



Support the March 14 Day of Action: Page 2

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people's VOICE



Across Canada, the demand is growing:

STOP BILL C-51!

Voices of resistance - pages 7 & 10

IWD 2015: Women say "NO" to war and repression

... see Open Letter, page 4



International Women's Day march in Toronto, photo by Ed Bil

3

"Yes" on transit vote

Trade unions, environmentalists, students, and others including the Communist Party of BC are urging a "yes" vote in the Metro Vancouver referendum on transportation and transit, which runs March 16- May 29.

INSIDE

5

Venezuela solidarity

Big questions are being raised about Canada's role in the foiled coup attempt against the elected government of President Maduro.

6

Labour (in)Action?

Behind closed doors, the U.S. Canada, the European Union and Pacific Rim countries are hammering new "free trade" corporate deals. But the U.S. labour movement has been slow to mobilize opposition.

"All out for anti-C51 rallies"

Even before Bill C-51 was tabled in Parliament, the Communist Party of Canada was preparing to oppose the Harper government's latest attack on civil liberties. CPC members across the country have been in the streets in recent weeks, working to raise public awareness

of this anti-democratic legislation. The Central Executive of the CPC has sent an urgent letter to all Party organizations and members, saying "As you are well aware, the struggle against the Harper government's viciously anti-democratic 'Anti-Terrorism Act,

2015' (Bill C-51) continues to grow across the country. Our Party was among the very first to condemn this legislation when it was introduced, but since then unions, Aboriginal organizations, civil liberties and environmental organizations, legal experts and even four former Prime Ministers, have raised their voices in opposition.

"In Parliament, Elizabeth May and the Green Party have come out strongly against the Bill, and the NDP caucus - after a lengthy delay - have now also come out against the legislation. The Liberals and Bloc Québécois, on the other hand, have lent support to C-51, reflecting their parties' crass electoral opportunism.

"In any case, the Tories' majority position in both the Commons and the Senate will likely ensure the bill's swift passage through the Committee stage, Third Reading, and Royal Consent.

"This however does not mean that C-51 is unstoppable. Harper

and his minions are well aware that with each passing day, opposition is growing outside of Parliament. This is why the government is so intent in limiting Committee study and debate on the legislation. Indeed, the Conservatives may yet be forced to retreat on C-51 if sufficient mass opposition can be generated, and the resulting 'political price' for its passage becomes too high.

"We should be clear that C-51 is not just a partisan electoral ploy of the Harper Conservatives; it is part of a larger agenda to strengthen the repressive apparatus of an authoritarian, "national security" state, to intimidate and stifle labour and democratic struggle, and to shift the political ballast of the country sharply to the Right. It is absolutely crucial therefore that

we concentrate all of our political, ideological and organizational efforts at building popular opposition to this dangerous legislation now, and over the coming weeks."

The letter urges all Communist Party organizations and members to give full support to the March 14 Day of Action against Bill C-51. Initiated by Open Media, Leadnow, the BC Government and Service Employees Union and other groups, the Day of Action will include dozens of demonstrations large and small across the country.

As the letter says, "This National Day of Action is endorsed by a broad sweep of groups and organizations, and we should do everything possible to help build and participate in local actions on this day."



Members of the Communist Party and YCL were at Broadway Station in Vancouver on March 7, collecting 120 signatures on the People's Voice petition against Bill C-51. Photo: Roberto Diaz

The Communist Party's "Stop C-51!" website:
<http://communist-party.ca/stopc51>

A People's Voice petition against Bill C-51 can be signed online at
<http://stopc51.tumblr.com/>.

See page 11 for information on Bill C-51 speaking tours

PV readers agree: "we will not be silenced by Bill C-51"

This year's People's Voice Press Fund Drive is off to a great start, in spite of - or perhaps because of! - the huge political struggle to block Bill C-51, the police state legislation which could open the way to repress opposition voices labelled as "pro-terrorist".

Anyone who thinks this concern is exaggerated should take a look back at Canadian history. Here's just one example. In September 1939, the Liberal government of Mackenzie King used the declaration of war against Nazi Germany as the pretext to invoke the War Measures Act, which had originally been adopted during World War One. Under this legislation, the government enacted dozens of "Defence of Canada Regulations," replacing constitutional and democratic rights with a form of Cabinet dictatorship. Far from being used to defend the country against fascist threats, these Regulations were unleashed against left-wing, radical and trade union movements. In November of that year, the *Clarion* and *Clarté* newspapers (predecessors of today's *People's Voice* and *Clarté* in Québec) were officially banned. In response, a

new publication was soon launched, the *Canadian Tribune*, as a "journal of democratic opinion". But the Canadian Civil Liberties Union reported that 64 people had been arrested under the War Measures Act by February 1940.

Then on June 6, 1940, sixteen organizations were banned: the Communist Party, the YCL, the Canadian Labour Defence League, the Finnish Organization of Canada, the Ukrainian Labour-Farmer Temple Association, and others. Some of the halls belonging to these groups were seized and sold to ultra-right groups. Over 250 Communists were interned in this wave of repression, which continued long after Hitler's attack on the USSR decisively altered the character of the war. The racist treatment of Canadians of Japanese descent was even more appalling; starting in December 1941, 27,000 were rounded up and sent to internment camps, and their assets confiscated.

In other words, yes, it could happen here again. Today, the federal government has declared that Canada is at war, and various categories of people are regularly

singled out as enemies: Indigenous land defenders, Muslims, trade unionists, opponents of tar sands extraction and exports, supporters of the Boycott, Disinvestment and Sanctions campaign against Israeli apartheid. Chillingly, Bill C-51 targets all those who engage in "activity that undermines the security of Canada" or "the economic or financial security of Canada," or who "promote terrorism in general". Of course, the federal government and CSIS could easily make such accusations against media critics, including People's Voice, which openly supports Aboriginal rights, trade unions, anti-war movements, protests against pipeline expansion, and the BDS campaign.

When we launched our 2015 Fund Drive, we were confident that our subscribers would agree that it's crucial to keep People's Voice publishing. The results during the first week confirm this prediction. **As of March 9, we have raised \$9,976 towards our \$50,000 target, including \$4306 from Ontario, \$4320 from B.C., \$1050 from Alberta, \$300 from Nova Scotia, with more now arriving in the mail every day.**

It's a great start, but we have a long way to go. We're printing thousands of extra copies to distribute at the March 14th Day of Action Against C-51 events across the country, but like all our efforts, that costs money. We appeal to all readers to respond quickly to the mail appeal sent out at the end of February. Subscribers will be notified about a range of upcoming events to promote People's Voice and the fight to block C-51. On March 28, our editor, Kimball Cariou, will speak at a public event in Toronto, and this crucial free speech fight will be highlighted at our annual PV Victory Banquet, which takes place on Saturday, May 2, at the Victoria Drive Community Hall in Vancouver. We look forward to seeing you!



Toronto:

Dinner and Evening with Kimball Cariou, People's Voice Editor

Live Music, Food, Cash Bar

Sat., March 28, 7 pm

290 Danforth Avenue (near Chester Subway)

\$10 at the door

For information, call PV Ontario Bureau 416-469-2446

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I am a man and all that affects mankind concerns me

Indo Canadian Workers Association

Shaheed Bhagat Singh, Rajguru & Sukhdev

MARTYRDOM DAY CELEBRATION

on Sunday, March 29th, 2015 @ 2:00 PM

at Lester B. Pearson Theater 150 Central Park Dr. Brampton

Tickets \$6 (kids under 10 free). For information, contact Surinder Sandhu (416-721-9671)

Vote "Yes" in transportation and transit referendum

Statement by the Communist Party of BC

Starting on March 16, residents of the Metro Vancouver region in British Columbia will face what some might call a "Hobson's Choice" dilemma. That is the date when the mail-in referendum/plebiscite on the Metro Vancouver Transportation and Transit Plan begins, and runs until May 29. Voters will decide whether to approve a 0.5% regional increase in the provincial sales tax, in order to finance badly needed improvements to public and commuter transit systems and alternative transportation options.

Voters face two choices: 1) Vote Yes to the tax increase, to provide funds for transit improvements, or 2) Vote No, and continue to see our transit degraded and traffic congestion increase, along with more air pollution and more social

problems.

The Communist Party of BC urges its members and supporters to vote "Yes". Together with the trade union movement, the Metro Vancouver Alliance, and environmental groups, we say that the urgent need for better public transit outweighs the flaws in this referendum.

The Communist Party believes that public transit is a public service, which should be fully funded by all levels of government. Under a socialist system, transit, health care, education, and other social services would be regarded as basic human needs. Unfortunately, we live in a capitalist system which puts corporate greed ahead of peoples' needs, a philosophy which the BC government slavishly follows to its logical conclusion.

Unfortunately, a "Yes" vote in this case does allow the province to

abrogate its responsibility to adequately fund public transit, by imposing a sales tax increase which puts a greater burden on low-income people. The BC Liberal track record has been a relentless strangling of funding for public services. Budget after budget bring tax breaks for the wealthy and the corporations, fewer services for the people, and a huge shift of public money into private bank accounts. It's nothing personal, it's just "good business" to turn public assets and programs over to private, for-profit businesses. No public service is immune from this process, including transit.

But in our opinion, the much needed improvements to the transportation system in the Greater Vancouver area far outweigh the negative effects of this regressive tax. We also warn that a "no" vote would be followed by new fare hikes which would seriously affect low-income people. For those who depend on public transit, the benefits of a "yes" vote will include improved bus scheduling, more service hours, more late night and B-line service, and preparations to add another new 400 vehicles in service over the next two years. This will be a direct benefit for the margin-alized, elderly, students and shift workers. Handy DART service, which has been seriously degraded by this government, will be improved by 30%. Rapid transit will be extended down the Broadway corridor towards UBC, and a light rail transit project will begin for Langley and Surrey. These improvements will help get individual vehicles off the road,

reducing traffic congestion and greenhouse gas emissions. Resources will be available to add 2,700km of new bikeways, including 300km of traffic-separated cycling routes, and improved services for bike parking at transit stations.

Those who call for a "no" vote often agree that transit improvements are needed, but focus their campaign on the dubious record of

others - were strongly in favour of the re-structuring of TransLink and the Gateway project. These groups also favour the privatization of public transit and all public services.

The BC Liberals are directly responsible for putting the citizens of this region in the position of having to voluntarily agree to higher taxes in order to pay for



TransLink, the government-appointed board responsible for transportation infrastructure in Metro Vancouver. There is much to criticize about the mismanagement of budgets and planning by TransLink's board, which has no accountability to the people even though they are charged with managing billions of taxpayer dollars. Originally comprised of elected members from the region's civic governments, this body was summarily turned into an unelected board of government appointees, to facilitate billions of dollars of road and bridge construction as a part of the notorious "Gateway" project, to help the resource corporations export unprocessed raw materials.

Ironically, the same right wing forces campaigning for a no vote today - the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, the Fraser Institute and

services that are the responsibility of the government. However the vote goes, the government will suffer no negative impact, as they have cleverly put the entire onus on municipalities and the people themselves. If the yes side wins, the Liberals will take credit for improving transit; if the no side wins, they will claim that the people are happy with the status quo and willing to wait years longer for any major improvements.

The Communist Party of BC is urging people to vote yes in this referendum, and to defeat the Christy Clark government at the next election in 2017. We also demand that TransLink be re-structured once again as an elected and accountable body, so that working people can gain some ability to have greater input into these vital issues of public transit and transportation. ●

Economists back "yes" vote on transit

Three prominent progressive economists have spoken out in favour of a "YES" vote in the Metro Vancouver transportation and transit referendum.

Seth Klein, Marc Lee, and Iglia Ivanova from the BC office of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives have posted a detailed commentary on the group's Policy Note website. They agree with many of the criticisms of TransLink and the government's decision to force a referendum on improved transit and transportation. But they also conclude that for working people and the poor, voting "yes" makes good sense.

The economists note that sales tax increases can have a regressive impact, hitting lower-income households harder as a share of their income. But in this case, the new investments will go mainly to transit improvements, which benefit lower-income people who rely more on public transit. As a result, the proposal is likely progressive overall.

Their analysis shows that families with household incomes under \$20,000 would pay an extra \$53 per year in sales tax, or 0.27% of their annual income. Meanwhile, families in the \$100,000-plus annual income brackets would pay just 0.13% of their incomes with the tax increase. This regressive result could be fixed by boosting the provincial sales tax credit lower-income people can claim on their income tax returns, or by extending the discount U-pass for students to low-income people.

Even without such changes, they stress that the proposed transit improvements are particularly important to low-wage and immigrant workers, who often have to commute long distances, and who frequently work night shifts when transit options are limited. Better transit is also crucial to youth and seniors, who rely more heavily on transit.

The full commentary is also printed online in the Georgia Straight, www.straight.com/news. ●

Air Canada links with Israeli apartheid

By Marion Kawas

In recent months, Canadian government officials have been working overtime to further cement their outrageous and biased support of Israeli policies. One example is the January 18, 2015 Memorandum of Understanding between the two countries that committed to develop "a co-ordinated, public diplomacy initiative both bilaterally and in international and multilateral fora to oppose boycotts of Israel, its institutions, and its people within three to six months".

This was quickly followed with the Canadian 'Public Safety' minister stating at the United Nations that "Canada has taken a zero-tolerance approach to anti-Semitism and all forms of discrimination including rhetoric towards Israel, and attempts to delegitimize Israel such as the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement". And the controversial and draconian Bill C-51 now making its way through the Canadian parliament is another ominous sign on the horizon; pro-Palestinian activists are fully aware that all of this will require increased determination in order to continue promoting the Palestinian struggle for human and national rights.

In this context, activists from BDS Vancouver-Coast Salish started a campaign last month to boycott Air Canada, the leading airline in the country. The original impetus was reports from supporters that Sabra Hummus was being served on Air Canada flights. Sabra Hummus has

already been an issue of controversy on university campuses in the U.S. and Canada (University of Ottawa) because of the deplorable human rights record of one of its partner companies, Strauss Group. Strauss is the second largest Israeli food and beverage company and is known for supporting two Israeli military units implicated in human rights abuses, the Golan and Givati brigades.

However, further research (like peeling the layers of an onion) revealed that the links between Canadian business leaders and Israeli apartheid run deep. In fact, Air Canada recently signed a maintenance agreement for its B787 jets with Israel Aerospace Industries IAI, a military defence company wholly owned by the government of Israel. IAI is the subject of boycotts across Europe and is well-known for its drone technology and production.

Corporate Watch in the UK says that "IAI was one of the earliest developers of drone technology and launched its first surveillance drone, the IAI Scout, in 1979...IAI writes on its website of its drones 'unsurpassed track record of over 1,200,000 operational flight hours for over 50 users on five continents'. According to Drone Wars UK, IAI has exported their UAVs, sometimes through joint venture agreements, to various European countries as well as South America, Australia, Canada and India and the company has a growing market in Africa."

And a recent study entitled "Sleepless in Gaza" by Dr. Atef Abu Saif, Al-Azhar University in Gaza, has detailed the terrifying

impact of drone warfare on the Gaza Strip, especially on children, and states - "Since their first use in 2000, drones have led to the death of hundreds of Palestinians and have injured thousands more. In addition, they have directly negatively impacted Palestinian psychological and social life, as well as causing a grossly negative impact on education."

Calin Rovinescu, Air Canada's CEO, was part of PM Stephen Harper's delegation to Israel early last year, along with other top Canadian business moguls. Of course, there is plenty of precedent here, most notably with the Heseg Foundation program created and sponsored by Indigo-Chapter's CEO, Heather Reisman. Heseg (also known as the Lone Soldier program) offers financial support and scholarships to individuals who have no family in Israel but decide nonetheless to join the Israeli army - an army of occupation.

It is truly shameful that Air Canada is "outsourcing" its maintenance work to this Israeli defence company that is directly responsible for the deaths of Palestinian civilians and has the blood of Palestinian children on its hands. BDS Vancouver called on supporters in its recent fact sheet, done up for Israel Apartheid Week at local campuses, to send the message that Palestinian rights and lives matter & Israeli government abuses of international law will not be rewarded with our travel dollars!

(Marion Kawas is a member of BDS Vancouver-Coast Salish and co-host of Voice of Palestine. This article is from mondoweiss.net) ●

MAY DAY 2015 GREETING ADS

To mark May Day 2015, 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 17; if PV is preparing the layout, the deadline is April 16. Please check with us about the format if your ad is being sent electronically.

Ad rates (based on 5 column page):

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Send greetings to People's Voice at:
706 Clark Drive, Vancouver, V5L 3J1
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EDITORIALS

Racist to the rotten core

New Brunswick Conservative MP John Williamson, a former director of communications for Stephen Harper, has "apologized" for saying it made no sense to pay "whities" to stay home, while companies bring in "brown people" as temporary foreign workers. But Williamson is not simply one racist apple in the barrel. The Harper strategy is to skilfully use a deadly combination of subtle and overt forms of racism.

Launched to give employers easier access to a global pool of exploitable skilled labour, the Temporary Foreign Worker Program was expanded under Harper to allow big corporations to hire hundreds of thousands of lower-paid service sector employees. This boosted corporate profits by undermining wage levels, but it also was deliberately aimed to help turn Canadian-born workers against our immigrant sisters and brothers. While posing as "colour-blind" politicians, the Tories were quietly fanning the flames of racism.

Other examples abound, such as the PM's arrogant dismissal of the call for a full public inquiry into the murders and disappearances of over 1200 Aboriginal women and girls. Nothing to see here, claims the PM - these are just crimes, and we're tough on crime. But everyone knows that if 1200 women and girls from wealthy non-Aboriginal neighbourhoods had been killed, the response by police and politicians would have been far different.

And it just keeps getting worse. For a few years, the Conservatives sought votes from racialized communities by pandering to "family values" stereotypes. Now, they make the vicious racist argument that certain head coverings should be banned because "that's not the way we do things in Canada."

March 21 is the International Day for the Elimination of Racism - let's use this important occasion to call for the defeat of the government that promotes this reactionary, divisive ideology.

No to U.S. threats in Latin America

In an extraordinary turn of events, the United States has declared Venezuela a "national security threat", escalating the drive to overthrow the democratically elected government of President Nicolas Maduro. The executive order against seven Venezuelan officials is the first step towards a comprehensive sanctions program along the lines of Iran and Syria.

The stated reasons read like a modern-day version of Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking-Glass*. President Obama accuses the Venezuelans of innumerable crimes: "undermining democratic institutions... committing acts of violence... abuse of human rights... penalizing freedom of expression... public corruption." Who could fail to notice that U.S. imperialism itself has frequently committed such offences and far worse, in pursuit of its hegemony over the entire western hemisphere?

U.S. officials argue with a straight face that this absurd executive order does not target the Venezuelan people or economy, and that upcoming legislative elections should be held without intimidation. But one example - the campaign to strangle the Popular Unity government of Salvador Allende in Chile - shows that these are precisely Washington's aims. The crushing of the Venezuelan economy is necessary to prepare the way for a successful coup, in contrast to the repeated failures of U.S.-backed elite politicians and corporate thugs, going back to the thwarted kidnapping of the late President Hugo Chavez in 2002. The memo from Washington to the people of Venezuela is brutal and clear: surrender to a neoliberal dictatorship, or face slow death from starvation and bullets.

Fortunately, 2015 is not 1898 (the U.S. takeover of Cuba), or 1954 or 1973 (the U.S.-backed coups in Guatemala and Chile). The people of Latin America are standing up to defy imperialist rule, carving out their own independent, sovereign destiny. But the solidarity of progressive Canadians is urgently needed at this critical moment.

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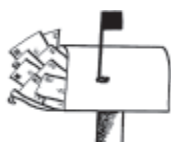
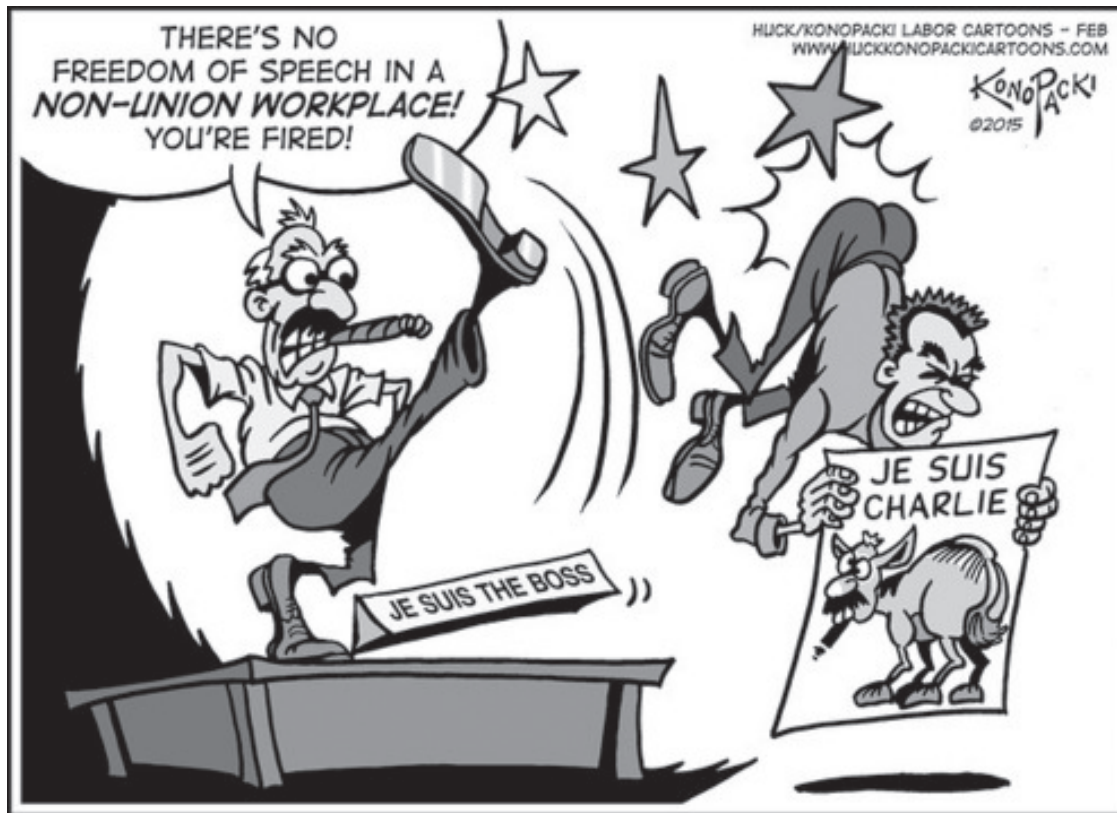
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LETTERS

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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Letters to the Editor

International Women's Day Open Letter

This Open Letter to parliamentary leaders Elizabeth May, Justin Trudeau, Thomas Mulcair and Prime Minister Stephen Harper is the result of an initiative by Martha Gloria Torrez.

We, diverse women who are co-creators and protectors of life in its many expressions, will not remain silent at this critical moment in the history of our country, Canada. As the Harper government prepares to introduce truly frightening legislation, we share both profound concern and hope that working together we will empower each other to protect all that is dear to us: life, rights, freedoms, and our precious natural environment.

WE SAY NO TO WAR

Two world wars devastated the world we live in. In 1948, people around the world feared the human capability for destruction, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was born. Canada is a signatory to this milestone for humanity, and today, especially, we must heed the words found in the preamble:

"Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world"; and "Whereas it is essential to promote the development of friendly relations between nations", we believe it is essential to remind Canada's current government of its obligations and responsibilities."

As women, we say no to more wars because it will be our children and grandchildren who will be sent to kill or who will be killed or injured physically and psychologically. We do not agree to war because the billions of dollars spent to finance the destruction of our planet will not be available for education, social programs, health care, and pensions for Canadian seniors who dedicated their lives to build our country.

The Harper Government's proposed Bill C-51, if implemented, could gravely affect some of our cherished rights and freedoms. People who exercise their right to

oppose projects they believe could cause great environmental destruction, could face criminalization. And, for those who exercise freedoms of expression and/association, this bill could be used not only to violate those fundamental rights and freedoms, but to guarantee the impunity of those who perpetrate wrongs against them.

Last fall, without consultation, and without respect for the safety of millions of people, Canada's government embarked on the violent and dangerous path of war. We were told that sending troops to Iraq was only a military mission and that Canadian soldiers would not be fighting on the ground. Three months later, the media reported that only Canadian soldiers were, in fact, fighting on the ground.

Canada has now announced that our soldiers may be sent to other two countries: Syria and Libya. Traditionally a country of peacekeepers, Canada is now at war. Innocent women, men and children are casualties of war, and as Canadian women we say there must be no deaths in our name.

WOMEN AND REFUGEES

This International Women's Day we remember the more than one thousand First Nations women who have been killed or disappeared in Canada. And we are incredulous at the arrogance of our federal government that ignores multiple requests from the women's families and friends for a national inquiry.

We are further appalled that the necessary funds for essential programs like counselling and shelter for victims of domestic violence and their children are not available. And, instead, every day our government spends millions of dollars to fund war and to protect the interests of oil and mining corporations among others.

In Canada and around the world, young women are sexually assaulted on university and college campuses, and they usually do not report it. For those who find the courage to report the violence against them, they usually face a

dearth of support and counselling programs. And no one assumes responsibility for these victims.

The Government of Canada leads an international campaign to protect women's rights and health in other parts of the world. However, at the Vancouver International Airport in December 2013, a Latin American woman, Lucia Vega Jimenes, feared she would be deported to her native Mexico and hanged herself.

The majority of world's refugees are women and children. Yet, in 2012, the Government of Canada cut the Interim Federal Health Program, which particularly gravely affected the health of pregnant women and children refugees. A 2014 Federal Court ruling acknowledged that refugees are poor, vulnerable, and disadvantaged and that these cuts constituted cruel and unusual treatment. This ruling recognized that refugees and other non-citizens must be treated like human beings. The actions of this federal government towards refugee women and children do not reflect the wise and compassionate values that 30 years ago resulted in Canada being the recipient of the United

see OPEN LETTER, p. 11

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Communist Party extends solidarity to Maduro Government in Venezuela

Central Executive Committee, Communist Party of Canada, March 5, 2015

In the wake of the recent coup plot against the democratically-elected government of President Nicolas Maduro, the Communist Party of Canada restates our long-standing solidarity with the Bolivarian Revolution in Venezuela. We condemn the role of the Canadian state in this murderous plot, and in the wider imperialist assault against the sovereignty of the peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean.

As the world knows, the coup was blocked when a retired Venezuelan Air Force general and 10 military and civilian opposition figures were arrested. They had

planned to bomb the Presidential Palace, the National Assembly, Telesur TV network, the Defence Ministry and other Caracas sites on February 12, the one-year anniversary of violent anti-

How we see it...

government attacks which caused 43 deaths.

The main imperialist backing for the coup came from Washington, which still treats the entire western hemisphere as an arena of "vital US interests," nearly two centuries

after the proclamation of the odious "Monroe Doctrine." As President Maduro revealed, the script of an eight-minute video to be aired by the coup group was even written with the help of a U.S. embassy advisor.

The "transition agreement" of the plotters included plans for a show trial of government leaders, and the privatization of nationalized industries, especially PDVSA, the state-owned oil industry that has been the main source of funding the extensive advances in healthcare, literacy, housing, poverty-reduction and other great social gains in Venezuela since 1999.

Other imperialist countries and U.S. allies, including Canada, were aware of the impending coup, but did nothing to alert the Venezuelan

government, indicating their sympathy with the plotters. A German embassy representative warned German citizens residing in Venezuela to obtain a two-week supply of food, water and emergency provisions in the event of renewed political unrest. An RCMP official connected with the Canadian embassy had sought information on airport capabilities in case of an "emergency", and we are certain that this revelation is just a tiny part of Canada's role in this affair.

This is no surprise, in the context of the Harper government's active support of U.S. militarism and aggression. Having abandoned any pretense of playing the role of a global "peacemaker", Canada is among the handful of imperialist powers who sign on regularly to provide fighter-bombers, naval vessels, troops and political backing for US/NATO military interventions. The U.S. France, and Canada planned the overthrow of elected Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in February 2005, and Canadian mining and finance capital are major players in the imperialist exploitation of Latin America.

All this explains why the Harper

Conservative government refuses to condemn the coup plotters, and instead continues to hint that they would be pleased with the overthrow of popular democracy and the restoration of capitalist regimes in Venezuela and Cuba.

The Communist Party of Canada will continue to expose the plans of imperialism and the Venezuelan oligarchy to use violence and economic destabilisation to create the conditions for a fascist Chile-style coup. We extend our solidarity with the Bolivarian government's "Operation Dignity" and other measures to protect the interests of working people, and for the arrests of the conspirators. We demand that the Canadian government end its shameful backing for Washington's interventionist meddling, and instead support the principle of sovereignty and independence for the countries and peoples of Latin America.

Above all, we warn that the danger is not over, and that the struggle to defend Venezuela's gains and oppose U.S. imperialism's schemes must be strengthened at this difficult period for the Bolivarian Revolution. ●



"Venezuela is not alone" reads banner at a solidarity rally in Spain.

Minimum wage jobs pay a penny more than in 1975

Posted at CALM.ca by Jessica Bell

A minimum wage job pays roughly the same now as it did in 1975, according to a study by Statistics Canada.

The average minimum wage in Canada in 2013 was \$10.14 an hour while the 1975 minimum wage, expressed in today's dollars, averaged out to \$10.13. That's a pathetic penny an hour increase over four decades. At the same time, almost all major expenses, including childcare, rent, housing, food, and transport, have risen dramatically. Workers are stuck in the middle.

"We have had positive economic growth over the past four decades over and above the inflation rate. That's why I say that all workers should share in the growth that they produce, including those who are earning minimum wage," said Erin Weir, economist for the United Steelworkers union.

Of the 13 U.S. states that recently raised their minimum wage rate, 10 have experienced above-average job growth, said Armine Yalnizyan, senior economist at the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. This fact undercuts the argument shared by big business that minimum wage increases hurt the economy.

The Statistics Canada report also found there is now a bigger portion of Canadians earning the minimum wage, with 6.7 per cent of all paid employees earning those wages in 2013, up from five per cent in 1997. Young employees, less-educated employees, part-timers and people in service industries are most likely to be paid minimum wage.

On the positive side, campaigns across North America have been successfully advocating for an increase in the minimum wage to bring about more equality and fairness. ●

Senate decision exposes transgender people to threats and violence

For several years, supporters of the rights of transgender people across Canada have been lobbying Parliament to pass Bill C-279, legislation on gender identity protection. Now, that struggle has hit yet another roadblock.

C-279 is a private member's bill introduced by NDP MP Randall Garrison to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Canadian Criminal Code to legally recognize and protect the human rights of transgender people. The Bill requires courts to recognize and penalize hate crimes against transgender people, just as they do for hate crimes motivated by religion, race, and sexual orientation.

The House of Commons passed C-279 in 2013, with support from members of each political party, having already passed a similar version of the Bill (C-389) in 2011, just before the federal election was called.

In late February, the Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs amended C-279, exempting it from applying to public spaces including bathrooms and locker rooms. Trans Equality Rights in Canada, a civil society-based coalition, is deeply disappointed by the change.

"Human rights are not conditional," said Helen Kennedy of Egale Canada Human Rights Trust. "The human rights of transgender people must be protected in all spaces including

public bathrooms and locker rooms. The amendment to Bill C-279 fuels discrimination against transgender individuals by making it seem like people have something to fear by sharing a bathroom with a transgender person, which of course they don't."

"As a transgender person I have been waiting a long time for federal human rights protections," said Amanda Ryan of Gender Mosaic.



"Bathrooms are dangerous for me. I fear what people will do to me if they realize I am transgender. Bill C-279 was meant to protect me from hate crimes, but in amending it, the Senate is putting me at risk. It will force me to use the men's bathroom, and a transgender woman in the men's room is a recipe for violence."

Discrimination and violence against transgender people remains common in Canada. According to a Canada-wide survey, 74% of transgender youth experience verbal harassment in school and 37% reported exper-

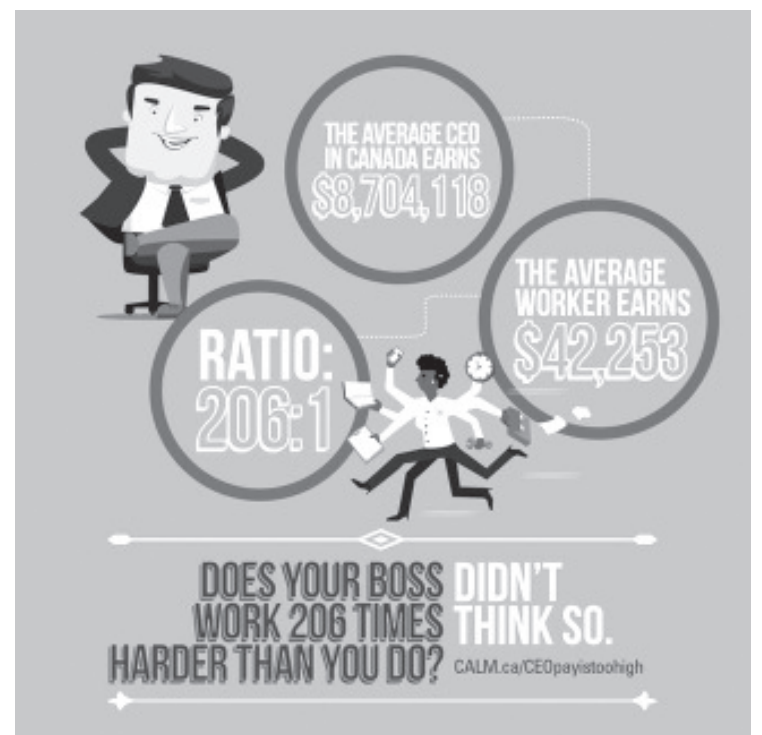
encing physical violence. As many as two-thirds of transgender people suffer from depression, and 77% of transgender individuals in Ontario report considering suicide; 43% have attempted suicide at least once.

"We appealed to all Senators to support Bill C-279 without any amendments," said Alex Neve, Secretary-General of Amnesty International Canada. "The original Bill is what was needed. If Senators passed the bill in Committee with no amendments, we would be well on our way to having life-saving human rights protections in place in a matter of weeks."

"We believe that vulnerable minorities are entitled to basic human rights and should have the full protection of the law; this Bill as amended falls short of providing that protection," said Richard Marceau of The Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, which is part of the coalition.

As the Senate moves toward third reading of the Bill, the Coalition calls on all Senators to reject amendments that would exclude trans people from public places and from accessing critical support services.

Six provinces and one territory have already passed legislation to protect transgender people: Manitoba (2012), Newfoundland and Labrador (2013), Northwest Territories (2004), Nova Scotia (2012), Ontario (2012), PEI (2013), and Saskatchewan (2014). ●



Labor needs a strategy of mass struggle to defeat Free Trade deals

By Ed Grystar

Negotiations between the US, Europe and the Pacific on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) and Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) continue in secrecy and with a blackout by the mainstream media. Ostensibly branded as trade negotiations whose aim is to abolish tariffs, these deals are essentially power grabs by multinational corporations to remove regulatory barriers on their profits. Of the TPP's 29 draft chapters, only five deal with traditional trade issues. The majority would strip governments, workers and citizens of health and safety regulations, environmental protections, food safety rules and other policies benefitting the public.

Because of this blackout, the public and congress itself are prevented from knowing the details of the talks. Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch reports that it is only through "leaks" that much of the information of these deals is made public. However, over 600 corporate "trade advisors" have full access to the texts.

Both trade deals reveal the utter collapse of democracy in the USA and the complete subservience of both major parties to the whims of moneyed interests. Obama, who campaigned on "transparency" in 2008 and pledged to avoid secret NAFTA type deals, has signed a 2010 agreement with the other countries that keeps the negotiations secret.

Proposals included in these Frankenstein-like deals roll back the minimal banking regulations enacted to protect consumers. Any governmental financial regulation would be subordinated to the extreme version of a deregulated system. A tax on financial transactions is not permitted. Exemptions for big pharmaceutical companies to extend patents from eight to twelve years, and perhaps even longer, would raise prices and restrict access to many needed drugs. The TPP weakens food

standards by altering or eliminating any regulations that ban or restrict such things as pesticides and toxins, so they comply with any weaker international standards. Governments would also be penalized if they offered preferences like "prevailing wages", buy American, or "sweatshop

free," since the language in the TPP says that all corporations in the countries that sign the agreement must have equal access to the public monies spent by national, state, and local governments. Both agreements aim to create new markets for private investors by opening up public services to privatization in critical areas such as health, education and water.

The TPP cannot be changed or modified by any new president or Congress. Once it's signed, all modifications must be agreed by all countries. If a new congress or president wants to sever or get out of the agreement, there is also a ten year look-back period when corporations can still sue for damages.

To administer these horrendous proposals, a major goal is to establish and impose "foreign investor privileges and rights" and create a private enforcement mechanism through an "investor-state" system. This new system will allow foreign corporations to challenge health, safety, environmental laws and regulations in individual countries. Incredibly, it will grant corporations and investors equal rights with a country's government, and above its citizens. This means that corporations can avoid national courts and challenge governments before courts of private lawyers operating under rules of the World Bank and the UN. These "courts" would be empowered to grant taxpayer compensation for domestic regulatory policies that corporations and investors believe

diminish their "future profits." Lori Wallach of Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch has appropriately called the TPP a corporate coup d'état.

The mainstream corporate media essentially ignores these secret negotiations. They also conventionally never ask why the Republicans, who supposedly despise Obama and his "liberal agenda," and have majorities in the House and Senate, suddenly have total confidence in his ability to negotiate and complete these treaties. Many Republican leaders are pushing for "fast track" authority in Congress.

How can this be? The media pundits and liberals constantly complain of a gridlocked Congress with supposed intractable ideological differences between the two parties. It's a phony difference without distinction and shows that big money pulls the strings in Congress. When the interests of capital are involved,

suddenly the two parties of big business find common ground to get things done. After all, this Congress is now the richest in history with the median wealth of an individual member now over 1 million dollars, according to the Center for Responsive Politics. The interests of the working people have no organized expression in this rigged setup.

The naked power of big

business, the duplicity of the two major parties, and the outrageous examples in these trade proposals must be widely disseminated in a mass "boots on the ground" and media campaign by labour. The AFL-CIO and many individual unions and other organizations are on record as opposed to these deals in their present form. But labour's overall political strategy continues to rely on an ineffective top down inside the beltway lobbying approach, rather than using its resources to educate and mobilize a real grassroots movement.

Mike Dolan of the Citizens Trade Campaign summed it up: "currently, the European movement against the TTIP is better organized in terms of protest than the U.S. counterpart, especially when it comes to turn-out, crowd-building, and militancy of messages and tactics. I was reminded of this during a TTIP demonstration in Brussels in March 2014, outside the European Commission headquarters, the

picture as villains? Can labour continue to defend a President, their "labour management partners", and the two major political parties that all openly advocate the surrender of their ability to negotiate, amend and or alter a major piece of legislation? Why are the central labour councils and other union resources not mobilized to hold public town hall meetings across the country? Why not picket lines at congressional and corporate offices? Where are the union and community phone banks to mobilize the membership and public into action, and form the foundation of a real alternative grassroots movement against the corporate takeover of our society?

Because the US labour leaders are beholden to the failed policy of "labour management cooperation" and a political strategy of supporting Democrats, their approach is essentially weak, bureaucratic, top-down lobbying. Without organized pressure from below, they are either incapable or unwilling to mobilize and build the independent movement that is necessary and entirely possible given the clear class nature of these corporate attacks, which essentially replace any pretense of democracy with the private rule of capitalists. Labour campaigned for and spent millions of dollars to elect President Obama, who returns the favour by openly campaigning for these secretive corporate takeovers – yet labour's only response is to send an email in protest? Labour extols the virtues of "labour management harmony," yet their corporate "partners", the real forces behind the monstrous deals, continue to escape unscathed.

It's hard to gain credibility and win followers if your message is not clear. As long as the song of harmony between labour and capital is the foundation of labour's strategy, its program to defend workers and defeat these trade deals will be inherently weakened. Recognizing the incompatibility of any partnership with these capitalist forces and their political allies is the starting point for developing a real people's campaign to stop these trade deals and move labour to an offensive position.

Why not start with an honest dialogue with the rank and file membership about the real face of capital and its political allies who are bent on destroying their jobs, public services, and communities with unfettered capitalism.

A real commitment to building grassroots power is the only foundation that can win. The ugly proposals inside these trade deals can and should be used as examples to the rank and file of why labour needs a new approach grounded in education, mobilization, and independent politics. A labour movement that fights can win. A labour movement that partners with capital and a corrupt two party political system is destined to lose.

(With over 40 years experience in the labour, political, peace and health care movements, Ed Grystar has worked as a steelworker, teacher and for a number of labour organizations. He served as President of Butler County (Pa.) United Labour Council for 15 years. He can be reached at egrystar@aol.com) ●

Labour Voices



windows of which ended up covered with milk. Meanwhile, in Washington D.C., the capital of the great trade hegemon and the headquarters of so many of the organizations that comprise the fair trade coalitions, even the mobilization for a small protest during the negotiations in December 2014 was a challenge."

One has to ask: where is the outrage of labour, and who do they

10,000 academic workers hit the picket lines in Ontario

"We are poor, precarious, and need improvement in our standard of living," stated CUPE local 3902 Chair Erin Black at University of Toronto.

Being "poor and precarious" has forged massive unity and militancy as over 10,000 teaching assistants and contract faculty at York University and University of Toronto gave their bargaining teams an overwhelming mandate for strike action and acted on it immediately. This unfolded between March 1st and 3rd in a dramatic resounding and solid rejection of the University administrations' "final" offers. The TAs and sessional faculty did not even vote on the final offers but went directly to strike action.

In a southern Ontario corridor from the city of Oshawa, through Toronto, the GTA, Hamilton and reaching St. Catharines, there exists the largest concentration of pre-cariously employed working poor in Canada. Ten thousand of these, the academic workers in CUPE Locals 3902 and 3903, have taken action to alter this situation. They are off the job, angry and militant.

These workers are typical of Canadian youth: well educated, overworked, underpaid and living below the poverty line. Add to this the absolutely unemployed who inhabit this same Ontario corridor, many who do not even qualify



Photo from CUPE Local 3903 website.

as a statistic, and the ugly face of neo-liberal Canada starts to emerge.

People's Voice expresses our militant solidarity with these striking workers and

encourages our readers to lend every support to their struggle. In our next issue we will carry a more detailed report on this important dispute. ●

Law professors condemn "dangerous" Bill C-51

Excerpts from an open letter to Parliament, signed by more than 100 Canadian professors of law and related disciplines.

Please accept this collective open letter as an expression of the signatories' deep concern that Bill C-51 (which the government is calling the Anti-terrorism Act, 2015) is a dangerous piece of legislation in terms of its potential impacts on the rule of law, on constitutionally and internationally protected rights, and on the health of Canada's democracy...

Bill C-51 enacts a new security-intelligence information-sharing statute of vast scope with no enhanced protections for privacy and from abuse. The law defines "activities that undermine the security of Canada" in such an exceptionally broad way that "terrorism" is simply one example of nine examples, and only "lawful advocacy, protest, dissent and artistic expression" is excluded.

Apart from all the civil-disobedience activities and illegal protests or strikes that will be covered (e.g. in relation to "interference with critical infrastructure"), this deep and broad intrusion into privacy is made worse by the fact there are no corresponding oversight or review mechanisms adequate to this expansion of the state's new levels of information awareness. Concerns have already been expressed by the Privacy Commissioner, an Officer of Parliament, who has insufficient powers and resources to even begin to oversee, let alone correct abuses within, this expanded information-sharing system. And there is virtually nothing in the bill that recognizes any lessons learned from what can happen when information-sharing ends up in the wrong hands, as

when the RCMP supplied poor information to US authorities that in turn led to the rendition of Maher Arar to Syria and his subsequent torture based on that – and further – information coming from Canada.

Bill C-51 enacts a new "terrorism" offence that makes it criminal to advocate or encourage "terrorism offences in general" where one does this being reckless

have been many examples of what could be caught, including in some contexts advocacy of armed revolution and rebellion in other countries (e.g. if C-51 had been the law when thousands of Canadians advocated support for Nelson Mandela's African National Congress in its efforts to overthrow apartheid by force of arms, when that was still part of the ANC's

youth who hold extreme views, including some views that, if expressed (including in private), would contravene this new prohibition. Such outreach may require "extreme dialogue" in order to work through the misconceptions, anger, hatred and other emotions that lead to radicalization. If C-51 is enacted, these efforts could find themselves stymied as local communities and parents receive advice that, if youth participating in these efforts say what they think, they could be charged with a crime. As a result, the RCMP may cease to be invited in at all, or, if they are, engagement will be fettered by restraint that defeats the underlying methods of the programme.

And the counter-productive impact could go further. The Prime Minister himself confirmed he would want the new law used against young people sitting in front of computers in their family basements, youth who can express extreme views on social-media platforms. Why is criminalization counter-productive here? As a National Post editorial pointed out, the result of Bill C-51 could easily be that one of the best sources of intelligence for possible future threats – public social-media platforms – could dry up; that is, extreme views will go silent because of fears of being charged. This undercuts the usefulness of these platforms for monitoring and intelligence that lead to knowing not only who warrants further investigative attention but also whether early intervention in the form of de-radicalization outreach efforts are called for.

Bill C-51 would allow CSIS to move from its central current function – information-gathering and associated surveillance with respect to a broad area of "national security" matters – to being a totally

different kind of agency that now may actively intervene to disrupt activities by a potentially infinite range of unspecified measures, as long as a given measure falls shy of causing bodily harm, infringements on sexual integrity or obstructions of justice. CSIS agents can do this activity both inside and outside Canada, and they can call on any entity or person to assist them.

There are a number of reasons to be apprehensive about this change of role. One only has to recall that the CSIS Act defines "threats to the security of Canada" so broadly that CSIS already considers various environmental and Aboriginal movements to be subject to their scrutiny; that is to say, this new disruption power goes well beyond anything that has any connection at all to "terrorism" precisely because CSIS's mandate in the CSIS Act goes far beyond a concern only with terrorism.

However, those general concerns expressed, we will now limit ourselves to the following serious problem: how Bill C-51 seems to display a complete misunderstanding of the role of judges in our legal system and constitutional order. Under C-51, judges may now be asked to give warrants to allow for disruption measures that contravene Canadian law or the Charter, a role that goes well beyond the current contexts in which judges now give warrants (e.g. surveillance warrants and search and seizure warrants) where a judge's role is to ensure that these investigative measures are "reasonable" so as not to infringe section 8 of the Canadian Charter of Rights.

What C-51 now does is turn judges into agents of the executive branch (here, CSIS) to pre-authorize

see LAW PROFS, p. 11

Given the urgent need to build broad resistance against the police state Bill C-51, People's Voice will continue to print a wide range of commentaries and analysis on this crucial topic.



as to whether the communication "may" contribute to someone else deciding to commit another terrorism offence. It is overbroad, unnecessary in view of current criminal law, and potentially counter-productive. Keep in mind how numerous and broad are the existing terrorism offences in the Criminal Code, some of which go beyond what the ordinary citizen imagines when they think of terrorism and all of which already include the general criminal-law prohibitions on counselling, aiding and abetting, conspiring, and so on: advocacy or encouragement of any of these "in general" could attract prosecution under the new C-51 offence.

Note as well that gestures and physical symbols appear to be caught, and not just verbal or written exhortations. In media commentary and reports, there

strategy). So, the chill for freedom of speech is real.

In addition, in a context in which direct incitement to terrorist acts (versus of "terrorism offences in general") is already a crime in Canada, this vague and sweeping extension of the criminal law seems unjustified in terms of necessity – and indeed, the Prime Minister during Question Period has been unable or unwilling to give examples of what conduct he would want to see criminalized now that is not already prohibited by the Criminal Code.

But, perhaps most worrying is how counter-productive this new crime could be. De-radicalization outreach programs could be negatively affected. Much anti-radicalization work depends on frank engagement of authorities like the RCMP, alongside communities and parents, with

Bill C-51: The Anti-First Nation, Environmentalist, Scientist and Bird-Watcher Act

Commentary by Pam Palmater, a Mi'kmaw lawyer and well-known activist in the Idle No More movement. Read her blog at <http://indigenousoptionhood.blogspot.ca>

Prime Minister Harper's Conservative government has introduced Bill C-51 The Anti-Terrorism Act, 2015 which it claims is needed to protect Canadians from terrorism. Experts and commentators have called the bill, which will create a secret police force for Harper: terrifying, illegal, unconstitutional, dictatorial and totalitarianism. In case you don't know what totalitarianism means, it's a term usually reserved for fascist (extremist or dictatorial) leaders that lead a centralist government that does not tolerate differences of opinion and tries to exercise dictatorial control over many aspects of public and private life – including thought. Voila: Bill C-51.

...In a world where Canada used

to pit environmentalists, scientists, doctors, teachers, and even bird-watchers against First Nations who peacefully defended their lands, Idle No More helped bring us together. As treaty and territorial allies, First Nations and Canadians face a formidable foe and threat to our collective futures. Idle No More raised awareness about the breakdown in democracy in general and human and Aboriginal rights specifically. Hundreds of thousands of people across Canada rose up against Bill C-45 – the large, unconstitutional omnibus bill pushed through Parliament without debate which threatened our lakes and rivers. This time, the threat is personal – any one of us could go to jail for thinking or voicing our opinions.

I think we all need a reminder of the freedoms upon which Canadian democracy rests – for without them, Canada descends into the lethal, dark hole of a deadly, dictatorial police-state.

The Charter of Rights protects the following freedoms and

liberties: Section 2(a) Freedom of conscience and religion; 2(b) Freedom of thought, belief, opinion, expression; 2(c) Freedom of peaceful assembly; 2(d) Freedom of association; 6 - Right to enter, remain in and leave Canada; 7 - Right to life, liberty and security of the person; 8 - Right to be secure against unreasonable search or seizure; 9 - Right not to be arbitrarily detained or imprisoned; 11(b) Everyone charged with an offence: right to be tried in a reasonable time; 11(d) Everyone charged with an offence: innocent until proven guilty; 15 - Everyone is equal before and under the law; 25 - Charter can never be interpreted to deny Aboriginal & treaty rights.

All of these rights, freedoms and liberties will be suspended with Bill C-51. This bill creates what has been described as Harper's "Secret Police force" with terrifying expanded powers. The purpose of the bill is to eliminate any "threat to security of Canada" which includes

see Anti-First Nation, p. 10





GLOBAL CLASS STRUGGLE

Public sector strikes in Germany

Workers at a university clinic in the western German city of Essen walked off the job on March 2, the first in a series of public sector labour stoppages that spread across the country in the following week.

The strikes expanded on March 3, when about 200,000 teachers walked out across the country. Another 650,000 teachers nationwide have a different "civil servant status" and are not allowed to strike. The workers are seeking 5.5% more in wages, job security and employment guarantees for trainee workers. Other differences in the negotiations focus on pensions and the pay scale for teachers.

Ver.di union leader Frank Bsirske said that the pay increases were justified because tax revenues are up in German municipalities. "Anyone who expects good work from qualified workers has to pay them properly," he said. Additional strikes were launched by coast guard workers, street repair crews and state administrative employees.

German & UK unions stand against racism

A joint statement by Britain's Trades Union Congress and the Confederation of German Trade Unions (Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund, DGB) has condemned the expansion of the anti-Islamic German organisation PEGIDA into the UK, starting with a Feb. 28 march in Newcastle-on-Tyne.

Signed by TUC leader Frances O'Grady and DGB President Reiner Hoffman, the statement reads: "On behalf of working people and their communities in Britain and Germany, we believe that no good will come of attacks on communities because of their race, religion or nationality, and we condemn those who seek to sow division and conflict among working people. We believe in social justice and equal rights for all.

"Trade unions represent all workers, regardless of any perceived differences between them, and our experience is that racism and religious strife scar communities and discrimination – at work and in the community – leads to working people becoming poorer and weaker in the face of adversity. Everyone should be proud of the positive characteristics of the groups to which they belong, but that pride must not be at the expense or denigration of others.

"Both the DGB and TUC recall what can happen when tensions escalate and underlying conflict is not resolved. In the past the focus of such hatreds have been Jews, gays and black people, and Eastern Europeans and disabled people are now suffering similarly. The Muslim community is facing real problems of discrimination and poverty – a third of Muslims are living in the 10% most deprived neighbourhoods of Britain – and

the Islamophobia that PEGIDA is feeding off and promoting is just the latest in a long line of prejudices that need to be overcome.

"We believe in the peaceful settlement of conflicts whether they are between nations and communities or within workplaces. We urge all those in a position to do so to take whatever steps they can to reduce tension, whether that is by tackling exploitation at work and offering young people from all communities a future, providing fair access to quality public services or encouraging better community relations and integration. In the meantime, we will not stand on the sidelines as far right organisations spread their poison in workplaces and communities. We don't accept



that PEGIDA has the right to stir up hatred on our streets anywhere in Britain or Germany, and we call on the community to unite against their pernicious activities and hate speech."

India unions protest Modi policies

Members of most of India's trade unions, including the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS), INTUC, CITU, AIUTC, MMS, LPF and the AICCTU, staged a sit-in protest (dharna) in Tamil Nadu state on Feb. 26. The action was part of ongoing actions protesting the anti-labour policies of the central government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, whose right-wing Hindu nationalist BJP party holds a majority in the Lok Sabha parliament.

Hundreds of leaders and cadres of 11 central trade unions staged the protest to denounce the policy of disinvestment of public sector undertakings and increasing foreign direct investment (FDI) in various sectors. Speakers slammed various decisions taken by the government, which have a negative impact on working conditions of employees. Describing the government's move to hike or allow FDI in defence, insurance and railways, and to disinvest in public sector units, the trade union leaders said the changes favour big corporations but would be detrimental to the interests of the economy and national security and to the common people.

Domestic workers need unions

The Barbados Workers Union is taking steps to ensure it includes domestic workers. BWU General Secretary Toni Moore said

domestic workers, who were mostly women, were marginalised but the union would broaden its scope for them.

Moore was addressing the union's two day workshop in commemoration of International Women's Day at the BWU Labour College. She said domestic workers were often prevented from joining a union for fear of victimisation so it had been an uphill struggle for the union over the past five years to induct them into the fold. She said the union would be taking a wider approach so even if the workers do not join, they could still benefit from the union speaking on their behalf.

Colombia oil worker layoffs

Colombian oil workers have given notice of an indefinite strike in protest job losses in the sector after the drop in global oil prices. About 10,000 oil workers have lost their jobs so far and the number could reach 25,000 by the end of the year.

Oil trade union USO president Edwin Castano said the walkout would probably begin on March 26. "We're going to hold an indefinite strike in the oil sector, workers and communities," he declared, although he added that USO, the largest union in the oil industry, was willing to enter into immediate talks with the government.

The strike decision was taken at a meeting in the north-western city of Barrancabermeja, home to the largest oil refinery in the country and known as the oil capital of Colombia. The country produces a million barrels of crude per day, most of it at the state-owned Ecopetrol, which employs 2,400 USO members.

Bengal tea workers go hungry

Describing a recent hike in wages of tea garden workers in Darjeeling and Dooars as inadequate, several trade unions warn that malnutrition and starvation would continue in the tea plantations of West Bengal.

A tripartite wage agreement signed by the state, employers and unions on February 20 fixed a raise of Rs. 37.50 per day (in phases over three years) to tea plantation workers in Terai and Dooars and Rs. 42.50 to workers in Darjeeling. The daily wage before the agreement was Rs. 95 [about \$2 Canadian].

"Workers will therefore be paid a miserly daily amount of Rs. 112.50 in the first year, Rs. 122.50 in the second year and finally Rs. 132.50 in the third year. By no logic can such an increase be justified," said a statement issued by Progressive Plantation Workers Union (PPWU), which refused to sign the agreement. PPWU president Kiran Kalindi said that the minimum wage declared by State government for the agricultural sector is Rs. 206 per day [\$4 Can.] at present.

"The agreement comes after almost a year-long tripartite wage negotiation process and is far from what the workers of tea plantations demanded," said Debjit Dutta, a

labour activist working with several tea garden unions. Another statement, jointly issued by many groups working with unorganised sector workers, pointed out that the revision won't end the crisis.

Blast kills Ukraine miners

A gas explosion occurred on March 4 deep inside the Zasyadko mine in Donetsk region of Ukraine, while 230 miners were working underground.

According to the Independent Trade Union of Coal Miners of Ukraine, 16 miners were injured and sent to hospital, five of them with burns. Nine miners were reported dead, and 23 were still missing.

The Donetsk authorities declared they were capable to conduct the rescue with their own means. However, according to the Independent Trade Union of Miners of Ukraine, the local mine rescue teams are poorly equipped to perform their tasks effectively and in full. Reportedly the rescue operation was put on hold because of an increased level of methane that could lead to another explosion.

Fifteen coal mines continue to operate in Donetsk region. Zasyadko mine has been known for its poor safety standards for years. Back in 2007 the mine saw Ukraine's worst mining disaster, which left more than 100 dead. Other explosions and accidents in 1999, 2001, 2002 and 2006 claimed an estimated 138 lives in total.

Kemal Ozkan, IndustriALL assistant general secretary, called for a proper investigation, and warned that the previous terrible record at this particular mine

requires giving health and safety paramount importance. "The employer and the authorities must take it as their own personal responsibility and provide safe and healthy conditions of work," said Ozkan. "No miner should be sent to die at the workplace!"

Gaza women form co-ops

Two cooperatives established by women in fishing communities in the Gaza city of Beit Lahiya have opened their offices. The co-ops have started chicken-breeding projects, which involve 31 women in both areas. The establishment of the cooperatives and the assistance to start their first-income generating project, is part of a strategy for "Promotion of solidarity-based economy in Gaza by empowering women in the local economy," implemented by the Democracy and workers Rights Centre in Palestine (DWRC) with the support of Nexus Solidarieta Internazionale Emilia Romagna in Italy.

The chicken-breeding projects were selected by the women members of the cooperatives. The DWRC helped to develop business plans and provides technical support and assistance. Agricultural engineers from Gaza's government departments checked out proposed locations, screened the chickens and supervised their distribution to the women and their families, who will care for them in order to generate new income. Each cooperative member participating in the chicken-breeding project also received feeders and chicken fodder, and other items necessary to ensure that the chicken coops meet all related standards.

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

Join the Communist Party of Canada



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

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"They globalize businesses, we globalize our strategies"

As Mexico's president is feted by the Queen and her government, Morning Star correspondent Conrad Landin spoke to Mexican miners' leader Napoleon Gomez Urrutia, whose life remains under constant threat.

For nine years, Napoleon Gomez Urrutia has been a political exile from his homeland. But that hasn't stopped him from leading one of Mexico's most influential trade unions — the National Union of Mine, Metal, Steel and Allied Workers of the Mexican Republic, or Los Mineros for short.

Far from it — every day he chats on Skype to his union executive, talking pay disputes, conditions in one of the world's most dangerous industries and taking on powerful corporations like Grupo Mexico (GM), the mining giant he accused of industrial homicide in 2006 after 65 of his members died in an explosion.

Shortly after he demanded the resignation of the minister of labour, who he says also had a commercial relationship with GM, he found himself facing fraud charges for embezzling union funds. He has always protested his innocence — and Interpol appeared to agree, refusing to support a Mexican

arrest warrant after Gomez fled to Vancouver, Canada, where he now makes his home.

When I meet him in London, where he's come to raise awareness of the plight of Mexican union activists while President Enrique Pena Nieto swans around Buckingham Palace on a state visit, he looks up full of resolve. And he needs it. The fraud charges were dropped last August and he can finally think about going back.

"Usually when union leaders in Latin America face attacks like this they end up in jail or dead. I hope in the short term, in the next few months, to be able to go back. But now we have the legal exoneration I need political exoneration before I can return. We are survivors. I've been re-elected six times since I left Mexico."

Alongside the support of his members, he credits his endurance to the support of his wife and family and solidarity from unions across the world — including the US United Steelworkers and Britain's Unite. "Without these it would have been very, very difficult to survive," he says.

He says there are rights abuses in Mexico "every single day."

The relationship between big business and government is a cosy one, he says, and never is that clearer than on state visits.

"Yes, there are strong ties between companies and the government, it is clear they're working together. It's clear that's their priority, rather than to protect workers' rights and human rights."

The crackdown on Los Mineros was brutal — but not entirely surprising. Mexico's dominant and Orwellian-sounding Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) has long sought to maintain control of trade unions — appointing pro-government union chiefs known as "charros."

"We have two kinds of trade union — the official ones that are close to government and the democratic ones," Gomez explains. "The government has the right to choose whether to recognise unions and whether to recognise the leadership of unions. It's a fascist way of having control of unions they like and those they don't. It's an instrument of control that was used in Nazi Germany and fascist Italy — Mexico is one of the few countries that still has it. If you're not a recognised union then

you can't open a bank account on behalf of the union and you can't negotiate."

He strongly rejects the suggestion from critics that Los Mineros, which was previously led by his father Napoleon Gomez Sada, had itself been too close to the government in the past.

"Los Mineros has always been independent," he says. "We've always been at the forefront of the struggle for labour union independence."

But the 2006 Pasta de Conchos mine disaster demanded a more radical approach, as Los Mineros had repeatedly warned about safety hazards on site. "False accusations" against Gomez and other union leaders followed and the government refused to recognise his leadership.

With oil workers in the US on strike over safety concerns and their counterparts here threatening the same, I wonder if safety is becoming the centre of modern labour disputes.

"Mining is a very high-risk

industry and companies tend to neglect health and safety, because it's not in the interests of their profits," Gomez says. "We've decided that where we have common ground with unions abroad, we need a common strategy."

When Los Mineros first established its partnership with the United Steelworkers union, Gomez met with a representative who told him the future of trade unions was bleak if they didn't "globalise their actions."

"If they're globalising their businesses, then we should globalise our strategies," he argues. "When we have multi-nationals that are common employers to us across the world, we can negotiate together with much stronger bargaining power."

As mining communities across Britain commemorate the 30th anniversary of the 1984-85 strike, I ask Gomez if he sees parallels between the treatment of the NUM under Margaret Thatcher and how Los Mineros has fared in recent years.

"Absolutely, yes," he remarks, saying that he's read Seumas Milne's book *The Enemy Within* several times over.

"It's very clear that in many ways there are similarities, the way (Thatcher's government) used the media, the smear campaign, the way they tried to corrupt union leaders. It's become a model to attack and destroy democratic and independent unions. We have great respect for the struggle of the miners in Great Britain."

Can they learn from the British miners' defeat to build for success?

"Each struggle is different," he says. "We have a different end to the struggle, but we can learn from what happened here. ●"



Mining remains a difficult and dangerous occupation in Mexico.

Protest hits new Greek deal with Euro-troika

Thousands of people rallied in Athens on Feb. 27, protesting the new "agreement" memorandum with the infamous "troika" - European Union, IMF and European Commercial Bank (ECB) - signed by the SYRIZA-ANEL coalition government of Prime Minister Alex Tsipras.

Organized by the Greek Communist Party (KKE), the rally called for the immediate abolition of the loans agreement, which imposes draconian neoliberal policies on the country. KKE leader Dimitris Koutsoumpas pointed out that a month after coming to office, the new government had still not brought a draft law to Parliament to cancel the debt repayment deal, as many Greeks believed it would. Instead, said Koutsoumpas, the coalition has essentially continued the anti-people line of former governments. After a 4-month extension of the previous terms, predicted the KKE leader, a new version of the memorandum will be reached for the years to come.

The KKE's 15 MPs have called on the government to immediately inform Parliament about the new 4-month agreement and submit it to a roll call vote.

Koutsoumpas added: "The government has baptized meat fish, it talks about extending the loan agreement and not the memorandum. However, we all know that the loan agreement and memorandum are inseparable. It is not long since Mr. Tsipras said the same thing when in opposition... New anti-people laws will be tabled so that the government can pass the evaluation and receive the installment in June. And this government, with its political line, not only does not intend to return to the people everything they lost due to the memoranda, but it will not even give them the crumbs it promised. It now says that it will give these crumbs gradually, over time, when and if the conditions, the fiscal goals and of course the lenders allow it. The troika has been renamed the 'three institutions', as if we were not talking about the same European Commission, ECB and IMF. All the measures taken by capital and its governments remain in place and are reinforced. These are measures taken together with the EU in the conditions of the economic crisis thrust the consequences onto the workers, strengthening capitalist profitability. And all this talk about a 'proud' negotiation is an out and out advertising scam."

Analysing the latest deal, the KKE Politbureau stressed that "if there is any revision of the previous program, e.g. lower primary surpluses, it will not be done to increase salaries, pensions, and social benefits but to save state resources which will then be used to support capital, its investments and profitability, as well as to pay the lenders. The employees, unemployed, self-employed, poor farmers and pensioners will go on paying the price for any recovery, through the continuation of austerity, which the government calls frugal living. Even the crumbs, chiefly for those who live in absolute poverty, promised by the government in its program, are up in the air and will depend on the agreement with the partners and with the precondition that they will not endanger fiscal discipline, the recovery of the economy and the profitability of the big businesses." ●

In Iran, women's rights are repressed by theocracy, but the struggle continues

From a commentary on International Women's Day from the March 2015 issue of CODIR Bulletin, published by the UK Committee for the Defense of the Iranian People's Rights

After all these years, we are witnessing violence against women in every shape and form, from domestic violence to sexual assault by strangers, from social oppression and economic exploitation to cruelty and the crimes inflicted in the name of faith by extremist religious groups. In particular, the expanding influence of so-called political Islam around the world, the enactment of reactionary and misogynist statutes against women and girls in a growing number of countries and the atrocities of criminal groups such as ISIS in the Middle East have led to the unfolding of a colossal disaster that must be halted by the combined action of women's rights activists and all progressive people everywhere.

Iranian women have suffered in every aspect of their lives for

many decades and yet have never ceased to fight for their human rights, to achieve gender equality and for a decent life. In particular, the struggle of Iranian women during the past 36 years of Islamic rule, under the burden of its most demeaning rules, has been exemplary.

The active involvement of women during the uprising of 2009 in protest against the fraudulent election of Ahmadinejad and in campaigning for the legitimate rights of women during the presidential election of 2013 are just two examples. Despite every offensive of the ruling fundamentalists, Iranian women have made significant gains but it is clear that they are fighting under the most difficult of circumstances. The Islamist regime sees women only as wives and mothers and attempts to keep them at home, under the strict rules of "hijab" (Islamic cover for women) rather than viewing them as major contributors to the development of the society. Ali Khamenei, the Supreme Leader of the Iranian regime, when he met with women last spring, said that emphasis on women's potential in the economic sphere, such as in employment,

was a "Western view" and constituted "viewing women from a business perspective to satisfy men's lust". At the same time in the Islamic Republic of Iran of today, men can legally have four wives at the same time and in addition have "temporary marriages"!

Almost two years into the presidency of Hassan Rouhani, the oppression of the Islamist regime against women still persists in its most demeaning forms. In recent weeks, another wave of protests and campaigns has taken place, including strikes and protests of teachers and nurses (significant numbers of whom are women) for decent jobs and pay, and demonstrations of students and workers for their basic rights. Iranian women are engaged in a battle that can benefit hugely from the international solidarity of progressive and human rights activists, unions and other democratic groups.

CODIR will continue to support Iranian women in their struggle for legitimate rights and will continue to campaign for international solidarity with them. ●

Law professors warn of C-51 threat...

continued from page 7

violations of Canadian law and, even, to pre-authorize infringements of almost any Charter right as long as the limits in C-51 – bodily harm, sexual integrity and obstruction of justice – are respected. This completely subverts the normal role of judges, which is to assess whether measures prescribed by law or taken in accordance with discretion

granted by statute infringed rights – and, if they did, whether the Charter has been violated because the infringement cannot be justified under the Charter's section 1 limitation clause. Now, a judge can be asked (indeed, required) to say yes in advance to measures that could range from wiping a target's computer clear of all information to fabricating materials (or playing agent-provocateur roles) that discredit a target in ways that cause

others no longer to trust him, her or it; and these examples are possibly at the mild end of what CSIS may well judge as useful "disruption" measures to employ.

It is also crucial to note that CSIS is authorized to engage in any measures it chooses if it concludes that the measure would not be "contrary" to any Canadian law or would not "contravene" the Charter. Thus, it is CSIS that decides whether to even go to a judge. There is reason to be worried about how unregulated (even by courts) this new CSIS disruption power would be, given the evidence that CSIS has in the past hidden information from its review body, SIRC, and given that a civil-servant whistleblower has revealed that, in a parallel context, Ministers of Justice in the Harper government have directed Department of Justice lawyers to conclude that the Minister can certify under the Department of Justice Act that a law is in compliance with the Charter if there is a mere 5% chance a court would

uphold the law if it was challenged in court. Finally, it is crucial to add that these warrant proceedings will take place in secret, with only the government side represented, and no prospect of appeal. Warrants will not be disclosed to the target and, unlike police investigations, CSIS activities do not culminate in court proceedings where state conduct is then reviewed...

C-51 radically lowers the threshold for preventive detention and imposition of recognizance with conditions on individuals. Only three years ago, Parliament enacted a law saying this detention/conditions regime can operate if there is a reasonable basis for believing a person "will" commit a terrorist offence. Now, that threshold has been lowered to "may." There has been a failure of the government to explain why exactly the existing power has not been adequate. In light of the huge potential for abuse of such a low threshold, including through wide-scale use (recalling the mass arrests

at the time of the War Measures Act in Quebec), Canadians and parliamentarians need to know why extraordinary new powers are needed, especially when the current ones were enacted in the context of ongoing threats by Al-Qaeda to carry out attacks in Canada that seem no less serious than the ones currently being threatened by entities like ISIS and Al-Shabab.

C-51 expands the no-fly list regime. It seems to have simply replicated the US no-fly list rules, the operation of which has been widely criticized in terms of its breadth and impacts on innocent people. Is this the right regime for Canada?...

In conclusion, we urge all Parliamentarians to ensure that C-51 not be enacted in anything resembling its present form.

(The Open Letter and the list of signatories is online at <http://news.nationalpost.com/2015/02/27/open-letter-to-parliament-amend-c-51-or-kill-it/>) •



UBCIC Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, seen here facing arrest last November during a protest against the Kinder Morgan pipeline expansion project. Photo from Vancouver Observer.


Bill C-51 will infringe on indigenous title and rights

The Harper Government's "Anti-terrorism Act, 2015", Bill C-51 "will radically and dangerously expand the powers of Canada's national security agencies and greatly infringe upon the rights of all citizens without making us any safer or secure," warns Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs.

In a news statement, Grand Chief Phillip said "The Union of BC Indian Chiefs believes the sweeping scope of Bill C-51 directly violates the ability of all Indigenous Peoples to exercise, assert and defend their constitutionally-protected and judicially-recognized Indigenous Title and Rights to their respective territories.

"It is absolutely appalling that as Indigenous Peoples protecting our territories we may be faced with the many insidious, provocative and heavy-handed powers that are granted by this omnibus Bill C-51. The Harper Government has dramatically changed internal government practices, policymaking structures and decision-making processes to serve an explicit natural resources development agenda. We have witnessed the gutting of environmental legislation, clamp-down of scientific analysis and comprehensive surveillance programs of Indigenous and environmental opposition."

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip concluded "As an act of civil disobedience, I was arrested at Burnaby Mountain because I believe mega-projects, like Kinder Morgan and Enbridge pipelines, do not respect the Indigenous laws and inherent authority of Indigenous Peoples to protect their territories, land and waters from the very real potential and increased risk of oil spills and increased coast tanker traffic along our coast. I believe under the draconian measures of Bill C-51, I would be identified as a terrorist. Regardless, I will continue to do what is necessary to defend the collective birthright of our grandchildren." •



La Trova Nuestra

Friday, March 27, 8 pm

"La Peña Nuestra"

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

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

Anti-First Nation legislation...

continued from page 7

any activity that undermines the sovereignty, security or territorial integrity of Canada. It also includes some of the following: interference with the administration of justice; interference with diplomatic relations; the economic or financial stability of Canada; terrorism; and interference with critical infrastructure.

The specific powers granted under the bill greatly expand the powers of CSIS (Canadian Security Intelligence Service) from an organization that collects and analyzes information related to security – to one which can take law enforcement action. They are further empowered to take measures against anything they deem to constitute a threat to Canada – inside or outside of the country. Additional anti-terrorism powers under the bill include: Materials deemed to be terrorist propaganda can be seized or removed from a website; Standards of investigation and arrest will be lowered from proof to suspicion; Police may arrest someone if they merely "think" that a terrorist act "may" be carried out; and deny air transportation to anyone who they "suspect" may be engaging in terrorist activity.

According to security law experts like Craig Force and Kent Roach, this new offence of "advocating or promoting terrorism" is not at all clear and Canadians should be extremely concerned about its conflict with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. One of their concerns is that it gives the police "substantial and unusually invasive powers" to be exercised under their own discretion. A significant change from offences against the promotion of hatred, is the fact that anti-terrorism applies to statements made in private and implies extensive wire-tapping. They fear this bill will result in "speech chill" – the fear to exercise our right to free speech.

For First Nations, this completes the circle of criminalizing

every aspect of who we are as Mi'kmaw, Maliseet, Mohawk and Cree Nations. When they made it against the law to be a Mi'kmaw person, our population was reduced by 80% for the scalping bounties placed on our heads. When speaking our languages and practising our culture was considered anti-Canadian, they enacted laws to outlaw our ceremonies and killed upwards of 50% of our children they forced into residential schools. When we



Pam Palmater

refused to die off, they forcibly sterilized our Indigenous women and girls without their knowledge and consent to reduce our populations. Standing by and watching our Indigenous women and girls go murdered and missing was a gross violation of our right to life by the RCMP, provincial police and Canadian governments.

When we survived, Canada made our traditional way of life a criminal act – hunting, fishing, trapping and gathering became criminal or regulatory offences which landed us in jail, resulted in beatings by the RCMP and/or our gear, vehicles and boats were seized. The defence and protection of what little lands we have left resulted in Canada bringing out the RCMP and army to stop our people. When we drummed and danced in Idle No More, we became the targets of illegal monitoring, publicly vilified and categorized as radicals, militants and terrorists. Now, our very voices, our private discussions and even the defence of our sovereignty is now an act of "terrorism".

We warned Canadians, that

what happens to First Nations under Harper's dictatorial regime is just a sign of things to come for Canadians. To Canadians who value their freedoms, the beauty and bounty of our shared lands and waters, and the peaceful right to live the good life as you see fit – everything is about to change. Canadians will, for the first time, be treated like First Nations people – without the protection of their basic rights, freedoms and liberties. Even someone who re-Tweets or reposts a comment made by someone else on Facebook could potentially be captured under this sweeping legislation. Our ideas themselves will now be criminalized. Our private lives and opinions will be invaded, monitored and criminalized. For Canadians, this is a frightening new turn of events that may well override our basic human rights, liberties and freedoms – an end to Canada as a democracy as you've known it.

Our decades long experiences with murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls, Starlight tours and the deaths of our Indigenous men while in police custody, the wrongful shootings of our unarmed peaceful protestors, the over-imprisonment of our Indigenous men and women, and the palpable fear many of us have of law enforcement will be part of the Canadian reality unless we stop this Bill now. We are allies in this territory. First Nations fought alongside Canadians in many wars to protect these lands. We lived up to our treaty obligations to protect you and be your allies. Now it's time for Canadians to stand up and restore this treaty and allied relationship – and protect our collective rights.

Canada has violated First Nations' constitutionally protected Aboriginal and treaty rights and basic human rights for decades. If we do not stand together now, this is what Canadians have to look forward to for their children. Please act to stop Bill C-51 now – before it becomes an act of terrorism to even speak about. •

What will it take to stop Bill C-51?

By Johan Boyden

A couple weeks ago, I picked up the front page of a Montreal daily newspaper with interest. "P-6 student protest fines dropped by Montreal," it said translated into English. Two things flashed through my mind. The first was the new Conservative Law Bill C-51. The second was a small stack of letters sitting on my desk back at home.

Since the beginning of January, Montreal City hall has sent me no fewer than eight letters about my two bylaw infractions, incurred during and shortly after the Quebec student strike, informing of fines that could have added up to over \$1500.

The strike was three years ago. At the height of that conflict, hundreds of thousands of students and working people were in the streets against the provincial Charest Liberal government, rising up against tuition hikes and austerity policies. The government's response was to bring in the "Hammer Law" and make the protests illegal. Municipalities adopted similar draconian rules. Thousands were arrested.

My first court appearance, as part of a group legal challenge to the law, saw the city courthouse in complete commotion. Not because there was any civil disobedience; so many people were charged and due to appear at the same time, that all the court rooms, processing

centres and hallways were packed to capacity.

While the Hammer Law was one of the first things swept from the books after the late-summer provincial election sent the Liberals packing (at least temporarily, since they were re-elected in 2014), the municipal bylaws did not go. Montreal's P6 bylaw, under which police could make almost any demonstration illegal, stayed in full force - until this February.

That is when Judge Randall Richmond ruled on Article 2.1 of bylaw P6, finding it so flawed as to no warrant protestors arrest. Now the City of Montreal is dropping most of the charges.

But here is the scoop. Judge Randall's ruling took three years of struggle, inside and outside of the courtroom, fighting a simple city Bylaw. And his ruling simply said the legal wording of the law was flawed, not that it violated fundamental civil rights and freedoms outlined in the Charter.

Could this be the future, with the anti-terrorist Act, Bill C-51? Already, over 100 law professors as well as a group of provincial privacy commissioners have joined the host of voices saying this new law violates Charter rights.

The fact that in Montreal it took so long to score a partial victory against something as narrow and limited as a bylaw should be a warning to those who hope we can count on the courts to strike down Bill C-51.

Moreover, the Liberals are

supporting the legislation, and the NDP (whose welcome opposition to Bill C-51 came out late last month) has also quietly said that if elected, they would not strike the law but simply modify it.

Meanwhile, rallies in at least 31 cities on the March 14 weekend against C-51 will be an important, powerful show of opposition, which the Communist Party has endorsed. Judging by facebook responses, among the top ten will be Winnipeg, CPC leader Miguel Figueroa is expected to speak.

Already some actions are taking place. Liberal leader Justin Trudeau was hounded at the University of British Columbia by students opposing the Bill. Rozh E., one of the initiators of the protest and the organizer of the Vancouver Young Communist League, told me by facebook chat that Trudeau was aggressively dismissive towards the students who simply questioned him about the Liberal's position.

"This goes against the claim that '82% of Canadians support this bill' as the media has been saying," she said.

Exactly, Mr. Harper. It is a changing reality the Conservatives and Liberals in Parliament need to wake up to.

(Johan Boyden is the central organizer of the Communist Party of Canada.)

IWD Letter...

continued from page 4

Nations Nansen Refugee Award. We remember in solidarity the mothers, wives, sisters and children of soldiers killed in foreign lands and veterans who committed suicide because the lack of treatment and appropriate support when they returned to Canada.

And in addition to all of this, Canadians are now faced with the dangerous Bill C-51, if passed, will change the face of Canada. Four former prime Ministers, retired Supreme Court justices, over 100 law professors and legal professionals, and a host of academics are warning of the grave risks of the federal government's proposed Bill. The risks to all women - mothers, grandmothers, daughters, and sisters - are serious and we must also speak out at this time in our world history when environmental and economic crises affect us all.

We hope that in the next federal elections we will have leaders able to tell the truth and to listen to people. Leaders who will make the well being of all Canadians their priorities instead of their egos and ambitions. Leaders who will not send our children to wars to defend the interests of a few. Leaders with the courage and vision to choose and work for peace and are able to respond to crisis with full respect for fundamental rights, freedoms and a safe environment for the new generations. ●

Bethune Dinner Door Prize

The winner of this year's Bethune Dinner door prize is Nazim Sesen of Montreal, ticket #937 sold by Anita Marin. Congratulations to the first Montreal winner of the prize: a trip for two to sunny socialist Cuba!

What's Left

Vancouver, BC

The Right to Dissent Under Bill C-51, forum with Carmen Cheung (BC Civil Liberties Assoc.), Tues., March 18, 7 pm, Mt. Pleasant Neighbourhood House, 800 E. Broadway. Organized by StopWar.ca.

Community March Against Racism, Sat., March 21, gather 1 pm at 14th & Commercial for march to Grandview Park (1200 block Commercial).

La Trova Nuestra, evening of Latin American music, admission \$10, 8 pm, Friday, March 27, CSE, 706 Clark Drive.

Stop Bill C-51, public forum with CPC Central Organizer Johan Boyden, Tues., April 14, 7:30 pm, Centre for Socialist Education, 706 Clark Drive.

Edmonton, AB

Mobilize to stop Bill C-51, forum with Communist Party leader Miguel Figueroa, Monday, March 16, 7:30 pm, Hostelling International, 10647-81 Ave. NW, sponsor Edmonton Club CPC.

House Concert with Ceilidh Friends from Yellowknife, Sat., March 21, 7 pm, tickets \$20, ph. Doug at 780-435-6795 for address and details.

Halifax, NS

Stop Bill C-51, public forum with YCL leader Drew Garvie, Halifax North Library (2285 Gottingen), 2 pm, Sat., March 21.

Winnipeg, MB

Stop Bill C-51, forum with Communist Party leader Miguel Figueroa, Sunday, March 15, ph. 204-586-7824 for details.

Toronto, ON

Dinner and Evening with Kimball Cariou, PV Editor. Live music, food, cash bar, \$10, Sat., March 28, 7 pm, 290 Danforth Ave., 416-469-2481 for info.

Meet Kimball Cariou, PV Editor, 2 pm, Sunday, March 29, location TBA. Come and talk shop with our Editor about the fight for working people's rights! Info @ 416-469-2481.

Ottawa, ON

Stop Bill C-51, forum with CP (Ontario) leader Liz Rowley, Thurs., March 17, 7 pm, McNabb City Centre, 180 Percy St.

Guelph, ON

Stop Bill C-51, forum with CP (Ontario) leader Liz Rowley, Wed., March 23, Mackinnon Hall Room 115, U of Guelph, ph. 416-469-2446 for time.

Stellarton, NS

Stop Bill C-51, with YCL leader Drew Garvie, Sunday, March 22, for time and location call Mark Hamilton, 902-752-0756.

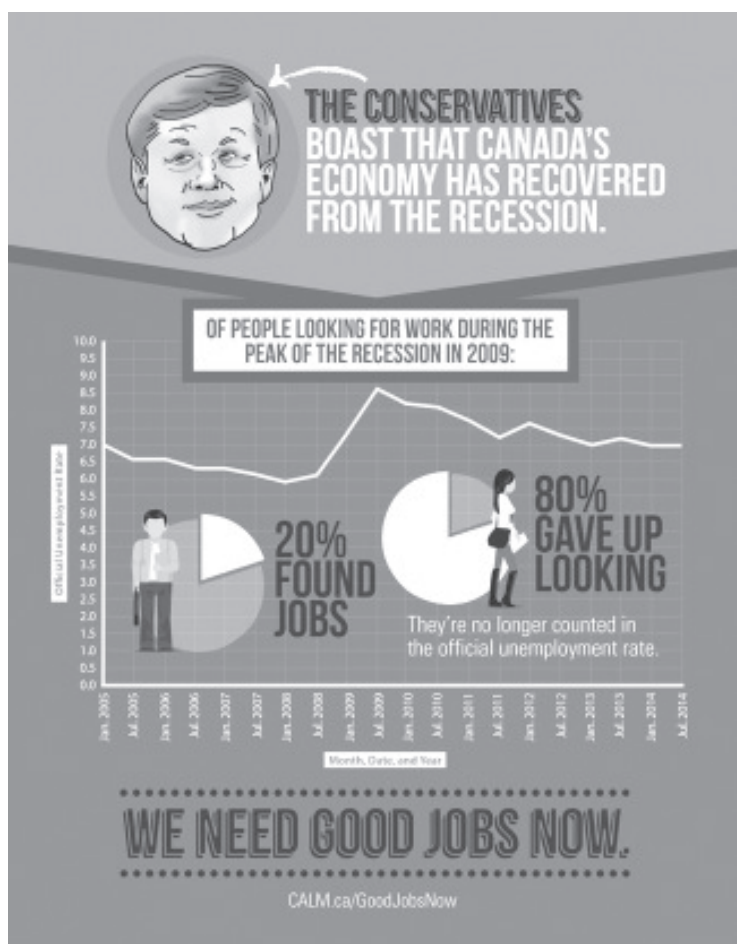
"Stop C-51" forums are also being held in Nanaimo, Victoria, Surrey, Brampton, Ottawa, and other cities. Check <http://communist-party.ca/stopc51> for updates.

People's Voice deadlines

April 1-15 issue: Thursday, March 19

April 16-30 issue: Thursday, April 2

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



Have you sent your donation to the People's Voice Fund Drive?

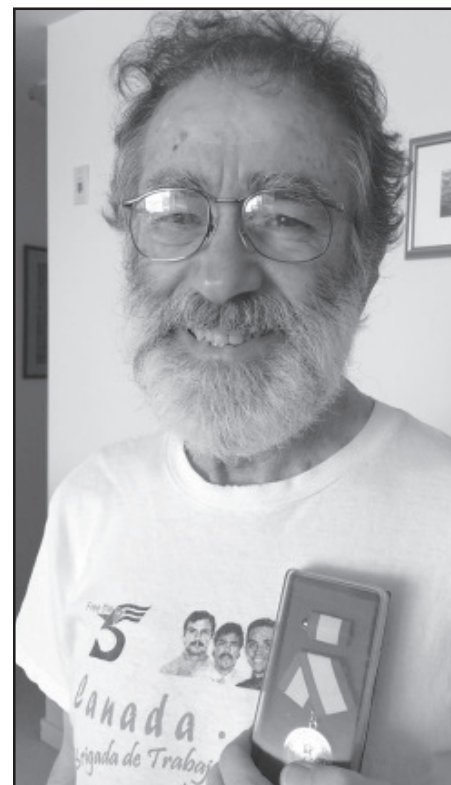
Nino Pagliccia receives Medal of Friendship honour

Canadian writers Arnold August and Nino Pagliccia participated in the recent Havana International Book Fair, which went from the Cuban capital to other provinces.

Nino Pagliccia presented his new book, "Cuba Solidarity in Canada: Five Decades of People to People Foreign Relations", published by Friesen Press. He also received the Medal of Friendship, granted by the Council of State of the Republic of Cuba to foreigners for their contributions to revolutionary causes.

Pagliccia's book draws on the experiences of solidarity of the Canadian people with the Cuban Revolution, with passages concerning the historical ties between the two peoples, dating back to 1960, when the first brigade of volunteer workers went to the island. For his active work within this solidarity movement, Pagliccia was recognized with the Friendship Medal.

Also at the Book Fair, Arnold August presented "Cuba and its Neighbours: Democracy in Motion," a study of the democratic processes of Cuba and other neighbouring countries, such as Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador and the United States. During the presentation, Ricardo Alarcon, author of the foreword of this book, praised August for the seriousness of his research, and his intellectual honesty. In 2013, Arnold August received the highest award granted by the Union of Journalists of Cuba to local and foreign colleagues, the Felix Elmuza. He is a member of the Latin American Studies Association (LASA, for its acronym in English), Canadian Association of Latin American and Caribbean Studies (CEFTA) and the Department of Research, University of Nottingham, UK. ●



Nino Pagliccia shows his Cuban Friendship Medal.

NATO finds Arab backdoor to arm Kiev

By *Finian Cunningham,*
Information Clearing House

The Feb. 24 announcement that the Kiev regime struck a major deal with the United Arab Emirates for armaments raises strong suspicions that the US-led NATO alliance has found a new backdoor into Ukraine. We say "new" because it is believed that the US and its NATO allies, Poland and Lithuania, are already covertly supplying weapons to the Kiev regime.

Ukraine's President Petro Poroshenko hailed the new strategic partnership with the Persian Gulf kingdom while attending the International Defence Exhibition (IDEX) in the UAE capital, Abu Dhabi. Poroshenko, who was royally received by UAE Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed al Nayhan, declared himself a "president of peace" but that Ukraine, or rather the rump state that his regime commands, needed strong defence because of its "Russian enemy".

A giveaway to the real significance of the surprise development is that Poroshenko and his Arab hosts also reportedly held discreet meetings with Pentagon officials and US weapons manufacturing executives during the weapons exhibition. That indicates that Washington is coordinating the expected arms transfers.

Although the Kiev-UAE partnership lacked any public detail, one can safely assume that the Arab supply of weapons to Ukraine is simply a conduit for American and NATO military support to the Western-backed junta, which seized power in Ukraine last year in an illegal coup. Its war of aggression on the separatist eastern Ukraine has inflicted at least 6,000 deaths, mainly among the ethnic Russian civilian population.

Earlier in February it became clear that Washington and its NATO allies would pay a heavy political price for an audacious move to openly increase their military involvement in the Ukraine conflict. When Washington announced that it intended to go ahead with Congressional provisions to send "lethal aid" to Kiev there was much international consternation over such a reckless move.

Moscow warned Washington that any further military support to

the reactionary, anti-Russian Kiev regime on its western border would constitute a "disastrous escalation". US President Barack Obama then appeared to back off from the proposal to supply lethal munitions.

America's normally servile

American-European "unity" over Ukraine and alleged "Russian aggression" – in spite of the fact that European leaders were, publicly at least, repudiating Washington's weapons policy.

So, rather than risk an open split in the NATO ranks, Washington



Petro Poroshenko (centre) hailed Ukraine's new strategic partnership with the United Arab Emirates while attending the International Defence Exhibition in the kingdom's capital, Abu Dhabi.

European allies also balked at the arms move. Germany, France and even Britain indicated disapproval by stating that they would not be following suite by sending arms to Ukraine. Germany's Chancellor Angela Merkel was perhaps the most forthright in her reservations. While on an official visit to Washington she reiterated her "no weapons" position to US media while being received in the White House by Obama.

No doubt a disgruntled European public reeling from economic austerity, unemployment and seething contempt for unaccountable EU leaders had a concentrating effect on the various political capitals to not throw more fuel on an already raging Ukrainian fire. The idea of going along with incendiary American militarism in Ukraine and further antagonising Russia would provoke a political storm across Europe. Hence the usually trusty European "yes men" had to defy Washington's recklessness.

That incipient divergence between the US and EU appeared to unnerve Washington, with the latter fearing that its anti-Russian axis and sanctions tactics might be unravelling. President Obama and his Secretary of State John Kerry were at pains to emphasise

and its allies seem to have found an ingenious way around that problem – by getting the UAE to be the front end for weapons supplied to the Kiev regime.

Several media reports have talked up a "new defence industry" in the UAE. But whatever new industry there may be in the oil-rich kingdom, it is largely a value-adding or marketing platform for established Western manufacturers.

The UAE defence sector is dominated by US military imports and American weapons giants, Boeing, Lockheed Martin and Raytheon. The Emirati "partner" operations are a way for the royal rulers to claim kudos for diversifying the kingdom away from its economic dependence on oil exports by seemingly creating hi-tech sectors. For the Western weapons firms, the Arab retail image can provide a convenient public relations cover for global arms-dealing. American and European weapons can thus be sold to parts of the world where it might otherwise be viewed as unethical – thanks to these sales being booked as originating from the UAE.

The fact remains, however, that the United Arab Emirates is the world's fourth biggest arms importer, according to the

Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). That is an astounding record considering that the UAE population is some nine million, with only one million of those being Arab nationals, and the rest being expatriate cheap-labour workers from Asia and Africa. Expressed on a per capita basis, the UAE is by far the world's biggest weapons importer. And this is a country that has never been at war since its founding in 1971 after Britain granted formal independence.

In its latest global report, SIPRI notes that the Persian Gulf Arab states have doubled their weapons imports in recent years, from an already high base. Saudi Arabia is now the fifth biggest importer globally. Qatar, Bahrain and Oman are also major sales destinations for the Western arms industry.

The Arab Gulf weapons market is dominated by the US, with some 40 percent of all sales. Other major exporters to the region are Germany, France and Britain. Russia has also a strong presence in the market. But the lion's share goes to US and its NATO allies. Germany in particular has stepped up its arms exports to the Persian Gulf, which has caused political problems among the German population for the Merkel government as it is being seen to prop up autocratic and repressive regimes. Leopard tanks and

armoured personnel carriers are lucrative German exports.

The Persian Gulf Arab regimes are thus in effect NATO arsenals. And the tiny UAE with its \$13 billion military budget is a NATO arsenal par excellence.

The Kiev regime's new contract with the UAE for weapons supply is thus a front for NATO supplying weapons to Ukraine. Conveniently for Western governments, the arrangement tends to obscure a NATO link in the eyes of their public, but only superficially.

That bodes badly for the shaky ceasefire that Russia's President Vladimir Putin helped broker. Putin has already deprecated the continuing hostile attitude of Poroshenko and other Kiev leaders, who routinely accuse Russia of aggression and talk with bravado of fighting a "total war". Washington and the EU are indulging this inflammatory rhetoric with renewed sanctions on Moscow and laying the blame for the conflict on Russia.

While Western taxpayers bail out the Kiev regime with a US\$40 billion loan from the International Monetary Fund, the junta is evidently using the money to go on a weapons spree and to crank up its NATO-supplied war machine. The UAE weapons sales deal is just a backdoor for NATO to embark on further warmongering in Ukraine and toward Russia. ●

New attempt to ban communist ideas in Ukraine

Ukraine's Minister of Justice, Pavel Petrenko, has introduced new draft legislation to prohibit communist ideology.

In a March 4 statement, the Communist Party of Ukraine (CPU) says, "Even not going into deep analysis of the draft, it's obvious that idea to prohibit Communist ideology and ban the activities of associations propagating Communist ideology is striking in its unconstitutionality. This idea contradicts the basic constitutional principles, namely political and ideological pluralism (diversity), implemented through a multi-party system, freedom of political activity and diversity of ideologies as concepts, ideas and views on life that reflect the interests, ideals, attitudes of people..."

"The Constitution of Ukraine contains a number of regulatory requirements, ensuring the right of citizens to freedom of association in political parties and public organizations, to exercise and protect their rights and freedoms and to satisfy their political, economic, social, cultural and other interests, as well as defines restrictions on the foundation and activities of political parties and civil society organizations..."

"Para. 1, Art. 37 of the Constitution

prohibits the formation and activities of political parties and public organizations, program goals or actions of which are aimed at eliminating of the independence of Ukraine, the constitutional order by force, violation of sovereignty and territorial integrity, undermining its security, unlawfully seizing power, propaganda of war, violence, the incitement of ethnic, racial or religious hatred, infringement of human rights and freedoms and public health. Thus, it is a constitutional possibility to prohibit formation and activities of concrete political parties and organizations, but not prohibition of a particular ideology as such..."

"It's not a secret that Ukrainian Rada (parliament) is composed of nationalists, radicals, oligarchs, neo-nazis etc. and predictably would vote for this draft law."

"Given the unconstitutional and even anti-constitutional character of the draft law, and its contradiction to generally accepted human rights principles, the Communist Party of Ukraine appeals to all progressive organizations, in particular to the leftist and working parties, to protest against unfounded and unlawful attempts to ban Communist ideology in Ukraine."

(Posted on solidnet.org) ●

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