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people's VOICE

Blocking peace in Korea

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"Women's Rights are Human Rights"



International Women's Day 2011

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The Social Roots of Revolt

Many Bahrainis have witnessed huge wealth sloshing around their diminutive country of less than 600,000 indigenous people (perhaps another 300,000 are expatriates, official figures are vague). But so little of that wealth - especially in the last seven years of high oil prices when Bahrain's national revenue tripled - has found its way into creating jobs and decent accommodation. More than 50,000 Bahraini families are estimated to be on waiting lists for homes. Some families have been waiting for over 20 years to be housed, with several generations sharing the one roof, in cramped conditions with poor sanitation.... SEE PAGE 5

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For daring to host a panel forum including an Auschwitz survivor who is sharply critical of the policies of Israel, a Jewish hall in Toronto faces threats from the Canadian Jewish Congress.

INSIDE

5 A woman Communist MP

Believe it or not, in 1940 voters in North Battleford, Saskatchewan sent a Communist woman to Ottawa as their Member of Parliament.

12 Rebellious Egypt

In one of his latest "Reflections," former Cuban president Fidel Castro looks at the background and implications of the popular rebellion which finally toppled Egyptian dictator Hosni Mubarak..

Mohawk College fears about Finkelstein unfounded

A lecture by Dr. Norman Finkelstein planned for Hamilton on Feb. 19th took place without incident, despite the fact that Mohawk College had determined that eight police were required to “secure” the venue. Because of Mohawk College’s outrageous security charges - applied to the organizers, Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME) - after the booking was

signed and paid, the lecture was moved to a church in downtown Hamilton. Neither the church nor CJPME hired security for the event.

CJPME had argued that the \$1500 in security charges which Mohawk College had sought to levy were in breach of contract, and designed to force the cancellation of the booking. Since the event proceeded without a single disruption - in the absence of any security personnel - CJPME says its position seems justified.

CJPME hosted Finkelstein for a series of five events last week. Like the previous 17 events organized in the past several years by CJPME for Dr. Finkelstein, there were no attempts to disrupt the proceedings.

Dr. Finkelstein - the son of Holocaust survivors - has been critical of Israel’s assault on Gaza two winters ago and its 43-year occupation of Palestinian territories in his lectures and books. Mohawk College admitted to the media that they had been pressured by Jewish and other community groups to cancel the event.

CJPME has paid for security at other post-secondary educational institutions in the past, but never at a ratio of 8 police for 190 seats as demanded by Mohawk College, and never as a fee applied after the contract was finalized and paid. The group is considering its legal options in terms of suing the College. •



Unions rally for Steelworkers, pensions

On February 14 - Valentine’s Day - the labour movement took its message to Bay Street in downtown Toronto. The protesters demanded an end to the corporate attack on workers’ pensions, such as the U.S. Steel lockout of 900 Steelworkers in Hamilton. Among the speakers was Rod Sheppard, President of The Society of Energy Professionals. (PV photo by Ed Bil.)

People's Voice Fund Drive kicks off March 1: help us raise \$50,000!

Nothing good ever came easy, as the old saying goes. That has been true for every gain achieved by the working class over past centuries of organizing to win shorter hours, better pay, pensions, workers’ compensation, public education, or universal health care.

It’s the same story in the arena of ideas. From the moment the printing press was invented, right up to the birth of the Internet, the wealthy have had a powerful monopoly over the mass media... with occasional important exceptions. Today in Canada, with the exception of the CBC and some community broadcasters, the media is overwhelmingly owned by a handful of private companies, and these giants are swallowing up the competition. For example, between 1990 and 2005, corporate mergers and takeovers in Canada reduced the number of independently-owned daily newspapers from 17.3% of the total to a mere 1%.

Adjusting the zoom, we know that big transnationals dominate the world-wide news and entertainment business, exercising nearly total control over the flow of ideas, imposing their capitalist, right-wing analysis on every facet of the media.

Fortunately, the working class and its allies have always found ways to combat this attempted form of thought control. In one way, the labour press and radical publications like People’s Voice have an edge over the monopolies - we don’t have to invent lies to prop up the profit system. In our pages, readers find stories and facts which mesh with their own daily experience. We help clarify a confusing world and bring working people together, instead of muddying the waters to create divisions.

But don’t take our word for it. Check out the comments on this page by several well-known activists in a wide range of people’s movements. They value the role of People’s Voice as a source of progressive news and ideas, and we hope you agree.

If you think it’s important to have a Canada-wide newspaper which supports the locked-out Hamilton steelworkers, the movements to defend public education and health care, the people of Palestine, please be generous. If you value a working class press which celebrates International Women’s Day and May Day every year, please dig deep when you get your appeal letter in the mail.

You need us, and we certainly need you to help us raise \$50,000 yet again in 2011. With your help, we can keep our voice for a socialist future alive in the fight against the capitalist media giants!

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



Progressive activists urge support for People’s Voice Fund Drive

People’s Voice has been the only media to thoroughly and correctly cover many crucial issues, such as the plight of Colombian political prisoners, Canadian mining companies’ overseas abuses and the Mavi Marmara massacre. When such stories become too hot and contentious, Canadian mainstream media goes silent, while the PV carries on asking the tough questions.

- **Human rights activist Kevin Neish, Victoria, B.C.**

People’s Voice represents a significant current of working class and anti-capitalist struggles in Canada now spanning several generations. As neo-liberalism’s crisis corrodes democratic freedoms and social justice, such voices of continuity have never been more important.

- **Tim McCaskell, long time queer and anti-racist activist in Toronto**

People’s Voice is one of the few places I can find serious coverage of public education issues. It



Jane Bouey



Kevin Neish

doesn’t just cover the issues of the day - i.e. school closures - but provides an analytical framework to help the reader understand the “who, what, where, when, why and how” around the attack on public education. Please join me in supporting a paper that actually speaks out in defense of public education - donate generously to the PV Fund Drive.

- **Jane Bouey, Vancouver Board of Education trustee and social justice activist**

“Timely, Challenging and Necessary”! These are the words which come to mind when I look at the human rights coverage in the pages of People’s Voice. With more of the mainstream media being controlled by large corporations, I count on the PV to advocate for those whose voice would not make it to the pages of the Big Business press. Keep up your good work.

- **Domenic Bellissimo, Provincial Office, Ontario Secondary School**



Tim McCaskell

Teachers’ Federation, Human Rights, Executive Assistant

People’s Voice immediately recognised the power of film in bringing the workers’ struggles to a mass audience. They helped publicise CLiFF and bring the message to all Canadians!

Frank Saptel is the founder of the Canadian Labour International Film Festival (CLiFF), now in its third year



Frank Saptel

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"Never Again For Anyone", says panel

By Liz Rowley

"Never Again For Anyone" is the message of a 13-city tour across Canada by Auschwitz survivor Dr. Hajo C. Meyer. The tour included a Feb. 1 meeting at the Winchevsky Centre in Toronto, sponsored by American Muslims for Palestine, the International Jewish Anti-Zionist Network, and the Middle East Children's Alliance.

The United Jewish People's Order in Toronto was a local sponsor of the evening. An imminent snowstorm and threats from some pro-Zionist organizations did not deter the audience which filled the hall. A similar meeting was held the night before at the Friends House in Toronto.

On the platform with Dr. Meyer were Khaled Mouammar, President of the Canadian Arab Federation, and Lee Maracle, First Nations writer and advocate, whose early political awakening was in the battle against apartheid in South Africa.

Meyer eloquently talked of his childhood exile in Holland and his imprisonment in Auschwitz until it was liberated. "The victims were Jews, not Zionists" he declared, noting the difference between Zionism and Judaism. He outlined steps the Nazis used to dehumanize the Jews, and showed how today these same ideas are used to dehumanize Muslims.

Khaled Mouammar spoke about the Palestinian struggle to achieve statehood, and implementation of UN Resolutions 242 and others which explicitly call for creation of a Palestinian state. Lee Maracle spoke of First Nations' fight to survive centuries of genocidal policies by both Tory and Liberal governments in Canada, including denial of education, which she characterized as "slow genocide".

A lively question and answer period followed, and much appreciation was expressed to the UJPO by panelists and audience members. The event was the only one on the tour to be held in a Jewish hall. Everywhere else the panel had been black-balled by the powerful Zionist lobby.

The day before the meeting, the Toronto Section of the UJPO received a letter from the Canadian Jewish Congress (CJC) and the United Jewish Appeal (UJA), threatening to "sever ties" with the Winchevsky Centre (the building housing the UJPO'S offices, a school, and Yiddish cultural programs). Organizations housed in the centre receive grants and funding for their activities from the United Jewish Appeal.

Not surprisingly, UJPO members were shocked and angered by the letter, but refused to cancel the meeting. UJPO Toronto President Marsha Solnicki said later the meeting had been co-sponsored "to provide a space and a forum for discussion with people of varying political positions. We didn't feel this association would be anything more than an educational opportunity to hear a wide range of viewpoints. Now we are dealing with the aftermath, not only in our organization but also in the wider Jewish community and among the progressive left and Jewish communities."

"We have a proud 85-year history to draw on and a record of speaking out on issues where injustice and bigotry threaten our democratic and humanist values, no matter where they occur. These, we can be sure, are values shared by our membership," Solnicki said in a letter to members.

After the event, the CJC and UJA were sharply criticized in letters to the Canadian Jewish News, and responded by saying they were willing to discuss the matter. The UJPO responded favourably, but has heard nothing since.

Feeling the heat, the CJC has tried to justify its actions by quoting Dr. Meyer at the Feb. 1 meeting. In answer to a question posed by this writer about the strength and effectiveness of the anti-Zionist forces inside Israel, Meyer said "it (Zionism) has grown much more aggressive and much less human than in the years after the Second World War. So that means that it can very easily lead

to the destruction of Israel as a state from within. That is one of my hopes."

The CJC contends that Dr. Meyer is calling for Israel's destruction, and that the UJPO supports this position by virtue of hosting the event. But the UJPO does not call for the destruction of Israel. It does, however, call for a peaceful political solution and adherence to UN Resolution 242 and others which call for Israel to return to its pre-1967 borders; and for the establishment of a Palestinian state, including Palestinians' right to return.

David Abramowitz, President of the UJPO, said the CJC had expelled the UJPO in the 1950s, alleging its campaign against the rearmament of West Germany showed UJPO was under Soviet control. At the time, the UJPO was the largest CJC affiliate, and it had the support of the Jewish population who were also opposed to NATO'S drive to rearm West Germany. UJPO remained outside the CJC for almost 50 years before re-affiliating a decade ago. One long-time member said, "(the CJC) has been knocking us around for 40 years. What's new?"

In Hamilton, a Feb. 19 speech on Israel/Palestine issues by Dr. Norman Finkelstein was forced to relocate to Centenary United Church, after Zionists demanded that Mohawk College either cancel the meeting or give them equal time to speak. The College responded by slapping a \$1500 "security" fee



Auschwitz survivor Dr. Hajo C. Meyer

on top of the \$519 rent for a 190 seat meeting room. The fee put the rental out of reach of organizers (Canadians for Peace and Justice in the Middle East), and was apparently intended to create the climate of danger that was missing prior to the College President's assessment that eight security guards were deemed essential. Centenary United, a progressive church near McMaster University, did not hire security guards, and supports the rights to free speech and free assembly guaranteed under the Canadian Constitution.

Two years ago, the Ontario Legislature adopted a Conservative motion that equated criticism of Israel with a hate crime.

Today, the Harper Tories in Ottawa are virtually the only government in the world still willing to stand with the US and Israel.

What's clear from all of this is the intent of the Zionist lobby in Canada to suppress dialogue on issues in the Middle East, including any criticism of Israel's war on its neighbours and its own citizens. It is to the great credit of the UJPO and its members that after 85 years, they continue to stand firm against great pressure and pointed threats by the Zionist lobby, instead holding to their progressive and secular world outlook and their principles of anti-racism and social justice. The UJPO can hold its head high. History is on their side. ●

labour
voices

Lessons from Wisconsin

Commentary by James Clancy, National President, National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE), from www.nupge.ca

Question - what do the players of Super Bowl champs the Green Bay Packers have in common with Wisconsin's teachers, social workers, nurses and state employees? Answer - all are rising up in protest to the union-busting antics of Governor Scott Walker. Walker has recently earned the nickname "Hosni" for his announcement that he is planning to strip the state's public workers of collective bargaining rights and slash their wages and health benefits. And if these folks have the temerity to oppose "Hosni" Walker's edicts he will call in the Wisconsin National Guard.

Unsurprisingly, this has raised the ire of more than a few people in the state. An unusual voice against the Governor has been many of the players of the publicly/fan owned Green Bay Packers. Players Brady Poppinga and Jason Spitz and former Packers Curtis Fuller, Chris Jacke, Charles Jordan, Bob Long and Steve Okoniewski have stated that: "in an unprecedented political attack Governor Walker is trying to take away their right to have a voice and bargain at work. The right to negotiate wages and benefits is a fundamental underpinning of our middle class... These public workers are Wisconsin's champions every single day and we urge the Governor and the State Legislature to not take away their rights."

But the Governor's attack shouldn't be a surprise to any of us. Indeed, the question has only been

when and which jurisdiction in North America would be first to take such heavy handed action. The private sector unions in Canada and the US have taken quite a beating over the past couple of decades. Sustained and prolonged attacks on these unions have seen significant decline in their size and influence. Many in government and business think that the time is ripe to turn their sights on the public sector unions.

Why? We will undoubtedly hear a lot of blather about debts and deficits as well as general crapping on how "cushy" public sector workers supposedly have it. But that is just a cover for the real reason.

Ultimately it is that the rich and powerful don't like people standing up to them. Unions remain one of the strongest vehicles for change in the world. Able to connect to large numbers of people and speak out without fear of seeing their funding cut. Strikes threaten their

beloved profits.

And unions speak out for everyone not just their members. We know that an injury to one is an injury to all! The labour movement represents workplace and grassroots democracy at its best!

Dictators know this when they ban unions. Workers know this when they face harassment and discrimination when trying to join them. Fundamentally that is why the rich and powerful hate us. It is also why we must continue to fight for our rights - our labour rights. It is for this reason that my union, the National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE), has been arguing that Labour Rights are Human Rights for decades now.

Will the Canadian government or one of our provinces take a measure as extreme as Wisconsin's "Hosni" Walker? I hope not. But, to be candid, I think some will if they think they can get away with it. That's why we must stand strong. Speak out. Mobilize. ●

MAY DAY 2011 GREETING ADS

To mark May Day 2011, People's Voice will print greetings from a wide range of labour and people's organizations in our May 1-15 issue, which will be distributed at events across Canada. The deadline for camera-ready ads will be April 22; if PV is preparing the layout, the deadline is April 20. Please check with us about the format if your ad is being sent electronically.

Ad rates (based on 5 column page):

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Two columns x 2 inches.....	\$45
Two columns x 3 inches.....	\$60
Two columns x 5 inches.....	\$90
Three columns x 4 inches.....	\$110
Two columns x 7 inches.....	\$140
Three columns x 7 inches.....	\$180

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

Niagara News Bulletin

By PV Niagara Bureau

* After yellow-shirted protesters from the **People's Healthcare Coalition** filled the seats at the Niagara Regional Headquarters, the Regional council reversed a previous vote and called for a public investigation into the cuts of local emergency-rooms in favour of a P3 (public-private-partnership) hospital further away from many of the region's towns. The Ontario health minister is still refusing to back down although several mayors have joined the call for an investigation.

* The DSBN (District School Board of Niagara) reversed its plan to make a new high-school exclusively for low-income students, condemned as "**apartheid education**" by one progressive MPP, but will instead make the new school for students who would be the first from their families to graduate from high school.

* Niagara residents have been told "not to worry if they hear gunfire" as the Canadian **military trains near public spaces** night and day, increasing the militarization of the area.

EDITORIALS

Tunis to Bahrain to Wisconsin....

Held just three months ago in South Africa, the annual meeting of the world's communist parties called the current global crisis "a particularly severe capitalist downturn." The Tshwane Declaration issued by that gathering pointed to the decline of US global hegemony, sharper attacks on political and social rights, and the escalation of popular resistance struggles.

The first weeks of 2011 have absolutely confirmed the Tshwane Declaration. The ruling class and their pundits exclaim that "nobody could have foreseen" the explosions of anger in the Arab world or in the streets of Wisconsin. But in fact, the only question was where and when the next uprising against the dictates of big capital would begin.

Outraged by the corruption of dictatorial cliques and "elected" politicians, and unable to feed their families, millions of desperate working people are in open revolt. The old rulers are either fleeing with their stolen riches, or turning the police and military on the people.

Any idea that this "year of revolutions" would bypass the "developed" capitalist countries is challenged by the massive rallies against the anti-union governor of Wisconsin, and by the stubborn resistance of the Hamilton steelworkers against U.S. Steel's lockout. In both cases, workers and their families and communities are proving that it is possible to unite and defend their hard-won pensions and social benefits from the predatory attacks of transnational capital.

Of course, there is no guarantee of victory for any of these struggles. But we reject the nay-sayers who look for every flaw to denigrate the emerging movements, even as working people sacrifice their lives to win a better future. We stand with their courageous struggles, which will ultimately open the doors to a world of peace, democracy, equality and socialism.

Odious events, scary implications

As calls for Bev Oda's dismissal get louder, one response hurled back by the Tories is the accusation of "sexism" among the opposition parties. There may be a grain of truth in this charge. After all, Tony Clement was the Minister responsible for the scandalous billion-dollar assault on civil liberties during the G20 summit, and also for the long-form census fiasco. Yet few demanded his resignation, perhaps reflecting a sexist double standard.

But the fact remains that Oda's resignation is long overdue for many reasons, starting with her eager support for the vicious attacks on women's equality programs by Harper's Tory minority in 2006. The minister is also notorious for racking up tens of thousands of dollars in limousine charges. Imagine the howls from the Tories if a Liberal was caught in such a spending outrage! But this elitist behaviour is simply shrugged off by Mr. Harper.

Now, Ms. Oda has admitted misleading Parliament about the Kairos affair. The efforts to deflect this scandal lead in a frightening direction. Essentially, the Tories are saying that the federal cabinet cannot be held responsible to the people of Canada through our elected MPs. The Oda affair is another move by Stephen Harper to place his office above the courts and Parliament, including refusals to submit to Supreme Court rulings, the rejection of majority votes in the House of Commons, the arbitrary decision to extend the military mission in Afghanistan, the recent secretive "perimeter" deal which sells out Canadian sovereignty, and much more.

Such systematic abuse of power further weakens democracy in this country. Even if Mr. Harper is defeated in the next election, his actions set ominous precedents for future prime ministers to simply ignore the will of Parliament and the voters. This dangerous trend must be reversed, starting with the resignation of cabinet ministers who lie to Parliament.

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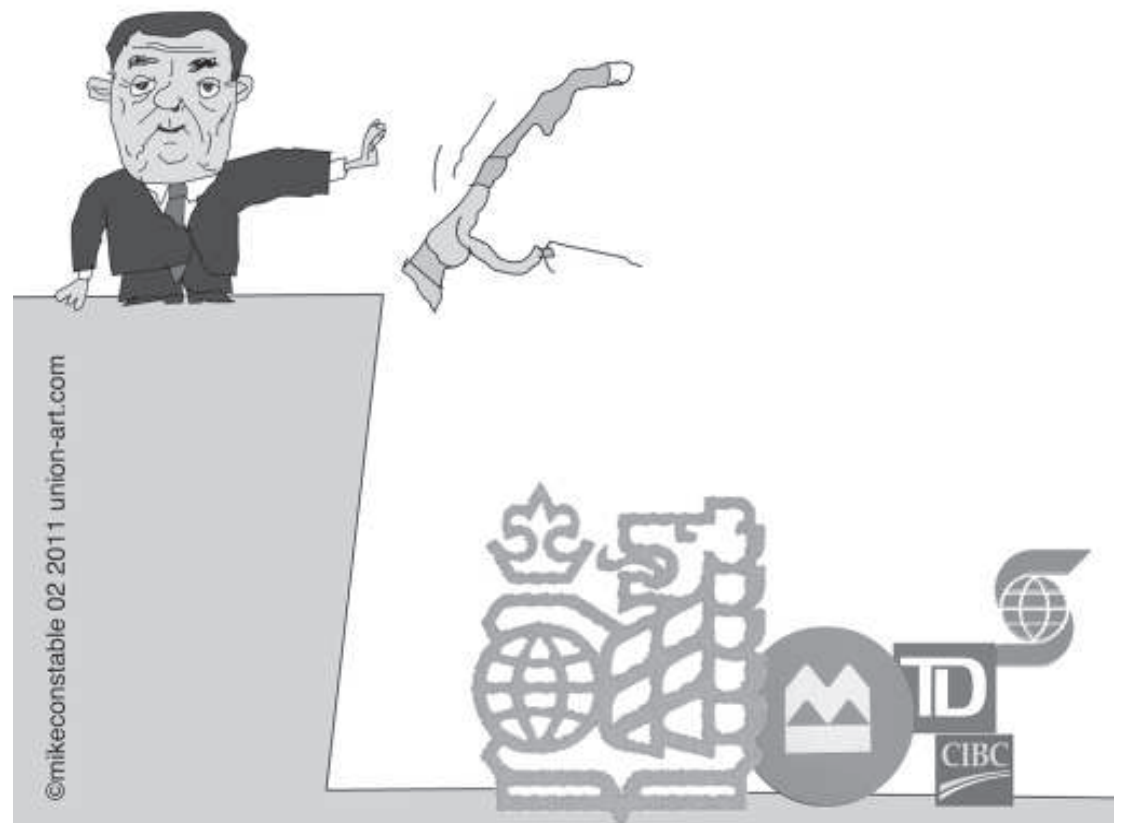
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LETTERS

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

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Flaherty throws pensioners to the lions



SPEAKING FRANKLY

Bahrain: The Social Roots of Revolt

By Finian Cunningham,
Global Research

Bahrain, Feb. 18, 2011 - "Have you ever seen an island with no beaches?" The question posed by the young Bahraini taxi man standing among thousands of chanting anti-government protesters seemed at first to be a bit off the wall. But his explanation soon got to the heart of the grievances that have brought tens of thousands of Bahrainis on to the streets - protests which have seen at least seven civilians killed amid scenes of excessive violence by state security forces. Unconfirmed reports put the death toll much higher.

Many Bahrainis, like the young taxi man, have witnessed huge wealth sloshing around their diminutive country of less than 600,000 indigenous people (perhaps another 300,000 are expatriates, official figures are vague). But so little of that wealth - especially in the last seven years of high oil prices when Bahrain's national revenue tripled - has found its way into creating jobs and decent accommodation. More than 50,000 Bahraini families are estimated to be on waiting lists for homes. Some families have been waiting for over 20 years to be housed, with several generations sharing the one roof, in cramped conditions with poor sanitation.

All the while, these people have come to feel like strangers in their own land, with their squalid conditions in inner-city areas and villages being in sharp contrast to the mega shopping malls and multi-storey buildings that have sprung up to attract US and European investors, financiers, companies and rich tourists.

The Gulf island's oil wealth has been channelled into diversifying the economy away from dependence on oil and gas revenues into other sectors such as property development and international banking. The self-styled kingdom, which is sandwiched less than 30 kilometers on either side between the oil and gas giants of Saudi Arabia and Qatar, has leveraged its hydrocarbon wealth to earn a reputation as a finance and trade hub in the Middle East on a par with

Dubai located further south along the Arabian Peninsula in the United Arab Emirates.

But that reputation for being a cutting-edge capitalist hub - Bahrain is the only country in the Gulf region to have signed a free trade agreement with the US - comes at a heavy social and ecological cost. And it's a cost that seems to have pushed a large section of the population too far, to the point where they are emulating the protests in Tunisia, Egypt and other parts of the Arab world to demand long-overdue democratic rights.

At the centre of Manama is the Pearl Monument, which alludes to the country's traditional pearl diving and fishing industries - industries that were the mainstay of communities.

Within view of the monument are the iconic skyscrapers of Bahrain's newfound wealth, including the Financial Harbour and the World Trade Center. Only a few years ago, this entire area of the capital was sea, the land having been reclaimed and developed. Up to 20 per cent of Bahrain's total land area has been reclaimed from the sea over the past three decades.

However, this vast reclamation and development drive has, according to local environmental groups, devastated the island's marine ecology and fish stocks in particular. The rampant development - which has made fortunes for the country's elite - has had an equally devastating effect on local communities who have depended on the sea for their livelihoods. While these communities have suffered the blight of unemployment and poverty, they also have witnessed roaring property development, land prices and profits benefiting the ruling elite.

These communities have watched their country's oil wealth being directed to serve elite interests with development plans that are geared to lure international capital. This has led to swathes of coastal areas being confiscated by members of the extended Al Khalifa royal family, to be earmarked for future reclamation and skyscraper development. That is how Bahrain has become something of a paradox - an island without any beaches.

And it is this lopsided, elite-orientated development that is fuelling deep social grievances among the masses, grievances that are now being directed at those elites. Further state repression against such protests can only amplify these grievances.

Bahrain's unstable social formation is underpinned by unwavering US diplomatic and military support. The island serves as the base for the US Fifth Fleet in the Persian Gulf. The latest wave of state repression has tellingly elicited only a subdued, ambivalent comment from Washington, urging "all sides to refrain from violence" - Washington-speak that translates into support for the government. Last year, Bahrain received \$19.5 million in US military aid, which, on a per capita basis, equates to greater than that delivered to Egypt.

Once again, another uprising against another US-designated "important ally" seems to be underway. And once again, the contradiction of elite rule and widespread poverty - all the more glaring in oil-rich countries - is ultimately undermining Washington's imperial designs. ●

Cunningham is a journalist and musician: www.myspace.com/finiancunninghammusic

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Dorise Nielsen: Canada's first Communist MP

By Kimball Cariou

A few years ago, one of Canada's pioneering radical women received long-overdue attention with the publication of Faith Johnston's biography, *A Great Restlessness: The Life and Politics of Dorise Nielsen*.

Born in 1902, Dorise Nielsen emigrated in 1927 from Britain to

the Meadow Lake area of northern Saskatchewan, where she married a homesteader and worked as a teacher. She eventually became immersed in the life of the community, and her progressive outlook became more radical during the Depression. Moving leftward, she joined the Communist Party of Canada in 1937, while continuing to work closely with the CCF which

she had initially joined in 1934.

Nielsen and other Communists and left-wing CCF members in Saskatchewan put the "popular front" concept into action, campaigning together for a wide range of progressive policies, from higher wheat prices to social programs for the rural population. This unity met with disapproval from the CCF leadership; the Meadow Lake CCF riding association was dissolved in 1939 because of its support for a popular front with the Communists.

Despite this opposition, Communists and CCF members continued to cooperate, and Nielsen was elected to Parliament from North Battleford in March 1940, as a "United Progressive" candidate. She was just the third Canadian woman elected to Parliament, and the first to hold office while still raising young children.

Nielsen arrived in Ottawa during a period of political repression, made more difficult by the complications of arranging for the care of three children. The Communist Party was banned in

**IWD...
1911 to
2011**

June 1940, and the Liberal government correctly suspected that she was a "Red." Maintaining contact with Montreal-based leaders of the Communist Party

who had escaped internment, Nielsen became a popular advocate for the party's views through her speeches in the House of Commons. She was widely known as a militant voice for women's equality and the interests of poor farm families.

When the Labour Progressive Party was formed as a legal party in 1943 by the Communists, Nielsen declared her affiliation with the LPP and was elected to its national executive. She was joined in the Commons by Fred Rose, elected as an LPP candidate in a byelection in the riding of Montreal-Cartier. (Rose defeated David Lewis, for the CCF leadership never forgave the Communists.)

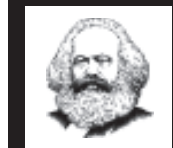
Nielsen ran for re-election in 1945, but placed third with 13% of the vote. She went to work for the LPP, drawing large crowds across Canada as a speaker on the issues which she had championed as an MP. As Faith

Johnston says, "she was a dazzling, charismatic speaker, and no one who heard her speak ever forgot." However, the rising Cold War attacks against Communists had a sharply negative impact on the LPP, which declined from its post-war peak of some 20,000 members.

In 1957, Nielsen left Canada for the People's Republic of China, where she lived until her death in 1980, working as an editor for the Foreign Languages Press in Beijing. ●



Dorise Nielsen's 1940 election campaign poster.



Marxist Theory

Women's Suffrage and the Working Class Struggle

At the time of the first International Women's Day rallies in 1911, before they won the right to vote, working class women were already building powerful organizations and struggles. At a women's rally in May 1912, in Stuttgart, Germany, Rosa Luxemburg spoke about the importance of the struggle for political equality. Here are some excerpts.

... You might think: even without equal political rights for women we have made enormous progress in educating and organizing women. Hence, women's suffrage is not urgently necessary. If you think so, you are deceived. The political and syndical awakening of the masses of the female proletariat during the last fifteen years has been magnificent. But it has been possible only because working women took a lively interest in the political and parliamentary struggles of their class in spite of being deprived of their rights...

Women's suffrage is the goal. But the mass movement to bring it about is not a job for women alone, but is a common class concern for women and men of the proletariat. Germany's present lack of rights for women is only one link in the chain of the reaction that shackles the people's lives. And it is closely connected with the other pillar of the reaction: the monarchy. In advanced capitalist, highly industrialized, twentieth-century Germany, in the age of electricity and airplanes, the absence of women's political rights is as much a reactionary remnant of the dead past as the reign by Divine Right

on the throne...

In truth, our state is interested in keeping the vote from working women and from them alone. It rightly fears they will threaten the traditional institutions of class rule, for instance militarism (of which no thinking proletarian woman can help being a deadly enemy), monarchy, the systematic robbery of duties and taxes on groceries, etc. Women's suffrage is a horror and abomination for the present capitalist state because behind it stand millions of women who would strengthen the enemy within, i.e., revolutionary Social Democracy.

If it were a matter of bourgeois ladies voting, the capitalist state could expect nothing but effective support for the reaction. Most of those bourgeois women who act like lionesses in the struggle against "male prerogatives" would trot like docile lambs in the camp of conservative and clerical reaction if they had suffrage. Indeed, they would certainly be a good deal more reactionary than the male part of their class. Aside from the few who have jobs or professions, the women of the bourgeoisie do not take part in social production. They are nothing but co-consumers of the surplus value their men extort from the proletariat. They are parasites of the parasites of the social body. And consumers are usually even more rabid and cruel in defending their "right" to a parasite's life than the direct agents of class rule and exploitation...

Today, millions of proletarian women create capitalist profit like men - in factories, workshops, on farms, in home industry, offices, stores. They are therefore productive in the strictest scientific sense of our present society. Every

day enlarges the hosts of women exploited by capitalism. Every new progress in industry or technology creates new places for women in the machinery of capitalist profiteering...

Considering all this, the proletarian woman's lack of political rights is a vile injustice, and the more so for being by now at least half a lie. After all, masses of women take an active part in political life. However, Social Democracy does not use the argument of "injustice." This is the basic difference between us and the earlier sentimental, utopian socialism. We do not depend on the justice of the ruling classes, but solely on the revolutionary power of the working masses and on the course of social development which prepares the ground for this power. Thus, injustice by itself is certainly not an argument with which to overthrow reactionary institutions. If, however, there is a feeling of injustice in large segments of society - says Friedrich Engels, the co-founder of scientific socialism - it is always a sure sign that the economic bases of the society have shifted considerably, that the present conditions contradict the march of development. The present forceful movement of millions of proletarian women who consider their lack of political rights a crying wrong is such an infallible sign, a sign that the social bases of the reigning system are rotten and that its days are numbered.

... The current mass struggle for women's political rights is only an expression and a part of the proletariat's general struggle for liberation. In this lies its strength and its future. Because of the female proletariat, general, equal, direct

suffrage for women would immensely advance and intensify the proletarian class struggle. This is why bourgeois society abhors and fears women's suffrage. And this is why we want and will achieve

it. Fighting for women's suffrage, we will also hasten the coming of the hour when the present society falls in ruins under the hammer strokes of the revolutionary proletariat. ●

NEEDED: affordable, quality, accessible, public, not-for-profit child care

By Johan Boyden and Marianne Breton Fontaine, Montreal

International Women's Day has always been an important event for young women, an occasion to celebrate past victories and focus on the struggles ahead.

The fight for accessible, affordable, universal, quality, public child care has especially been brought into focus for us, as young parents. Like other issues, it is clearly a gendered problem. But childcare is not only a women's issue, nor the only issue facing young women.

Consider violence against women, where it is young women are especially vulnerable, or young women's control over their bodies. On campuses, women's student organizations have made a bold effort to ban anti-choice groups that terrorize women students.

Body-pride campaigns have also pushed-back against the plague of stereotypes aggressively promoted by big corporations in their marketing, making young women feel disempowered and uninformed about their own person. Formerly taboo sexual education classes

have also made cracks in the wall of silence about healthy sexuality, but sex ed still suffers from cutbacks, and is often homophobic or trans-phobic.

One of the most basic class issues is pay equity. The CLC released a study a few years ago that showed the wage gap between young men and women, for the same work, had narrowed slightly. Not because young women were making more, but because young men were making less! Women still make about 73 cents on the dollar every man earns.

The issue of women's wages brings us back to the question of child care. Although we had already started thinking about childcare, our baby was born prematurely. Months later, as our world began to re-stabilize, we realized we had a problem. Marianne had to go back to school, maternity benefits were ending for both of us, and somebody we trusted had to look after our new baby boy.

Quebec has a \$7 a day childcare system that is internationally recognized, the product of many

see **CHILDCARE**, page 11

Women's Rights are Human Rights

This year, the 100th Anniversary of International Women's Day comes amidst inspiring new struggles for democratic rights in Tunisia, Egypt and other countries. Women have played key roles in the trade union, community, student and other grassroots organizing which sparked these popular uprisings, and in the powerful fightback against the attacks on public sector unions in Wisconsin.

Across the capitalist world, women are disproportionately paying the price for government bailouts of the banks and major corporations. Across Europe, women are active in the fightbacks against the neo-liberal cuts to social programs, public service lay-offs and massive raises in tuition.

In Canada, IWD 2011 comes amidst the intense battle over pension rights, such as the U.S. steel lockout of steelworkers in Hamilton. The attacks by corporations upon the hard won pensions of their workers, and by the government upon public pension plans, have the sharpest impact on women, given their lower average incomes, and higher rates of poverty.

This year's IWD follows a groundbreaking vote in the House of Commons, adding gender identity and gender expression as prohibited grounds for discrimination and harassment in both the Canadian Human Rights Code and the Criminal Code. While it still must pass the Senate, Bill C-384 is a major advance for human rights in Canada - particularly for trans women.

March 8 has always been a day to honour women's struggles, take stock of hard-won gains, and put forward demands to promote full equality.

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. Despite the growing numbers of women in Canada's workforce, their unequal economic status is reflected in a 30% "wage gap" and many other indicators.

Statistics Canada reports that in 2009, 58.3% of women - a total of 8.1 million - were employed, more than double the 1976 total. This includes 72.9% of women with children under 16 at home. Despite considerable strides since the 1970s, women are still less likely to be employed than men, with the exception of young women aged 15 to 24.

While about 73% of employed women worked full-time in 2009, another 27% worked fewer than 30 hours per week, more than double the 12% of men who work part-time. Nearly 7 out of 10 part-time workers are female, a total of 2.2 million women, a pattern which has changed little in recent decades. Low-paid women are increasingly compelled to hold more than one job. By 2009, about 56% of multiple job holders were

women.

Meanwhile, the percentage of women in unionized jobs has risen dramatically, from 22.3% in 1976, to 32.6% in 2009, while men's unionization has fallen from 39% to 30.3%. Women now make up a

International Women's Day 2011 Greetings from the Communist Party of Canada

majority of organized workers in Canada.

The majority of employed women (67% in 2009) still work in "traditional" sectors: teaching, nursing and related health occupations, clerical or administrative positions, or sales and service, compared with 31% of employed men.

Young women, and immigrant and aboriginal women, have higher unemployment rates.

The unequal economic status of women in Canada has been condemned internationally. High poverty levels and the lack of social assistance to women have been raised by virtually every United Nations body that reviews Canada's human rights performance, including the CEDAW Committee, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Human Rights Committee, and the Human Rights Council.

The fight for equality

Despite the claim that women have achieved "equality," they still face under-funding of emergency shelters and support services for victims of family violence. Economic and social conditions are shameful for Aboriginal women and girls, who are particularly vulnerable to racism and inequality, and hundreds of whom have been murdered or disappeared. The shameful decision by the Harper Tories to deny funding for the Sisters in Spirit program is yet another attempt to silence the voices of Aboriginal women.

Internationally, trillions of dollars are wasted on war instead of development efforts to provide

women and girls with education and economic opportunities, clean water, adequate 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 living downstream from Canada's tar sands, to those living in drought stricken sub-saharan Africa. Changing material conditions goes hand in hand with changing social attitudes. Today it is more obvious than ever that war is the most terrible crime against humanity. In many countries, from the Middle

East to Afghanistan to Congo to Colombia, wars increasingly target civilian populations. Women and children are casualties of bombardment from the air and atrocities on the ground, and the victims of public health catastrophes arising from the destruction of power plants, water supply systems and hospitals.

The Communist Party expresses our full solidarity for all women involved in the struggle for survival under difficult conditions. We demand that the state of Israel abandon its policy of territorial expansion, violence and economic strangulation of Palestinian communities, an apartheid policy which imposes terrible hardships upon the women of Gaza and the West Bank. The women of Haiti need our full solidarity following the tragic earthquake in that country; we reject the strategy of imperialist governments which have sent troops instead of medical personnel.

International Women's Day 2011 takes place in a time of ongoing economic crisis. Government and corporate reassurances of recovery are exposed as lay-offs, plant closures and attacks on pensions continue. The corporations, and the governments which serve them, are increasing economic disparity by cutting social programs and giving bailouts to wealthy shareholders and CEOs. Rather than pay for the crisis which their system created, the capitalists want to roll back workers' gains and set the stage for ever-deepening exploitation.

The demand for a country-wide child care system, a key issue in election after election, has again been abandoned by the minority

Harper government. Incredibly, pay equity is actually under attack, and even the opportunity for complaints through the courts is denied. The Tories ignore calls to improve the Employment Insurance system paid for by all workers. As the majority of part-time and minimum wage workers, women are disproportionately under-protected; only three women out of ten in the workforce are eligible to collect EI. Even those who meet the requirements can't survive on benefit rates set at 55% of their low previous earnings.

Needed: a working class response

The response to the economic crisis by working people, women and men, must be a massive campaign to build a People's Coalition for a genuine alternative to corporate greed. Such a campaign, led by the labour movement and its allies, should fight to restructure the economy, to provide sustainable jobs and to improve social services such as health, education and universal child care, to provide increased opportunities for women in the work force. To protect jobless workers and their families, EI payments must be set at 90% of previous earnings for the full duration of unemployment. Evictions and utility cutoffs against all families affected by unemployment must be banned. The labour movement must put much greater emphasis on organizing unorganized women, the most important way to combat poverty and income disparity.

But as long as capitalism continues, it will continue to generate poverty, inequality, exploitation, environmental degradation and war. These are not accidental side-effects, they are necessary ingredients of a system designed to maximize profit in private hands. Under capitalism, the women of the world face tremendous struggles to win new progress, or to hold on to gains already won. Every step forward will be threatened by the next economic downturn, and the danger of war is never absent. Only socialism, based on democratic, collective ownership and working class power, can permit the enormous creative and productive potential of the world's workers to be used constructively for human needs.

Communists have played a leading role since the inception of International Women's Day, which was unanimously adopted by a Socialist International women's conference in Copenhagen in 1910 and observed for the first time in 1911. The Communist Party of Canada salutes women who are struggling throughout the world for peace, justice and equality, whose full participation is essential for the success of all working class and democratic movements.

On IWD 2011, the Communist Party of Canada stands in solidarity with all those who struggle for peace, equality, democracy and social progress. A better world is both possible and necessary - the world of socialism, the only system which can guarantee full equality and a future for humanity! ●

IWD 2011 training and to

Huge pay gaps still

The gender pay gap still prevails in the latest Quarterly Wage Indicator report. A comparison of data collected in 23 countries shows results of nearly 190,000 questionnaires, which reveals a stubborn perception of equality despite the facts.

Overall, women earn between 54% and 85% of the same tasks. The gender pay gap remains a major force, where male officers can earn more than twice as much. By contrast, pay inequality is smaller in some countries where female workers even earn more than male counterparts, such as female managers, professionals and teachers. In most of their male peers' earnings. For lower-paid workers, the pay gap is "only" about 17 percent. In some occupations by contrast, the gender pay gap is much larger.

The Wage Indicator survey (www.wageindicator.org) shows a 4.5% increase in workers' perception of equality since 2009. In most of the 23 countries, more than 50% of women have reached equality. Overall, 45% of respondents consider that women and men have the same value.

Only in the Ukraine and the Russian Federation, only one in two women work in the same labour opportunities as men, the lowest in the survey. In most other countries, four out of ten agree that women are valued as men.

Human trafficking

At any given time, some 2.4 million people are victims of a modern form of slavery: human trafficking. Women and men across the globe are being bought and enslaved as forced labourers. A global industry worth an estimated \$32 billion, human trafficking is a crime in every country.

On January 18, the feature-length documentary *Not My Life* premiered in New York. Centered on human trafficking in Africa, Asia, Europe and North America, *Not My Life* brings the story of human trafficking from victims and politicians to imprisoned women. The film offers a unique insight into a world where lives have fallen prey.

The film brings a new level of exposure to the world of human trafficking. The director, Oscar-winning filmmaker Billie Liddell, says, "Not My Life probes the often unspeakable realities of human trafficking - multi-billion-dollar global industry that feeds the profits, as the film's narrative says, 'in the beds of our planet's youth'".

Inequality in agriculture

A new United Nations interagency report on rural employment and face new challenges. In many sectors, there is evidence that, globally, decent work for women in agriculture and infrastructure, women's care burden is likely to decrease," the report says.

The report also cites migration, the child labour as issues and trends affecting women's economic position include the disproportionate burden of unpaid work but overall larger work burden is unexplained, apparently due to gender inequality.

To overcome discrimination, women need equal, secure access to land and farmers' organizations. The report makes several key recommendations:

- *The enormous economic contribution of women to the burden of housework.
- *Public works programmes can support women's economic access to decent employment.
- *Promoting quality female education and training.
- *Non-traditional agricultural exports and labour standards.
- *Policy measures to address gender discrimination, safety nets; assistance to organizations and labour markets.

011: "Equal access to education, and science and technology: pathway to decent work for women"



All remain

round the world, according to the report, using a cross-occupation intries during 2009 and 2010. The es were incorporated in this study, hat women have achieved parity,

nd 86 per cent of men's wages, for aches its highest level in the armed ore than twice women's salaries. n clerical occupations, where some en. In highly qualified occupations, technicians get just 75-78 per cent r qualified occupations, the gender In middle and higher qualified pay gap widens to 35 percentage

.wageindicator.org) registered a n of equality in 2010 as compared ore men than women believe that all, three out of four respondents e same labour opportunities.

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sure to the crime of ar nominee Robert he dark, hidden and fficking and modern- l industries that earn ys, on the backs and

Culture sector

report on the gender dimension of agricultural work says women still benefit less than men from nges due to the current economic and food crises. The report, "Gender dimensions of agricultural pathways out of poverty," says that: "although gender inequality varies considerably across regions ally, women benefit less from rural employment, whether in self- or wage-employment, than men at "the recent financial and food crises have slowed down progress towards greater gender equity" rural and rural areas over the past few years. "With job losses and cuts in spending on social services lens and unpaid work have intensified, and their financial contribution to household food security "This is particularly dramatic for female-headed households".

feminization of rural activities, international trade, the diversification of the rural economy, and ing women employed in agricultural work. Some factors that push women into a disadvantaged ortionate employment of women in low-quality jobs, the gender gap in earnings, and fewer hours urdens. About 90% of the wage gap between men and women in developed or developing counties der discrimination.

en need access to education, training, credit, markets, technical assistance and labour protection. d and other assets, and "social capital", including the ability to participate equally with men in akes several recommendations:

of unpaid work must be recognized, and measures must be implemented to reduce and redistribute

ort gender equality in rural employment.

n rural areas and reducing gender gaps in primary and secondary schooling will improve women's

can generate quality employment for women and men, but women in particular are vulnerable to

fferences in rural employment should include legal reforms that promote gender equality; social s supporting farmers, women and youth; child care programmes; education; and better access to

Each year around the world, International Women's Day (IWD) is celebrated on March 8 and throughout the month to mark the economic, political and social achievements of women. Since the mid-1990s, the United Nations has put forward "themes" for IWD, which are often used to frame the activities organized in various countries. This year's UN theme is Equal access to education, training and science and technology: pathway to decent work for women. But as the various reports drawn from United Nations sources on this page indicate, women still face many challenges in the struggle to achieve full economic, social, political and cultural equality.

Congolese army accused of rapes

Soldiers allegedly raped at least 67 women over the New Year period in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), more than double the number originally thought. Separate investigations by the UN human rights office and the UN peacekeeping mission in DRC (MONUSCO) found that at least 35 women had been raped and 32 people wounded by soldiers serving with the Congolese national army, known as FARDC, in the town of Fizi in South Kivu province. Eleven people had also been arrested and 14 shops looted. FARDC commander Lieutenant-Colonel Kibibi Mutware, along with three majors and 11 soldiers, are currently detained, with their trials expected shortly.

Meanwhile, in the village of Bushani in North Kivu province, FARDC soldiers reportedly committed at least 32 rapes on the night of December 31. The victims include two pregnant women and a 16-year-old girl. Troops also arbitrarily arrested 12 people in Bushani, looted about 50 houses and submitted villagers to inhuman and degrading treatment.

Women & poverty

The United Nations reports that "More than 1 billion in the world today, the great majority of whom are women, live in unacceptable conditions of poverty, mostly in the developing countries. Poverty has various causes, including structural ones. Poverty is a complex, multidimensional problem, with origins in both the national and international domains." Seventy per cent of the developing world's 1.4 billion extremely poor people live in rural areas.

Girls exploited as child labourers

One million fewer children are working in Nepal than a decade ago, though more girls are toiling in dangerous conditions than boys, says a report documenting the country's sizeable population of child labourers. Nearly 24 percent of girls nationwide (or 911,000), compared to 17.5 percent of boys (or 688,000), perform work that qualifies them as labourers, according to an International Labour Organization (ILO) report.

Girls are 50 percent more likely to be involved in hazardous work - 373,000 girls, compared to 248,000 boys - exposing them to "significant" physical and psychological dangers, according to the study.

Madhav Pradhan, president of Child Workers in Nepal, a local child rights NGO, said traditional attitudes favour educating boys, who are seen as a family's future breadwinners.

There are 7.7 million children aged 5-17 in Nepal, of whom 1.6 million perform work that qualifies them as child labourers by international legal standards - one million fewer than in 1999.

A violent decade-long war between the state army and Maoist insurgents pushed rural families to send their children to the safety of urban areas where they subsequently worked to support themselves, but the practice has declined since fighting stopped in 2006, say observers.

While girls bear the brunt of labour, there has been a marked decline in 'kamlari', outlawed in 2006, where parents loan their children - usually girls from the Tharu caste - as indentured workers to pay off a family debt. Human rights groups have tried to discourage the practice by giving poor families grants, and the government has pledged financial assistance. Aggravating the problem is the fact that most children do not receive an education beyond primary school, and lax enforcement allows factories to employ many of them despite a legal ban.

Ending female genital mutilation

Over 6,000 communities have chosen to abandon the practice of female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C), according to a joint United Nations programme designed to eliminate this practice, and the number is growing. UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, and UNICEF, the United Nations Children's Fund, are partners in a joint effort to end FGM/C, a practice with serious immediate and long-term health effects and a clear violation of girls' and women's fundamental human rights.

"We are working in 12 out of 17 priority African countries and have seen real results. The years of hard work are paying off with FGM/C prevalence rates decreasing," says Nafissatou Diop, Coordinator of the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on FGM/C. "In Ethiopia, the prevalence rate has fallen from 80 per cent to 74 per cent, in Kenya from 32 per cent to 27 per cent, and in Egypt from 97 per cent to 91 per cent. But there is still a lot of work to do."

Three million girls face FGM/C every year in Africa, and worldwide, and up to 140 million women and girls have already undergone the practice.

The UNFPA-UNICEF joint programme, set up in 2008, encourages communities to collectively abandon FGM/C. It uses a culturally sensitive approach, including dialogue and social networking, leading to abandonment within one generation. The programme is anchored in human rights and involves all groups within a community, including religious leaders and young girls themselves. Rather than condemn FGM/C, it encourages collective abandonment to avoid alienating those that practice it and instead bring about their voluntary renunciation.

"Three years into the programme, more than 6,000 communities in Ethiopia, Egypt, Kenya, Senegal, Burkina Faso, the Gambia, Guinea and Somalia have already abandoned FGM/C," according to a joint statement by UNFPA and UNICEF.

The World Health Organization says that the removal or damage to healthy normal genital tissue interferes with the natural functioning of the body, and is associated with serious long-term and short-term risks and health consequences, including a birth complication which poses risk both to the mother and the child.



GLOBAL CLASS STRUGGLE

Women hotel workers defend minimum wage

Services, Industrial, Professional and Technical Union (SIPTU) members at the Davenport Hotel in Dublin mounted pickets on Feb. 17 after refusing to sign new contracts reducing their wages by almost 1 euro an hour. When Ireland's new National Minimum Wage legislation was being passed, Finance Minister Brian Lenihan promised existing employees that the former 8.65 euros/hr rate could not be reduced without their consent.

However, the five hotel workers, all women from Lithuania and Poland, had been told they must sign new contracts or lose their jobs. They were not given a copy of the new contract, either in English or in their own languages. The women have worked at the Davenport Hotel for between four and six years. They refused to sign the new contracts on Feb. 1, and were removed from the payroll.

The dispute has implications for over 300,000 workers affected by the new legislation and related rates of pay in the hotels, contract cleaning, security and other low pay sectors.

SIPTU Vice President Patricia King said; "These workers were brought to a series of meetings where they were told they must agree to accept a reduction in pay from 8.65 to 7.79 euros/hour to 'support the Government'. If they refused, they would be taken off the roster. The other workers, the vast majority of whom are migrant workers, signed the new contracts. Like the five women they were not given translations of the document or copies. I think it showed incredible courage by these women to take the stand they did. As far as I am aware, this is the first occasion on which the new law has been tested in the industrial relations arena. The stakes are very high... If these workers are effectively locked out of their jobs and penalised for seeking to defend their right to the 8.65 euro rate it will signal a new race to the bottom."

Back in the USSR...

The International Union of Food Workers (IUF) reports that employees at Moldova's Glodeni-Zahar sugar company have not been paid their wages and benefits since June 2009. Last November, the company filed for bankruptcy and operations ceased, unleashing a battle over 2,500 tons of warehoused sugar with a market value of some \$2.8 million which the workers view as the only guarantee of their wage arrears. A bankruptcy administrator has connived to illegally sell the sugar while the company remains in bankruptcy proceedings and creditors - including the workers - have not been paid. The workers are guarding the warehouse and have used trucks to prevent it from being looted. Criminal charges have been brought against five union leaders, who now face prison terms of 3 to 8 years.

Meanwhile, on Dec. 18 Nestle Russia announced the sale of its

Altai confectionary plant, located in Barnaul. Seven hundred workers are scheduled to be handed over to a new employer during the second quarter of 2011 without any guarantees and no prospect of negotiation with them or their union. Several Nestle Russia operations have been sold off to former Nestle managers, and trade union rights are thrown out with the trash in the process.

Strikes key to Egypt's uprising

One key factor that forced Hosni Mubarak out of office was the wave of strikes that erupted throughout the country. Workers in industry, banking, agriculture and the stock exchange stopped work, and many remained on strike days after the dictator's resignation. As the *Independent* newspaper (UK)



reported on Feb. 18, with less than 25% of Egypt's labour force unionised, and the official labour federation backing the regime, the massive mobilisation by workers was unexpected by those in power.

Two days into the January 25 uprising, the official union organisation announced that workers would not join the protests. But at the same time, police units were turning back busloads of workers from the textile plants at Mehalla, the Nile delta town north of Cairo, heading for Tahrir Square. In recent years, workers from Mehalla have developed a reputation for militancy. The April 6 Movement, which took the most prominent role in organising the events in Tahrir Square, took its name from a strike in 2008 by workers in Mehalla. A young civil engineer, Ahmed Maher, and a friend created a Facebook group to support those strikers. Out of this grew the near 100,000-strong Facebook community that morphed into the April 6 Movement that initiated the mass protest in Tahrir Square.

As the January 25 "police day" holiday dawned, a call for a general strike went out across Egypt's 29 governorates, and the economy began grinding to a halt. Worker delegates met to establish a new, independent Egyptian Federation for Independent Trade Unions (EFITU).

When the official union movement lost control, Mubarak announced a pay rise for all public sector workers, but this desperate act did not work. On January 31 the newly formed EFITU drew up a nine-point list of popular demands, including the right to work or to be compensated for unemployment, and a higher national minimum

wage. The unions also want guaranteed wage rises based on inflation, bonuses and "special compensation" for hazardous work, decent health care, housing and pensions, and training in new technologies and foreign languages.

By the time Mubarak stepped down, almost the entire labour force of more than 20 million was on strike and guarantees were being sought for a prompt move to free elections and the adoption of the EFITU demands. In a communiqué, the new federation noted: "Now that the republic of fear, despotism and corruption has fallen, it is incumbent upon us, we workers, to purge the country of the remnants of the regime and its servants... These people should pay the price of their crimes against workers. We will not remain silent regarding those who stole workers' money, who facilitated and profited from the sell-off (of) the public sector. We will pursue them through all legal means."

Georgian miners win pay hike

Effective March 1, some 200 transport workers at the Tkibuli-Mindeli coal mines in Imerti region, Georgia, will receive between 20-40% salary increases, depending on job classification, thanks to a Feb. 1-2 strike by 600 members of the Metallurgical, Mining, and Chemical Workers' Trade Union. That strike, on the heels of a methane gas explosion that killed one miner and seriously injured four others, proved highly successful at 1,050-worker Sakhakhshiri, or Geo-Coal, with management immediately agreeing to recognise the union. Sakhakhshiri is owned by Georgian Investment Group (GIG), a diverse conglomerate controlled by Georgian politician Davit Bezhushvili.

On Feb. 20, the union and management, together with the President of the Georgian Trade Unions Confederation, Irakli Petriashvili, resumed talks on behalf of 650 underground miners over safety, pay, and other work terms.

Actions for union rights in Mexico

"Global Days of Action" were held around the world Feb. 14-19 in defence of trade union rights in Mexico. Jyrki Raina, General Secretary of the International Metalworkers' Federation (IMF), kicked off the campaign at the Australian Workers' Union National Conference on Feb. 15.

"The Mexican government must end its campaign of political persecution against independent and democratic unions," said Raina, speaking to over 500 unionists gathered in Queensland.

On Feb. 14, an international union delegation met with Mexico's Ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva, Gomez Camacho, to deliver the demands of the global campaign. Manfred Warda, International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Unions (ICEM) General Secretary, and Fernando

Lopes, Assistant General Secretary of the IMF, met with the Ambassador while a demonstration continued outside.

Rallies and meetings with Mexican Ambassadors were conducted in over 30 countries. The global actions coincide with the fifth anniversary of the deaths of 65 miners at the Pasta de Conchos mine disaster in Mexico on February 19, 2006. In Mexico itself, unions held a news conference on February 14 to kick off various actions across the country throughout the week to highlight the systematic abuse of trade union rights by the government.

Urgent social needs in Tunisia

Tunisia's main labour union has urged the government to begin talks immediately to tackle social problems which threaten to derail the country's democratic process.

"It is in the interest of the government to rapidly launch negotiations with the main union because the social situation is explosive," said Abid Briki on Feb. 10. Briki heads the General Union of Tunisian Workers (UGTT).

Interim president Foued Mebazaa had said on Feb. 9 he would shortly hold talks with UGTT, a key player in the popular revolt that toppled dictator Zine El Abidine Ali, did not specify a date.

Briki spoke after a woman set herself on fire when she was unable to obtain medication for her cancer-stricken husband. The attempted public suicide was a reminder of last December's self-immolation by a desperate young street vendor whose death triggered the nationwide revolt and inspired a similar uprising in Egypt. His death came

to symbolise the grievances of many against a corrupt leadership that failed to address poverty, rampant unemployment, surging costs and housing problems.

Briki urged the government to create permanent jobs for temporary workers, and to respond to a long-standing union demand to create an unemployment fund. While Tunisia's jobless rate is officially 14%, the percentage of graduates out of work is double that.

Transport workers walk out in SA

Transport workers in South Africa walked out in mid-February to fight for better pay and conditions in the road freight and logistics industry. The workers, represented by the South African Transport and Allied Workers' Union (Satawu), took strike action on Feb. 13 after the employers' association refused to meet demands made by the union during negotiations for 2010/2011.

Satawu's demands include an across the board wage increase of 20% over two years; a ban on labour brokers (temporary employment services); an increase in existing allowances and the introduction of new allowances; six months' maternity leave on full pay and four weeks' annual leave.

Zenzo Mahlangu, Satawu general secretary, commented: "The strike is taking the form of gatherings and marches in all provinces. We call on all workers in road freight and logistics, whether union members or not, to use this last resort to build a better life for all in the industry - for themselves and for generations to come."

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

Send me information on the Communist Party of Canada

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

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Venezuelan workers back Chavez government

By Juan Reardon,
Venezuelanalysis.com, Feb.
11, 2011 (abridged)

Nearly 10,000 workers marched in downtown Caracas on Feb. 10 to support the government's social policies and to push for further advances in worker's rights and working conditions.

Members of health, education, electricity, oil and other sectors marched to the National Assembly to demand, among other things, the signing into law of labour legislation which has been under discussion since 2003. National Assembly President, Fernando Soto Rojas, met with marchers personally to receive their written statement and demands.

"Never in the political history of this country has the working class had such possibilities for social inclusion," declared Wills Rangel, President of the United Federation of Oil Workers.

Since the start of the Bolivarian Revolution, Venezuelans have seen a five-fold increase in pensions, a large decrease in unemployment and one of the highest minimum wages in Latin America, according to *Correo del Orinoco Internacional*. As cited by Minister of Foreign Affairs Nicolas Maduro, 60% of the country's national budget is now spent on social services.

Pedro Rojas, Secretary General of Petroleum Workers' Union, described the purpose of the Feb. 10 march.

"The objective [of this march] is to support the revolutionary process and to dismantle the current international media campaign that says here in Venezuela worker's rights are violated," he said. "Quite the contrary, here in Venezuela working people have been guaranteed more inclusion, more opportunities than ever... in addition, more than 3,000 unions have been born in these 12 years of

revolution," he told teleSUR reporters during the march.

"Today we will present - as a 'Legislature of the People' - our support for the revolutionary parliamentarians who we count on," said Wilmer Nolasco, President of United Construction Industry Workers' Union (SUTIC). "We are convinced that they... will sign this [Organic Labour] Law, including in it our proposals and our solutions to the problems faced by all working people."

One of the proposals referred to by Nolasco is the removal of Article 125 from the Organic Labour Law currently under discussion, since it establishes "poverty-inducing" compensation for workers fired

without justification.

In addition, marchers called for all Venezuelans over the age of 80 to be guaranteed social security benefits, regardless of their contributions or lack thereof. Maduro confirmed that plans are underway for food tickets benefits to reach the elderly before May 1, 2011.

The most popular elements of the proposed labour law include abolishing the so-called "subcontracted worker" position, requiring employers - both public and private - to incorporate all workers as fixed, benefit-assured workers; reducing the legal workday from eight to six hours; allotting paid time for workers'

councils as well as political education; and the establishing of a national fund for worker stability that would include payments to thousands of workers denied their legal rights by former employers.

The governing United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) has hosted numerous discussions nationwide - in parks, plazas, schools and community centers - to secure greater popular participation in the development of the law.

Earlier in February, less than a thousand people responded to the opposition-aligned Venezuelan Workers' Federation (CTV) call to march against nationalizations by the Chavez government as well as what they called a "criminalization

of dissent." They received support from opposition student groups and the Democratic Unity Roundtable (MUD). The CTV has also received financial support from the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) and the US Agency for International Development (USAID), as well as the AFL-CIO.

During open air discussion of the pending labour law in Caracas's Plaza Bolivar, National Revolutionary Workers' Front (FNTR) representative Juan Carlos Lopez spoke of the CTV march. "To those [marchers], to those who sold out [privatized] the public sector, to that fifth column, we are here to affirm that we are the real working class," he said. ●

Blocking peace on the Korean Peninsula

By Sean Burton

The past year was certainly tense, due to confrontations between the forces of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK, North Korea) and the Republic of Korea (ROK, South Korea).

There have been repeated clashes between the navies of each country in the waters of the Yellow Sea. A North Korean vessel was badly damaged with unknown casualties late in 2009, and the South Korean vessel *Cheonan* sank in March 2010 in the same waters. Investigations into the latter by various countries have turned up conflicting results. South Korea and its allies say that it was attacked by a North Korean submarine, an act strongly denied by the DPRK. And then in November, the South-controlled island of Yeonpyeong was attacked by North Korean artillery, killing two marines, wounding several others and damaging numerous buildings.

The *Cheonan* and Yeonpyeong



The DPRK recognizes the Military Demarcation Line (an extension of the 1953 armistice line) as the border between the states. South Korea claims the Northern Limit Line drawn up by the US-dominated United Nations Command, denying the DPRK access to the 12-mile maritime boundary accepted by international law.

events have been reported in western news media completely out of context, as random, unexpected and irrational acts of a desperate North Korea. But the fact is that both incidents occurred in a contested area of water between North and South Korea, a "no-man's land" of sorts. More specifically, the DPRK recognizes a slightly more southern border, while the ROK recognizes a border that runs closer to the North Korean coast. Conflict in these waters, and indeed any Korean border incident, must be seen in the context of the state of war which has existed for sixty years.

Particularly vexing is that the ROK navy regularly conducts military exercises in this disputed area. In the case of Yeonpyeong, the South Koreans had numerous ships in the area, and were also performing an artillery drill, firing into waters claimed by the North. Korean People's Army forces contacted the South and demanded the firing cease. That was not forthcoming, and the North fired back a few hours later, leading to a South Korean response that may have killed several North Korean soldiers. Whether or not it was "excessive" of the North to target the island, Yeonpyeong nonetheless is a military base in a tense location.

Given all this tension, it was pleasant to hear that the DPRK proposed talks involving the defence ministers of both countries late in January, with the explicit purpose of putting forward its opinion on the Yeonpyeong attack and the *Cheonan*, as well as discussing the maritime border and South Korean/U.S. military exercises in the region. The DPRK has proposed such talks several

times, but Seoul rejected them on the grounds that the North was not "sincere". Given the frequency of the North Korean requests and their current insistence that dialogue be resumed, Seoul did not want to be seen as blocking inter-Korean relations.

It is therefore all the more disappointing that the preparatory meetings quickly fell apart. The South Korean delegation refused to budge on the agenda, insisting that no further measures could be discussed until the DPRK takes "responsible measures" with regard to the *Cheonan* and Yeonpyeong incidents. The DPRK sought to ensure discussion of the Northern Limit Line and joint South Korea-US military drills, as well as South Korea's resumption of psychological warfare on the DMZ. The Southern delegates would not allow such discussion until the North produced "satisfactory" results on the two incidents.

What the South considers "satisfactory" probably means the North taking full responsibility. But one can scarcely talk about either incident without bringing up the maritime border or the South's military exercises. Yet the South seems to think these related matters are separate issues, which goes well with the media reporting the events out of context. This will

make it easier for Seoul to shift blame back onto the North as solely responsible for ending the talks.

Speaking of psychological warfare, Seoul seems to be in no hurry to punish South Koreans who send anti-Kim Jong Il propaganda over the border. The DPRK's senior leader, marked his 69th birthday on February 16, and agitators describing themselves as North Korean human rights activists took to the border to send their propaganda. According to the *Hankyoreh* newspaper, the event was attended by South Korean national assembly members from the ruling Grand National Party - hardly an indication of sincere cooperation with the North.

Making matters worse, South Korean and U.S. forces will conduct their annual Key Resolve and Foal Eagle exercise at the end of February and early March. The exercise is designed to prepare for "total war" in Korea, with particular emphasis this year on intervening in North Korea in case of "regime change" or nuclear weapons proliferation. The drills involve nearly 13,000 U.S. and 200,000 South Korean troops.

The North has regularly condemned these massive drills as provocative dress rehearsals for an invasion. Conducted in a sensitive region, they are as much a statement to the "enemy" as a means of training. In recent years the drills include plans for dealing with "political instability" in Pyongyang or with a "hostage situation" in the North, practically building an invasion into the exercise.

Inter-Korean dialogue must resume immediately, in the interest of reducing border conflicts and improving relations. Long term peace will not be forthcoming if South Korea and its allies continue to marginalize the North and deny their own responsibility. The continued presence of a large U.S. force in the south, along with war exercises conducted in or near disputed territory, only serve to enhance tensions. ●

New strikes in Burma

SPECIAL TO PV - Two more workers' strikes are set to take place in Rangoon as calls for the legal formation of labour unions in Burma gather momentum. Despite a media blackout on the protests, the latest of which took place in early February at a major Rangoon brewery, unrest appears to have spread around Burma's former capital.

A strikers' group has been formed under the unofficial name of the Workers-Farmers Unity League (WFUL), which is under the leadership of UG Communist Party of Burma and is demanding that the government ease restrictions on the formation of trade unions.

Yee Yee Shein, a WFUL representative, said the group was demanding the government "set a minimum wage in accordance with today's commodity prices," and warned that the strikes will continue if the situation doesn't change. She also slammed the mass privatisation of Burmese industry in recent months and said that the strikes were down to the monopolisation of the country's economy by cronies of the ruling junta.

The military government has embarked on an aggressive auctioning of industry, with Burmese businesses the main beneficiaries. Most recently, Rangoon's electricity sector was sold to Htoo Trading Company, which is owned by junta crony, Tay Za.

A 2000-strong strike led by women at a garment factory in Rangoon last month was greeted by more than 40 riot police trucks, according to witnesses. Although the strike appeared to have ended in some success, with the government agreeing to increase wages, Yee Yee Shein said the promise was not met.

"We demanded 10,000 kyat (\$US10) pay raise and [employers] agreed to 5000 kyat (\$US5)," she said. "But at the end of the month, they cut money from our pay and we didn't get any more than before."

She said that around 500 people had staged a sit-in protest at the Lucky Shoe factory in Rangoon, while workers at a nearby garment factory had also gone on strike demanding higher wages.

REDS ON THE WEB

www.comunist-party.ca

www.peoplesvoice.ca

www.ycl-ljc.ca

www.solidnet.org

CPC-PCC
90

Fighting back during the "Dirty Thirties"

In our Feb. 15-28 issue, we examined the activities of the Trade Union Educational League (TUEL) during the 1920s. Our series of articles marking the 90th anniversary of the Communist Party continues with this look at the Workers' Unity League.

By the late 1920s, the efforts of the Communist-led TUEL to help unite Canadian workers faced enormous obstacles, forcing a major shift in strategy. Some historians claim this change was simply a tactic ordered by the Communist International. But in fact, the leaders of the Trades and Labour Congress and the All-Canadian Congress of Labour blocked the emergence of a united working class fightback. The TLC stubbornly refused to admit industrial unions, and the ACCL believed that the economic crisis made it nearly impossible to organize workers or win strikes.

As a result, the TUEL became the Workers' Unity League in January 1930, with a mandate to organize the unorganized and the unemployed into powerful industrial unions under rank and file control. Led by Tom McEwen, the WUL brought together industrial unions in the mining, clothing, lumber and textile industries, with an aggressive, militant approach towards the class struggle.

The WUL provided the leadership for the most important labour struggles of the early 1930s, including the strikes by miners in several communities and by furniture workers in Ontario.

While the TLC only admitted affiliates of the American Federation of Labour, and the ACCL was limited to Canadian unions, the WUL accepted "all wage workers, regardless of race, creed, colour, sex, craft or political affiliations." The WUL combined a strong central leadership, able to respond quickly to events across the country, with the maximum of membership involvement and democracy.

Although it never formally represented the majority of trade unionists in Canada, the WUL attracted significant support. Both the Lumber Workers Industrial Union of Canada and the Mine Workers Union of Canada broke with the ACCL in 1930 to join the WUL, as did the Industrial Union of Needle Trades Workers. In industries where no unions existed, such as furniture manufacturing, the WUL set up committees to organize the unorganized.

The first major test of the WUL came on Sept. 8, 1931, when 600 coal miners at Bienfait, Saskatchewan



Gravestone of Peter Markunas, Nick Nargan, and Julian Gryshko, three workers killed in Estevan. Despite attempts by the police to deface the headstone, labour activists regularly maintain the wording "Murdered by RCMP".

walked out against terrible conditions and pay cuts of 10 to 15 percent. The strike came just weeks after the arrest of Tim Buck and other top leaders of the Communist Party, including Tom McEwen. But when the miners asked for assistance, the MWUC quickly sent its president, Jim Sloan, Joe Forkin (later elected alderman in Winnipeg), former IWW organizer Sam Scarlett, John Stokaluk, and the famous Annie Buller.

On Sept. 17, the companies tried to open three mines with scab workers, only to be defeated by a mass picket line. The struggle continued, with Annie Buller speaking to a mass rally on Sept. 27. The next day, a peaceful parade of miners and their families in Estevan became the target of a police riot, with the RCMP murdering three workers and injuring fifty people. Several workers were charged, and Sam Scarlett and Annie Buller received lengthy jail sentences for "unlawful rioting."

While the miners did not achieve union recognition, they did win other key demands, proving that labour struggles could win gains despite the capitalist economic crisis.

Another important battle took place in Stratford, Ontario, where the Chesterfield Furniture Workers' Industrial Union struck against several companies. To support the bosses, the federal government sent in tanks and troops armed with machine guns to patrol the streets. But the unity of the workers and public opinion forced the companies and governments to concede defeat, and a pro-labour city council was elected in Stratford.

Other important strikes took place in Flin Flon, Manitoba, where several MWUC leaders were jailed, and in Corbin, B.C., where police used bulldozers to attack a picket line of miners and their families. On

the Vancouver waterfront, the WUL led a major struggle to organize dockworkers, culminating in the "Battle of Ballantyne Pier."

By 1935, the WUL had built up a membership of over 40,000. From 1933 to 1936, the WUL led 90 percent of the strikes across Canada, winning many of these struggles.

Perhaps the most significant event came in 1935, with the historic On to Ottawa Trek, organized by the Relief Camp Workers' Union. Formed by WUL organizers working in the infamous "slave labour camps" for unemployed single men set up by the Conservative government of R.B. "Iron Heel" Bennett, the RCWU called a B.C.-wide strike in April 1935. Thousands of relief camp workers headed to Vancouver, taking militant actions for several weeks to demand real work and better wages.

Finally the workers decided to travel to Ottawa, and on June 3, hundreds boarded freight trains heading through the mountains. Receiving huge support, the strikers were in Regina by mid-June. Frightened by the prospect of thousands of radical unemployed workers, the Tory government offered to negotiate with the RCWU, while secretly preparing to crush the Trek. On July 1, 1935, police and troops poured into Regina's Market Square, savagely beating Trekkers and local citizens gathered to hear speeches.

The vicious attack was a turning point of the Great Depression. Within months, the Bennett government was defeated at the polls, and the next several years saw a series of important victories for the working class movement.

But the sharpening class struggle, in Canada and around the world, called for another change in strategy. The rise of fascism in Europe was met with a growing demand for working class unity at all levels, from the workplace to the ballot box. This included the need to build unity against the bosses within the trade union movement. The successes of the WUL and its counterparts in the United States had helped create the conditions for much stronger efforts to organize industrial unions across the continent, overcoming the resistance of the old reformist, craft union leadership.

In an upcoming issue, we will look at the role of Communists in the drive to organize steel, auto, and other mass production industries. ●



Workers in Windsor rally in support of the On to Ottawa Trek.



MUSIC NOTES

By Wally Brooker

Faith Nolan & CUPE Freedom Singers

Singer, songwriter and activist Faith Nolan is well-known to readers of this newspaper. She's been inspiring working people across Canada for more than thirty years. Born in Halifax of African, Miqmaq and Irish heritage, she grew up in Toronto's Cabbagetown district. Her socialist, anti-racist and queer-positive message is delivered with a sharp wit and an engaging style that breaks down barriers between performer and audience. In recent years Nolan has been organizing labour choirs. The CUPE Freedom Singers has been performing with her at rallies, marches and forums in Southern Ontario. Here are some video clips of their exciting performance at a recent forum sponsored by the Greater Toronto Worker's Assembly: www.socialistproject.ca/leftstreamed/. For more info: www.faithnolan.org.

Sounds of the Arab revolution

Events in Tunisia and Egypt show once again that music can be a driving force in the struggle for social change. Historian Mark LeVine, in his 2008 book *Heavy Metal Islam*, described the rise of a dissident youth culture in the Arab world that has creatively adapted various forms of western pop music, including heavy metal and hip-hop, as a means of resisting repressive regimes. One example of this insurgent culture is Tunisian rapper Hamada Ben-Amor (El Général). During the protests he released an anti-regime video, "Mr. President, Your People Are Dying." He was subsequently arrested but soon released after much protest. Look for "El Général, the Voice of Tunisia" on YouTube.

Haiti's electoral farce

Popular Haitian musician Michel ("Sweet Mickey") Martelly is contesting right-wing candidate Mirlande Manigat in the March 20 presidential election runoff, following the ouster of President René Préval's designated successor, Jude Célestin. The dubious removal of Célestin was announced Feb. 3 by Haiti's Provisional Electoral Council, acting on the "expert advice" of the Organization of American States. "Sweet Mickey," billed as a "protest" candidate, has links to Haiti's elite, as well as to coup plotters and paramilitary death squads. The first round of voting on Nov. 28 resulted in a dismal 22% turnout. Haitians rightly abstained from a farce that excludes the largest party in the country, exiled President Aristide's Fanmi Lavalas. There is little chance that the results on March 20 will express the will of the people.

Harry Belafonte: "No more retreat"

In a Jan. 26 interview on Democracy Now, Harry Belafonte was asked to assess the presidency of Barack Obama. The occasion was the Sundance Film Festival, where "Sing Your Song," a new film about the 84-year old star's life received accolades. While Belafonte acknowledged that the election of Obama says something about "America's deeper resonance," he added that he was "dismayed" by the way the President has used his power. During the 2008 campaign, he said, Obama asked him "When are you and [fellow African-American activist] Cornell West going to cut me some slack?" His reply: "What makes you think we haven't?" Belafonte's advice to Obama supporters: "Any further retreat from bringing truth to power would be a disservice to this country." Read the interview at www.democracynow.org/.

Patti Smith's National Book Award

Patti Smith is the 2010 non-fiction recipient of the U.S. publishing industry's National Book Award. In *Just Kids*, the rock & roll poet and visual artist, now 64, writes of her working-class roots in small-town New Jersey, her emergence as an artist in the hothouse cultural atmosphere of New York City in the '70s, and her close relationship with celebrated photographer Robert Mapplethorpe (1946-1989). In 2002 Patti Smith became one of the first major artists to oppose the U.S. invasion of Iraq. She continues to be an outspoken anti-war activist, having recorded powerful songs about the 2006 Israeli massacres in Lebanon ("Qana"), the imprisonment of innocent Muslims at Guantanamo ("Without Chains"), and a tribute to murdered peace activist Rachel Corrie ("Peaceable Kingdom"). For more info: www.pattismith.net.

Leon Rosselson coming to Canada

Leon Rosselson, a prominent figure in British folk music since the early sixties, is planning a rare visit to Canada. Music lovers can catch him at the Vancouver Island Folk Festival (July 8-10) and the Vancouver Folk Festival (July 15-17). A Toronto concert in early August is also in the works. Rosselson's recent benefit CD for Medical Aid for Palestinians, *The Last Chance: Eight Songs on Israel/Palestine*, was reviewed in PV last September (read it at <http://wallybrooker.wordpress.com/category/reviews/>). "The Last Chance" was previously available in Canada only as an iTunes download. Now the hard copy of the CD, with Rosselson's insightful notes, can be purchased from Beit Zatoun in Toronto (www.beitzatoun.org). It will also be available during his tour. ●

Historic events in the Arab world

From remarks by Communist Party leader Miguel Figueroa, at a People's Voice forum in Toronto on the uprising in Egypt, Feb. 17, 2011

What we have been witnessing over the past weeks, first in Tunisia with the uprising against the Ben-Ali regime, and even more so in the mass popular mobilizations which succeeded in toppling the Hosni Mubarak regime, are truly historic and unprecedented. It would be profoundly wrong to underestimate not only its immediate and short-term effects throughout the Arab world - as we are already seeing in Bahrain, Yemen and elsewhere - but also its long-term impact. The 'genie' of mass democratic and revolutionary action is out of the bottle, and it will not be easily or quickly stuffed back, despite the feverish efforts of imperialism and its local ruling circles.

U.S. Imperialism, the Zionist state of Israel, and the constellation of client Arab despotic regimes have all been caught flatfooted by these rapidly unfolding events. Clearly, the CIA, Mossad, and the local intelligence services in Egypt and elsewhere failed to anticipate these mass upheavals, as some like James Petras have recently observed.

But it is more than that alone; it is a failure of the bourgeois worldview in general in an important sense - its static, metaphysical conception of social reality which views change as an anomaly rather than a constant; which overconfidently relies on the 'stability' of the oppressive state (and its courts, police and army), and which discounts the power of the masses when aroused.

It has been a genuinely mass revolt, with remarkably little manipulation form abroad, despite such claims from Mubarak and co. Some initially were suspicious about who was behind this mass movement, because of reports that organizers were using Facebook, Twitter and other social networking services to communicate and mobilize actions. This was not a colour revolution organized by imperialist agents like what was witnessed in Georgia, the Ukraine

and elsewhere in Eastern Europe in recent years.

It was primarily a secular uprising, and while followers of the Islamic faith and Coptic Christians were prominent in the street and in the strike movement, their demands were almost universally around democratic and class-based issues, not religious themes. In fact, the Islamic and Coptic Christian establishments, both of which have been closely tied to the Mubarak regime are among the big losers in the uprising. This of course also applies to religious-political organizations like the Muslim Brotherhood.

Clearly, the uprising across Egypt has been cross-class in nature - workers, professionals, small shop owners and business people, all were drawn into the streets in mass revolt, and while their respective class interests differ, they were united in their opposition to the repressive, corrupt and dictatorial Mubarak regime. Particularly significant was the fact that the front lines of the struggle were taken by the country's youth and students, and also by women. What we need to underline here has been the increasing role of the working class of Egypt, particularly after the first week of the mass protests. While the media cameras continued to be focussed on the crowds in Tahrir square, strikes began breaking out all over the country - in the chemical industry, in telecommunications offices, in textile plants, among canal workers, etc. There is a long historical background here, but the corrupt and collaborationist labour body - the General Trade Union Federation "ETUF" - has been pushed aside by the workers, and a new independent labour central, Federation of Egyptian Trade

Unions, has just been created.

So are we witnessing a revolution in the making, or just a popular revolt? I would argue that the uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt share many features of a classic revolutionary process - the masses are no longer prepared to live in the old way; the ruling class can no longer rule in the old way.

What is missing is the presence of the third ingredient in any revolutionary situation which best guarantees its success - that of an organized and politically advanced revolutionary vanguard. The relatively spontaneous nature of the uprising and the relative absence of a vanguard organization, especially one based on Marxism-Leninism - is without a doubt an 'Achilles heel', if you will, of the process.

But we are in only the opening acts of this unfolding process - an unfinished revolution. It is true that while the regime has been pulled down, the state, while wobbly, is still in place. And the U.S.-sponsored generals and army brass which controls the interim Military Council want nothing less than to snuff out the embers of revolution and restore 'stability'. But it is an open question whether or not they will succeed.

No one has a crystal ball here, but my personal view is that the confidence and maturity of the masses of the Egyptian people has grown tremendously over these past three weeks. They have shed their fear, and felt the strength of united action. The revolutionary genie is out of the bottle, and with the people's vigilance and perseverance, and with our solidarity, it will continue to grow and develop into a full-blown national democratic, anti-imperialist and ultimately socialist alternative. ●

What's Left

Vancouver, BC

COPE Winter Gala, Sat., Feb. 26, 7 pm, COPE Masquerade ball at Museum of Vancouver, 1100 Chestnut St. Hosted by comedian Charles Demers, west coast food, live music & more. Tickets \$70 (student/youth \$40, low-income tickets available), for tickets tel. 604-255-0400.

Left Film Night, "GARBAGE DREAMS," documentary on Cairo's garbage recycling community, Sun., Feb. 27, 7 pm, Centre for Socialist Education, 706 Clark. Admission free, donations welcome, call 604-255-2041 for details.

March Against Racism, Sunday, March 20, 2 pm, from Waterfront Skytrain (601 W. Cordova), 604-715-6990 for info.

Pasta Dinner for People's Voice, 6 pm, Sunday, March 27, tickets \$12, followed by Left Film Night at 7 pm, 706 Clark Drive. For info, call 604-255-2041.

Winnipeg, MB

Assembly to protect pensions - expand CPP, Wed., Mar 2, 7-9:30 pm. Speaker Paul Moist, CUPE. Plumbers and Pipefitters Hall, 34 Higgins. Info 942-0522.

Toronto, ON

National Child Care Now!, flash mob & rally, Tue., March 8, 3:30 pm, Yonge & Dundas. For info, email nationalchildcarenow@gmail.com.

Global Crisis, Fiscal Restraint and Public-Private Partnerships, 2011 Clarke Memorial Lecture with John Loxley. 7 pm, Thur., March 10, Ryerson University, Oakham Lounge, 2nd floor, 63 Gould St. Co-sponsored by Ryerson CUPE Locals, Ontario Council of Hospital Unions/ CUPE. Info: Bryan Evans at 416-979-5000 x4199.

Ottawa, ON

Feminism: The Other "F" Word, Tue., March 8, 12:30 pm, panel followed by "World Café", Univ. of Ottawa, Desmarais Building, Rm 3120, organized by Amethyst Women's Addiction Centre.

Montreal, QC

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

IWD EVENTS

BURNABY - March 8, 7.30-9.30 am, IWD breakfast sponsored by BC Federation of Labour, at Firefighters' Banquet Hall, order tickets at 604-430-1421.

FREDERICTON - March 6, 12:30-2:30, IWD Potluck and information sharing, 811 Charlotte St., co-hosted by NB Coalition for Pay Equity and Fredericton Peace Coalition.

HAMILTON - March 8, 9 am-4 pm, conference for CAW Local 555 sisters on women's issues and the prospects ahead, Hamilton Convention Centre, CAW Local 555.

KINGSTON - March 6, 11 am-5 pm, IWD Fair at City Hall 2nd floor, International Women's

Week Organizing Committee.

NIAGARA FALLS - March 6, 1-6 pm, IWD Festival at the Greg Frewin Theatre, in support of Gillian's Place and Women's Place of South Niagara.

NORTH VANCOUVER - March 12, 7 pm, Crimson Cabaret at Centennial Theatre, to support North Shore Women's Centre, tickets from 604-984-6009.

PRINCE GEORGE - March 5, 8 pm, IWD Masquerade Dance, at the Twisted Cork (1157-5th Ave.) tickets \$15 at Books and Company, fundraiser sponsored by Prism North Film Society.

REGINA - March 4, 9 pm, viewing of *Women's Rights: Raising the Glass Ceiling*, presentation and multi-generational panel, Language Institute Theatre (L1 129), U of R. For info call 757-4669, U of R Women's Centre.

SASKATOON - March 6, 1-4 pm, Strong Women, Strong World., celebrate the contributions of Aboriginal women in Saskatchewan, and march to bring awareness to exploited and missing Aboriginal women, Oskayak High School, Univ. of Saskatchewan.

ST. CATHARINES, ON - March 8, 6.30-9 pm, A Night of Laughs with the Women's Committee CAW Local 199, tickets \$25 (includes dinner), at House of Comedy.

SUDBURY - March 6, 1-4 pm, IWD celebration hosted by Sudbury & District Labour Council, Howard Johnson Hotel, 50 Brady Street.

TORONTO - March 3, 7-10 pm, Live Music night at Toronto Women's Bookstore, \$5, tel. 416-922-8744; 73 Harbord St.

- March 12, IWD rally starts 11 am, OISE Auditorium, 252 Bloor West, march 1 pm to Info Fair at Ryerson Student Centre, 55 Gould St.

VANCOUVER - March 3, 6-10 pm, dinner with presentation on the history of IWD and women in the trade union movement, music by Solidarity Sisters, bhanga dancing, Fraserview Hall (8240 Fraser), VDLC Women's Committee.

- March 5, gather 12:30 at McSpadden Park (Victoria & 4th), march 1 pm along Commercial Dr., to IWD Festival at WISE Hall (1882 Adanac), 2-4:30 pm, www.iwdvancouver.ca.

VICTORIA, BC - March 8, Noon-1 pm, Happy 100th Birthday IWD with Raging Grannies, corner of Fort and Douglas Streets.

WINNIPEG - March 8, speakers 4:30 at Union Centre (Smith & Broadway), march 5:30 to community feast and events at U of Winnipeg, info 786-9921.

- March 8, IWD celebration, Ramada Marlborough Hotel, 8th fl. Dinner & awards. Cash bar 6 pm, dinner 7 pm. Tickets \$50, Grassroots Women 770-1767, grassrootswomenmb@gmail.com

YELLOWKNIFE - March 7-9, Celebrating Northern women conference to eliminate gender inequality, Explorer Hotel, organized by Status of Women Council of the NWT.

People's Voice deadlines:

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Childcare an election issue....

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years of struggle, but \$7 a day still adds up fast. In other parts of Canada, parents have to pay \$30 to \$60 a day. This is out of reach of most young families, not to mention single mums.

Affordable, accessible, quality, public, not-for-profit child care may seem like a mouthful. But each demand makes sense. For us, the problem wasn't affordability, it was access. The waiting list that our little boy is on is very long. He will probably only find a placement when he reaches kindergarten age. Other options would have cost a lot more. If Marianne had returned to work to pay for day care at "market rates", her wages would have been eaten up by just the child care bill.

In the end, we get by (with the help of family and friends, adjusting life, bringing baby everywhere). Meanwhile, workers at child care centres are some of the lowest paid in the country, and they often are

not unionized. Only recently did Quebec childcare workers win the right to organize. Especially at the big places, management is pressured to cut corners to raise profits.

For decades, corporate politicians have promised action. Even Brian Mulroney had a better plan (though never implemented) than the current Tory tax credits. Hopes for a Canada-wide child care plan were dashed by the election of Harper in 2006. This fact itself shows the sexism

promoted by the system.

In our view, to eliminate sexism we need to overturn the basis of capitalist society, and win socialism. But public childcare would not be incompatible with capitalism. It would be a major victory, opening more possibilities for advancing a real people's agenda. Shortly after IWD we may be into a federal election. It will be another occasion to advance the issue of child care. ●



The Revolutionary Rebellion In Egypt

Reflections by Comrade Fidel Castro Rua, Feb. 13, 2011

Several days ago I said that Mubarak's fate was sealed and that not even Obama was able to save him.

The world knows about what is happening in the Middle East. News spreads at mind-boggling speed. Politicians barely have enough time to read the dispatches arriving hour after hour. Everyone is aware of the importance of what is happening over there.

After 18 days of tough struggle, the Egyptian people achieved an important objective: overthrowing the main United States ally in the heart of the Arab nations. Mubarak was oppressing and pillaging his own people, he was an enemy to the Palestinians and an accomplice of Israel, the sixth nuclear power on the planet, associated with the war-mongering NATO group.

The Armed Forces of Egypt,

under the command of Gamal Abdel Nasser, had thrown overboard a submissive King and created a Republic which, with the support of the USSR, defended its Homeland from the Franco-British and Israeli invasion of 1956 and preserved its ownership of the Suez Canal and the independence of its ancient nation.

For that reason, Egypt had a high degree of prestige in the Third World. Nasser was well-known as one of the most outstanding leaders of the Non-Aligned Movement, in whose creation he took part along with other well-known leaders of Asia, Africa and Oceania who were struggling for national liberation and for the political and economic independence of the former colonies.

Egypt always enjoyed the support and respect of that international organization which brings together more than 100

countries. At this precise time, that sister country is chairing NAM for a corresponding three-year period; and the support of many of its members for the struggle its people are engaged in today is a given.

What was the significance of the Camp David Agreements, and why do the heroic Palestinian people so arduously defend their most essential rights?

At Camp David, with the mediation of then-President of the United States Jimmy Carter, Egyptian leader Anwar el-Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menahem Begin signed the famous treaties between Egypt and Israel. It is said that secret talks went on for 12 days and on September 17, 1978, they signed two important treaties: one in reference to peace between Egypt and Israel; the other having to do with the creation of the autonomous territory in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank where, el-Sadat was thinking - and Israel was aware of and sharing the idea - the capital of the State of Palestine would be, and whose existence, as well as that of the State of Israel, was agreed to by the United Nations on November 29, 1947, in the British protectorate of Palestine.

At the end of arduous and complicated talks, Israel agreed to withdraw their troops from Egyptian territory in the Sinai, even though it categorically rejected Palestinian participation in those peace negotiations.

As a product of the first treaty, in the term of one year, Israel reinstated Sinai territory occupied during one of the Arab-Israeli wars back to Egypt.

By virtue of the second agreement, both parties committed to negotiate the creation of the autonomous regime in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The first of these included 5640 square kilometres of territory and 2.1 million inhabitants; and the second one, 360 square kilometres and 1.5 million inhabitants.

The Arab countries were offended by that treaty where, in their opinion, Egypt had not defended with sufficient energy

and resolution a Palestinian State whose right to exist had been the focal point of the battle fought for decades by the Arab States.

Their reactions reached such a level of indignation that many broke off their relations with Egypt. Thus,



the United Nations Resolution of November 1947 was erased from the map. The autonomous body was never created and thus the Palestinians were deprived of their right to exist as an independent state; that is the origin of the never-ending tragedy they are living in and which should have been resolved more than three decades ago.

The Arab population of Palestine are victims of genocidal actions; their lands are confiscated or deprived of water supplies in the semi-desert areas and their homes are destroyed with heavy wrecking equipment. In the Gaza Strip a million and a half people are regularly being

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attacked with explosive projectiles, live phosphorus and booby-trap bombs. The Gaza Strip lands are being blockaded by land and by sea. Why are the Camp David agreements being talked about to such a degree while nobody mentions Palestine?

The United States is supplying the most modern and sophisticated weaponry to Israel to the tune of billions of dollars every year. Egypt, an Arab country, was turned into the second receiver of US weapons. To fight against whom? Another Arab country? Against the very Egyptian people?

When the population was asking for respect for their most basic rights and the resignation of a president whose policy consisted of exploiting and pillaging his own people, the repressive forces trained by the US did not hesitate for a second in shooting at them, killing hundreds and wounding thousands.

When the Egyptian people were awaiting explanations from the government of their own country, the answers were coming from senior officials of U.S. intelligence or government bodies, without any respect for Egyptian officials.

Could it possibly be that the leaders of the United States and their intelligence agencies knew nothing at all about the colossal thefts perpetrated by the Mubarak

government?

Before the people were to protest en masse from Tahrir Square, neither the government officials nor the United States intelligence bodies were uttering one single word about the privileges and outrageous thefts of billions of dollars.

It would be a mistake to imagine that the people's revolutionary movement in Egypt theoretically obeys a reaction to violations on their most elementary rights. Peoples do not defy repression and death, nor do they remain for nights on end protesting energetically, just because of merely formal matters. They do this when their legal and material rights are being mercilessly sacrificed to the insatiable demands of corrupt politicians and the national and international circles looting the country.

The poverty rate was now affecting the vast majority of a militant people, young and patriotic, with their dignity, culture and beliefs being trampled.

How was the unstoppable increase of food prices to be reconciled with the dozens of billions of dollars that were being attributed to President Mubarak and to the privileged sectors of the government and society? It's not enough now that we find out how much these come to; we must demand they be returned to the country...

Despite what is happening in Egypt, one of the most serious problems being faced by imperialism at this time is the lack of grain as I analyzed in my Reflection on January 19th.

The US uses an important part of the corn it grows and a large percentage of the soy harvest for the production of biofuels. As for Europe, it uses millions of hectares of land for that purpose.

On the other hand, as a consequence of the climate change originated basically by the developed and wealthy countries, a shortage of fresh water and foods compatible with population growth at a pace that would lead to 9 billion inhabitants in a mere 30 years is being created, without the United Nations and the most influential governments on the planet, after the disappointing meeting at Copenhagen and Cancun warning and informing the world about that situation.

We support the Egyptian people and their courageous struggle for their political rights and social justice.

We are not opposed to the people of Israel; we are against the genocide of the Palestinian people and we are for their right to an independent State.

We are not in favour of war, but in favour of peace among all the peoples. ●



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