark it on your summer calendar, and see our next issue for details.

Once again this year, we offer a gift in appreciation of your solidarity. For each donation of \$100, contributors will have their choice of a PV 2011 Calendar, a framed portrait of a revolutionary fighter, or a copy of "Great October," a short DVD dedicated to the Great October Socialist Revolution of 1917. ●



The recent Vancouver Bus Tour to mark the Communist Party's 90th anniversary was a big hit with participants (above), and raised a welcome contribution to the *People's Voice* Fund Drive. Held on May 29, the two-hour tour focused on some 35 locations linked with the history of local trade unions, progressive movements, and the Party. Many of the locations are connected with the On to Ottawa Trek and the Battle of Ballantyne Pier (both in 1935), and the 1938 Post Office occupation by the unemployed. Other sites represent important anti-racist struggles, such as the monument to Chinese Veterans and Railway Workers. The trip wrapped up with lunch at the Centre for Socialist Education. Due to ongoing interest, a similar tour may be held again this fall.

Davenport Club's Annual People's Voice BBQ

Saturday, July 9, 2-5 pm
58 Albany Avenue, Toronto
(first street east of Bathurst, north of Bloor)

Rain or Shine!
 \$20 per person,
 \$10 low waged, students
 Children under 12 free

To help us prepare better, please let us know if you will be coming, 416-536-6771

Here's my contribution to the PV Fund Drive!

Enclosed please find my donation of \$_____ to the 2011 People's Voice Press Fund Drive.

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

Charter of Youth Rights campaign gains momentum

PV Montreal Bureau

How does the youth and student movement fight back in the time of the Harper majority government? How do we evaluate the experience and role of young people in the election, as well as the broader labour and people's struggles across Canada and around the world?

"The Harper majority is catastrophic for youth and students, already facing record high unemployment, skyrocketing student debt, and many other social problems" Young Communist League General Secretary Johan Boyden recently told People's Voice. "Despite pro-corporate pundits trying to calm the people with soothing words that Harper's new majority will lead him to an approach of 'balance,' we've already seen what the Conservatives will do."

"Harper's budget will bring in severe cutbacks. They don't need to do it all at once, there will be many occasions for ramming through the agenda of more poverty, police, prisons, war and crimes against the environment. In the last year of their mandate, for example, the Canada Health and Social Transfer expires," he said.

According to Boyden, there is no mandate for this agenda from the Canadian people, especially the youth who massively oppose the Conservatives. He pointed to flash demonstrations that came together immediately after the election, organized by youth and students against the Harper majority, as well as polls showing that youth overwhelmingly voted against Harper and often for the New Democrats.

"Another indication of the mood of youth is the high-school

programme Student Vote," he said. "This isn't necessarily an accurate picture - in some regions only private schools participate - but students would have returned a larger number of non-big business party candidates (NDPers and Greens) and a Conservative minority."

In places where the Communist candidate was allowed to speak directly to students, their Student Vote was "significantly higher, catching the support often of several hundred students."

In a post-election statement, the YCL noted the increasing barriers to youth voting, while the big parties offer little of substance to young people like peace or free

education. "Youth vote turnout was apparently, like the general turnout, not significantly higher - despite comedian Rick Mercer's Maple-leaf enwrapped non-partisan 'Vote Mobs' on campuses and much hype about social media," the statement said.

The YCL also welcomed the NDP's victory as official opposition, the new young Quebec NDP MPs in Ottawa, the higher number of women in parliament, and the election of the first Green MP. However, these parties do not consistently challenge corporate rule and the military-industrial complex.

Boyden noted that YCLers have been out campaigning for the Charter of Youth Rights at the

Canadian Labour Congress in Vancouver and the Rebelles conference in Winnipeg, and have already collected the contacts of over a hundred youth and student activists who want to participate in developing the campaign.

"We are hearing some youth who are very wedded to the NDP saying 'the election results are great! Maybe we'll form government next.' This is a misread," said Boyden.

"The other sense is danger. Naturally, many youth have noticed that the NDP basically jettisoned the progressive planks of its platform and so there is also a sense of disempowerment. Whatever you think of the NDP,

they cannot block the Tory agenda because of 'the math' in Parliament. The main struggle is very clearly out of parliament and on the streets. And social democracy in Canada, as in Europe, is increasingly dressed-up in neo-liberal gear. We can't fall into the analytical trap of defining the strategy and tactics of the left and the youth and student movement in terms of the NDP. The unity and orientation of the people's movements is what is key to moving forward," Boyden said.

As a youth and student movement "we need to fight the cultivated sense of cynicism that holds hundreds of thousands of youth back from participating in organized struggle," he told PV.

"The idea of the Charter of Youth Rights is to present a militant agenda that relatively disparate forces in the youth movement can unite behind - from the struggle for accessible education in BC, to young Postal workers about to go on strike, to the youth organizing for a National Aboriginal Day of Action in Winnipeg, to the young women marching to stop violence against women, to the thousands of youth who casually walked through Montreal's anarchist bookfair, searching for radical perspectives, or the participants of Nova Scotia youth pride events in Halifax - and from there seek to involve many more youth."

Johan Boyden and two other prominent youth activists - Marianne Breton Fontaine and Stephen Von Sychowski - will speak at a June 22 forum at the Centre for Socialist Education, 706 Clark Drive, Vancouver. For details, see the ad on page 10, or call 604-255-2041. For more information, visit www.youth-charter.ca or check out the latest issue of Rebel Youth magazine. ●



YCL members took part in the April 9th Community Day of Action rally in Toronto (Photo: Ed Bil)

Municipalities need stable funding and fair taxes

Canada's largest public sector union says cities and towns across the country face unprecedented pressure and demand for investment in infrastructure, social services, immigrant settlement, social housing, public transit and child care services. But, says CUPE, municipalities are limited in their ability to generate revenue and face significant barriers when trying to properly meet these critical needs.

In a June 1 statement, CUPE says that many factors are contributing to the crisis in municipal financing. Federal government stimulus funding is coming to an end, as is more than \$1.5 billion annually in other federal funding programs for municipal infrastructure and housing.

Infrastructure funding is set to decline in coming years, while communities face existing and new demands such as stronger environmental standards, climate change and growing social needs.

Canadian communities continue to struggle with an infrastructure deficit of more than \$120 billion, while relying on regressive property taxes and user fees for more than 75 per cent of their revenues. As a result, Canadians face some of the highest rates of property tax in the world. In contrast, most European and U.S. cities have access to revenues from income and sales taxes.

CUPE says that municipalities need stable, predictable and increasing revenues to deliver on their growing responsibilities. The union argues that to improve its major funding programs for municipalities, the federal government should take several steps:

- * renew the \$1.2 billion a year Building Canada Infrastructure Fund, but eliminate the requirement to consider wasteful financing through public private partnerships;
- * renew and expand federal funding for homelessness and affordable housing;
- * commit \$400 million a year to revitalize public urban transit systems;
- * index federal gas tax funding to keep up with inflation and economic growth; and
- * introduce a new clean water fund to pay for the federal share of the \$20 billion cost of meeting new federal wastewater standards.

CUPE Ontario puts heat on McGuinty

Over a thousand delegates from across the province met at Toronto's Sheraton Centre on May 25 for the 48th annual CUPE Ontario Convention. The theme of this year's convention, "Building a Better Ontario," put the focus on the union's determination to protect and strengthen the valuable public services provided to the people by CUPE's 200,000 Ontario members.

A highlight of the convention was the May 26 march to Queen's Park, where delegates sent a strong message to the McGuinty Liberals about the growth of poverty in Ontario, and the need for governments to improve public services and create good jobs.

"For far too long politicians have ignored the issues that matter," said Candace Rennick, the union's Secretary-Treasurer. "These are issues that we will have at the top of our minds come election day in October."

The rally was joined by a wide range of community allies, students, and members of other unions. Speakers at the rally and at the convention called on the government to raise social assistance rates, restore the Special Diet Allowance, and set a liveable minimum wage. They also demanded better funding for public housing, childcare and post-secondary education.

(People's Voice photos by Ed Bil.) ●



CUPE Ontario President Fred Hahn (above) and some of the May 26 rally participants (below).



EDITORIALS

The "big player" enters the game

Somehow it was never spoken of during the recent federal election, but the Harper Tories now admit they are setting up Canadian military bases around the world. Why? It's just "prudent planning", claims Defence Minister Peter MacKay.

Waxing eloquent about the burdens and responsibilities of a 21st century imperialist power, MacKay says Canada must "look out into the future (to) anticipate where and when we will be needed... The focus of the planning is our capability for expeditionary participation in international missions... We are big players in NATO. We're a country that has become a go-to nation in response to situations like what we're seeing in Libya, what we saw in Haiti... We are constantly working within that paradigm of countries, to see where we can bring that niche capability to bear. It's part of planning and preparation, in conjunction with our equipment needs."

Le Devoir reports that the Canadian Forces are already negotiating to set up bases in Germany, Jamaica, Kuwait, Senegal, Kenya, Tanzania, Singapore and South Korea.

Why wasn't this historic expansion of Canadian military power raised during the campaign? Did the Harperites fear a voter backlash? After all, the Tories received the backing of just 39% of Canadians who voted. Another one or two percent less would have left them with another minority. Now, Canadians face a government determined to keep ramping up the military, at the expense of people's needs at home and abroad. One of Harper's first actions after May 2 was to buy another \$130 million worth of bombs to kill Libyans.

As for being "big players" and "go-to guys," a better phrase might be "hired guns." The burden of the world's biggest military machine weighs heavily on the U.S., and the PM is eager to volunteer the people of Canada to help shoulder the load.

It's time to retool the anti-war movement to meet this militarist threat - and to demand that the Opposition parties take a stand against the unchecked expansion of Canadian imperialism.

For our future: stand with CUPW

The struggle by the Postal Workers for a fair collective agreement is no ordinary bargaining dispute. It is the latest episode in a campaign to drive down the wages and working conditions of the entire working class. Once again, right-wing politicians and media talking heads are frothing at the mouth about "overpaid" workers, "generous" sick leave plans, "inflated" pensions. Coming from people who have widened the income and wealth gap in Canada to historic proportions, these accusations are absurd. But repeated often enough, with sufficient volume, blatant lies can take on a dangerous aura of authenticity.

As with other recent public sector strikes, the bosses hope to sow petty jealousies to sap our ability to unite against a common enemy. Yes, \$24 per hour is a decent wage, and posties do enjoy some hard-won sick leave and pension benefits. But why shouldn't workers who perform a tough job under difficult weather conditions earn enough money to live relatively comfortably, instead of sinking into poverty?

Every attack on the wages and benefits of postal workers needs to be countered with the truth that millionaire shareholders and CEOs in this country are laughing all the way to the bank. Corporate profits will likely hit \$250 billion this year, while 1.4 million workers are jobless and millions more face a scary future.

If two-tier wages and benefits are imposed at Canada Post and across the country, the entire working class will see its conditions sink through the floor within the next generation. A defeat for CUPW in this battle may open the floodgates for such an all-out assault. We cannot afford to lose this fight. We must stand with CUPW, on the picket lines, in our daily conversations with friends and fellow workers, in the wider arena of public opinion. Our future depends on it.



SPEAKING FRANKLY

Israelis demand recognition for Palestinian State

More than 20 famous Israeli intellectuals and public figures have signed a letter urging European leaders to officially recognize an independent Palestinian State. The letter was initiated by the peace group Sheikh Jarrah Solidarity Movement, which also organizes the weekly demonstrations in the Palestinian East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Sheikh Jarrah.

"Peace has fallen hostage to the peace process," the letter said. "As Israeli citizens, we announce that if and when the Palestinian people declare independence of a sovereign state that will exist next to Israel in peace and security, we will support the announcement of the Palestinian State with borders based on the 1967 lines, with needed land swaps on a 1:1 basis. We urge the countries of the world to declare their willingness to recognize a sovereign Palestinian State according to these principles."

"Netanyahu's speech in Washington and the sweeping support he received from the U.S. Congress shows that the peace process has reached its end," the statement added, stressing that Israel now has a choice between recognizing a Palestinian State or a renewed wave of violence.

The letter was signed, among others, by former Knesset Speaker Avraham Burg, former Foreign Ministry Director General Dr. Alon Liel, the former Ambassador to South Africa and the Philippines, Ilan Baruch; Nobel laureate Professor Daniel Kahneman, Israel Prize Winner Professor Avishai

Margalit, former head of the Civil Service Commission Itzhak Galnoor, former president of the Israel Academy of Sciences Prof. Menahem Yaari, Israel Prize winner Prof. Yuval Yermiahu, the economist Prof. Arie Arnon and popular authors Nir Baram, Lea Eini, and Ronit Matalon.

Under the banner "Netanyahu said no, Israelis say yes", many of the letter signers participated in a June 4 rally for a Palestinian state, held in Kikar Rabin in the center of Tel Aviv.

The Communist Party of Israel (CPI) and Hadash initiated the massive Jewish and Arab June 4 rally for an independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as Arab-Palestinian capital. Peace groups like Peace Now and Gush Shalom are among a wide coalition of peace and Left groups which organized the rally.

Around 25,000 people took part in the march, which ended with a rally at the Tel Aviv Museum. MKs Dov Khenin (Hadash), Daniel Ben-Simon (Labor), Nino Abesadze (Kadima), Zahava Galon (Meretz), the Mayor of Nazareth Ramez Jeraisy, the editor of *Al Ittihad* daily communist newspaper and well known feminist activist Aida Touma-Sliman, and playwright Yehoshua Sobol give speeches.

Numerous political parties took part, along with current and former Knesset members.

Marchers held signs reading "Palestinian state - An Israeli interest", "Bibi, recognize the Palestinians" and "Yes, we KEN

[which means 'yes' in Hebrew]". The demonstrators carried Palestinian, Israeli and red flags, reading "Yes to peace" and "Jews and Arabs refuse to be enemies."

Several dozen rightist activists, wrapped in Israeli flags, held a counter-rally at the starting point of the march in Rabin Square. During the march, two left activists were arrested because of arbitrary police actions.

A veteran Communist Party member, Prof. Yenina Altman, 80, came to the march from Haifa. "It's important to me to voice the desire to see the Palestinians independent," she said. "I came from Poland after my entire family perished, I was in a ghetto and a concentration camp. I would like to have my country show tolerance and respect for the Palestinians and give them the right for an independent state just as we desired."

A member of the Communist Party of Israel Central Committee, Rawda Murcus from the Galilee town of Kafr Yasif said, "We hope that such acts of protest will grow stronger and cause a change which will see an independent Palestinian state along 1967 borders with east Jerusalem as capital."

Several streets in the area of the demonstration were closed to traffic, paralyzing the center of Tel-Aviv for hours. ●



Some of the June 4 demonstrators in Tel-Aviv.

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Volunteers and contributors for this issue:
Asad Ali, Dave Arland, Ed Bil, Johan Boyden,
Miguel Figueroa, Sam Hammond, Tim Pelzer,
B. Prasant, Liz Rowley, and our mailers in
Vancouver & Toronto.

Editor: Kimball Cariou Business Manager: Sam Hammond
Editorial Board: Kimball Cariou, Miguel Figueroa,
Doug Meggison, Naomi Rankin, Liz Rowley, Jim Sacouman

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Which was the real tar sands hoax?

By Kimball Cariou

There was a minor uproar at the end of May, with the release of a video clip claiming that Peter Jackson, director of the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, would supposedly use the Alberta tar sands to film part of his upcoming feature *The Hobbit*. Apparently these scenes would be set in Mordor, the bleak and terrifying region of Middle Earth ruled by Sauron.

To LOTR fans (true confession: I have read both the trilogy and *The Hobbit* several times), the story sounded strange. *The Hobbit* does include chapters in dark forests and deep mines, but not Mordor. In the end, the whole thing was exposed as a hoax, designed to draw attention to the environmental and human damages caused by the tar sands projects.

Did the hoax work? Or did it make environmentalists seem willing to lie to achieve their goals? I have my own opinion, but I leave it up to readers to decide for themselves.

Somewhat lost in the debate was a far more chilling deception, carried out by the Harper Conservatives. According to Postmedia News reports, the federal government deliberately excluded data showing a 20 per cent increase in annual pollution from the tar sands industry in 2009.

The data was kept out of a report on climate change and Canada's greenhouse gas emissions submitted to the United Nations. The report showed a six per cent drop in annual emissions for the entire economy from 2008 to 2009, but does not directly note the extent of emissions from the oilsands production, which is greater than the amount of all the cars driven on Canadian roads.

The data also indicated that emissions per barrel of oil produced by the sector are increasing, despite advertising claims made by the industry.

"The oilsands remain Canada's

fastest-growing source of greenhouse gas pollution, and they're the subject of a huge amount of attention and scrutiny in Canada and internationally," said Clare Demerse, director of climate change at the Pembina Institute, an Alberta-based environmental research group. "So it's very disappointing to see Environment Canada publish a 500-page report that leaves out these critical numbers - especially when last year's edition included them."

According to Environment Canada estimates, the tar sands industry was responsible for about 6.5% of annual greenhouse gas

emissions in 2009, up from five per cent in 2008. Emissions from this industry have climbed about 300% since 1990, effectively cancelling out reductions by other economic sectors.

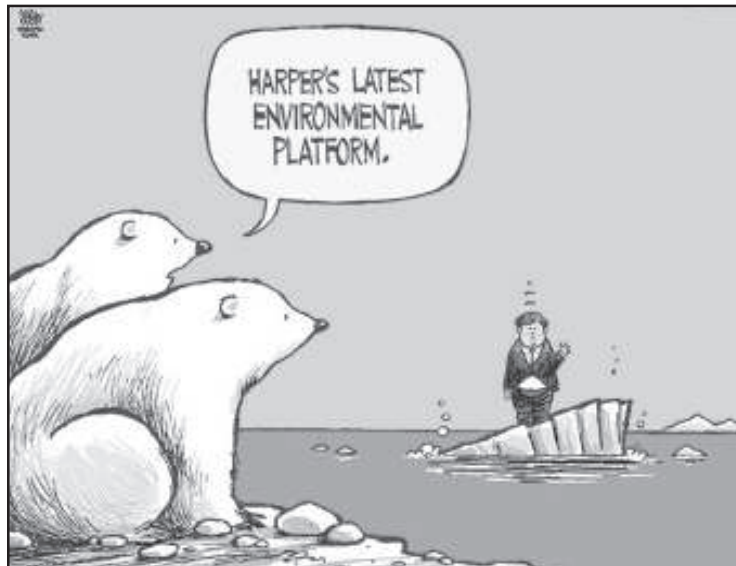
The report says the 6% decrease in overall emissions is partly due to the recent economic crisis, and also to a reduction of coal-fired electricity in Ontario.

An Environment Canada spokesperson told Postmedia that "some" of the missing information was still available in other reports, and argued that reporting requirements for the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) are divided into "broad, international sectors." But the department did not say which politicians or bureaucrats decided to exclude the tar sands emission

numbers.

According to Greg Stringham, vice-president of oilsands and markets at the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, "We report the information to them, and they choose to pass it on - they must pass it on to the UN. But then they choose how to disclose it and put it out there."

Last fall, media reports revealed that the Harper government had set up a partnership with the Alberta government, the industry and several federal departments to fight emission-reduction policies from other countries that target the tar sands. The latest news indicates that the Tory lobbying and public relations strategy continues to delay international action to fight climate change. ●



Tar sands mining is licensed to use twice the amount of fresh water that the entire city of Calgary uses in a year. The water requirements for oil sands projects range from 2.5 to 4.0 barrels of water for each barrel of oil produced. Processing the tar sands uses enough natural gas in a day to heat 3 million homes in Canada. Producing a barrel of oil from the tar sands produces three times more greenhouse gas emissions than a barrel of conventional oil. The tar sands operations are the fastest growing source of heat-trapping greenhouse gas in Canada. By 2020 the tar sands will release twice the amount produced currently by all the cars and trucks in Canada. (For sources, visit www.desmogblog.com)

Broken Skies: Canada's untold airline crisis

Commentary from www.yyzdistrict301.com, the newsletter of CAW Local 2002, District 301

Imagine if a politician promised to bankrupt every company in an important industry, create some of the highest service charges in the world, cause one of the biggest scandals in Canadian history through backroom privatisation deals, and turn thousands of stable jobs into precarious ones to pay for massive CEO bonuses.

It's hard to imagine many voters supporting this. Yet this is exactly what happened to Canada's airline industry when it became the first testing ground for the privatisation and de-regulation agenda in 1987. At the time, airline CEOs like Ward Air's Max Ward thought they could dominate the skies if government "got out of the way of business." The privateers promised more competition would create lower fares. Publicly-owned Air Canada became a target for politicians who favoured "less government."

At first this experiment was deemed a great success. New start-up companies and existing airlines went on buying sprees (mostly of each other, with a few Airbus' thrown in). The experiment's supposed "success" was then used to expand this model to other sectors of our economy.

But soon it started to fall apart, with spectacular failures like Wardair, growing debt and increased concentration of airline ownership. By the early 90s the industry was in a full blown crisis. Instead of reversing de-regulation, the newly elected Liberal government took the experiment further by launching "Open Skies"

with the U.S. and pushing even more aggressively the de-regulation agenda (including airports).

This trend continues today with the government now actively looking at the final takeover of our skies by foreign owned air carriers. The experiment has been a complete failure: instead of increased competition, there are fewer airlines operating within Canada.

In 1985 passengers could travel between Montreal and Toronto on Air Canada, CP Air, Quebecair, Nordair, City Express, Great Lakes and Eastern Provincial Airlines.

other voices....

Today their choices are limited to Air Canada, West Jet and Porter Airlines.

Every major airline that operated prior to de-regulation has either ceased operations, disappeared through merger or undergone restructuring through bankruptcy proceedings. This 100% failure rate is unprecedented. From 1937 to 1987 only three major airlines ceased operations due to economic factors, and the government suspended one airline's operations due to political pressure from the U.S. over its cargo service to Cuba (World-Wide Airways in 1966).

From 1987 to 2009, 25 airlines have ceased operations. These failures have caused considerable hardship to the thousands of stranded passengers and the suddenly unemployed workers.

This instability has caused a decrease in government revenues from profits and workers' wages. In order to make this up, there have

been dramatic increases in user fees and service charges. Canada now has amongst the highest such charges in the world.

Contrary to the hype and gimmicky seat sales, the facts paint a different story. Adjusted for inflation, the price of an airline ticket only showed an annual decrease of 0.4% in de-regulation's first twelve years (1987-1999). Although there are no current stats, overall transport prices appear to be following this trend. However when all additional charges are included, there has been a marked increase in total costs for the travelling public.

Many of the 80,000 workers directly employed in the industry have been forced to move from airline to airline to stay employed. This instability has caused large decreases in full time jobs with benefits. Those still employed are forced to make ever bigger sacrifices to "keep their jobs." Today's new airport worker is increasingly on a part time contract and is forced to start over at near minimum wage whenever they are forced to change contracts.

De-regulation has created some winners: CEOs have seen their wages and bonuses take off. In 2006, Air Canada's CEO Robert Milton earned over \$39 million at a time of worker concessions. Wall Street firms like Cerberus continue to make windfall profits by stripping assets from restructuring carriers. Investment bankers continue to pocket rich commissions whenever new share offerings are made. Bankruptcy lawyers are always the first to appear when airlines fail because they are always the first to be paid.

In other words; the people who lobbied for de-regulation in the first



Airline workers took part in a demonstration during the recent CUPE Ontario convention in Toronto. (Photo: Ed Bil)

place. The collapse of the world's financial sector has shown the bankruptcy of the ideology of removing regulations and privatising our nations. On March 29, 2009 Stephen Harper said on Fox News that the instability of the world markets was due to the "consequence of under-regulation." He could have just as easily been talking about Canada's airlines.

The first step to reverse this instability is to restore the regulations that protected Canadians in the past. Simply put: ensure industry operates for the

benefit of the people instead of the corporate vultures.

In the months ahead, Canada's airline workers will be demanding a return to saner skies. Action is needed before the next chapter of "Milton's Millions" is written or the next Karlheinz Schreiber flies into town.

Your support will be critical in making this happen. A good place to start would be to tell your MP that you don't support the "consequences of under-regulation" of the airlines and all other industries in Canada. ●

Message to Canada Post: negotiate a fair collective agreement with CUPW

Instead of tearing down Canada's mail delivery system and attacking the postal workers who provide this vital public service, the federal government and Canada Post must be compelled to negotiate a fair collective agreement with the Canadian Union of Postal Workers, says the Communist Party of Canada.

In a news release issued on June 1, the Communist Party's Central Executive Committee said, "Through their reckless actions, Canada Post management and the Harper Tories are on the brink of forcing the shutdown of postal delivery."

"For seven months, instead of engaging in serious bargaining, Canada Post has stubbornly insisted on huge contract rollbacks. The company demand for a 22% cut in pay for new hires, its drive to gut the sick leave program won through difficult bargaining in previous agreements, and many other concessionary proposals, have nothing to do with preserving the financial viability of Canada Post. If the company

was serious about this claim, it would have acted on the many valuable proposals raised in recent years by CUPW to improve the

Instead of encouraging Canada Post to continue down this dangerous path, the Harper government must be compelled to live up to its responsibilities to guarantee affordable and reliable mail service to Canadians in all regions

postal service for Canadians. Indeed, Canada Post has turned a profit every year for the past 16 years - hardly a picture of impending financial crisis and ruin!

"The negotiating position of Canada Post has the fingerprint of the Harper government and its pro-corporate, anti-worker policies all over it. This attack is part of a much wider corporate/government assault on the overall wages, pensions and working conditions of both public and private sector employees across Canada, indeed across the entire capitalist world. This is yet another example of the corporate drive to boost profits by

slashing the wages and pensions of working people.

"Despite claims to the contrary, the shutdown of Canada Post operations as a result of management intransigence would deal a harsh blow against thousands of small businesses and their employees across the country. For the company to make dismissive comments that 'there's plenty of time to negotiate' - as

Jon Hamilton, Canada Post's director of communications, told CBC on May 30 - is a slap in the face for both customers and postal workers.

"The very next day, after CUPW tabled serious new proposals to avert a shutdown, a Canada Post bargaining committee took less than ten minutes to reject the union's final offer in its entirety. This rejection signals that Canada Post and the Harper Tories are spoiling for a fight, hoping for an opportunity to inflict major damage on the labour

movement and on working people across Canada. We can expect to see an escalation of intense and hateful attacks on postal workers by right-wing politicians and the corporate media. The aim of these anti-labour forces is to whip up anger against postal workers, to divide working people and set the

stage for the break-up of Canada Post and the full privatization of this crucial public asset. The end result of this strategy can only be a much poorer mail system, higher costs for customers, lower wages and more dangerous working conditions, and bigger profits for the private corporations which seek to take over all postal delivery operations in Canada.

"The Communist Party demands that instead of making outrageous statements about the potential costs of paying decent wages to postal workers, the management of Canada Post must withdraw its anti-worker demands and bargain a fair collective agreement with its employees. Instead of encouraging Canada Post to continue down this dangerous path, the Harper government must be compelled to live up to its responsibilities to guarantee affordable and reliable mail service to Canadians in all regions, in rural and urban areas alike." ●

**WE
SUPPORT
OUR
POSTAL
WORKERS**



Why we all must support our Postal Workers

Posted on May 29, by David Bush, at this blog site: <http://halifax.mediacoop.ca/blog/david-bush/7373>

In all honesty it is as simple as this: You want to fight Harper? Then support the posties! Any day now, 45,000 postal workers could be on strike or be locked out from their job by their employer, Canada Post Corporation (CPC). The Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) and CPC have been in negotiation since October. The two sides are at fundamental odds over working conditions, the future of the postal service, and the treatment of new workers.

The CPC, a crown corporation, has been profitable for the last 16 years. In its last reported year, 2009, CPC registered a net profit of 281 million dollars from a total revenue of 3.1 billion dollars. Mail volumes fell in 2009, largely due to the economic downturn, but remained well above what they were 10 years ago. According to CPC, in 2009 "the negative pressure on revenue growth was mitigated by cost containment and operational efficiencies along with an unplanned non-cash reduction in employee future benefits expense."

Thus, despite an 8 percent reduction in mail volumes in 2009, CPC was able to make profits by reducing worker's benefits and denying health and safety concerns of their employees (Postal workers make up about 6% of the federal workforce but account for 20% of federal workforce injuries). And even though CPC recorded its most profitable year in 2009, "Canada Post did not pay a dividend to the Government of

Canada in 2009 due to the company's financial challenges and the need for significant capital reinvestment to modernize the postal system."

This reinvestment was the spending of 2 billion dollars to purchase new sorting machines, reorganize routes, and reduce "inefficiencies" in the postal service. This capital reinvestment is referred to as the Modern Post. The Modern Post is an attempt by the CPC to reduce the size of its workforce, weaken the power of CUPW, and increase the productivity among workers while reducing wages and benefits to those very same workers.

During negotiations the CPC has insisted on creating a two-tiered workplace where new workers will: get paid around 30% less than current employees, will have a defined pension plan where they bear all the risk, longer hours, less job security and less paid leave. This is an obvious ploy to weaken

the union by creating resentment among new members and by setting up a precedence for all members wages and benefits to be reduced in future bargaining.

The CPC is also trying to implement working conditions that defy any standard of health and safety. They want letter carriers to carry double bundles in one arm when they are delivering mail. For those of you who are not letter carriers, this means two huge satchels on your side, a scanner gun, a heavy bundle of mail in your hand, and a heavy bundle of mail on that same forearm. This is just plain dangerous, especially with longer routes and inclement weather. In places where they have tried to implement this change, letter carriers simply refused to work under such conditions and went out on a wildcat strike.

The CPC is also trying to end sick leave as it is known. They want to replace sick days with a Short-Term Disability (STD) plan.

The STD plan pays 30 percent less than sick days, and there is a lag of seven days before you can file for STD plan coverage in which you have to use personal days. Your claim is then subject to Manulife's approval. So why is the postal worker's struggle important for us non-postal workers?

First off, CUPW is the most progressive union in Canada. It has been at the forefront of many progressive struggles. It was the first national union to pass a boycott, divestment and sanction resolution against the state of Israel for its illegal occupation of Palestine. CUPW was also the first Canadian union to pass a boycott resolution against South African apartheid. It has also taken stances against the Iraq war and the Afghan war as well as taking stances against NAFTA and the FTAA. CUPW is also a major reason that maternity leave exists at all in Canada. In 1981, as a result of a 42-day strike, CUPW successfully negotiated 17 weeks of maternity leave paid at a rate of 93% of wages. This was a major breakthrough for all workers as the government and other major employers were forced to provide maternity leave and improve on it.

The defeat of the postal workers would be a major blow to the Canadian labour movement which is also facing huge jobs cuts on the federal level. If the CPC were victorious other major employers would implement many of CPC's rules regarding sick leave and wage rollbacks and two-tier workplaces. This would be disastrous for all workers, whether they are unionized or not.

The CPC and the Harper government want to privatize our

postal system. The CPC over the years has been whittling down the services provided by the postal system. They have reduced rural service, replaced door-to-door service with community mail boxes and have gotten rid of banking services. An expanded postal service would create more jobs and provide more services in our communities.

Our society has become more and more unequal. As the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives', Linda McQuaig and others, have noted, the top-earning 1 percent of Canadians almost doubled their share of national income, from 7.7 per cent to 13.8 per cent, over the past three decades. Things are only set to get worse under Harper. Workers, both unionized and non-unionized face a future of precarious job security and working conditions. Migrant labourers, women and people of colour will be facing even worse conditions as the Harper government will cut services, increase the security apparatus and institute a regressive regime that will police borders, bodies and dissent with the utmost cruelty.

This will be done in the service of a system, capitalism, which serves only those who already have power and wealth beyond the wildest imagination of most people in our society.

We are facing a choice in our society. Do we want to live in a place where managers and bosses aim to squeeze out as much profit from our labour and our communities just so a few people can have a third home and a second yacht? Or do we want to live in



A union built on solidarity: CUPW members at a 2009 rally against the Israeli attack on Gaza. Photo from Peace Alliance Winnipeg

Vote "YES" to axe the tax! Defeat the HST!

The BC Campbell Liberals, in cahoots with the Harper Tories, conspired secretly prior to the May 2010 provincial election to construct a monumental tax scam. Their HST is shifting billions of dollars from the public purse and consumer pockets into the corporate purse. The federal Tories paid the BC Liberals a \$1.6 billion bribe to do what they promised they would never do. While they were promising during the election campaign not to implement the HST, they were arranging how to do it.

This is how the swindle works.

BC businesses that formerly paid PST and were rebated GST now enjoy a "Harmonized" rebate of both the GST and the PST.

BC corporations pay the HST up front and then get a 100% rebate. The working public pay both taxes on an enlarged base of taxable items. Billions going into corporate bank accounts and billions coming out of the income of working families.

In the tradition of Gordon Campbell, new boss, same gang.

Christy Clark has inherited the BC Liberal tradition of broken promises, hidden agendas and outright lies. The smashed HEU contracts, smashed teachers' contracts on class size and composition, tax cuts for corporations and the wealthy in 2001, 2005 and 2009, and the criminal sale of BC Rail, set the Liberal operating procedure for sellout of the public's interest, and the largest

transfer of wealth into the corporate pockets in BC history.

On the eve of the HST referendum, Clark has introduced schemes to bribe people with their own money to vote "NO" against scrapping the HST. She has promised that if voters keep the HST, she will reduce it to 11% by July 12, 2012 and a further drop to 10% by July 2014. To compensate for the lost revenue, she will temporarily increase corporate

Registered voters in BC are taking part in a mail-in referendum on the so-called "Harmonized Sales Tax" (HST). The Communist Party of British Columbia has issued this statement urging a "YES" vote to axe the HST.

taxes and eliminate scheduled small business subsidies.

Christy Clark has no control over the federal part of the HST. Her promises are a continuation of the Liberal method - promise one thing and do the opposite. She is desperately trying to put out the fire and win support for the HST, with promises that are only hot wind.

Cash Cows and Pork Barrels

The HST is a "value added tax", a cash cow and pork barrel for provincial and federal governments. In other countries with VAT taxes, the rates have been hiked at government whim - in England to 17.5% in 2010, and in France now up

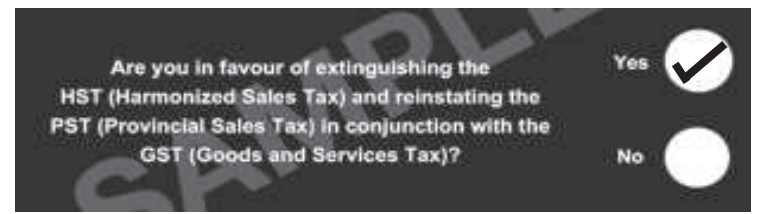
to 19.6% on food. The federal implementation bribe was paid for the future ability to squeeze more out of the public and rebate it to the corporations. On top of the HST scam, MSP premiums are scheduled to rise 6% per year, while health care cuts continue.

The defeat of the HST is the first step in the fight for Progressive Tax Reform. We need progressive tax reform based on the ability to pay, tax reform that will shift the load off working families and put it on those reaping the profits from our resources - the corporations and the wealthy.

In December 2010, the Liberal Finance Minister Colin Hansen said, "We have reduced taxes to some of the lowest levels in the country, and when combined with planned federal tax rate cuts, by 2012, the corporate income tax rate in BC will be the lowest of the G-7 nations." In the 1960s, the corporations paid 50 cents of every tax dollar in Canada. Now they pay pennies and the working people pay more and more.

The Communist Party of British Columbia calls for urgent measures to win progressive tax reform:

- * Axe the HST as a first step in the elimination of the GST and PST.
- * Reverse the Campbell Liberal corporate tax cuts, which cost the treasury over \$800 million annually.
- * Restore the corporation capital tax.
- * Introduce wealth and inheritance on estates over \$500,000.



* Eliminate taxes on incomes under \$35,000.

It is time to put BC back to work, using a reformed tax base to build affordable housing, provide publicly-financed post secondary education, do away with MSP premiums, increase education funding and attack the child poverty and homelessness that is

a stain on this province.

The Communist Party of British Columbia urges a strong YES vote to "axe the tax" and defeat the HST!

Issued by the Communist Party of British Columbia, cp.info@gmail.com 604-254-9836



September 2010: Members of several progressive South Asian organizations in Surrey hold one of the first public rallies against the HST. (Photo: K. Cariou)

"The HST cannot be fixed", warns Sinclair

By Jim Sinclair, President of the BC Federation of Labour, Vancouver Sun, June 3, 2011

During the leadup to the 2009 provincial election, instead of campaigning on their plan to introduce the harmonized sales tax, the Liberal government and its MLAs denied they were even considering it. But with the ballots barely counted, the Liberals announced they would proceed with the largest and most unfair tax shift in the province's history.

Incensed at being lied to and having their taxes increased to fund tax cuts for corporations, British Columbians rebelled. When the dust settled, the people won Round One. A grassroots movement spread across the province, forcing a referendum on the issue.

The people won Round Two in November 2010, when Gordon Campbell was forced to resign as premier.

Today a desperate Liberal party led by newly elected Premier Christy Clark is scrambling to win Round Three by spending millions of taxpayer dollars to convince British Columbians the HST is good for them.

Let's be clear: The HST can't be fixed. The changes promised by

Clark are a cynical attempt to buy British Columbians with their own money and, more importantly, dropping the tax by two points will cause a major revenue crisis leading to more cutbacks of schools, hospitals and government services.



Clark knows this is true - she said so herself.

"We aren't going to be talking about trying to reduce it by a point or two before the referendum. I think people will see that as buying them with their own money," Clark stated on March 21, adding that the province will either have a \$1.6-billion bigger deficit or \$1.6 billion less to spend on heart operations, special needs teachers, school facilities, hospital emergency rooms.

She is right on both counts, but she did it anyway. However, the cost to citizens of the HST goes

beyond creating bigger deficits or extreme cuts to public services.

This tax is fundamentally flawed because it takes billions of dollars from working families and gives those dollars to B.C.'s largest corporations.

Despite the convoluted question on the referendum, the real choice is between the HST and the provincial sales tax. If British Columbians vote Yes to reject the HST and reintroduce the PST, the government will receive an estimated \$6.4 billion from the PST in 2014-15 to pay for public services. Based on historical data, corporations will pay about \$2.6 billion and citizens will pay \$3.8 billion. Corporations and citizens share the responsibility and the tax will not apply to hundreds of essential purchases.

If British Columbians vote No and keep the HST, the government will receive in 2014-15 about \$5.3 billion from the tax, paid entirely by British Columbians and their families. Not only will this create a huge shortfall in revenue (as predicted by the premier) but corporations will pay virtually nothing. This is unfair.

Clark's HST will still have British Columbians paying \$1.4 billion more in taxes in 2014-15, but the provincial budget will be more than \$1 billion short to pay for public services.

Citizens pay more money and get fewer services. This makes no sense.

Yes, Clark announced a "temporary" increase in corporate taxes from 10 per cent to 12 per cent, but that will generate only a small portion of what the HST will save them. And don't forget, since the Liberals took power, the tax on corporate profits has been cut from 16.5 per cent to 10 per cent. The result has been a windfall of nearly \$8.5 billion since 2001. Corporate profits also increased 60 per cent

during the same period.

Did all those corporate tax cuts create jobs? Unfortunately, no. Corporations took the money and ran - closing mills and factories at a record pace, leaving us with 28,000 fewer manufacturing jobs today than at the beginning of the Liberal regime.

Don't be fooled by the Liberals or the upside-down question. Vote Yes to scrap the HST, vote Yes to the PST, vote Yes for fair taxes and vote Yes to properly fund public services for British Columbians. ●

HST fails equity test

From a commentary by Seth Klein, BC office of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, May 26, 2011

When comparing the overall corporate tax regime in BC to other jurisdictions, there is simply no compelling case that the corporate sector in BC was in need of a massive tax reduction (the HST system, by providing rebates for taxes paid on inputs, bestows upon businesses a tax cut of somewhere between \$730 million and \$2 billion). As it is, corporate tax rates have been dropping for years, and global accounting firm KPMG consistently finds BC to be one of the least expensive places in which to do business in the industrialized world.... At the household level, British Columbian consumers will be paying more (about \$1.3 billion more, according to the recent report of the government-appointed HST panel). Fundamentally, the HST and its low-income credit, as currently structured, fail the equity test. The credit largely off-sets the higher HST costs for the poorest British Columbians, but its early and quick phase-out means that many modest and middle income households will be facing higher costs. ●



GLOBAL CLASS STRUGGLE

Osanloo released!

Mansour Osanloo, the Iranian bus union leader, was set free on June 2 after almost four years of imprisonment. The release is reportedly conditional on "good behaviour" and the payment of a bond.

Osanloo is the president and a founding member of the Vahed Syndicate, a trade union representing Tehran's bus workers. In 2007, Osanloo was sentenced to five years' imprisonment on charges of "acting against national security" and "propaganda against the state". In 2010 another year was added to his sentence.

The International Transport Federation (ITF) has led an international campaign demanding Osanloo's release. ITF general secretary David Cockroft commented: "This is a great day for Mansour and his family - and for his fellow Vahed union members and those of us in the international trade union movement who are honoured to call him a friend. It's doubly welcome given the deterioration in his health during his time behind bars."

"That bail has been set falls short of the full pardon we all wanted, and which the Iranian government promised, but for now we can just take a moment to savour his richly deserved return to his family. But - and sadly even on a day as good as this one there has to be a but - there are other innocents in jail in Iran for the same 'crime' of wanting to join a trade union. They include Mansour's colleagues, Reza Shahabi and Ebrahim Madadi. For all of them, and us, the fight is not over."

The Vahed Syndicate has expressed its thanks to everyone who fought so hard for Osanloo's release.

Kazakh union leader charged

A jailed Kazakh trade union activist, who was due to be released, has had a new criminal case launched against her. Natalya Sokolova was found guilty on May 24 of "organizing an unsanctioned mass gathering" in front of police headquarters in the western city of Aqtau on May 21 and sentenced to eight days in jail. Her sentence was to have ended on June 1.

Sokolova was providing legal support to employees at the Qarazhanbas oil and gas field in the western Manghystau region, who went on strike in early May. Sokolova's husband, Vasily Chepurnoi, told reporters on June 1 that, instead of releasing the trade unionist, authorities in Aqtau launched another criminal case, charging Sokolova with "igniting social hatred."

Chepurnoi also said that police visited his apartment on May 31 and confiscated his wife's two mobile phones, his son's personal computer, and a laptop. About 20 kilograms of documents were also taken from the apartment by police.

According to Chepurnoi, the local authorities and the

Qarazhanbas oil and gas corporation management want to keep Sokolova jailed while the workers are on strike.

Fewer fatalities at union coal mines

Underground coal mines in the U.S. that are unionized have significantly fewer traumatic injuries and fatalities than nonunion mines, a study by a Stanford Law School professor concludes. The United Mine



Workers of America, which has seen its ranks gradually wane in the face of anti-union tactics by mine companies, says the study is proof of the importance of the union.

The study was released in late May, after another report into the Upper Big Branch mine disaster concluded that safety measures at the non-union mine owned by Massey Energy were inadequate. Twenty-nine miners were killed by an explosion at the West Virginia mine in April 2010.

In the past two decades, there have been 18-33 percent fewer traumatic injuries per miner in union mines than nonunion mines and 27-68 percent fewer fatalities per miner, according to a draft of the study sponsored by the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health. The variation in the numbers is designed to account for the relatively small size of the sample - there are only several hundred mines operating in the United States. Over the time covered by the study, some have opened and others have closed.

"Taken at face value, my findings seem to support the idea that unions have substantially improved the safety of U.S. coal mines, at least over the past two decades," said the author, Alison Morantz.

Some previous studies suggested there are actually more injuries reported at union mines, which Morantz argues could be explained in part by the underreporting of injuries at nonunion mines.

She said there's no way to be certain about the relationship, but the numbers provide "a strong presumption that a 'union safety effect' exists in U.S. coal mining... So, I think the burden of proof is now on the those who disagree to muster credible empirical evidence in support of the contrary position."

Foreign workers in Saudi lose jobs

Nepali migrant workers in Saudi

Arabia might lose around 300,000 jobs, as the host country implements changed labour force policies. Under the "Saudisation" policy, the Saudi government will no longer renew the work permits of foreign workers who have already spent six years in the country. Companies will be required to guarantee at least 10 percent of their workforce are Saudi nationals.

Formulated in 2006, "Saudisation" was adopted some three months ago when King Abdullah promised to create jobs for youth in the midst of anti-government protests in Middle East and North African countries. Saudi Arabia has an unemployment rate above 10.5 percent this year.

Some "source countries" have started exploring alternate destinations for their exported workers. Philippines (which like Nepal relies heavily on remittances) signed overseas job agreements with South Korea and Australia last month. The two agreements consist of 11,000 jobs in South Korea and 180,000 jobs in Australia.

According to the Nepal Association of Foreign Employment Agencies, about 600,000 Nepalis are working in Saudi Arabia, and the change will affect nearly half of them. There are an estimated 10 million expatriate workers in Saudi Arabia employed in various trades, such as construction, telecommunications, health and service sectors, and domestic workers.

The Gulf Cooperation Council has assured source countries that the six-year migrant worker limit will not be introduced in other Gulf countries, where local unemployment rates are lower.

Thousands march against U.S. sanctions

Around ten thousand people marched in Caracas on May 31 to protest the sanctions by the U.S. on Venezuela's state oil company Petroleos de Venezuela (PDVSA) for trading with Iran. The marchers, including many PDVSA workers from around the country, rallied in three main plazas in Caracas, calling for the defence of national sovereignty against foreign interference.

On May 24, the U.S. announced sanctions against PDVSA and other smaller companies in Jersey, Monaco, the United Arab Emirates, Israel and Singapore. Venezuela will continue selling oil to the U.S. but PDVSA will be prohibited from competing for US government procurement contracts, from securing financing from the Export-Import Bank of the United States, and from obtaining US export licenses. The sanctions do not apply to PDVSA's U.S. based subsidiary, CITGO.

Energy and Petroleum minister, Rafael Ramirez, spoke at the protest, saying, "Now petroleum builds health, education, housing, it brings justice to all our people. Our brother countries in OPEC, under the undisputable

leadership of Venezuela, have strengthened an instrument in defence of our national interests. That's why imperialism invaded Iraq, besieges Iran, bombs Libya, and for the same reason, it harasses the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela."

Two-tier workplaces in Ireland

Ireland's Services, Industrial, Professional and Technical Union (SIPTU) fears that proposed Government changes to sectoral wage agreements will create two-tier workplaces with workers on different pay and conditions. The Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, Richard Bruton, has said that new workers will be most affected by the changes to hotel, restaurant and retailing wage agreements, while existing workers would be protected by employment contracts.

But SIPTU, which represents large numbers of these workers, says an existing employment contract is not always a guarantee of pay and conditions as employers can replace older, more expensive workers, with new employees on lower wages. SIPTU is concerned that two-tier workplaces would develop and that the workers with the original and more expensive contract would eventually be phased out.

The union cites the example of the recent cut in the minimum wage which was supposed to apply only to new employees, but saw some companies replace existing workforces with new ones on the lower wage rate. Although the Government has restored the minimum wage rate, SIPTU is concerned that employers will seek to do the same thing if a "reformed"

sectoral wage agreement applies only to new employees.

Bruton claims that existing workers would have the protection of their employment contracts, but acknowledges that over time, even existing workers could see their pay and conditions altered. He proposes to allow businesses "adapt to the environment" by reaching local deals on pay and conditions, and not be bound by sectoral contracts. The government also argues that its so-called "reforms" are necessary because some sectoral agreements have been in place for 40 or 50 years.

Swazi teachers demand to freeze King's assets

Teachers in Swaziland, sub-Saharan Africa's last absolute monarchy, protested in the capital, Mbabane, on June 1, calling for the U.S. to freeze the assets of the country's top leaders.

About 1,000 teachers marched to the U.S. embassy to demand action amid a fiscal crisis, Mhlanga, of the Swaziland National Association of Teachers, told the media. The union also wants South Africa to help bring democracy to Swaziland, he said.

Swaziland, Africa's third-largest sugar producer and bordered by South Africa and Mozambique, is trying to contain a budget crisis. The government aims to raise taxes and slash spending, but refuses to consider curtailing lavish spending on luxury items by members of the royal family. Swazi trade unions have refused to agree to a planned cut in public sector wages, and held pro-democracy protests in April.

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

Send me information on the Communist Party of Canada



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Ottawa CPC
Tel: 613-232-7108

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

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

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

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

New developments in Colombian repression cases

Based on reports by W. T. Whitney, Jr. and files from the Popular Tribune website of the Communist Party of Venezuela

The jailing in Colombia of Swedish journalist Joaquin Perez Becerra stands as a heavy indictment of Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez and of a Colombian regime notorious for terrible class-based repression, a Red scare of titanic dimensions, and a major role as imperialist enabler in Latin America.

Joaquin Perez Becerra landed in a Bogota prison on April 25. The director of the left-oriented Anncol website (News Agency for the New Colombia) in Sweden had flown from Europe to Caracas two days earlier. Venezuela President Hugo Chavez complied with the request of Colombia counterpart Juan Manuel Santos that Perez Becerra be seized and delivered to Colombia. Santos indicated that INTERPOL had issued a "Red Notification" on Perez Becerra, whom Colombian sources say acted as a European agent for the leftist Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC).

Perez Becerra was a city councillor in Corinto, Valle del Cauca, when he fled to Sweden in 1993 to save his life. He gained political asylum the next year and Swedish citizenship in 2000. Despite his having given up Colombian citizenship, Venezuelan and Colombian officials dealing with Perez refer to him as Colombian. They have refused to allow lawyers and Swedish councillor officials to visit him.

Perez Becerra had gained office as a candidate of the Patriotic Union (UP) electoral coalition, formed by FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) insurgents, communists, and others who

entered electoral politics in 1985. By 1993, when Perez's first wife was murdered, UP candidates were winning victories, but others among them and elected officials were being killed, mostly by paramilitaries. The continuing massacre has taken 5000 lives.

Joaquin Perez Becerra's fate has triggered a flood of protests. For many, President Chavez' action signifies complicity with the Colombian regime's excesses. The journalist's capture and detention, they say, betokens continued persecution of UP activists.

In a May 3 article on its Popular Tribune website, the Communist Party of Venezuela (PCV) maintains that the seizing and delivery of Joaquin Perez Becerra to the Colombian government was "illegal and politically misguided."

On April 24, a group of leaders of the PCV, Venezuelan political personalities, and lawyers went to the HQ of the Bolivarian National Intelligence Service to monitor compliance with international and Venezuelan law in this case.

The delegation found that "the detained journalist was being kept incommunicado from family members and his lawyers, in violation of the national Constitution. Nor was consular notification allowed, which is established in international treaties for citizens of other nationalities." A *habeas corpus* plea by the lawyers for the prisoner's release was denied by a judge.

On April 30, President Chavez said that he "gave the order because Perez Becerra was being sought by INTERPOL" and that "The only alternative that I had was to deliver him to the government that wanted him."

But as the PCV points out, INTERPOL's official website indicates that any "Red Notification" should be

accompanied "by a petition that the person being sought be detained for the sake of extradition," not immediately handed over. Further, the Venezuelan Penal Code states that "extradition of a foreigner cannot be conceded for political crimes" and that such a request must be decided by the country's Supreme Judicial Tribunal.

Other sections of the Penal Code spell out the necessary processes of oral hearings and appeals, and the right of detainees to effective judicial protection.

Further, the UN Convention on the status of refugees, of which Venezuela is a signatory, explicitly says that "No contracting state may, when expelling or returning a foreigner, place a refugee inside frontiers of territories where his life or liberty is, in any way, in danger."

Despite their sharp criticism of this case, the Politbureau of the Venezuelan Communist Party stresses that they "recognize and value highly" the leadership of

President Hugo Chavez to the Venezuelan people and the world revolutionary movement.

Meanwhile, the main "evidence" used by the Colombian state in its persecution of a wide range of opponents may be nullified. In an astonishing development, Colombia's Supreme Court of Justice has disqualified "archives" from laptop computers said to belong to assassinated FARC guerrilla chief Raul Reyes. As a result of the Court's May 19 decision, judicial processes based on these archives may collapse.

Reyes was killed when his encampment was bombed on March 1, 2008, 1.7 miles inside Ecuadorian territory. After Colombian planes launched several missiles at the camp, a fleet of Blackhawk helicopters fired rockets and machine guns. Special forces contingents then killed several wounded guerrillas, and four Mexican students. The fact that the laptops "survived" the bombardment that killed 25

guerrillas has been seriously questioned by experts. But the logic behind the Court decision is that the three laptops and USB memories remained in the power of special forces commandos over three subsequent days, and not in the hands of the judicial police.

Ex-Colombian President Alvaro Uribe and Defense Minister Juan Manuel Santos (now president), delivered copies of the computer disks to the British Center for Strategic Studies. This Institute, know to have ex-CIA agents within its leadership, quickly claimed that the laptops showed that Hugo Chavez and Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa had direct ties with FARC guerrillas.

INTERPOL's own investigation found that over 48,000 archives on the computers had been removed, transferred, changed, or erased. Several archives were dated 2014 and other years.

Further, Raul Reyes' supposed computer files are not emails, but are Word Office documents, as attested to by an army captain two years ago. These Word documents were accepted by a judge in the judicial process against Joaquin Perez Becerra.

The May 19 ruling halted the investigation of Wilson Borja, a former Congress member of the Alternative Democratic Pole (Polo). Borja had allegedly maintained ties with the FARC, an accusation based on the "evidence" in the Reyes laptops. If the decision of the Supreme Judicial Court takes effect, Perez Becerra could be released, and other legal actions against "FARC-politica" prisoners may collapse. The ruling may affect the case of Senator Piedad Cordoba, a peace and human rights activist who was expelled from Colombia's Congress after accusations that the computers "proved" her collaboration with the FARC. ●



On March 16, Venezuelan authorities captured five suspected members of the right-wing Colombian paramilitary group *Aguilas Negras* (Black Eagles) in the border state of Táchira. Among those arrested was Diego Armando Lopez, a key leader of the group. Despite being "demobilized", paramilitaries remain an active and deadly threat to labour and peasant movements in Colombia. This photo from the website venezuelanalysis.com shows several *Aguilas Negras* combatants.

Stop extension of the war in Libya, demands Peace Alliance

Canadian Peace Alliance statement, May 23, 2011

The Government of Canada is set to renew its support for the NATO led bombing of Libya, as the current three-month mandate expires on June 16. The Canadian Peace Alliance strongly condemns the ongoing NATO attacks that have killed hundreds of civilians in the country and calls on the Canadian government to end its support for the bombing.

Canada has already done 300 bombing runs and the cost of keeping planes, ships and more than 500 military personnel in Libya is at least \$100 million a month according to retired Col. Michel Drapeau. Last week, it was reported that the Harper government had purchased an additional 1300 "smart bombs" for a total price of \$130 million.

In total, NATO planes have been on more than 2500 bombing missions. We know from watching the bombings of Iraq and Afghanistan that civilians are inevitably caught in the crossfire despite claims that the bombings

only target military facilities. Now British commanders are calling for a much more widespread bombing campaign against the infrastructure in Tripoli - a direct violation of the Geneva convention. NATO bombs have already targeted some infrastructure such as the bombing of a preschool for children with Down Syndrome.

The NATO intervention in Libya has nothing to do with

Canada has already done 300 bombing runs and the cost of keeping planes, ships and more than 500 military personnel in Libya is at least \$100 million a month... The Harper government has purchased an additional 1300 "smart bombs" for a price of \$130 million.

supporting the legitimate struggle of the Libyan people for freedom and democracy. The attack on Libya has but one goal in mind - control of the Arab uprisings by western nations intent on the plunder of the resources of the region. The initial enthusiasm shown by some western countries has been tempered as of late, and divisions

within NATO are now apparent. There was widespread belief that the war would be short and that Gaddafi would fall quickly. This has been proven false.

Each NATO bomb that is dropped helps to give Gaddafi the false aura of being an anti-imperialist fighter and both sides in the conflict are becoming more entrenched, resulting in a stalemate. NATO planners are scrambling to find a way out of this impasse and calls for boots-on-the-ground from some quarters are becoming ever louder.

There have been multiple proposals for a ceasefire by the African Union and Tripoli has agreed to talks. It is NATO that refuses to enter into any dialogue to stop the killing.

We demand that the government of Canada call for an immediate ceasefire and support talks aimed at a mediated settlement. We demand that the opposition stand against this new war and call for Canadian forces to be brought home.

Take Action: Send a message to your Member of Parliament and tell them - No to extending the war on Libya. ●

NATO violence rising in Afghanistan

Two days before the latest of PM Stephen Harper's many "surprise" visits to the Kandahar military base, a NATO air strike killed 14 people and wounded several other civilians in the nearby southern Afghan province of Helmand.

"The air strike delivered with Hellfire rockets on houses killed seven girls, five boys and four women who were within the firing range. Not a single Taliban militant has been found on the site of the air strike," one provincial employee told the Novosti news service.

The incident occurred early on May 28 after a NATO convoy was ambushed by Taliban militants. The NATO troops summoned warplanes for support, and the air strike almost completely destroyed the village from which the militants were apparently firing. The exact number of victims was difficult to count as police and volunteers worked to clear the debris and retrieve dead bodies from the rubble.

Afghan president Hamid Karzai reacted with anger to the news, warning that continued US/NATO attacks on civilian homes would not be tolerated.

Levels of violence remain high in Afghanistan, despite repeated claims by NATO leaders that "progress" is being made. Taliban forces continue to stage regular attacks on government officials, police and NATO troops.

On May 30, the same day as Harper's trip to Kandahar, the Taliban launched an attack on targets in the western Afghan city of Herat, including a NATO base. At least four people were killed and thirty-eight wounded. Operating in a city considered among the safest in Afghanistan, the attackers detonated a car bomb in front of the Provincial Reconstruction Team headquarters, which is under Italian command, and set off a second bomb in a shopping area.

Anti-war activists warn that the impending switch to a "training mission" will not end Canada's military role in Afghanistan. Over 1,000 Canadian troops will remain after July, nearly half of the total size of the mission in recent years. Contrary to earlier indications, these heavily-armed "training personnel" will not be limited to the capital city, Kabul, but will be stationed across Afghanistan. ●



Slim Evans: Red labour organizer

This year, to mark the 90th anniversary of the Communist Party of Canada's foundation in 1921, *People's Voice* is printing a series of articles on the party's history and prominent members.

Arthur H. "Slim" Evans is best known as the main organizer and leader of the On To Ottawa Trek of 1935. For his decades of organizing efforts, Slim Evans was repeatedly charged and jailed, but was widely hailed as an outstanding champion of workers' rights.

Born on April 24, 1890 in Toronto, Slim Evans left school at 13 to help support his family. He sold newspapers, drove a team of horses and learned the carpentry trade. Like many others, Evans came west in 1911, working at various jobs on the prairies, before heading to Minneapolis and then Kansas City. There he joined the Industrial Workers of the World, and was sentenced to three years imprisonment for participating in a free speech fight, having read aloud the Declaration of Independence at a rally. "All I did was read it. I was too shy and too nervous at that time to make up any speech of my own," he said later.

Evans was released in 1912 after leading a jail strike of political prisoners. In 1913 he was shot in the leg at the infamous Ludlow Massacre of striking Colorado coal miners. During five years across the western USA, he worked with many labour giants including "Big Bill" Haywood, Frank Little and Joe Hill.

In 1916, Evans returned to Canada, doing farm work, carpentry, and then becoming a miner. He was active in the One Big Union, the Canadian equivalent of the IWW, and volunteered to help organize coal miners in the Drumheller Valley region of Alberta. The Drumheller miners walked out in solidarity with the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919. Rejecting the United Mineworkers of America which had failed to help them, the miners also demanded recognition of the OBU. The mineowners, the Alberta government, and the UMWA fought back, and the OBU was

defeated after a lengthy battle. Evans was later sentenced to three years in prison, on trumped-up charges of using UMWA funds to fund a wildcat strike without permission. The truth was that he had used union funds to feed striking miners rather than send it as "per capita" to UMWA headquarters.

Evans was released in March 1925, after one year in the Prince Albert Penitentiary. A petition to the Minister of Justice with over 8700 signatures of miners and other supporters from across B.C. and Alberta was the cause of his early release.

By this time, the OBU had nearly disappeared, but Evans remained a prominent labour activist, working at a variety of different jobs. He also built a home for his family, at 17 E. 42 Avenue in Vancouver.

In 1926, Evans joined the Communist Party of Canada. As he said later, "I believe I was a communist right from the first time I started to travel through the country and saw conditions in the various mining camps and the rotten conditions that prevailed there."

The onset of the Great Depression saw conditions become much worse. Millions were jobless and hungry. In 1932 Evans helped organize the BC section of the National Unemployed Workers Association, fighting to win increased rates for relief work. Later that year, he began organizing the coal miners of Princeton into the Mine Workers Union of Canada, an affiliate of the Communist-led Workers Unity League. Police and the Ku Klux Klan cooperated to break the Princeton miners' strike for higher wages, and Evans was imprisoned for 18 months in Oakalla penitentiary. The authorities also evicted his family from the house on 42nd Avenue when they were unable to pay the mortgage. Another huge labour campaign finally won Evans' release in 1934, just as the struggle of the unemployed began to boil over.

Thousands of unemployed men in the "slave camps" run by the

federal government joined the WUL-affiliated Relief Camp Workers Union. BC members of the RCWU voted in April 1935 to strike for "work and wages." For two months, the strikers conducted a powerful campaign for their demands in Vancouver, and then voted to take their struggle directly to Ottawa. Riding the freights, they reached Regina, where Prime

Minister R.B. "Iron Heel" Bennett invited the union to send a delegation to present their grievances. Slim Evans headed the eight-member delegation, which was subjected to a verbal attack by Bennett. Evans called Bennett a liar, and the delegation headed back to Regina, where a brutal RCMP attack halted the Trek on July 1, 1935.

But stopping the Trek did not

change the course of history. The slave camps were soon shut down, Bennett's Tories suffered a massive defeat, and workers began winning gains such as unemployment insurance. Evans and others were charged under Section 98 of the Criminal Code for "membership in an unlawful organization" - the RCWU. But the cases died when the new Liberal government was compelled to repeal Section 98.

Slim Evans continued his labour activities, helping to organize workers at Cominco in Trail, B.C., into Local 480 of the Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers Union. In 1937 he led a campaign for medical funds to support the MacKenzie Papineau Battalion fighting for the freedom of Spain. During World War Two, he was a shop steward of the Amalgamated Shipwrights in the Vancouver shipyards.

Tragically, Slim Evans died on Feb. 13, 1944, from injuries after being struck by a car three weeks earlier. He was buried in Ocean View Park cemetery in Burnaby. His place in Canadian history was regained with "Work and Wages," the most complete collection of information on his life, edited by his daughter Jean Evans Sheils and Ben Swankey, published in 1977 by the Trade Union Research Bureau. Anniversary celebrations of the On to Ottawa Trek held in 1985 and later years have also done much to educate new generations of labour activists about the contributions of this remarkable Communist. ●



"Slim" Evans, in a photo taken about 1911



Quit fracking around, warns Gasland

GASLAND, written & directed by Josh Fox, International Wom Company, 2010, 140 minutes. Reviewed by Tim Pelzer.

To meet growing demand for fossil fuels, gas companies are using hydraulic fracturing - fracking for short - to extract natural gas from shale rock deposits. This involves shooting a toxic brew of chemicals and water into the ground to shatter shale rock deposits and force up natural gas. As Josh Fox shockingly reveals in *Gasland*, hydraulic fracturing threatens to destroy ground water and air quality across the US.

Fox takes us on a journey across 34 states where he interviews rural landowners and farmers who signed agreements allowing companies to drill for gas. A common complaint is that they can no longer drink ground water after fracking. One rancher turns on his kitchen water faucet and places a lighter against the rushing water. Suddenly, the faucet turns into a flame thrower, engulfing the sink in flames.

Handing Fox samples of brownish water that came out of their taps, those interviewed complain that they must now buy drinking water. Fox reports feeling weak because the water smells like

turpentine. Gas companies refuse to acknowledge the problem and insist water is safe to drink.

Many complain of sickness, headaches, brain damage and tumours. Dr. Theo Colborn reveals that fracking fluid consists of 500 chemicals, many of which are toxic, leading to brain damage and tumours.

Gas companies have blighted vast stretches of the landscape with thousands of grey drilling rigs, pipelines and containment tanks. Instead of being removed for safe disposal, waste water is either dumped onto fields or left in open pits, contaminating underground water. Gas equipment and evaporating fracking fluid release toxic chemicals and ozone into the air.

Now gas companies want to drill for gas around watersheds used for drinking water by New York City.

What do the gas companies say about the mess they are leaving behind? All of Fox's requests for interviews are denied.

The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) says fracking is not polluting drinking water. However, EPA employee Weston Wilson charges that the agency is ignoring the problem, despite evidence that Americans are being exposed to toxic chemicals. As *Gasland* reveals, the former

Bush government excluded hydraulic fracturing from EPA regulations protecting clean air and water. The Obama government has pursued the same policy, turning a blind eye to an unfolding environmental disaster.

Gasland is relevant for Canada because gas companies are fracking for shale gas here and pressing to expand operations, despite warning signs that the same disaster is beginning to occur. Quebec has ordered companies to halt fracking until it finishes an environmental assessment study, after provincial inspectors found leaks in 19 of 31 gas wells.

In Alberta, landowner Jessica Ernst has filed a \$33 million lawsuit against Encana Corp. and provincial regulatory bodies, claiming that nearby drilling is responsible for contaminating her water with enough methane that it can be set on fire. Ernst said that "I'm not the only one. There are many others that this has happened to, and my story is not unique."

Canadians need to see what is in store for us if provincial and federal authorities give the green light to widespread fracking. *Gasland*, with its innovative production values, camera footage and music score, is one of the best new documentaries on environmental issues to come out in recent years. ●

Youth fighting back under a Harper majority



JOHAN BOYDEN
leader of the Young Communist League of Canada

MARIANNE BRETON FONTAINE
student movement activist (Montréal)

STEPHEN VON SYCHOWSKI
young worker activist (Vancouver)

free public forum & discussion on the Charter of Youth Rights

7:30 pm, Wed., June 22
Centre for Socialist Education
706 Clark Drive, Vancouver

Co-sponsored by Vancouver East Club (Communist Party of Canada)
and Red Star Club (Young Communist League)

Info: 604-255-2041 <yyclbc@ycl-jc.ca>
www.ycl-jc.ca www.youthcharter.ca

Right and left gain in Spanish elections

By Emile Schepers,
People's World

On May 22, the ruling Socialist Workers' Party of Spain, the country's social democrats, took a severe beating in regional and local elections, while the right-wing People's Party surged ahead. Communists, starting from a small base, also picked up a significant number of votes and seats. Meanwhile, demonstrators who have been sitting in at Madrid's Plaza del Sol and other public places vowed to continue their protests against austerity measures that are being imposed on Spain in the context of Europe's worsening financial and economic crisis.

Spain has been plagued by severe unemployment (now at 21%) since the 2008 world financial crisis, although its budget is not as far in the red as are those of the other poor Western European countries, known as PIIGS (Portugal, Italy, Ireland, Greece and Spain).

Under pressure from the European Union and the Central Bank of Europe, the Socialist Workers government of Prime Minister Zapatero has been implementing severe austerity measures, which include 5% cuts in public employees' pay, an end to cost of living adjustments of pensions, and the elimination or cutback of aid to regional and local governments, among others. Many of these things exacerbate the unemployment problem.

As in the other PIIGS countries, austerity and privatisation have led to public protests by unions, students and other sectors. Over the days leading up to elections, tens of thousands of people have converged for a massive protest at the Plaza del

Sol, the main central plaza of Madrid, right next to Spain's royal palace.

Demands have been for a rescinding of the austerity measures, on pain of losing votes. Ordered to leave on the pretext that public political agitation is not allowed in Spain right before elections, the demonstrators refused, and other similar demonstrations have arisen, vowing to continue these "May 15" protests.

Spain's multiple communist parties have taken different stances toward the protests, which are heterogeneous in social origin and sometimes confused in their messages. The Communist Party of Spain and the Communist Party of Catalonia hailed the demonstrations and urged their members to support them. The Communist Party of the Peoples of Spain, however, has withheld its support.

In the event, on election day the governing Socialist Workers took a drubbing, losing to the People's Party and its right-wing allies in all provincial governments and most local ones. The popular vote went 38% to the rightists and 28% to the socialists, a sharp change from the 2007 regional and local elections. Losses included such former Socialist Workers strongholds as Barcelona, which the social democrats and Catalan allies had ruled for many years. The United Left, which unites the Communist Party of Spain with smaller left-wing groups, raised its popular vote total to 6.33%, compared to 5.48% in 2007, and picked up 200 municipal council seats and 12 provincial ones. However, they lost control of the city of Cordoba in Andalusia to the right. A new left-wing Basque nationalist party, BILDU, also

advanced, gaining 18 new municipal council seats out of 83 in the historically Basque provinces of Bilbao, San Sebastian and Vitoria, plus three out of 27 in Pamplona, in spite of government attempts to prohibit it, based on accusations of connections to the armed Basque guerrilla organisation ETA.

People's Party leaders immediately asked for a vote of confidence in parliament, hoping to force an early national election. Zapatero had announced before the elections that he would not run for re-election.

The Spanish scenario is similar to that of Greece and Portugal, economically beleaguered countries also ruled by social democrats. Pressure from their own ruling classes, from the European Union and its wealthier countries, the European Central Bank and the IMF leads these social democratic governments to implement austerity programs, slashing social welfare programs that they themselves introduced many years ago. This leads to massive labour and social protests.

The communist parties and their allies grow and advance electorally, but do not have the numbers to force the social democrats to back away from austerity or to form socialist-communist electoral blocs and governing coalitions, let alone to take power themselves. The right then moves into the vacuum, taking advantage of anger with the social-democratic governments in power, in spite of the fact that, after all, the social democratic governments are only enforcing policies that the right itself has always advocated.

How to break this pattern is the great problem now to be tackled by the European left. ●

Support Postal Workers....

continued from page 6

communities based on social solidarity, where if someone is down and out we help them out as equals and we look out for one another?

So we must support our postal workers with as much effort as we can muster. If they are handed a defeat by the Harper government we will all eventually feel it. So

please. Lets organize and support postal workers in our communities as best we can. Whatever differences we may have, politically or personally, let's put those aside so we can rally around this important struggle. Put your trust in the postal workers and let's focus on build community mobilization for this cause.

By practising solidarity with our postal workers, by talking to

our friends and neighbours, by building links in our communities around common struggles we can further build our capacity to resist attacks on those very communities. Also, through struggle we can build a better political analysis based on concrete realities that will help hone future political strategies to fight for a better world.

Together we can win this fight!
How You Can Help:

- Educate yourself on the issues
- Talk to your friends, neighbours, and family about the issues
- Put a sign of support in your window, then go to your neighbour and ask if they will do the same
- Write into your paper, call your radio station, comment online and demand they get their facts straight and let them know you are with the posties
- Find groups organizing in your community, coordinate actions with them such as: canvassing neighbourhoods, having an information picket, leafletting events, putting up posters, making banners, organize teach-ins, film nights, organizing picket line support, coordinating community food servings, etc.

If there is no group in your community organizing, then start one...

Their struggle is our struggle!
An injury to ONE is and an injury to ALL!

For materials (posters and pamphlets) you can use in your communities visit www.support-postalworkers.wordpress.com. ●

Oscar Chavez, 1948-2011

Oscar Chavez, a life-long socialist and communist, militant and campaigner for El Salvador, died on May 23 at Saint-Luc Hospital in Montréal of cancer at the age of 63.

Born in El Salvador at Puerto El Triunfo, like many youth of his generation Oscar was drawn to working class and revolutionary issues. As a teenager he organized shrimp fishers into a union. He bravely began to work with underground socialists and communists and later the forces that came together as the Frente Farabundo Marti para la Liberacion Nacional (FMLN) in 1980 during the liberation struggle against the military junta and its death squads.

Exiled to Quebec, Oscar made a new home in Montreal and became a fixture of the Latin American left community. He joined the Communist Party of Canada when the Parti communiste du Québec began to reorganize in the late 90s. He was elected as a member of the National Committee and held that position until his death. Oscar was seen at almost every demo, often holding the Party banner and wearing his Che beret, marching for the Cuban Five, for the Mapuche peoples, against racism, war and imperialism and with the trade unions, students, and women's organizations. He was also a member of Québec Solidaire.

Oscar never forgot his homeland, to which he returned to visit. He was outspoken in the FMLN against abandoning the united, revolutionary perspective of the movement. His death is a great loss to the Parti communiste du Québec, the Montreal component of the FMLN, and the progressive movements.

Oscar will be deeply missed by his family, and by his many comrades and friends in the progressive movements and Latin American community in Montréal. The National Executive of the PCQ and the Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party of Canada send condolences to Oscar's partner, family, comrades and friends. We salute his life of struggle for peace, social progress and socialism in Canada, El Salvador, and around the world.

A tribute to Oscar will be held on Sat., June 25, 1 pm, at the Hotel Lord Berri, 1199 Berri Street (near metro Berri UQAM and rue Ste-Catherine).

What's Left

Vancouver, BC

Summer Soldsitce BBQ, Coalition of Progressive Electors, Tue., June 21, 6:30-11 pm, Vancouver Rowing Club, 450 Stanley Park Drive, for tickets call 604-255-0400.

Youth Fighting Back Under A Harper Majority, forum on Charter of Youth Rights, Wed., June 22, 7:30 pm, Centre for Socialist Education, 706 Clark Drive. Speakers: Johan Boyden (Young Communist League leader), Marianne Breton Fontaine (Montreal student activist), Stephen Von Sychowski (BC young worker activist). For info, 604-255-2041.

Special General Meeting of COPE (Coalition of Progressive Electors), Sunday, June 26, Japanese Hall, 487 Alexander St. Registration 2 pm, meeting 3 pm, members will vote on electoral agreement for the municipal election.

Winnipeg, MB

30th Annual Peace Walk and First Annual International Peace Festival, Sat., June 18, at Vimy Ridge Park. 11 am - Craft tent and banner making. 12:00

Assemble, 12:30 Walk begins. 2 pm - Program continues at Park.

Dangers and Challenges of the Conservative majority: Strategy and action to defeat the Harper agenda. Thur., June 23, 7 pm, People's Voice forum with speaker Darrell Rankin. Information: 586-7824.

Toronto, ON

Davenport Club Annual People's Voice BBQ, 2-5 pm, Sat., July 9 (rain or shine), \$20/person, \$10 low waged & students, children under 12 free. 58 Albany Ave. (first street east of Bathurst, north of Bloor). To help us prepare better, let us know if you are coming, ph. 416-536-6771.

Montreal, QC

Palestinians And Jews United, boycott/disinvestment/sanctions picket, every Saturday, 1-3 pm, outside Le marcheur, at Duluth & St. Denis.

Tribute to Oscar Chavez, Sat., June 25, 1 pm, at the Hotel Lord Berri, 1199 Berri St. (near metro Berri UQAM and rue Ste-Catherine).

People's Voice deadlines

July 1-31 issue, Thursday, June 16

August 1-31 issue: Thursday, July 21

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

In Memoriam: Bob Wrigley

The Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party extends deepest sympathy to Comrade Naomi Rankin, leader of the CPC in Alberta, at the sudden death of her husband and life partner Bob Wrigley on April 25. After a long and increasingly debilitating and painful illness, with no end in sight and the prospect of eventual loss of autonomy, Bob decided to take his own life.

An intellectual and environmentalist, Bob was also a writer, social activist, trade unionist, Communist, and self-styled 'peace monger'. He joined the Communist Party after a short stint in the Green Party, convinced that a radical social transformation was necessary. A kind man with a quirky sense of humour and a deep love for his family and the human family, he will be deeply missed by his comrades and friends.

Bob is survived by his beloved wife Naomi and their daughters Malka and Elsa, and by Lise and Jessica, his daughters of his first marriage, and two grandsons. A third grandson was killed in an accident two years ago.

The Editorial Board of People's Voice also extends deepest sympathy to Comrade Naomi and her family.

A Tribute to:

**VALENTYNA S.
KALSHNIKOVA**

*She remained true to the
ideals of socialism*

Sept. 1935 - March 2010

From her only beloved friend,
daughter and grand-daughter

John Graham continues struggle for justice

Special to PV

Refusing to give up despite his conviction in an unfair trial, Tutchone native John Graham is carrying on his struggle for justice, supported by his family and friends. A May 15 statement issued by Graham from his South Dakota jail cell says that his lawyer has filed appeals of the conviction and life sentence.

Last December 10, a jury found Graham guilty in the death of American Indian Movement (AIM) member Anna Mae Aquash, the victim of an execution-style killing in South Dakota.

Graham, originally from Yukon, and Nova Scotia-born Aquash worked closely together in AIM before her murder 35 years ago. During that period, the FBI and pro-business elements of the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation were conducting a war against AIM members and other "traditionals". Dozens of people were killed during the mid-1970s by cops and goon squads, but those deaths have never been given serious police attention.

One common FBI tactic, used in other operations against progressive and radical movements, was known as "snitch-jacketing." This refers to spreading rumours that individuals were informants, a tactic which often created serious divisions. It



John Graham at a 2004 rally in Vancouver against the U.S. extradition demand. (Photos on this page: K. Cariou)

appears that Anna Mae Aquash, seen by the U.S. state as a powerful figure within AIM, may have been a target of this tactic. The circumstances of her death may also point to a more direct form of involvement by FBI undercover agents. In either case, the murder and later events fanned suspicions within the AIM leadership.

One obvious factor in the

Several witnesses had strong FBI connections. Darlene Ecoffey (formerly Kamook Banks) is the wife of Robert Ecoffey, the lead investigator of Aquash's murder and present superintendent of the Bureau of Indian Affairs on Pine Ridge. Ecoffey has admitted to being paid over \$40,000 for her activities as an FBI informant....

Bureau's long campaign to destroy AIM is the 1975 killing of two FBI agents during a disastrous raid at the Jumping Bull ranch in South Dakota, where AIM members and traditionals were staying to avoid the violence sweeping the area. AIM leader Leonard Peltier was convicted in these deaths, following his extradition from Canada and a kangaroo-court trial. Peltier remains in prison to this day, despite revelations that evidence against him was fabricated.

The FBI was determined to get revenge against AIM. Since then, a tangled web of lies, accusations and betrayals has accumulated. Aquash told friends that she had refused an FBI offer to testify against Peltier, who himself rejected promises of freedom in return for testifying that Graham was responsible for the murder of Aquash. Graham says that while living back in Yukon, on four occasions police threatened that unless he testified that AIM leaders were implicated in the murder of Aquash, he would himself face charges.

Those charges were brought against Graham a decade ago. His attempts to fight extradition failed when the Canadian government refused to lift a finger to protect his legal rights.

In 2004, Arlo Looking Cloud, a man with a long history of substance abuse, was convicted of murder for aiding in the murder of Aquash. He received a life

sentence with a chance of parole in 2013. Last year, Richard Marshall was acquitted on the charge of supplying the gun that killed Aquash. Looking Cloud testified against both Marshall and Graham.

Another former AIM member, Thelma Rios, pleaded guilty in November 2010 to charges of aiding and abetting, for which she received five years of probation and no jail time. Rios claimed that John Graham took Aquash from Denver and killed her in the hills of South Dakota.

Observers at the Graham trial say it was "riddled with inconsistencies." Witnesses contradicted each other about the kidnapping in Denver, for example, but these were dismissed by the prosecution as a problem of "degraded memory." The case was based on verbal testimony, not material evidence.

Several witnesses had strong FBI connections. Darlene Ecoffey (formerly Kamook Banks) is the wife of Robert Ecoffey, the lead investigator of Aquash's murder and present superintendent of the Bureau of Indian Affairs on Pine Ridge. Ecoffey has admitted to being paid over \$40,000 for her activities as an FBI informant. Angie Janis, who claimed she was at the house in Denver when Anna Mae was "kidnapped", works as a secretary at the Pine Ridge BIA. Her boss is Robert Ecoffey. Testimony was also heard from other FBI and BIA agents.

The defense rested its case without calling a single witness. Defense lawyer John Murphy twice asked Judge Jack Delaney to dismiss the charges against Graham, arguing that prosecutors had not proven their case. But his motions were denied. ●

Please send letters to John Graham at this address:

John Graham, ID #55101
South Dakota State
Penitentiary
Box 5911, Sioux Falls
SD 57117-5911, USA



The May 15 statement by John Graham reads:

"After a week long trial and several inconsistent and contradicting prosecution witnesses, and the defense calling no witnesses, a South Dakota jury found me NOT GUILTY OF PREMEDITATED 1975 MURDER OF ANNA MAE AQUASH. After totally contradicting testimonies about the alleged kidnapping from Denver the same South Dakota jury found me guilty of the lesser charge of felony murder kidnapping. In felony murder cases the prosecution does not have to prove that the accused actually killed anyone. Instead the accused is found criminally liable for any deaths that occurred during or in furtherance of a felony. In this case the felony is the kidnapping charge. The murder having taken place in 1975, more than 35 years ago, the many contradictions in testimony were explained by the prosecution as a problem of degraded memory. Their entire case rested on verbal testimony without a shred of material or factual evidence. My defense motion for dismissal of charges, because the prosecution failed to prove their case, was denied by judge Jack Delaney. Felony murder carries the same sentence as premeditated murder so the judge had no alternative but to sentence me to life with no possibility of parole. My lawyer filed an appeal on both the sentence and conviction. The trial transcript will be posted on my website in the very near future."

For more information, see these websites

<http://ourfreedom.wordpress.com>, www.grahamdefense.org

"Israeli Apartheid" term does not discriminate, rules Toronto committee

On May 24, Toronto City Council's Executive Committee adopted a report concluding that the phrase "Israeli Apartheid" does not violate the city's anti-discrimination policy. In addition, the report made two other key determinations: a) that Queers Against Israeli Apartheid (QuAIA) participation in Toronto's annual gay Pride Parade does not violate the City's Anti-Discrimination Policy; and b) that the City cannot ban QuAIA signs or banners as hate speech.

The Executive Committee made its decision after animated deputations from 46 organizations and individuals, including QuAIA, the Canadian Arab Federation (CAF) and Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME). Of the 46 deputations, 28 defended the report and 18 opposed it. QuAIA gave a humorous and effective presentation challenging the anti-QuAIA smear campaign. CAF informed councillors about Israeli laws and practices that discriminate against Palestinians in Israel-Palestine or in exile. CJPME reminded councillors of their obligation to protect Torontonians' rights to information and freedom of expression on thorny issues such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

"We are gratified that Toronto City Council Executive Committee recognized that criticism of Israel cannot be equated with either anti-Semitism or hate speech," says Thomas Woodley, President of Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME). But CJPME also "laments that QuAIA felt obliged to withdraw from the 2011 Pride Parade to ease the task of organizers in the face of criticism from pro-Israel lobbyists. CJPME urges the full Toronto City Council to adopt the same position as the Executive Council when the report is discussed again on June 14."

The focus on Toronto's Gay Pride Parade and QuAIA's participation is part of a larger campaign in Canada by pro-Israel lobbyists to criminalize criticism of Israel. A July 2010 City Council decision to delay disbursement of funds for 2011 Pride Toronto until after the parade has taken place still stands. ●

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