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# people's VOICE

**NO to workplace  
harassment!**

*See page 5*

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## "Equality For Women Is Progress For All"

- see pages 5 & 6 -

*(At left: garment workers rally for  
their rights, past and present)*



# VENEZUELA

## **Who's the real bully?**

**see p. 4 & 7**



Are the protesters seen here really "supporters of freedom"? Or are they trying to overthrow a democratic government which has been repeatedly elected with majority voter support ?

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### Shafting the poor

Fortunately, nobody was killed in a recent fire at a residence in Edmonton for adults with disabilities. But the case raises huge questions about how Alberta treats people with disabilities.

## **INSIDE**

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### Protect public schools

Pressures are being created to expand funding for religious schools in Ontario, at the expense of the public education system.

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### Korea's tragic past

Once again, the government of North Korea faces accusations of serious abuses. But the history of Korea shows that imperialism and its local allies have committed enormous crimes.

# Public auto insurance: fair to young drivers, taxi fleets

By Liz Rowley

Young drivers and taxi fleet drivers in Ontario are among those hardest hit by greedy auto insurance companies. Instead of paying premiums based on their records, these drivers pay the highest premiums in the province.

The insurance companies write their own ticket in Ontario. Their 2012 profits of \$4.4 billion (up 24% from 2011) are testament to their greed.

No fault insurance, brought in by the Ontario Liberals in 2010 to bring down sky-high premiums affecting all drivers, slashed benefits in half, while reducing premiums by a fraction. Accident victims are paying the highest price, with many forced to sue their own insurers for the benefits they need and thought they had.

But young people, especially men under 25, are targeted by the insurance companies. Some pay premiums as high as \$1,000 per

month. They have no choice. In many parts of Ontario, a car is essential if you work, and insurance is compulsory, not an option.

Ontario's public transportation systems are not workable for anyone travelling any distance to go to work. For these people, a car is a tool of work.

Why do the insurance companies charge so much? Because they can. The Ontario government allows them to build a 12% profit into every policy.

Last spring the Wynn government promised to make insurance companies reduce premiums by 15%. But in December, the reduction was only 4% according to news reports, and not in premium cuts, but in so-called fraud reduction.

Meanwhile, insurance companies refused to insure cab fleets in Hamilton until they accepted rates that have some drivers paying \$1,000 a month or more. The insurance companies

essentially starved them out until they capitulated. The result? Most cab drivers make less than the minimum wage and work 72 to 84 hours a week. Now that's slavery.

The biggest fraudsters are the insurance companies, which the government refuses to confront, let alone control. The Premier says it's too complex and she's afraid the companies will refuse to write insurance-like they did in Hamilton.

In the four provinces with public auto insurance, premiums are about 50% lower than in Ontario, and benefits are generous. Furthermore, premiums have nothing to do with age or address, they're based solely on driving record. No more sky-high premiums for young drivers and fleet drivers.

As an added bonus, these crown corporations are able to generate surpluses for the public treasury, much as the LCBO generates about \$2 billion annually for Ontario's public purse. This money could be used to build public transit in Ontario, to expand GO transit and other rapid inter-urban rail service,

and to reduce transit fares.

Public auto insurance could be part of the solution to reduce gridlock and cars in Ontario - which would be good for people and the environment.

Recent calls to privatize public transportation, including the TTC in Toronto, combined with Premier Wynn's determination to utilize tolls, taxes and user fees to fund transportation upgrades, are a logical extension of government policy that has put corporate greed ahead of people's needs for many years. Liberal, Tory, and NDP governments have all contributed actively or passively to this mess. That's why Ontario is now facing a crisis in transportation.

Now, Chrysler Corporation - is demanding \$460 million in public money to maintain its car plants and 4,600 jobs in Windsor and Brampton. They also want wage, benefit, and pension concessions from Chrysler workers.

Instead of bending to blackmail, federal and provincial governments should tell Chrysler to invest or not, but the plant and equipment

must stay in Canada for development of a Canadian car that's small, affordable, fuel-efficient and environmentally sustainable.

The solution is not more privatization, but more public ownership and more public control. More democracy, and less corporate greed.

This should include public auto insurance, and a strong public urban and inter-city transportation system geared to meet the needs of working people and the public.

If right wing governments and corporations are unwilling to move in this direction, they should be moved out of the way in the coming election.

Public auto insurance, investment in public transit, lower fares, and unionized well-paid transportation jobs are at the core of a progressive people's transportation policy. This will be a critical issue in the coming Ontario election.

*Liz Rowley is leader of the Communist Party of Canada (Ontario) and a candidate in the coming provincial election. •*

## Peace Congress condemns plans for "Regime Change"

In a Feb. 23 statement, the Canadian Peace Congress condemns foreign interference in the internal affairs of Venezuela, as part of a plan to destabilize the country and provoke "regime change."

"The violent attacks against the Venezuelan people and their democratically elected government began on February 10, involving masked demonstrators armed with Molotov cocktails, rocks and even sniper rifles," the Congress points out. "The leader of the right-wing Popular Will Party, Leopoldo Lopez, incited these events. Lopez is a member of one of the wealthiest families in Venezuela, and participated directly in the failed coup attempt in 2002. Since the election of Nicholas Maduro to succeed Hugo Chavez as president, Lopez and other wealthy oligarchs have worked with foreign powers to destabilize the country through economic sabotage and, now, through a widespread campaign of violence.

"With the largest known oil reserves in the world, Venezuela has been a focal point for peace and self-determination in Latin America. The country is of tremendous strategic importance to imperialism's plans for the region. Despite consistent election victories and popularity among the majority of Venezuelans, the government has been constantly targeted by the elites in Venezuela and the United States government, to facilitate the plunder of the country's resources..."

The Canadian Peace Congress has demanded that the Government of Canada: denounce the anti-government violence and foreign interference in Venezuela; respect the Venezuelan people's right to determine the course of their social, economic and political development; and pursue a foreign policy of peace, solidarity and international cooperation in its relations with Venezuela. •

# Kicking off our 2014 Fund Drive

## A message from the People's Voice Editorial Board

Here's a snap quiz. Ready? Give a "true or false" answer to the following statements: The Harper Conservatives are the party best qualified to handle the big economic challenges facing Canada; the Maduro dictatorship in Venezuela should be replaced by a democratically elected government; the most significant issue for the working people of Toronto is Rob Ford's substance abuse.

If you answered "yes" to any of these ridiculous statements, you may be suffering a common ailment: overexposure to the corporate media. This disease has been known to leave victims unable to understand the world around them. Fortunately, there is an inexpensive cure. Regular reading of the working class press is the best antidote to the "brain freeze" caused by uncritical consumption of right-wing newspapers and electronic media. And it's so easy! For just \$30 a year, a unionized public employee will deliver People's Voice to your door... or at least to the nearest super mailbox, if we don't stop the attack on Canada Post.

But we can't keep publishing without your support. The Canada Post "restructuring" is just the latest hurdle faced by independent print publications. The steep increases in mailing rates will add several thousand dollars a year to our expenses, affecting us just as negatively as other small companies across the country.

For this calendar year, we will keep our subscription rates at the current levels. Obviously, that will have to change, but first, we hope to expand our paid subscription base.

As always, we must rely on our annual Press Fund Drive for about half of our overall budget. With this issue, the Drive for \$50,000 is officially underway.

Among the many progressive publications, radio shows and

social media in this country, People's Voice is truly unique, carrying forward a 92-year tradition of revolutionary journalism. For over nine decades, PV and our predecessors have analysed events from a working class perspective, to help build the labour and people's movements for equality, peace, labour rights, expanded democracy, sovereignty and much more. We are Canada's leading socialist newspaper, reaching out to every corner of the country.

You can see this in the International Women's Day issue in your hands right now. This issue gives particular attention to pay equity, reproductive rights, freedom from violence, and other important demands of the women's movement. As always, we link these critical struggles with the need to build wide unity of all working class people - organized and unorganized, across genders, in all nations within the Canadian state and around the world. The fight for gender and national equality is a crucial element of the working class movement for full

emancipation from capitalist exploitation, racism, sexism, and oppression.

Unlike the mainstream corporate media, we want our readers to hear directly from activists in the people's movements. We extend full solidarity with their actions, helping to educate Canadians about the issues at stake.

Like the *Canadian* and *Pacific Tribunes* before PV, we stand with our sisters and brothers on every picket line and every fight for social justice. We call for an end to capitalist rule, for working class political power and an economy owned collectively by the people, not private capitalists. We urge the defeat of right-wing governments such as the Harper Tories, but we will never be satisfied to simply "stop making things worse." Our view is that while the bosses cannot exist without workers to generate profits, workers have no need for capitalists. In fact, the world would be much better off without capitalist exploiters and imperialist war-makers.

For all these reasons, we appeal to readers to dig deep when you receive your mail appeal for the 2014 PV Press Fund Drive. If you agree that Canada needs a working class, socialist newspaper, please help us to keep publishing.

As a special incentive, we are repeating last year's project to raise extra funds. A generous friend has again offered to contribute a further \$100, for each donation of at least \$300 received by March 31. For example, if we get forty such donations by March 31, our benefactor will add a cheque for another \$4000. This amount is not part of our provincial quotas, but it will be used to purchase a badly-needed new computer for our editor, and to expand our web and social media presence.

Starting with our next issue, we will report on the initial progress of the Fund Drive. Thank you in advance for your solidarity! •



## MAY DAY 2014 GREETING ADS

To mark May Day 2014, People's Voice will print greetings from a wide range of labour and people's organizations in our May 1-15 issue, which will be distributed at events across Canada. The deadline for camera-ready ads will be April 18; if PV is preparing the layout, the deadline is April 16. Please check with us about the format if your ad is being sent electronically.

### Ad rates (based on 5 column page):

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

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

# Save Ontario public schools: one secular, public education system now!

The Communist Party of Canada (Ontario) is calling on the Ontario government to take immediate steps to develop a single, universal and secular, public education system in the province.

In a Feb. news statement, the CPC (O) urged all progressives in Ontario to raise this demand, along with the introduction of a needs-based funding formula, as the most effective means for saving and improving public schools and delivering universal, quality public education.

The statement continues, "Specifically, the Ontario government must end the public funding of the provincial Catholic school system. Governments have tried to justify this through references to constitutional education rights for Catholics. In reality, however, this is an outdated, regressive and discriminatory practice that the public cannot afford, from either a

financial or a democratic viewpoint. Ontario is now the only province in Canada to publicly fund a parallel system of religious education."

"The practice of publicly funding the Catholic school system has twice been condemned by the United Nations, in 1999 and again in 2005," stated Elizabeth Rowley, CPC(O) leader and a former public school trustee. "The UN stated very clearly that

Ontario needs to eliminate discrimination, on the basis of religion, for public funding for education. This means that either all religious groups are funded, or none are. For decades, the Communist Party has continued to propose that the best way to provide quality, and equality, is through a single, secular public school system, with English and French boards,

and no funding for any religious education."

The CPC(O) "welcomes the recent statement from the Elementary Teachers Federation



of Ontario (ETFO), calling for an end to public funding for Catholic schools. This demand, which has also been made by the Ontario Secondary School Teacher's Federation (OSSTF), should be echoed in all areas of the province, until the government can no longer ignore the issue. Polls have consistently shown that a majority of Ontarians also want a single,

secular and quality system of public education.

Religious education is the responsibility of particular religious communities, not public institutions.

The Communist Party's call for one, secular system does not include the idea of a blended or combined system, in which religious - specifically Catholic - education would be an optional stream.

"In addition to de-funding religious education, the Ontario government must act now to introduce a needs-based funding formula, that will guarantee sufficient education resources for schools, students and communities. The double-prong approach of underfunding and balanced budget legislation has

created and deepened the crisis in public education across the province, with the inevitable result that public confidence in the system is being eroded. The stage is being set for increased privatization of education."

"Education is a right, pure and simple," said Rowley, "but making money off people's needs is not. As Ontarians prepare for provincial and municipal elections this year, we need to see a strong campaign that will reverse the trend toward deep program and staff cuts, increased fees, privatization and inequity. We need to demand that the province adequately fund public education, from cradle to grave. And we need local public school boards and trustees who are prepared to fight for this demand and, if necessary, defy the government's balanced budget legislation." ●

## Toronto-York Labour Council backs Carnival Cruise boycott

**From USW** - Delegates to the Toronto and York Region Labour Council have voted unanimously to boycott Carnival Corporation cruises until the lengthy labour dispute at Crown Holdings is resolved. Labour Council President John Cartwright said at the meeting, "Tonight, we are sending an important message to Carnival's CEO Arnold Donald, who is also a Crown Holdings director, that we hold him responsible for Crown's union busting. He can't hide in the boardroom anymore - he can and must act to stop Crown's attacks."

"We intend to expand the Carnival boycott across Canada and the U.S. now that Canada's largest labour council, representing almost 200,000 union members and their families, has taken this first step," said Ken Neumann, United Steelworkers National Director. "Tens of thousands of union members and retirees can afford to take Carnival's cruises because of good union wages and decent retirements, and Donald is slapping all working people in the face with these demands. Carnival stands to lose a lot of customers as the boycott expands."

Since Sept. 6, 120 USW members having been walking the picket line at Crown's Toronto metal packaging facility in an attempt to fend off ruthless cuts, including a two-tier wage plan that would permanently reduce new and younger workers' wages by up to \$9/hour.

"We are exposing each member of Crown's board of directors and holding them accountable for the company's shameful position towards our members," said Neumann. "Donald sits on the compensation committee of Crown's board and approved paying the Crown CEO \$6,000 per hour and lucrative executive retirement benefits, while remaining silent as the company slashed wages and benefits of workers throughout North America."

Carnival Corporation operates cruise ships under the Carnival, Princess, Holland America, Cunard, Aida, Ibero, P&O, Seabourn and Costa brands. All brands are covered under the boycott.

The USW is talking to retiree groups and unions throughout Canada about joining the boycott. The union is asking the public to send letters to Arnold Donald via an online campaign, at [www.usw.ca/labourstart](http://www.usw.ca/labourstart).

For more information, see [www.takebacksnomore.ca](http://www.takebacksnomore.ca). ●

## VDLC re-elects Joey Hartman

**By Peter Marcus**

At the February 18 meeting of the Vancouver and District Labour Council, Joey Hartman was re-elected by acclamation to another term as president. Also acclaimed were Terry Engler as 1st vice-president, Stephen Von Sychowski as 2nd vice-president, Georgi Bates as recording secretary and Paul Sihota as treasurer.

It was announced at the meeting by Hospital Employees Union delegate Graham O'Neill, that the bid by the Pulp and Paper Workers of Canada (a non-affiliate), to raid maintenance workers at Vancouver General Hospital, Lions Gate Hospital and Children's and Women's Hospital was quashed by the Labour Relations Board of British Columbia.

The VDLC announced its sponsorship of the annual International Women's Day dinner at Fraserview Hall on March 7, and the May Day march on May 1 on Commercial Drive, both in Vancouver.

Stephen Von Sychowski reported that there will be another support picket for the locked out workers at IKEA. There is still no agreement in this lengthy lockout, particularly on dealing with scabs.

Special guest Deborah Litman, organizer for the Metro Vancouver Alliance, announced the founding assembly of this organization will be on March 19. The alliance was set up to start dialogue and build relationships amongst groups in the area for mutual support. ●

## Dwayne's Home fire raises huge questions

**By Corinne Benson, Edmonton**

On February 12, there was a fire at Dwayne's Home, a hotel in Edmonton that has been converted into a transitional housing facility for 130 people, who are probably all on AISH, Alberta's "assured income for the severely handicapped" program.

These individuals are in the category of homeless and considered hard to house. I know one of them because the community of the disabled are highly ghettoized, and my daughter, also disabled, is friends with her. As I was listening to the radio, my sobbing was stilled when it was announced that all 130 had escaped the fire, and only one had been taken to the hospital.

The people involved were displaced for two and a half days, and most were returned to their units since the fire involved the top corner of the hotel. Forty firefighters and fourteen pieces of equipment and vehicles were involved with extinguishing the fire. The front page of the Edmonton Sun showed a major blaze.

The first question that outraged me was why so many high-needs disabled people were being housed under such concentrated conditions. We had never been allowed to visit. It seemed to me that it didn't take a lot of imagination to conclude that this might be a recipe for disaster. The newspapers said this was a third fire at Dwayne's Home. People to whom I spoke said the first two fires were waste basket fires.

When I speak for my daughter's friend I am speaking



PV file photo: K. Cariou

for someone whose ability to speak for herself is not the best. She has fetal alcohol syndrome, developmental delay, and schizophrenia. Last summer she attended a demonstration to protest the cutting of funding by the provincial government to PDD, Persons with Developmental Delay.

Since the cutting of this budget her life has spiralled severely downward. She was cut her staffing for the weekend although her weekday staffing remained the same. Her fetal alcohol syndrome makes social decisions difficult. She is easily led and since many disabled people are comorbid with a lot of drug and alcohol involvement, combined with the fact that much of the disabled community live and associate in a ghetto, she is frequently making poor decisions led by the men she associates with. Since the loss of her PDD weekend staff, she has become evicted from her apartment. While in Dwayne's Home she was not able to make the decision

to not accept a ride with a stranger on a bitterly cold night, and from what she could tell me, was raped. Now she was temporarily displaced because of this fire.

From the two days that I housed her I can tell she is extremely disabled and needs every dollar she was getting, as do all the staff and administration who deal with her. There is no excuse for her or anyone like her having their funding cut.

Being of Aboriginal background, the source of her disability has the potential to be traced to Canada's residential school policy, but I will never know that with any certainty. But I do know that disability costs big time, and if we created this problem we should not shirk our responsibility.

The other question that looms so large is why we ask the budget to be balanced on the back of people so disabled, while those who can pay don't. Why are the oil royalties so low and the defenceless asked to pay? ●

# EDITORIALS

## Ominous events in Kiev

The latest so-called "colour revolution" has led to a coup against the elected government of Ukraine. This development brings new dangers for Ukraine and for the entire region.

The circumstances of the coup are not identical to the imperialist attempts to overthrow the governments of Syria or Venezuela. As the Ukrainian communists have made clear, the ousted President Yanukovich and his party represent the interests of one section of the oligarchic clans in that country, associated with anti-working class policies and corruption.

But there are serious reasons to fear the outcome of the struggle which has rocked Kiev and other cities in recent months. One is the open participation within the "opposition" forces by a wide range of fascist, racist, and even pro-Nazi movements. Aligning with the "nationalist" groupings which occupied the Maidan square in Kiev, these elements included violent thugs who battled the government's police and soldiers. The fascist groups will help to provide stormtroopers for the new regime's attacks on the working class of Ukraine.

While some in Ukraine may believe that a tilt towards the European Union will bring economic prosperity, other countries have gone through a very different experience. Membership in the EU has not meant privileges for the workers of Greece, Portugal, Italy or Spain. Throughout this entire region, EU-imposed austerity cuts have resulted in skyrocketing unemployment, lower wages, and the gutting of public services. Any "bailout" from the EU will come with the same strings attached, wiping out Ukrainian sovereignty.

Not least, a new pro-western government in Kiev will strengthen the US-led NATO war alliance, and increase military tensions in eastern Europe.

Make no mistake. The "revolution" in Kiev aims at crushing the Ukrainian working class, selling out the country to European capital, and tightening the imperialist noose around Russia. None of this is any reason for working people to celebrate.

## Stop the "Unfair Elections Act"

Like a runaway freight train, the so-called "Fair Elections Act" will be difficult to stop, and the results could be just as disastrous. In a typical example of Tory double-speak, when Bill C-23 was tabled in Parliament by the minister of state for "democratic reform", Pierre Poilievre, he claimed the changes will "increase democracy." One day later, Poilievre moved to cut off the first round of debate in the House of Commons.

By now, everyone knows that the Conservatives blatantly lied about holding "consultations" with Chief Electoral Officer Marc Mayrand about this legislation. The bill denies Elections Canada the powers it needs to investigate election fraud such as the Tory robocalls and other abuses of the 2011 campaign.

In fact, the Unfair Elections Act is intended to facilitate the Conservative "voter suppression" strategy, borrowed directly from the U.S. Republican party. Bill C-23 will make it more difficult for hundreds of thousands of Canadians to cast a ballot, especially Aboriginal people, students, low-income seniors, and others who often lack all the valid ID required to vote. The legislation even gives the Tories an extra edge in fundraising, raising the maximum individual donation limits by another \$300.

Yet the Harper government has refused Opposition demands for public hearings across the country. Why? Because, as Mr. Poilievre admits, such hearings would reveal massive rejection of this fundamentally anti-democratic legislation.

In short, an attempt is underway to steal the 2015 federal election, right before our eyes. In response, we urge union locals, community groups and other organizations to demand full public hearings. Bill C-23 must be stopped, before it's too late!

## PEOPLE'S VOICE

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## LETTERS

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

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## Venezuela: who's the bully?

By Zach Morgenstern

Imagine you went to school with a bully, someone who intimidates and physically assaults other students to get their way. Imagine one of the bully's targets is an honours student with no blotches on his/her permanent record. Finally, imagine you are approached by the bully. The bully tells you the honours student has been beating up other kids, and that you should do whatever it takes to stop the violence.

Now chances are if you are most people, you would not buy the bully's attempt to play the angel and slander his/her very likeable, and trustworthy enemy.

Unfortunately, it seems we do not have this common sense when it comes to our perception of international politics. In 2002, Venezuela's opposition launched a coup against then President Hugo Chavez. Their short-lived government named businessman Pedro Carmona president, and then proceeded to shut down the national assembly and supreme court. The coup regime abolished the constitution, which had been approved by popular referendum in 1999.

The coup government was soon defeated, but shortly afterwards, Venezuela faced an oil industry "strike" (actually a lockout) that attempted to bankrupt the country and bring down the government. Since then, opposition-government relations have not improved, with opposition politicians regularly refusing to accept the results of the nation's democratic elections.

Common sense would tell us that a government that wins election after election by empowering poor, non-white Venezuelans is the "honours student" in our metaphor. Common sense would tell us that a government that not only puts up with regular slander, including Hitler comparisons, from the country's largely privately owned media, but also pardoned many of the perpetrators

of the 2002 coup, should be trusted in the wake of allegations of it being oppressive. Unfortunately, the analogy hasn't held. As opposition campaigns such as #PrayForVenezuela have gone viral, people have forgotten the opposition's consistent role as the bully.

What is more incredible is that the list of Venezuela's bullies also includes the US government, which openly funds the Venezuelan opposition and has been linked to the 2002 coup.

Prior to Chavez's rise, Venezuela was a close US ally, including in 1989 when Venezuelan security forces massacred anti-IMF demonstrators. The US record in the rest of Latin America is even more abhorrent. The US is a strong backer of Venezuela's neighbour Colombia, a country with a reputation for disappearing people and killing trade unionists. Historically, the United States can claim to have supported a coup in Chile that killed the country's

## How we see it...

democratically elected President Allende. Chile then fell under the rule of the US-trained General Augusto Pinochet, who proceeded to murder and torture his opponents en masse.

Washington has also backed murderous regimes in Guatemala, El Salvador Honduras, Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, The Dominican Republic and Haiti. The US government funded the Contra army in Nicaragua which killed many in order to coerce citizens to finally vote against their leftist Sandinista government. Fidel Castro, Washington's number one enemy in Latin America, has had to survive as many as 638 alleged assassination attempts.

Despite all this, mainstream western outlets have failed to view recent allegations of government violence in Venezuela through a critical lens. There has been little discussion in the mainstream press of the role of Washington and Venezuela's reactionary opposition in the violence. Rather, the response thus far has seemingly been one that takes the credibility of Venezuela's opposition for granted, and, as the normally apolitical celebrity George Takei did, acts as if westerners are indifferent to the plights of Venezuelan dissidents.

This only shows why the bullies of the world are far more domineering than the bullies of schoolyards. Many westerners know about the repressive tendencies of their governments that include the practice of torture, drone strikes and mass surveillance. Despite this, the average western commentator cannot seem to think like the kid on the playground who knows to trust the squeaky-clean honours student over the bully. Rather, the bully's identity has to be relearned on every relevant occasion.

In the post-Rwanda era, it has become a western mantra to worry about not doing enough to protect foreign peoples from their oppressive governments. The problem with this logic is that it has become a cliché that gets employed again and again seemingly devoid of context. Not all governments are created equal and not all demonstrators are created equal. We therefore need to be able to challenge the assumptions of the current political order and speak out for democratic and socialist-oriented Venezuela against its oligarchic, imperialist bullies.

(Originally published by the University of Toronto's "the newspaper", Feb 23, 2014) ●

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Hugo Chavez People's Defense Front rally, Feb. 22 in Toronto

IWD  
2014

# When work becomes a sexual battleground

To mark *International Women's Day 2014*, the *International Labour Organization* highlighted sexual harassment in the workplace, calling this "an often subtle but disturbing form of aggression."

GENEVA (ILO News) - Sisandra, 28, understands all too well the impact of sexual harassment in the workplace. As a telecommunications technician in Durban, South Africa, she works in a male-dominated environment.

"My executive manager came to the office and asked for my number and I gave it to him," she said. "I did not ask him why he wanted my number as he is a senior person and respected by all in the company because of his position. He then started touching my breast and private parts.

"I started feeling very uncomfortable and stopped him. I then walked out of the office and told him that I was going to report this to my supervisor. I felt violated and scared. Even though I said I was going to report this, I felt I could not because I thought I could easily lose my job if I told."

Sisandra's experience is not uncommon. According to UN figures, between 40 and 50 per cent of women in the European Union experience unwanted sexual advances, physical contact, verbal suggestions or other forms of sexual harassment at their workplace; in Asia-Pacific countries it is 30 to 40 per cent. Men can also be victims of workplace sexual harassment but this is much less common.

"Sexual harassment and other forms of harassment and abuse - physical, verbal or psychological - bullying, mobbing, work-related stress and violence affect all professions and sectors and both women and men," says Jane Hodges, ILO Director of the

Bureau for Gender Equality.

"However, there is still no explicit international human rights treaty prohibition of violence against women and the issue remains poorly-defined and understood under international human rights law."

As in Sisandra's case, a major problem is that many women do not report harassment for fear of losing their jobs. The cost for workers, says Hodges, is heightened stress, loss of motivation and increased risk of accidents at work: "Workplace violence and harassment present a significant barrier to women accessing and progressing through the labour market. It erodes decent working conditions."

It is also costly for business, leading to absenteeism, increased turnover and lower job performance and productivity.

Among ILO efforts to tackle such violence in the workplace, are two projects in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. The ILO has also partnered with other agencies in a number of programmes in Brazil, Angola, South Africa, India and China.

ILO experts, working with trade unions and employers, have helped draft guides and codes of conduct on preventing sexual harassment in several countries, including China and Viet Nam.

Some unions have also included clauses on sexual harassment in collective agreements and deal with complaints through

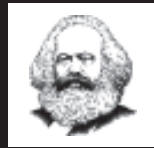
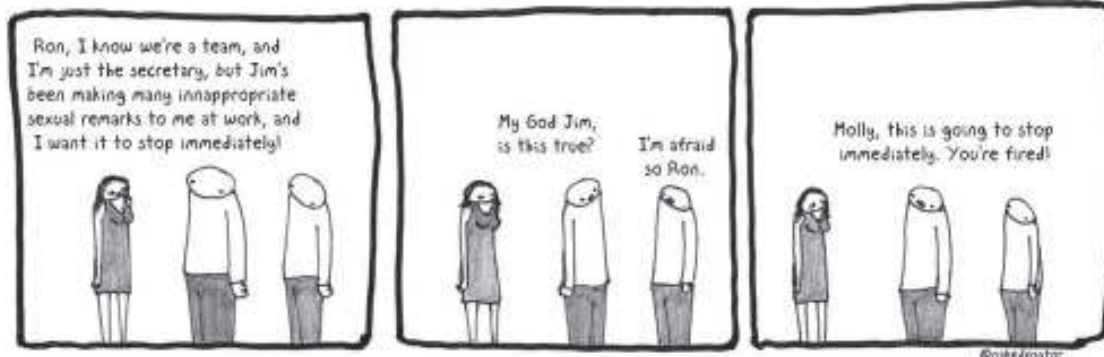
established grievance and disciplinary procedures, explains Dan Cunniah, Director of ACTRAV, the Bureau for Workers' Activities at the ILO: "ACTRAV considers sexual harassment as a form of violence at work. Let us all repudiate sexual harassment and remove it from the workplace now to safeguard the dignity and equality of the workers."

ILO researchers are also tracking the global incidence of violence at work, while governments are being helped to draft and implement new laws.

In Viet Nam, for instance, the ILO advised on a new Labour Code, which for the first time prohibits sexual harassment in workplaces.

Part of the challenge is changing attitudes. Many people trivialise the issue, dismissing it as "just a bit of fun".

But, says Jane Hodges, sexual harassment is damaging on many levels: "It's a human rights issue, as well as a health, education and socio-economic problem. Workplace violence is a hidden problem, but with very tangible consequences." ●



## Marxist Theory

## "Women Workers Struggle for their Rights" - a look back at our history

Excerpts from "In Place of a Foreword", Alexandra Kollontai's introduction to a 1918 collection of her articles on the struggle for women's equality. Kollontai was a member of the Bolshevik party, which led the October 1917 Socialist Revolution in Russia.

The war and world revolution have brought essential changes in the character and form of all workers' communist movements; "the ideal type" of German party work, adapted exclusively to the period of peaceful parliamentary activity, has ceased to be a model for us. The revolutionary struggle has generated new problems, new fighting methods of work. The war and the revolution have shaken what seemed to be the most stable foundations of life. And also, the position of woman has changed before our eyes.

Up until the war, the process whereby women were drawn into the people's economy was carried out with considerably less speed than it has been for these last four and a half years of feverishly rapid development and the growth of female labour in all fields of industrial life.

The old family, too, seemed firm and unshakeable; the Party had to fight against its way of life and traditions every time it wanted to bring the woman worker into the class struggle. The fact that housework was dying out and the transition to the state education of children, were regarded not as mature, living, practical problems of the present day, but as a "historical tendency", as a lengthy process. The feelings of the women workers were strongest in the economic field - the inequality of men's and women's pay - and in

the political field - the absence of voting rights and the inequality in citizenship.

This inequality, on economic and political grounds, together with the enslavement of the woman to her family and the running of the house, created a psychological division between men and women workers, and provided the soil from which grew those independent organisations of women workers which sprang up in all countries alongside the



The young Alexandra Kollontai (1872-1952)

general workers' socialist parties, in the form of societies or unions of women workers, clubs and so on. The more actively the socialist parties became engaged in the business of propaganda amongst women workers, the quicker these specialised organisations for women workers died out.

But only a radical change in the whole existence of the working class woman, in the conditions of her home and family life, as she acquires equal status with men in civil law will wipe out once and for all the barrier which to this day prevents the woman worker letting her forces flow freely into the class struggle.

The war provided an impulse

towards a radical break in the social position of women. It remains for the revolution to complete this task. The war drove the "wet-nurse" to the front; ninety women out of a hundred were forced to provide for themselves and their children. The problem was becoming acute: what to do with the children of all those millions of women who had to spend the greater part of their day in preparing military supplies - grenades, shrapnel and bullets? It was in this way that the question had to be posed - not as a theoretical problem and not as something desirable in the remote future, but as a practical measure: state security for maternity and childhood. The capitalist class governments were forced to worry about the fate of the "soldier children" and unwillingly, and half-heartedly, they brought about a situation in which the care of children is the responsibility of the state.

The departure of bridegrooms and fiances to the war, and the woman's fear for the fate of her loved one, provided a natural reason for the increased number of babies born outside marriage. And once again the bourgeois capitalist state was forced, under the pressure of war, to inflict upon itself a blow, to encroach upon one of its most sacred rights - on the prerogative of legal marriage. It was forced for the sake of the soldiers' well being to make equal under the law both legal and extra-marital mothers and children. Germany, France and England were eventually forced to this revolutionary act.

The war not only disrupted the sanctity and stability of the indissoluble church marriage, but also encroached on yet another of the foundations of the family - housework. Rising prices, queues which exhausted the housewife, the

system of delaying stocktaking until supplies had run out - all this led to a situation in which the women themselves hastened to do away with the domestic hearth, preferring to use communal facilities.

The work of destroying the social slavery of women as it was then, was carried through by the great workers' revolution. Women workers and peasants participated in the great liberating struggle on an equal footing with men. The former specialisations of the female sex collapsed as the social structure rocked on its twin pillars, private property and class government. The great fire of the world uprising of the proletariat called woman from her baking tins into the arena of the barricades, the fight for freedom. Woman ceased to feel secure in her own home, alongside her familiar flagstones, drinking troughs and cradles, when all around bullets were whistling and, amazed, she heard the cry of the worker fighters: "To arms, comrades! All of you who cherish your freedom, who have grown to hate the chains of slavery and deprivation of civil rights! To arms, workers, to arms, women workers! ..."

The revolution accustomed women workers to great mass movements, to the struggle for the realisation of communism. The revolution in Russia won full political equality and equality of citizenship for women. The revolution fulfilled the demands of women workers from all countries: equal pay for equal work. The revolution made it impossible for women ever again to be tied to their families. The revolution also abolished the previous forms of workers' movements, which had been shaped by the age of peaceful parliamentary rule. We are cut off from the period of the Second

International not only by four years, but a whole geological shift in the field of social and economic relations...

However profound are the changes which have been accomplished before our eyes in the life and economic structure of our country, brought about by the war and the revolution, however far Soviet Russia has marched forward along the road to communism, the legacy of the capitalist order has still not been eradicated; the conditions of life, the working class family's way of life, the traditions which hold captive the mind of woman, the servitude of housework - all these have still not died away. And in so far as all the factors which prevented a working class woman from taking an active part in the liberating movement of the proletariat before the war are still operative, in so far as even now the Party still has to take into account both the political backwardness of women, and the bondage of the woman worker to her family, so the necessity of intensive work among the women proletariat, with the help of a party machine set up specifically for this purpose, remains as pressing as ever...

I would hope that this pamphlet might serve as some guidance for those of my comrades who intend to devote themselves to work among the female proletariat in particular. I hope that they will get from it the certainty that in taking upon themselves this difficult and sometimes thankless work, they are serving not the idea of the "specialisation" of women, not a narrowly feminine business, but the whole task of building a united, strong, world-wide workers' party which before our very eyes is achieving the bright new world of international communism. ●

# “Equality for Women is Progress for all”

## IWD 2014 greetings from the Communist Party of Canada

For over a century, March 8 has been the international day to honour the women in all countries who strive to achieve full equality. On IWD 2014, the Communist Party of Canada sends our warmest greetings to all women in the fight against poverty, austerity, violence, misogyny and war. As the United Nations has declared for this year's IWD, “equality for women is progress for all.”

Here, the ruling class claims that Canada is a country of equality, fairness and social justice. Yet recent years have seen huge struggles around issues such as access to education, pay equity, union rights, jobs, devastation of the environment, deportations of migrants. Women have played a leading role in the Quebec student strike, the Idle No More movement, grassroots environmental struggles, and defence of labour and social rights.

IWD is particularly significant for working class women, oppressed by the “double burden” of exploitation in the workplace and the major share of domestic labour. Women's unequal status in Canada is reflected in a 30% “wage gap” and other indicators.

Aboriginal women and girls suffer the racist burden of higher rates of poverty, unemployment, and incarceration, and dramatically shorter life spans. Hundreds have been murdered or disappeared, and appalling conditions in many First Nations communities have been condemned internationally.

The rights of all women to a decent job, education, child care, employment insurance, etc. are

increasingly undermined by the corporate/government neoliberal agenda. Across the capitalist world, women are paying the price for bailouts of the banks and major corporations, austerity cuts to social programs and public services, and massive tuition increases.

Yet the Harper Conservative government dares to pose as “defenders of women's equality rights”, internationally and at home. For example, the Tories say they want to “protect” women, yet they have slashed virtually every federal agency or service which supported women's equality, closed Status of Women Canada offices, eliminated funding of women's organizations which engage in advocacy, and blocked legal avenues to fight for pay equity. Governments refuse to



provide adequate funding for emergency shelters and support services for victims of violence and abuse.

Women are disproportionately affected by changes to prevent unemployed workers from accessing EI benefits, and the “restructuring” of Canada Post will cost thousands of jobs now held by women. If the Conservatives win another majority in the 2015 election, the growing power of the



Last Nov. 11, garment workers - mainly women - demanding higher pay, attacked factories on the outskirts of Bangladesh's capital. The workers were demanding a \$100 per month minimum wage. Bangladesh's garment industry has come under attack for its low pay and unsafe conditions, after the collapse of an eight-story building killed more than 1,100 workers last April, and another 112 workers were killed in a factory fire.

most extreme anti-women forces in Parliament could pose a serious threat to reproductive rights.

The attack on equality extends to the provincial arena, including cuts to welfare, health care and

Rights Council.

On a global scale, women and children are the most frequent civilian victims of war and armed conflicts. From the Middle East to Afghanistan to Colombia, wars fuelled by transnational corporations, western imperialist powers and local elites increasingly create health catastrophes through the destruction of power plants, water supply systems and hospitals. Trillions of dollars are wasted on militarism instead of providing education and economic opportunities, clean water, health care, and more human rights protection, including personal security, choice in marriage, and reproductive choice.

Global environmental devastation impacts women and children, from those near Alberta's tar sands, to millions living in drought stricken sub-Saharan Africa. Changing material conditions goes hand in hand with changing social attitudes.

We express our full solidarity

with all women involved in the struggle for survival under difficult conditions, such as the heroic women garment workers of Bangladesh, who are fighting for a living wage, safe working conditions, and the right to organize into trade unions. We demand that Israel abandon its apartheid policy of territorial expansion, violence and economic strangulation of Palestine, which imposes terrible hardships upon the women of Gaza and the West Bank. We condemn the drive for new wars against Iran and Syria, and the U.S.-backed attempt to launch a coup against the progressive and democratically elected Bolivarian government of Venezuela.

### A united fightback!

In recent years, the popular fightback against the Harper/corporate attack has been hampered by the lack of a truly pan-Canadian voice for women's rights. The organized women's movement has been deeply wounded by systematic cuts to funding.

There have been important struggles by women's and pro-equality movements, and the Canadian Labour Congress's Women's conferences have helped keep the fight for women's rights alive. But the re-establishment of an organization like NAC, to bring together women from labour, youth and students, and Aboriginal and racialized women, and from organizations that fight for legal rights, reproductive rights, disability rights, and child care, would be an important advance.

We welcome the development of initiatives to identify barriers and current issues relating to women in the labour movement. Moving these

see IWD 2014, p. 11

## Annie Buller: Working Class Hero

*Excerpt from a speech by Helen Kennedy, at the annual Norman Bethune Day Dinner, held Feb. 22 in Toronto*

I was taken with two very apt descriptions of our Annie Buller. Tom McEwen, in *The Forge Glows Red*, describes Annie at his first meeting with her, shortly after she had organized the Montreal Labour College:

“A tall, slender, beautiful woman, crowned in a wealth of golden auburn hair and an infectious smile, starting out on a long road that was to see many heartbreaks and many victories, years of endless bargaining on the ‘market’ for her exploited sisters and brothers in the needle trades, long months in prison in Brandon and North Battleford for her struggles on behalf of coal miners, endless battles to build the Workers Unity League unions and her beloved Communist Party, long years of arduous work seeking to direct the steps of her sister Canadians along the pathways to peace and progress; her “salary” often more on a level (if funds were available) with that of a low-grade welfare handout...”

And ten years later, another, just as accurate but much more comical, description of Annie Buller given to General J.H. McBrien, RCMP Commissioner, just after the murder of three miners in Estevan, as reported by Stephen Endicott in *Bienfait: The Saskatchewan Miners' Struggle of '31*:

“Annie Buller, also known as Mrs. Harry Guralnick. Born in Montreal; age: 36; height: 5' 10"; weight 140lbs; build: medium; hair: dark brown; eyes: brown, wears heavy dark-rimmed spectacles; religion: loyalty to the working class. Other particulars - is a powerful speaker; very well-liked. Dangerous agitator. Resides in Toronto. Is a member of the Political Committee of the Communist Party.”

Annie was very deserving of both of these descriptions of her contributions to working class struggles in Canada.

After the Montreal Labour College dissolved and the Marxist work continued by the new Workers' Party of Canada, the forerunner to the Communist Party,

Annie continued her work as an educator and organizer. She was inspired by the Russian Revolution, and committed herself to build the Communist Party in Canada and also to organize workers into militant, class struggle trade unions.



For the Party, Annie was the Business Manager for *The Worker* in the mid-1920s, and wrote often of the struggle of the needle trades workers to organize into a new Canadian-based industrial union. By 1927 in the United States, the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) had

successfully expelled all its communist leaders (and probably sympathizers) and as a result lost almost half its membership. The ILGWU, committed to class collaboration, lost support amongst many of its Canadian members as well. Annie was invited to the first convention of the Industrial Union of Needle Trades Workers in the spring of 1929 as a representative of *The Worker*; shortly thereafter she became the organizer of the IUNTW which was aligned in 1931 to the Workers' Unity League.

Annie's first organizing campaign was among the 3000 dressmakers in Toronto. Annie's work in the Industrial Union encapsulates the struggle which resonates still in the trade union movement - the fight between class collaboration and class struggle principles...

In 1931, the Industrial Union called a strike of all the dressmakers in Toronto. Just as today, the struggle pitted tactics of class struggle against those of class collaboration. The International Union sent in scabs to break the

strike and enlisted support from Toronto politicians to disparage the striking workers. Striking workers were intimidated by thugs hired by the ILGWU and the American Federation of Labour. Only 500 of the 3000 workers came out on strike, and the leaders had to admit defeat after only six days....

Annie left for Winnipeg shortly after the strike, but her advice was followed up by the new leadership. A strong emphasis was placed in the workplaces on organizing strong shop floor committees, elected by the predominantly female workforce. Sisters from each shop were put in charge of filing grievances. Executives were elected that represented each shop. When the Industrial Union called a strike three years later in 1934, 1500 workers responded. This strike was hugely successful: it resulted in wage increases from 10 to 40 per cent, an eight hour day, minimum wages, no contracting out, etc. Annie's pioneering work in organizing the dressmakers built a foundation for their success in 1934...

(For the text of the full speech, visit the People's Voice website, [www.peoplesvoice.ca](http://www.peoplesvoice.ca).)

# Violence in Venezuela created by the Opposition

By Steve Ellner,  
venezuelanalysis.com

The slant of the Venezuelan private media and the international media on what is happening in Venezuela is clear: The government is responsible for the violence. In the first place government-ordered gunmen are shooting at pacific demonstrators and the violence generated by the opposition is just a response to the brutality of police and military forces. But there is considerable evidence that shows that the violence, including that of unidentified motorcyclists against the demonstrators, is being carried out by the opposition. Consider the following:

1. Violent actions have been carried out by the opposition since the time of the 2002 coup. The “guarimba” which means urban violence (or “foquismo”) was publicly advocated by opposition leaders in 2003-2004 as the only way to prevent the establishment of a dictatorial regime in Venezuela.

2. On April 11, 2002, the day Chavez was overthrown, the Venezuelan and international media and the White House used juxtaposition of images of Chavistas shooting pistols in downtown Caracas, on the one hand, and peaceful anti-government demonstrators, on the other to justify the coup. However the Irish-produced documentary “The Revolution Will Not Be Televised” and other documentaries demonstrated by the flow of the camera that the demonstrators were far away from the Chavistas and that they were shooting in response to sniper fire against them. If snipers were responsible for the 15-20 killings (of opposition demonstrators along with Chavistas) that justified the

coup of April 2002, is there any reason to doubt that the unidentified individuals who are attacking demonstrators are not acting on behalf of sectors of the opposition?

3. The violence that has rocked Venezuela during the last two weeks has targeted public buildings, such as the headquarters of the Fiscalía General (Attorney General), the public television channel (Channel 8), the state-owned Banco de Venezuela, the house of the Chavista governor of Tachira, trucks of the state grocery store chain PDVAL, and dozens of metro buses in Caracas.

4. None of the opposition leaders have explicitly condemned the opposition-promoted violence. Opposition mayors in Caracas and elsewhere have refrained from using their police force to contain the violence.

5. The so-called “peaceful” demonstrators engage in disruptions by closing key avenues in an attempt to paralyze transportation. Where I live, on the main drag between the twin cities of Barcleona and Puerto La Cruz, the demonstrators occupy two of the three lanes on both sides and as a result traffic backs up for miles. A number of tragedies have been reported of people in a state of emergency who were unable to make it to a hospital or clinic on time.

6. The term “salida,” which has become a main slogan of the



“Dawg’s Blawg” has done excellent work to deconstruct images of “police violence” posted by social and mainstream anti-Venezuelan media sources. This example of “repression in Venezuela” uses an original photo from Al-Jazeera of police violence against Chilean student protestors. Check it out at <http://drdawgsblawg.ca/2014/02/constructing-venezuela-protests-a-photo-gallery.shtml>

protesters, implies regime change. Obviously the opposition is not calling for a constitutional solution in which Maduro resigns and is replaced by the president of the National Assembly Diosdado Cabello, as the constitution stipulates. Regime change is a radical slogan that implies radical tactics.

7. Political scientist and Venezuelan specialist David Smilde of the University of Georgia, who is not pro-Chavista but rather evenhanded in his analyses, has stated that the Venezuelan government has nothing to gain by the violence.

8. The government has nothing to gain by the violence because the media is largely on the side of the opposition and present a picture of the violence which directly and

indirectly blames the government. Consider the following front page article titled “Capital City Suffers Night Violence” of El Universal (February 20), one of Venezuela’s major newspapers:

“Anoche la Guardia Nacional Bolivariana y la Policia Nacional Bolivariana arremetieron casi simultaneamente contra las diferentes manifestaciones que se producian en distintos puntos de la ciudad capital, mientras el presidente Nicolas Maduro hablaba en cadena nacional de radio y television. En los enfrentamientos hubo perdigones, bombas lacrimagenas mientras las cacerolas sonaban desde las ventanas.”

Translation: “Last night, the National Guard and National Police attacked almost simul-

aneously different demonstrations that were taking place in distinct areas of the capital city... In the confrontations there was gunshot [and] tear gas while people banged on pots and pans from their windows (in protest of the government).”

9. The Venezuelan government has shown great restraint in the context of opposition-promoted violence and disruption. In nearly any other country in the world, the disruption of traffic in major cities throughout the country would have resulted in mass arrests.

10. Governments, particularly undemocratic ones, which lack active popular support and completely control the media effectively use repression against dissidents. This is not the case in Venezuela. None of the non-state channels and newspapers (that the vast majority of Venezuelans get their news from) supports the government and most of them are ardently anti-government. Furthermore, unlike governments that use massive repression (such as Egypt under Mubarak), the Chavista government and movement has a greater mobilization capacity, particularly among the popular sectors of the population, than the opposition. As Smilde says, the use of violence by the government makes absolutely no sense. ●

## El Salvador: From conquistadors to oligarchy

By Larry Wasslen, Ottawa

As historical background to People’s Voice coverage of the Salvadorian election, this article covers the years between the conquest and the modern period of fascist violence which began in the 1930s.

Like all countries in the so-called “new world” the history of El Salvador is one of savage repression, genocide, and heroic resistance. The people of tiny Cuzcutlan, the name of the area used by the first nations of present day El Salvador, endured centuries of violence and exploitation, but their spirit of struggle was never defeated.

Even before the first Spanish incursions into Cuzcutlan, a devastating smallpox epidemic swept through Central America between 1519 and 1524. Fifty to eighty percent of the aboriginal population died from exposure to European diseases.

When Pedro de Alvarado, one of Cortez’s chief lieutenants, began his invasion in 1524, the Pipil, Lenca, Chorti and other peoples, though still trying to recover from smallpox, put up incredible resistance. The invaders were

driven back by the Pipil warriors led by Chief Atlacatl at the Battle of Acajutla.

Subsequent invasions proved more successful and San Salvador was established in 1525. Western El Salvador took three more years to subdue while the Lenca held on for another two years. San Miguel was established in 1530. The initial



conquest took 15 years to complete and an additional 12 years to “secure” the territory of just over 20,000 square km.

Spanish colonial rule lasted until 1821. While the province did not contain the gold and silver the conquistadors so desperately sought, it did have very fertile land which was quickly occupied by

the “peninsulares”, colonists who came directly from Spain, and by the “criollos”, descendants of the Spanish colonizers.

The First Nations peoples were forced to become slaves or serfs via the Spanish *encomienda*, *repartamiento*, and debt peonage systems.

The *encomienda*, first used

against the conquered Moors of Spain, provided the conquistadores with cheap labour, tribute and personal service from First Nations people, in return for “protection” of the rights of the peasants to use their own land.

*Repartamiento* provided conscript labour to private individuals and to institutions such

as the Catholic Church, and various levels of government. In theory the repartamiento system meant that Indian men between the ages of 16-60 were to work about 1/3 of the time for the ruling class, but in practice it was far more exacting.

Debt peonage was involuntary servitude based upon indebtedness of the peasant to the owner of very large farms or “haciendas”. The conquistadors, the peninsulares and their criollo descendants occupied the best land and implemented these systems of exploitation to enrich themselves, while the First Nations and ladino (or mixed blood) peasants were kept in ever increasing poverty. The land would remain the basis of power for the oligarchy of El Salvador.

The ruling class in El Salvador has consistently developed agriculture based on exports. Initially cacao and indigo were grown on large haciendas in the fertile valleys between the volcanoes which dot the horizon. Exports destined for Spain and other industrial countries such as England provided foreign exchange, which was used to supply the idle rich with luxury goods. The First Nations and

ladino peasantry continued to live as forced labourers and by subsistence agriculture.

The beginning of the 19th century brought increasing competition between the peninsulares, still loyal to the colonial government and the more liberal criollos, merchants and land owners alike. The crown tried to restrict trading opportunities and loyal hacendados received greater access to forced First Nations labour.

International events such as Napoleon’s invasion of Spain, the drop in price of indigo on the world market and increasingly independent action of the criollo section of the ruling class, led to disagreements and competition between the privileged conservative and liberal land owners.

The first liberal revolt was led by Father Jose Matias Delgado in 1811. As the power of the crown decreased, the liberals stepped forward to proclaim independence on September 15, 1821.

In 1823 the land owners organized themselves as part of the United Provinces of Central

see EL SALVADOR, p. 11



# GLOBAL CLASS STRUGGLE

## UAW appeals Chattanooga vote interference

The UAW has filed an appeal with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) related to the interference by politicians and outside special interest groups in the union representation election held Volkswagen's Chattanooga plant.

A firestorm of interference threatening the economic future of the plant occurred just before and during three days of voting in an election supervised by the NLRB. Workers voted narrowly to reject representation, with a slim 44 vote swing. The appeal details a coordinated and widely publicized coercive campaign conducted by politicians and outside organizations to deprive Volkswagen workers of their federally protected right to join a union. The campaign included threats by elected officials that state-financed incentives would be withheld if workers formed a union.

U.S. Sen. Bob Corker held out the promise of a new product line for the plant if workers voted against UAW representation. The appeal states, "Senator Corker's conduct was shameful and undertaken with utter disregard for the rights of the citizens of Tennessee and surrounding states that work at Volkswagen. ... The clear message of the campaign was that voting for the union would result in stagnation for the Chattanooga plant, with no new product, no job security, and withholding of state support for its expansion."

An affirmative vote for union representation at the Volkswagen plant would have led to the establishment of a works council that would have been the first such model of labor-management relations in the United States.

## Union organizing up in Bangladesh

Union registrations in Bangladesh's readymade garments (RMG) sector rose sharply last year, reflecting significant progress in strengthening workers' rights in line with the country's new labour law, the country head of the International Labour Organisation says.

"Working conditions and workers' rights issues are receiving high priority in Bangladesh," ILO Country Director Srinivas Reddy said at the closing session of a two-day training on Bangladesh's labour law. About 30 officials from the labour department attended the training that focussed on a 2013 amendment to the law.

Reddy said working conditions would only improve when workers' rights were respected. "Your actions can help create better, safer working conditions. Ultimately, this will increase investor confidence, bring more business and jobs to Bangladesh," he said.

Since amendments to the Bangladesh Labour Act were made last July, there has been a dramatic

increase in registering of new unions in the RMG sector. In 2013, 96 new trade unions in the sector were registered with the Department of Labour, up from just two in the previous two years. At present, a total of 222 RMG unions are registered with the Department.

## Brazil techies want better deal

The Sao Paulo technology workers union Sindpd started a state-wide strike starting Feb. 21, following weeks of unfruitful negotiations with IT employers around increases in pay and benefits.

Negotiations between the union and employers had reached a dead end. Nearly 100,000 Sao Paulo-based professionals working for companies of all sizes are



represented by Sindpd, the largest technology workers union in the country. Until the situation is resolved, IT companies are not allowed to make any employee redundant, under Brazilian law which bars employers from sacking striking workers. Companies are also banned from deducting any pay from staff involved in the action.

"If you are sick of hearing your boss boasting about the company's record profit while refusing to boost your pay accordingly, you should go on strike," the union says on its website. "Without a strike, things will not change - it is clear that IT employers want to maintain an army of professionals on low pay and without benefits".

After several rounds of negotiation, the union said it would settle for an 8.8 percent raise, plus daily meal allowances of \$16, and profit sharing plans for any IT company with more than 10 staff. The body representing the employers has offered a 6.2 percent raise, daily meal subsidies of \$5.80 for companies that employ more than 50 staff, and profit sharing plans for companies with more than 30 employees.

During a previous strike in 2011, the union took its demands to the Ministry of Labor, which helped to mediate an agreement.

## Cyprus dockers work to rule

The right-wing government of the Mediterranean island of Cyprus has accused port workers of dealing a serious blow to the economy by conducting a work to rule action. Communications Minister Tasos Mitsopoulos made

the accusation on Feb. 21, as businesses urged the government to issue a decree against the job action.

Starting on Feb. 14, the dockers refused to work afternoons and weekends, demanding a raise in overtime pay, which was cut by the government as part of an austerity drive that followed the island's 10 billion bailout last year. The workers are seeking to be paid 30% over regular pay rates for afternoon shifts, and 75% higher for weekend shifts. Currently they get no extra pay for afternoon shifts, and an extra 30% for weekend work.

The Cyprus Chamber of Commerce is urging the state to use the law on essential services. In response to industrial action by air traffic controllers, the Cypriot parliament in 2012 enacted legislation limiting strike action.

## Strike actions across Egypt

Strike actions are spreading across the Nile Delta and southern Egypt, increasing pressure on the country's military-backed interim government. Notaries in the Delta province of Kafr el-Sheikh went on strike Feb. 21, joining pharmacists, doctors and factory workers who have been protesting across much of the country for the past month, calling for higher salaries.

Reports indicate that police staged strikes in six provinces during mid-February. Police officers face a growing threat as attacks on police stations spiked following the July 2013 ouster of Islamist President Mohammed Morsi. In response, Egypt's interim president Adly Mansour ordered a 30 percent raise for police to take effect in March. Currently, lower-ranking officers are paid some 800 Egyptian pounds (\$115) per month.

More than 22,000 workers in the northern city of Mahalla al-Kobra went on strike in early February, demanding higher wages and the removal of the government-operated Textile Holding Company's president. A gritty industrial town, Mahalla al-Kobra was the scene of numerous strikes in 2008. Demonstrators destroyed posters of then-President Hosni Mubarak and clashed with security troops. That strike prompted calls by opposition groups to turn the labor unrest into a wider political protest against the government.

Doctors around the country have been striking periodically for months now, demanding higher salaries. After a partial strike of all hospitals on Feb. 19, the Ministry of the Health said the total rate of participation was 17 percent, while union leaders said that 45 percent of hospitals had taken part.

The Center for Trade and Union Services, a pro-labor non-governmental organization, said that government workers are striking now because they've seen no results from long-awaited minimum wage legislation. Last September, Finance Minister Ahmed Galal said that public workers would all receive a minimum wage of 1,200 Egyptian pounds, or roughly \$170.

Egyptians have dealt with rising prices and high unemployment for most of the country's political transition, since Mubarak left power in 2011. Employment is upward of 13 percent, and experts put youth unemployment at more than 25 percent. The annual rate of inflation stood at 11.3 percent in January, according to the Central Bank. The interim government is struggling to keep unrest at minimum with an already strapped budget, even with billions of dollars in financial help from the governments of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

## Reza Shahabi still in prison

International labour groups are calling for immediate intervention in the case of Reza Shahabi, a prominent Iranian activist. Police beat Shahabi, treasurer of the Syndicate of Workers of the Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company, following his arrest in 2010.

The beatings reportedly caused liver and kidney dysfunction, a loss of sensation in Shahabi's leg, and severe back pain. Following an operation on his spine in August 2012, Shahabi was sent back to prison - against medical advice. A further examination in October 2013 showed that without treatment, it was possible that he could be disabled permanently.

Despite the severity of his injuries, Shahabi still has not received the medical treatment he needs. International human rights organisations and global union federations have intervened. The campaign led to Shahabi's temporary release to receive medical treatment last year. However, after just three months, he was recalled to prison.

## Indian migrant deaths in Qatar

Almost 1,000 Indians have died in Qatar in the last four years, according to an Agence France-Presse report. Other reports have revealed that hundreds of Nepalese migrant workers died in recent years in Qatar, the host country of the 2022 football World Cup.

While human rights groups say the latest figures highlight Qatar's abysmal record, the Indian embassy said there was nothing abnormal, and that many of these deaths were due to natural causes.

The Indian community is the single-largest expatriate group in Qatar. The number of Indians is estimated at close to 500,000, approximately 26% of Qatar's population of 1.9 million. The majority are engaged in low-paid, unskilled and semi-skilled work.

The information was obtained by AFP through an access to information request. The news report quoted an official of the International Trade Union Confederation as saying that the data showed an "exceptionally high mortality rate". The Indian embassy, however, said it was inappropriate to use these figures in a distorted manner, even praising Doha for taking care of the interests of Indian workers.

"Qatar's human rights record is under scrutiny like never before as it cranks up building work ahead of the 2022 World Cup, most of which will be done by migrant labour from South Asia," the AFP report said. "Amnesty International said in November that workers were being treated like 'animals', and urged football's world governing body, FIFA, to press Doha to improve conditions for foreign labourers," it added.

Many items in our "Global Class Struggle" column are from the Labour Start website, [www.labourstart.org](http://www.labourstart.org)

## Join the Communist Party of Canada



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

**Central Committee CPC**  
290A Danforth Ave, Toronto, ON, M4K 1N6  
416-469-2446 <info@cpc-pcc.ca> [www.comunist-party.ca](http://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  
604-254-9836 <cpinfo.bc@gmail.com>

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

**Calgary CPC**  
5421 - 8th Ave. SE  
Calgary, AB, T2A 4L7 Tel: 403-248-6489

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

**Ottawa CPC**  
Tel: 613-232-7108

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

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

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

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



# Why does Western Sahara matter?

*This Feb. 19 report by UK Labour MP Jeremy Corbyn is from the Morning Star*

Last week I was part of a delegation from the all-parliamentary Western Sahara group to visit the Moroccan-occupied territory, with John Hillary of War on Want and John Gurr of the Western Sahara resources group.

We held over 20 meetings with a wide range of groups of former prisoners, human rights campaigners, women's organisations, disability groups and trade unions.

We also met the Morocco-appointed governor of the region as well as the mayor of the city of Laayoune and pro-Moroccan civil society groups, the Moroccan Human Rights group and Wolfgang Weisbrod-Weber, the head of Minurso, the UN mission set up to work for a referendum on Western Sahara independence.

So why does Western Sahara matter?

When the European powers divided up Africa in the late 19th century Spain became master of this vast area of mainly desert land, stretching from Algeria to the Atlantic and south to Mauritania.

The UN set up Minurso, which still has offices in Laayoune as well as in Tindouf, Algeria.

Years of negotiation over how a referendum on the territory's future proved fruitless as Morocco and Polisario were unable to agree on an electoral roll. The UN has since suspended its referendum plans.

Rabat asserts that the area should be an autonomous part of Morocco. Former US secretary of state James Baker suggested a compromise, with a referendum on independence after 10 years. Polisario reluctantly agreed, only for the proposal to be rejected by Morocco.

The majority of Sahrawis live in refugee camps in Algeria. There are 100,000 people stuck in camps in the Algerian desert, many of whom have been there since the 1970s.

The remaining Sahrawi population in the territory are now outnumbered by Moroccan settlers. Many now rely on the Moroccan state and para-state companies for work.

In legal terms the territory is a non-self governing territory, in other words occupied. That has been the reason for opposition to



*Codesa president Aminatou Haidar*

of arbitrary arrests, the detention of young people and discrimination against those who speak in favour of self-determination.

Codesa president Aminatou Haidar was herself jailed for years - and kept blindfolded for four of them. She has been nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize.

The president of the Sahrawi Phosphate Workers Union explained to us that in 1975 24,000 people, all Sahrawi, had worked in the industry, but now it was a tiny percentage of that and Sahrawis were on worse-paid jobs.

We also met the families of people who have been killed and of those still in prison.

But Moroccan-based civil society groups all supported autonomy within Morocco, while being unspecific about what that meant.

They talked of the importance of the national Human Rights Commission and about social and economic development. The proximity of the Canary Islands and the potential to increase tourism were raised.

When we met the governor and the mayor of Laayoune both insisted that autonomy could be a solution to the political crisis - and both heaped abuse on Algeria for housing the refugees and supporting Polisario.

A constant refrain was that human rights had been politicised and there was freedom of expression in Western Sahara.

Certainly there has been development, with good roads and huge infrastructure projects in Laayoune. The whole occupied region is virtually tax-free and settlers' salaries are higher than in Morocco. The cost to the Moroccan government is enormous.

But we sensed a surreal disconnect when we left the sumptuous mayor's residence to observe a demonstration.

Minurso's mandate is up for renewal on April 15 and all Sahrawi self-determination groups demand that it should have a human rights mandate added. Demonstrations are called on the 15th of every month to highlight this.

We drove through the streets in the wind and rain to where the demonstration was due to assemble. We saw van-loads of young men getting out and being given large sticks which they used to beat any young man they saw walking or running down the street. The small number who managed to assemble anyway were forcibly

dispersed.

Our car was then stopped and the police attempted to arrest our driver, a Codesa member, for alleged traffic violations, and remove his car with a tow-truck. We were actually attached to the tow truck with two of us still in the car.

After an hour of argument and the arrival of the Human Rights Commission our driver was released and we agreed to leave the area in his company.

His car was however removed as the police thought investigating his road tax was clearly a priority and could only be done by confiscating the vehicle. The operation involved at least 30 police officers.

Later that night the governor put out a statement saying we had "incited" young people to demonstrate by our presence.

And the following morning we met a woman with a badly bruised

and cut hand from her attempt to attend the demo.

Throughout our visit we were accompanied by unmarked police vehicles and motorbikes which followed us everywhere and waited outside each meeting we attended.

The lack of a clear choice over Western Sahara's future has set settlers against local people in some - not all - cases and brought a huge police and army presence to the region.

Why? A conflict going back to colonisation has blighted the lives of the Sahrawi people. Their resources should not be exploited until there is an agreement allowing them to choose their future, a choice they have never been allowed to make.

The UN must immediately renew Minurso and extend its mandate to monitor human rights throughout the territory.

(Corbyn is Labour MP for Islington North.) ●

## Stop the murder and abuse of women and girls in Swaziland

*Communist Party of Swaziland, Feb. 18, 2014*

In the run-up to International Women's Day, 8 March, the Communist Party of Swaziland is urging all Swazi pro-democracy organisations, NGOs and community organisations to denounce the recurrent murders of women and girls in our country, and to demand equal rights for women at all levels of society.

Three more women were murdered in separate incidents last weekend (16-17 Feb). Every year, scores of women disappear mysteriously or are killed, and thousands suffer violent attacks, including rape, by men.

A few years ago Swazi national David Simelane was convicted of killing 34 women in a reign of terror against women lasting many years. In 2011, an 11 year-old girl with albinism was shot and beheaded. Last year, the mutilated bodies of several women were found.

Often the police do not investigate, or even cover up, cases of the disappearance or murder of women and girls. Some of the murders that have become known have probably been ritual or "muti" killings.

There is a spike in such killings

at election time, lending substance to rumours that some MPs are behind the murders in the belief they boost their chances of getting into parliament.

Most violent or murderous attacks on women happen in domestic settings. About two thirds of Swazi women are violently abused, mainly by their husbands.

All this happens within a social and economic context of aggravated inequality between men and women, which is actively sustained by the absolute monarchy and ruling class.

The annual Reed Dance, where girls are made to cavort before the King in case he wants to choose another wife, typifies the subordinate and objectified position of women in our patriarchal society.

The Constitution asserts gender equality. But like most of the Constitution's lip service to democracy, nothing is done to make women's equality a reality.

The Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Act is likewise inadequate window dressing, conceding certain rights to victims but failing to criminalise all gender based

see SWAZILAND, p. 11



From the 1950s colony after colony achieved independence. French influence on Morocco ended in 1956, though Mauritania and Algeria had to fight bloody wars for their own independence.

Spain finally withdrew from Western Sahara in 1975 after the death of fascist dictator General Franco. But it handed administration of the territory to Morocco and Mauritania - sparking a war when Sahrawi national liberation front Polisario launched a bid to win self-determination.

Mauritania soon withdrew but Morocco did not and has occupied the country since. It built a sand wall around most of the territory ahead of a ceasefire in 1991. The landmines from the fighting will take another decade to clear.

the EU's fishing agreement with Morocco which allows Western Sahara fish to enter our shops.

Behind the dispute lie the national ambitions of Morocco and the huge mineral wealth of phosphates which stream out of the territory through Laayoune, as well as prodigious quantities of fish off the coast.

There are now increasing Moroccan farming activities around the other main city of Dhakla, with vast tomato plantations being established. Some of the products end up in our supermarkets.

The abuses of Western Sahara residents goes on. When we met representatives of the Collective of Human Rights Defenders of Western Sahara (Codesa) we heard

## REDS ON THE WEB

[www.communist-party.ca](http://www.communist-party.ca)

[www.peoplesvoice.ca](http://www.peoplesvoice.ca)

[www.ycl-ljc.ca](http://www.ycl-ljc.ca)

[rebelyouth-magazine.blogspot.com](http://rebelyouth-magazine.blogspot.com)

<http://solidnet.org>



## The Fifth of the Month to Free the Five

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

E-mail: [president@whitehouse.gov](mailto:president@whitehouse.gov)

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

Phone 1-202-456-1111 Fax 1-202-456-2461

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

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



## MUSIC NOTES

By Wally Brooker

# Remembering Pete Seeger

Pete Seeger, who died on January 27th, was a key figure in the development of folk music as a progressive force within popular culture. For a later generation, Pete personified the popular front - that broad alliance of progressive forces that led the fight against fascism and racism, and fought successfully for labour rights in the period from the mid-thirties to the mid-fifties.

Around the world this past month, people have been remembering a man who survived the persecution of the McCarthy era to see his band, the blacklisted Weavers, return to Carnegie Hall, who planted the seeds that led to the folk revival of the sixties, and who became an inspiring figure in the environmental movement. Pete Seeger's achievements were the result of hard work, personal courage, an optimistic spirit, a strong understanding of history, and solid socialist principles.

It is easy to imagine that folk music was always the music of the left, but when Seeger was a teenager it was considered by many activists to be a cultural backwater. Before he was won over to his son's enthusiasm, Pete's father, composer and ethno-musicologist Charles Seeger, was suspicious of folk music. His view was shared by many left-wing composers of the time, including the young Aaron Copeland and the German communist Hanns Eisler. In his column for the CPUSA's *Daily Worker* (circa 1934-35) Charles argued for a proletarian music that combined contemporary popular music (jazz) with elements of twentieth-century European avant-garde music. While the debate continues today (read hip-hop instead of jazz), folk music prevailed for more than a generation, and folk-inspired artists continue to play a significant role in today's progressive movements.

Pete's career trajectory was set when he got a job in Washington in 1939 assisting folklorist Alan Lomax at the Library of Congress. It was there that he met Woody Guthrie, the Oklahoma troubadour who was to become his mentor. Inspired by Guthrie and Lomax, his circle grew to include Woody's

sidekick Cisco Houston, African-American musicians like Sonny Terry, Brownie McGee and Leadbelly, and labour singers Agnes "Sis" Cunningham and Lee Hayes. The Almanac Singers, a short-lived but influential group which he co-founded, became the soundtrack of a heroic era of industrial union organizing.

In 1943 Pete married Toshi Ohta (1922-2013), a Japanese-American woman he'd met a few years before at a square dance. She came from a left-wing background (her grandfather had translated Marx's writings into Japanese). Toshi effectively ran the Seeger family's rustic household near Beacon, NY, raised their three children while Pete was often away on tour, managed his business affairs, endured the dark days of McCarthyism, and became a respected community activist. Later Toshi co-founded the Newport Folk Festival and co-produced films and TV shows about Pete. Toshi Seeger became a renowned figure in her own right, her character and her important contributions acknowledged by the folk-music world and beyond.

Like many communists and socialists, Pete served in the armed forces during the 1939-45 war against fascism. When he came home from his tour of duty in the South Pacific he plunged back into life as musical activist, co-founding People's Songs with Lee Hayes and Alan Lomax, and later the booking agency People's Artists.

With the onset of the Cold War, life for artists like Seeger became dangerous, as an ugly 1949 riot in Peekskill, NY demonstrated. Pete and Toshi had helped to organize a concert there, featuring the great African-American singer Paul Robeson. After the show, concert-goers and performers were violently assaulted by anti-communist and racist crowds while the police looked on.

While things were to get even worse, somehow the times were also right for Pete, Lee Hayes, and two other musicians (Ronnie Gilbert and Fred Hellerman) to achieve commercial success with the unabashedly progressive group the Weavers. For several years



they enjoyed a series of hits, (most notably Leadbelly's "Goodnight Irene"), but their chart success was soon cut short by McCarthyism

and the red scare.

In 1950, a group of screenwriters and directors, who came to be known as the Hollywood Ten,

were summoned to appear before the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) to testify about their links to the Communist Party. When they refused to name names, citing in their defence the First Amendment to the US Constitution (free speech), they were convicted of contempt of congress and sent to prison. Over the next five years the practice of HUAC's victims was to plead the Fifth Amendment (protecting against self-incrimination). Pete Seeger pleaded the First Amendment, stating: "I am not going to answer any questions as to my association, my philosophical or religious beliefs, or how I voted in any election, or any of these private affairs. I think these are very improper questions for any American to be asked, especially under such compulsion as this."

For that he was convicted of contempt of congress. He launched an appeal, was released on bail, and finally won his case in 1962. Pete's inspiring testimony can be found at [www.peteseeger.net/HUAC.htm](http://www.peteseeger.net/HUAC.htm).

It's been said that this ordeal set Pete Seeger on the path to becoming the torch-bearer of people's music. I'll pick up on this story next month. ●

## Exorcising the broadcasting demon

By Rob Gowland, *The Guardian, newspaper of the Communist Party of Australia*

The Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) is about to run a program called Teen Exorcists, about three teenage American girls from Scottsdale, Arizona, raised to be a crack team of exorcists. Yes, exorcists. These unfortunate girls are the daughters of the Reverend Bob Larson, one of those loony American preachers who think "the Devil" is a real person, and that demonic possession is not only possible but that it happens all the time.

The Reverend Bob's delusions warrant some sort of mental health intervention but instead he is given a microphone, radio time and publicity and encouraged to "spread the word" as he and his daughters drive demons out of emotional church-goers. To do this they need special crosses (which are made for Bob by a special contractor) and which he and the girls sell at their religious "meetings" and services.

Their exorcisms also require a lot of "holy water" and a heck of a lot of yelling as they "command" the demon to leave the person who is supposedly "possessed".

This hokum should have their audiences rolling in the aisles with laughter, but of course rational people don't go to events of that sort. Instead, the Larsons' audiences comprise that huge chunk of "Bible Belt" Americans who devoutly believe that angels and demons are real, along with wizards and sorcerers and practitioners of black magic of every description.

Don't for a moment think that

this craziness is limited to Americans, however.

Brynne, Tess and Savannah Larson have been on missions to England and Ukraine, conducting spectacular public exorcisms. The inclusion of Ukraine is interesting. Since the overthrow of socialism in the USSR, representatives of every evangelical church with the money to allow it have flooded into Ukraine to "help save the people there" from their (godless, materialist) socialist past.

They have the blessing of imperialism, of course: both Germany and the USA - for their own reasons - would like to see the former breadbasket of the Soviet Union torn away from Russia's influence. In joining the EU, Ukraine would quickly become in effect a German colony. For its part, the USA would have struck a serious blow at Russia's economy and defences.

The overthrow of socialism in the USSR, an overthrow remember that did not come from below, from the people, but from above - from the highest levels of the Party and government - left the people of the USSR leaderless and rudderless. Party leader Gorbachev didn't mind: he proudly revealed later that he had plotted for several years to "bring down" the Soviet government.


Nevertheless, the apparent overturning of the belief in the working class and the ideology of socialism left a lot of people groping for some thing they could believe in instead. Evangelical churches in the US rushed to fill the void, especially those in the Bible Belt who had previously endeavoured to smuggle bibles into Russia when it was "Godless

and Communist" (a purely propagandist activity since during Soviet times the Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church published more than enough copies of the Bible from its own very prolific publishing house).

But substituting a belief in "the Devil" and demon-banishing exorcisms for their previous confidence in socialism does not seem like much of an advance for the people of Ukraine. During their visit to Britain, because they were not from a mainstream church but were from the USA's Southern Bible Belt - usually perceived as "loony" among educated people - the Larson girls copped a bit of a battering from the more perceptive of the British bourgeois media who accused them of profiteering (never!), fame seeking (surely not) and charlatanism (really?).

I doubt that any of this will have affected them adversely: it would obviously have been the work of the Devil! The Larsons, father and daughters, are physically living in the 21st century, but mentally they are stuck somewhere in the tenth or eleventh century. They are hip as far as using all the technical benefits of modern science and electronics in particular, but their understanding of the world has fossilised sometime during the Crusades.

What is really worrying about this program is that it is being run on the ABC, which has apparently abandoned its Charter completely now. You may remember, the original Charter for the ABC gave it the task (amongst other things) of raising the educational and cultural level of the Australian people. Promoting this kind of nonsense does not seem to really be living up to that Charter. ●



## La Trova Nuestra

**Friday, March 8, 8 pm**

**"La Peña Nuestra"**

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

**About Vancouver's "La Trova Nuestra"**

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

## On the reactionary developments in Ukraine

### *Joint Statement of Communist and Workers' Parties, circulated by the Communist Parties of Germany and Greece*

The recent dramatic developments in Ukraine do not constitute the "victory of democracy" by the alleged "revolutionaries", as it is described by the mass media of the USA and the EU, but is a dangerous development, above all for the people of Ukraine themselves.

Reactionary political forces, ideological descendants of the Nazis, have risen to the political "surface" with the assistance of the EU and the USA. These are forces which apart from destroying the offices of their opponents, are planning political persecutions, and the banning of parties, above all against the communists, and even racist legislation at the expense of the Russian-speaking population, like what has been in force for the last 20 years in the countries of the "European" Baltic, with the blatant political support of the EU.

The communist and workers' parties endorsing this statement

express our solidarity and support with the communists of Ukraine, above all with those who in many instances went on to the streets in order to defend the monuments of Lenin and the other Soviet and anti-fascist monuments, which found themselves "targeted" by the ideological "cleansing" of history being attempted by the nationalist-fascist armed groups.

We denounce the USA and the EU regarding their blatant involvement in the internal affairs of Ukraine, regarding the direct support they provided and are providing to the armed fascist groups, supporting historical revanchism against the outcome of WW2, transforming anti-communism into their official policy, as well as beautifying the fascist groups, their criminal ideology and activity, promoting the division of the people of Ukraine with planned persecutions at the expense of the Russian-speaking people of Ukraine.

The positions of the opportunist forces are dangerous, spreading illusions that there could exist another "better EU, another better association agreement of the EU with Ukraine". The EU, like every

capitalist inter-state union, is a predatory alliance which has a deeply reactionary character, and acts and will continue to act against the working people's rights. The developments in Ukraine are connected to the fierce competition between the EU and the USA, on one hand, and Russia for the control of markets, raw materials and the country's transport networks. However the people of Ukraine, as all the other peoples of Europe, have no interests in siding with the one or the other imperialist, or one or the other predatory alliance.

The interests of the working class and popular strata of Ukraine mean that they must prevent themselves from being "trapped" in nationalist, divisive dilemmas, on the basis of ethnic, linguistic, religious particularities, and to prioritize their common class interests, to chart their path of class struggle, for their rights and socialism. Socialism remains as timely and necessary as ever. This is the perspective against every capitalist inter-state union, in order to pave the way for an economy and society that will not operate on the basis of profit, but on the basis of the needs of the workers. ●

land. Liberals passed anti-vagrancy laws to drive peasants from their privately owned lands. In 1881-1882 the same oligarchy went after communal land help by the remaining First Nations. The greed of the coffee plantation owners was insatiable.

In the post-independence period the basic relationship between land owners and the various military organizations continued. Militias were organized in various cities and municipalities, but land owners continued to employ their own security forces. Foreign military influence appeared in El Salvador in 1825 when France sent two advisors. Colombia and Chile would also play roles in modernizing the Armed forces. City-based militias were always ready to respond to unrest in the countryside. The Guardia Civil (civil guard) was formed in 1867.

Forty five presidents held office between 1838 and the military dictatorship of the fascist General Maximilano Hernandez Martinez. The plight of the working class and peasantry continued to deteriorate throughout this period.

Yet resistance was always in play. Between 1537 and 1547 anti-Spanish rebellions were launched from Higuereo. In 1625 major slave

riots rocked the capital, San Salvador. Another example of determined resistance was the independence struggle of the Nonualco First Nation lead by Anastasio Aquino in 1832-1833. Although Aquino's forces did liberate San Vicente and Zacatecoluca they did not move against San Salvador. This allowed government forces to contain and crush this liberation struggle. Later, five peasant uprisings took place between 1872 and 1898.

What was evident to the First Nations and ladino population was that independence from Spain meant greater freedom for the oligarchs and greater exploitation for the majority of the people.

El Salvador, a tiny country in the centre of Central America, endured three centuries of conquest and exploitation at the hands of the conquistadores, their peninsular followers and creole descendants.

The First Nations, Pipiles, Lencas, Chortis, and others put up stiff resistance. It took many years for the area to be conquered and secured. Notwithstanding Spanish control and massive repression revolts, rebellions, and liberation movements have always been a critical part of Salvadorian history. ●

The labour movement must focus on organizing unorganized women, the most important way to combat poverty and income disparity.

But while capitalism survives, it will always generate poverty, inequality, exploitation, environmental degradation and war. These outrages are inherent in a system based on maximizing profit in private hands. Only socialism, based on democratic, collective ownership and working class power, can liberate the enormous creative and productive potential of the people for human needs.

The real alternative for gender equality and human survival is socialism. As the tiny island of Cuba demonstrates, when social

equality is a priority, huge advances in the status of women can be achieved. Unlike Canada, for example, Cuban women are elected to almost 50% of seats in their National Assembly.

For a century, since IWD was adopted by a Socialist International women's conference in Copenhagen in 1910, the full participation of women has been essential for the success of working class and democratic movements.

On March 8, the Communist Party of Canada extends our warm solidarity to all those who stand for peace, equality, democracy and social progress. A better world is both possible and necessary - the world of socialism, which can guarantee full equality and a future for humanity! ●

# What's Left

## IWD EVENTS

### BELLEVILLE, ON

IWD Gathering and March, Wed., March 5, 9:45 am-Noon, starts from Public Library and Art Gallery.

### HALIFAX, NS

IWD Rally, Sat., March 8, 2 pm, gather at Grand Parade Halifax, organized by Halifax-Dartmouth & District Labour Council.

### NORTH VANCOUVER, BC

Break the Silence, Inspire Change, Wed., March 5, 6-8 pm, North Vancouver Library (120-14 St. W), sponsored by North Shore Women's Centre.

### OTTAWA, ON

Migrant Women Rebuilding Communities, Wed. March 5, 7 pm, 885 Bank St., festival to help rebuild communities devastated by Typhoon Haiyan Yolanda in the Philippines, donation \$5.

### SURREY, BC

IWD Celebration, 1:30 pm, Sunday, March 9, Surrey Central Public Library Room 418, guest speaker Jane Bouey (former Vancouver school trustee), organized by Fraser Valley Peace Council.

### SUNSHINE COAST, BC

IWD Potluck Dinner, Sat., March 8, 5-7 pm, Roberts Creek Community Hall, organized by Sunshine Coast Labour Council.

### TORONTO, ON

"Women Taking Power," Sat., March 8, rally 11 am at OISE (252 Bloor Street W), march 1 pm to info fair at 55 Gould St., Ryerson University, organized by Women Working With Immigrant Women and IWD Organizing Ctee.

### VANCOUVER, BC

IWD Dinner, with Idle No More speakers, Friday, March 7, 5:15 pm, Fraserview Hall, 8240 Fraser St., organized by Vancouver & District Labour Council, tickets \$45 (low income \$30) from 604-254-0703.

Annual IWD March, Sat., March 8, 12 noon, starts from Vancouver Art Gallery, sponsored by Vancouver IWD coalition.

### OMNIBUS MARCHES

Omnibus March Against Harper, Saturday, March 1, events across Canada. For local details, check on Facebook.

### Kelowna, BC

World Community Film Festival, documentaries on social justice topics, March 8-9 at Okanagan College, with special screenings March 5 & 7 at UBCO, and March 6 at Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society. For details, visit worldfilmfestkelowna.net.

### Vancouver, BC

La Trova Nuestra, evening of Latin American music and socialising, admission \$10, 8 pm, Friday, March 28, Centre for Socialist Education, 706 Clark Drive.

Left Film Night, Sunday, March 30, 7 pm, at the CSE, 706 Clark Drive. For film information, call 604-255-2041.

### Montreal, QC

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

**People's Voice 2014 Fund Drive starts March 1 - see page 2**

## People's Voice deadlines

March 16-31 issue: Thursday, March 6  
April 1-15 issue: Thursday, March 20

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

## Stop abuse in Swaziland...

### continued from page 9

violence.

Mswati's toy parliament upholds the worst attitudes to women, including the 2012 ban on women wearing mini-skirts because they are supposedly "rape-provoking".

The CPS calls on all pro-democracy organisations, NGOs and activists to

- \* spotlight the killings of women and girls in Swaziland as patriarchy at its most depraved
- \* demand that police investigate and prosecute all killings and violent abuse of women and girls
- \* highlight the complicity of the Mswati regime in sustaining the

oppression of women and girls  
\* develop and support consciousness raising and self-defence skills among women and girls

\* bring to Swaziland the militant message of International Women's Day 2014 to advance women's equality by challenging the status quo.

Expose the autocracy; fight for an equal, just and lasting peace in Swaziland!

Women to the front in the struggle against; patriarchy, murder, oppression, exploitation and all forms of gender based violence in our motherland!

For freedom, democracy and socialism in Swaziland! ●

## IWD 2014: Equality for women....

### continued from page 6

findings into action can help to reinvigorate a more democratic and equity-driven labour movement.

The response to the economic crisis by working people of all genders and backgrounds must be to build a People's Coalition to demand a genuine alternative to corporate greed. Led by the labour movement and its allies, such a Coalition could fight to win sustainable jobs, improve social services and gain increased opportunities for women. To protect jobless workers and their families, EI payments must be set at 90% of previous earnings. Evictions and utility cutoffs against all families affected by unemployment must be banned.

# Remember the real history of the Korean War

**British journalist John Pilger looks back to the Korean war of 1950-53, and how distorted history masks the true nature of a conflict which scars the region to this day**

Fifty years ago, E.P. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class* rescued the study of history from the powerful. Kings and queens, landowners, industrialists and imperialists had owned much of public memory.

Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States* also demonstrated that the freedoms and rights we enjoy precariously - free expression, free association, the jury system, rights of minorities - were the achievements of ordinary people, not the gift of elites.

Historians, like journalists, play their most honourable role when they myth-bust.

Eduardo Galeano's *Open Veins of Latin America* (1971) achieved this for the people of a continent whose historical memory was colonised and mutated by the dominance of the United States.

The "good" world war of 1939-45 provides a bottomless ethical bath in which the West's "peacetime" conquests are cleansed.

Demystifying historical investigation stands in the way. Richard Overy's *1939: Countdown to War* (2009) is a devastating explanation of why that cataclysm was not inevitable. We need such smokescreen-clearing now more than ever.

The powerful would like us to believe that the likes of Thompson, Zinn and Galeano are no longer necessary - that we live, as *Time* magazine put it, "in an eternal present" in which reflection is limited to Facebook and historical narrative is the preserve of Hollywood.

This is a confidence trick. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four* George Orwell wrote: "Who controls the past controls the future: who controls the present controls the past."

The people of Korea understand this well.

The slaughter on their peninsula



The DPRK capital Pyongyang after U.S. bombing during the Korean War.

following the second world war is known as "the forgotten war," whose significance for all humanity has long been suppressed in military histories of cold war good versus evil.

I have just read *The Korean War: a History* by Bruce Cumings

**On Jeju, as many as 60,000 people were massacred by militias supported, directed and in some cases commanded by US officers.**

(2010), professor of history at the University of Chicago.

I first saw Cumings interviewed in Regis Tremblay's extraordinary film *The Ghosts of Jeju*, which documents the 1948 uprising on the southern Korean island of Jeju and the campaign by the present-day islanders to stop the building of a base with US missiles aimed provocatively at China.

Like most Koreans, the farmers and fishing families protested at the senseless division of their nation between north and south in 1945 - a line drawn along the 38th parallel by a US official, Dean Rusk, who had "consulted a map around midnight on the day after we obliterated Nagasaki with an atomic bomb," as Cumings writes.

The myth of a "good" Korea (the South) and a "bad" Korea (the North) was invented. In fact, Korea, north and south, has a remarkable people's history of resistance to feudalism and foreign occupation, notably Japan's in the 20th century.

When the US defeated Japan in 1945 it occupied Korea and often branded those who had resisted the Japanese as "commies." On Jeju, as many as 60,000 people were massacred by militias supported, directed and in some cases commanded by US officers. This and other unreported atrocities were a "forgotten" prelude to the Korean war (1950-53), in which more people were killed than Japanese died during all of the second world war.

Cumings gives an astonishing tally of the degree of destruction of the cities of the North - Pyongyang 75 per cent, Sariwon 95 per cent, Sinanju 100 per cent. Great dams in the North were bombed in order to unleash internal tsunamis. "Anti-personnel" weapons, such as napalm, were tested on civilians.

Cumings's superb investigation helps us understand why today's North Korea seems so strange, an anachronism sustained by an

enduring mentality of siege.

"The unhindered machinery of incendiary bombing was visited on the North for three years," he writes, "yielding a wasteland and a surviving mole people who had learned to love the shelter of caves, mountains, tunnels and redoubts, a subterranean world that became the basis for reconstructing a country and a memento for building a fierce hatred through the ranks of the population. Their truth is not cold, antiquarian, ineffectual knowledge."

Cumings quotes Virginia Woolf to describe how the trauma of this kind of war "confers memory."

The guerrilla leader Kim Il Sung had begun fighting the Japanese

militarists in 1932. Every characteristic attached to the regime he founded - "communist, rogue state, evil enemy" - derives from a ruthless, brutal, heroic resistance, first to Japan, then the United States, which threatened to nuke the rubble its bombers had left.

Cumings exposes as propaganda the notion that Kim Il Sung, leader of the "bad" Korea, was a stooge of Moscow.

In contrast, the regime that Washington invented in the South, the "good" Korea, was run largely by those who had collaborated with Japan and the United States.

The Korean war has an unrecognised distinction. It was in the smouldering ruins of the peninsula that the US turned itself into what Cumings calls "an archipelago of empire."

When the Soviet Union collapsed in the 1990s, it was as if the whole planet was declared pro-US - or else.

But there is China now. The base being built on Jeju Island will face the Chinese metropolis of Shanghai, less than 300 miles away, and the industrial heartland of the only country whose economic power is likely to surpass that of the US.

"China," says President Obama in a leaked briefing paper, "is our fast-emerging strategic threat."

By 2020, almost two-thirds of all US naval forces in the world will be transferred to the Asia-Pacific region. In an arc extending from Australia to Japan and beyond, China will be ringed by US missiles and nuclear-weaponised aircraft.

Will this threat to all of us be "forgotten" too? ●

## Flower industry exploits Colombian and Kenyan workers

By Paddy McGuffin, Morning Star

Valentine's Day is the most lucrative date in the flower retailers' calendar yet workers in developing countries are risking their health and toiling for a pittance supplying British supermarkets. Bouquets are sold for vastly inflated prices but research by anti-poverty charity War on Want has found the mainly female workforce in Colombia and Kenya supplying those flowers continues to slave for as little as half the living wage.

Workers also suffer problems such as disabling repetitive strain injuries and miscarriages through exposure toxic to pesticides, the charity said. Supermarkets sell around 70 percent of all the flowers bought in Britain - the highest proportion in Europe.

While many British firms have adopted voluntary standards for their suppliers, these are still failing to protect the health and safety of workers or ensure basic workers' rights. War on Want believes government regulation is necessary to introduce binding legislation to hold companies to account for the impacts in their supply chains.

It argues that workers supplying multinational companies in Britain should have the right to redress in this country and the ability to seek compensation for damage to their health or loss of earnings as the result of actions of British companies and their suppliers.

The charity is calling for the establishment of a supermarket watchdog to tackle abuses by British firms and their suppliers.

War on Want spokesman Paul Collins said: "Millions of people buying Valentine's Day roses for their loved ones will be shocked to learn that many workers supplying them face poor pay and conditions. It is nothing less than a disgrace that company bosses are piling up profits while Kenyans on flower farms struggle to feed themselves and their families, and live in slum housing. British corporate leaders must ensure a living wage and decent conditions for them."

Collins added that with London Fashion week due, "we urge shoppers not only to press retailers on flower workers' treatment, but on the need to guarantee a living wage and good, safe conditions for those who make our clothes or supply fruit, tea and wine sold in UK stores." ●

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