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people's VOICE

MAY DAY 2014

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Canadian Labour Congress meets in Montréal



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Decades of repression by right-wing governments, the military, and death squads have failed to defeat Colombia's working class. This month, a national agrarian strike may challenge the regime.

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One hundred years ago, thugs in the pay of mining and financial bosses murdered 18 coal miners and family members to break a strike.

16 The Modi danger

Voters in India are going to the polls, with ultra-Hindu nationalist Narendra Modi leading the race. Critics in North America are reminding the world about Modi's threat to minorities.

Gains for NYC transit workers

The settlement just achieved for 38,000 members of Transit Workers Union Local 100 in New York City is being called a "huge success" by their union - an important achievement at a time when organized labour is under sustained attack. Now the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 726, which represents 2000 workers in Staten Island, hopes to reach a similar deal.

A letter from Danny Cassella, President ATU Local 726, says the following:

"Two years ago, all NYC Transit workers were facing a disastrous situation. The NY state

unions including all other public authority workers caved in and accepted extremely concessionary contracts which included three consecutive zero's (no retro pay), two weeks forced unpaid furlough time, and out of pocket health care payments going up to \$5,000 per year. In addition to this, the MTA (Metro Transit Authority) was pushing part time bus operator as the major focus of their demands.

"For two years, despite being under tremendous pressure, TWU Local 100 and ATU 726 stood our ground and refused to cave in and accept the three zeros, the outrageous healthcare payment

increases or Part Timers.

"Now there is a contract settlement in place which has shattered the state pattern, and moved the MTA far off their initial "three zero's" bargain position. The deal that the TWU settled includes raises in all three years where every other union took zeros. It provides for retroactive pay of \$4,000-\$5,000 for most workers, and an immediate 4% wage increase. When other unions were losing ground, this contract is putting real money in members' pockets instead of having the healthcare payment go up to \$5,000 a year, there are only minor increases amounting to less than 7 bucks a week. And in return the benefits have been substantially improved. For the first time ever the contract includes fully paid maternity and paternity leave - if your wife has a baby now you get two weeks off work fully paid! The TWU won huge monetary increases on Dental and optical too. But most importantly, this contract now provides for lifetime medical coverage for our spouses. Under the current contract when we pass away in retirement, your spouse's lose medical coverage shortly afterward. This contract corrects that inequity and gives us the peace of mind that our husband or wife will be taken care of if something happens to us.

"If the TWU did not settle this contract, all transit workers in every union would have run the risk of getting bound up in arbitration to the upcoming city contract pattern which will include zeros in years that the TWU won raises. Very shortly, I will be reaching out to the MTA to bargain this very same contract for ATU 726. The sooner we can sign this deal, the faster we are out of harm's way, and the faster we can start collecting retro pay and wage increases." •

"Peace, Jobs, Socialism"

Elgin "Scotty" Neish
Club, CPC

Victoria, BC

MAY DAY GREETINGS!

From the Davenport Club
CPC

PV Fund Drive Report

In the hectic push to complete our most complex publication of the year - the May Day special with greetings from across Canada - it has been difficult to keep up with all the details of the Fund Drive. Look for an update in our next issue. We are now past the half-way mark, with the majority of our \$50,000 target either received or accounted for by the value of the May Day ads in this issue. We thank every organization which placed a greeting. Your

solidarity and commitment to celebrating International Workers' Day are deeply appreciated!

This issue will be distributed to delegates at the Canadian Labour Congress convention, taking place May 5-9 in Montreal. As you can see by our commentaries on pages 6 and 7, this will be a particularly crucial convention. For the first time in many years, there will be an election for President. Just as important, the future of Labour Councils, the main grassroots

contact of the CLC with communities across Canada, will be hotly debated. Look for analysis of the outcome in our next issue!

Three events are coming up for B.C. readers. The Vancouver East Club's Pasta Dinner will take place at 6 pm on Sunday, April 27, including vegetarian or non-vegetarian pasta options, salad and garlic bread, for just \$15.

The annual Pancake Breakfast organized by the Burnaby Club is back at 5435 Kincaid St. in Burnaby. That's on Mother's Day, Sunday, May 11, starting 10 am. Last call for pancakes is 12 noon, and the price is an amazing \$12 (or \$8 for kids under 12). Call 604-294-6775 for more details!

The 22nd annual People's Voice Victory Banquet is Sat., May 31 (doors open 6 pm), at the Russian Hall, 600 Campbell Ave. in Vancouver. Call 604-254-9836 for tickets and other details.

In Toronto, part of the proceeds from the annual United May Day event will go to the PV Drive. Join your friends on Sat., May 3, 6:30 pm, at the Steelworkers Hall, 25 Cecil Street. Admission is free, with speakers, live music, poetry and dance, and food and refreshments. Don't miss it!

No matter how you say it:

**Proletarios de todos los paises, unios!
Proletaires de tous les pays, Unissez-vous!
Proletarii vsekhn stran, soyedinyaytes!
Oibrithe an domhain, aontaigh!
Proletarier alles lander, vereinigt euch!
Kaikkien maiden proletaarit, liirtykaa yhteen!
Butun du nyanin proletarlari, birlisliniz!
Proletarier fun ale lender, fariinikt zikh!**

It means the same:

"WORKERS OF THE WORLD, UNITE"

Happy May Day, 2014

Parkdale Club

Communist Party of Canada

MAY DAY GREETINGS!

To People's Voice readers and
to working people everywhere!

Belogiannis Club CPC



May Day Greetings

from the
Eric Blair Club CPC
of Niagara

Home of Harriet Tubman

Alberta bitumen boom accompanied by rising worker injuries

Alberta's fossil fuel-based economic boom has meant enormous profits for energy corporations, but heavy personal costs for thousands of workers.

Award-winning journalist Andrew Nikiforuk, who writes for The Tyee website and others, has written a scathing article on the shocking extent of deaths and injuries in the Alberta workforce.

Last year, Alberta saw a near-record high of 173 deaths on the job. As Nikiforuk writes, "excluding occupational disease and vehicle accidents, Alberta, with a population of four million, now reports 5.9 times more fatalities due to workplace injury than the United Kingdom, according to Athabasca University labour expert Bob Barnetson."

Britain also carries out 7.5 times more Occupational Health and Safety prosecutions than Alberta, where prosecutions of employers for unsafe workplaces plummeted from 22 in 2008 to a low of five last year.

The province relies on economic activity which poses many dangers for workers, such as petroleum extraction, mining and construction, but lags behind on occupational health and safety.

According to a 2011 study by the Alberta Federation of Labour, the province has the lowest Workers' Compensation Board premiums in Canada for industries that are "responsible for the most worksite fatalities, occupational diseases, and disabling injuries."

Oil and natural gas exploration companies pay just \$0.55/\$100 payroll, the study notes, "while companies in the rest of Canada pay four times as much, at \$2/\$100 payroll."

The Alberta government maintains that only 53,000 workers were injured on the job in 2009. But Prof. Barnetson calculates the number of workplace injuries annually in Alberta may be 500,000, or 10 times the government figure.

That's because the only injuries the government discusses in public are disabling injury claims. Leaving out injuries which do not result in lost or modified work, this under-represents the true rate of injury by a factor of 10. •

Here's my contribution to the PV Fund Drive!

Enclosed please find my donation of \$_____ to the 2014 People's Voice Press Fund Drive.

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B.C. school boards "should consider deficit budgets"

School boards across British Columbia face huge budget shortfalls this spring, due to the impact of extra costs downloaded by the Liberal provincial government. Compelled by law to bring in "balanced" budgets, many boards are reducing the numbers of teachers and support staff.

The following is from a presentation at the Vancouver School Board's budget consultations, by Jane Bouey and Gwen Giesbrecht, co-chairs of the Vancouver Public Education

Project, which is "dedicated to defending, promoting and enhancing public education." Bouey was elected to the VSB in 2002 and 2008, serving the latter term as deputy chair. Giesbrecht is a former president of the city's Parent Advisory Council.

The proposed VSB budget is an effort to mitigate an untenable situation. Over a decade of provincial underfunding continues. The next three years portend more of the same. Is this deliberate? Is the intention to undermine confidence in public

education - our society's single most valuable social institution? Your Board is not to blame, but it will bear the burden imposed by a cynical government.

Some recommendations are palatable. Cancelling membership in the BC School Trustees Association and not adding to District Parent Advisory Council's existing funds for the next year are two.

But many recommendations will disproportionately affect vulnerable students. Eliminating an Educational Psychologist will, as stated "... increase the waitlists for psycho-educational assessments." Cuts such as the Speech and Language pathologist, the Anti-Racism and Literacy mentors, two SACY positions, the English Language Learner consultant, Britannia Secondary cafeteria worker, the District Athletics Coordinator, Multicultural Liaison worker may be minimal, but the impact will be large.

The arts are vital for a full and rich education. In this proposed budget the entire elementary Band and Strings Program could be axed. The Board could increase the annual fee for the band and strings program to \$25 a month. For families able to afford \$250 a year per child, access to music could be available. This restriction is contrary to the purposes and spirit of a public system. Such "access" already exists. It's called private music lessons.

This budget proposes more cuts to Maintenance services to save about half a million dollars. Those who spend time in Vancouver schools know that they are shabby



Jane Bouey (left) and Gwen Giesbrecht of the Public Education Project are potential candidates for VSB trustee in the November 2014 civic election.

and not painted regularly.

How has this happened? It is the consequence of the province downloading expenses onto local school boards. Recently, Victoria put boards on notice that they may need to pay for half the cost of capital projects and seismic upgrades. These abrupt and unilateral directives show contempt for local planning and have a destabilizing impact on all operations.

There is still money in the budget to support the vast array of computer technology that is now a key part of school infrastructures. Both the initial expenses and those in this budget have been downloaded onto local boards by the province. The system absolutely requires the use of computers but refuses to fund it...

Technology expenses eat up a huge amount of capital. The 6,000 computers purchased by the Board in 2009 are now nearing their fifth

birthday and need to be replaced by modern tools, says the Board, at a cost of \$720,000. Five years young and already obsolete. This infrastructure cost out of operating funds will be needed in perpetuity.

The Vancouver Board of Education has had to put a stark and bleak budget proposal on the table. Its response should be equally stark, but not so bleak.

The single most important part of the board's response should be loud, evidence-based, hard-hitting advocacy with a detailed plan that makes good use of all trustees in their role as leaders.

It should ignite public awareness and engagement and media interest about the reality of the provincial government's abrogation of responsibility for public education.

Government has ignored our pleas for 13 years. Now, it is time for more pressure. The Board should consider creating and submitting a deficit budget rather than passing a balanced, inadequate, harmful and irresponsible budget.

Perhaps the Board ought to operate the schools the way they should be run, until the money runs out. And then? Shut it down. Simply refuse to preside over the demise of the Public Education.

Either scenario would leave the Board in very difficult circumstances. You could be fired, it has happened. But consider the opportunity to mobilize for the November municipal election when we could place public education at the center of the civic agenda.

Well-funded, stable, valued public schools are good for the whole community - not a political add-on.

But the current reality is a freeze on capital spending; three years of upcoming, compounded cuts until 2017 and ongoing harm to the one system that provides the best opportunities for everyone.

It is time to put the provincial government on the hook. This strategy just might do it. •

May Day Greetings

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Great dinner, music, door prizes, refreshments & more!

Saturday, May 31
doors open 6 pm

Russian Hall, 600 Campbell Ave., Vancouver

Tickets \$20 (unwaged \$10), from People's Voice, 604-255-2041 email <newlabourpress1@gmail.com>



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Who fought to establish and protect...

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| 1) public education? | <input type="checkbox"/> Unions | <input type="checkbox"/> Corporations |
| 2) child care? | <input type="checkbox"/> Unions | <input type="checkbox"/> Corporations |
| 3) public health care? | <input type="checkbox"/> Unions | <input type="checkbox"/> Corporations |
| 4) women's rights? | <input type="checkbox"/> Unions | <input type="checkbox"/> Corporations |
| 5) unemployment insurance? | <input type="checkbox"/> Unions | <input type="checkbox"/> Corporations |
| 6) maternity/parental leave? | <input type="checkbox"/> Unions | <input type="checkbox"/> Corporations |
| 7) workplace safety laws? | <input type="checkbox"/> Unions | <input type="checkbox"/> Corporations |
| 8) higher minimum wage? | <input type="checkbox"/> Unions | <input type="checkbox"/> Corporations |
| 9) equity legislation? | <input type="checkbox"/> Unions | <input type="checkbox"/> Corporations |
| 10) improved Canada Pension? | <input type="checkbox"/> Unions | <input type="checkbox"/> Corporations |

Let's Keep making history

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EDITORIALS

Cracks in the Tory wall?

It appears that Stephen Harper's iron grip over his caucus may be a bit looser these days, at least around Bill C-23, the "(Un)Fair Elections Act." A Senate committee report, endorsed by Conservative members, calls for nine changes to the bill. One is to remove the "fundraising" exemption which would allow the Conservatives drive truckloads of cash through election spending limits. While any party could theoretically do the same, the proposal would give the Conservatives an enormous extra advantage, and result in a huge increase in political spending.

Another important amendment would allow Elections Canada to continue funding the Student Vote organization, and other voter education programs in schools. Apparently the senators are feeling the heat for Harper's blatant attempt to steal the next election long before the votes are counted.

Unfortunately, the Senate committee did not recommend the retention of vouching, where one registered voter verifies the identity and address of another voter. This critical change could deprive up to half a million Canadians of their right to vote, according to electoral experts, especially poor people, Aboriginal peoples, the elderly, many immigrants, and those in rural areas who lack the required "street address" ID. The elimination of vouching will almost certainly be challenged in court as a violation of the Charter guarantee of the right to vote.

And that gets to the heart of the matter. Like their ultra-right US Republican mentors, the Harper Tories pose the democratic right of casting a ballot as a suspicious or even criminal act, to be restricted by making it difficult for sections of the population less likely to vote Conservative.

The Senate amendments are an important reflection of public anger. But this odious legislation must be withdrawn completely, not tinkered with.

Scrap the TFWP

Under the guise of addressing shortages of skilled workers in certain regions or industries, the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) has been relentlessly expanded under the Harper Tories, as part of their core agenda to weaken the labour movement. New revelations about employer abuses of the TFWP have sparked more calls to change the program, or to shut it down.

Unity of all workers is the bedrock of our common struggle for social justice and equality. We must be vigilant against the divisive strategies of the bosses and pro-corporate governments, especially their attempt to fan hatred against workers from outside Canada. The demand to scrap the TFWP must not become a racist or narrow nationalist campaign. Today, capital flows unrestricted across borders in search of maximum returns, so working people must have the right to improve their own lives by seeking better employment, regardless of their passports, or their lack of formal documentation.

But the TFWP is not a form of solidarity extended by the ruling class to non-Canadian workers. In a recent Vancouver Sun interview, Dan Keely, President of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, claimed that Canadian youth burdened with student debt refuse to take fast food jobs, while foreign-born workers accept low wages and turn up for every shift. In other words, TFWP employees are considered to be reliable cheap labour.

Today, Macdonald's is being called out for its hiring practices, including reluctance to hire young Canadians. Yet this fast food giant raked in \$6 billion (US) profit during 2013. Clearly, such corporations can afford to pay higher wages. The TFWP is a deliberate government tool to help business maximize profits, at the expense of all working people, wherever we are from. The call to scrap the TFWP must be part of a wider struggle to build unity around the fight to put people before profits!

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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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Release trade unionist Shahrokh Zamani!

The UK-based Committee for the Defence of the Iranian People's Rights (CODIR) has called upon the labour and trade movement internationally to demand the release of Shahrokh Zamani, a trade unionist currently on hunger strike in Iran.

Zamani was sentenced to 11 years imprisonment for his trade union activities. Arrested in June 2011, he was convicted of "acting against national security by establishing or membership of groups opposed to the system" and "spreading propaganda against the establishment". These charges are widely used by the Iranian state to intimidate those engaged in trade union activity.

Zamani has been on hunger strike since March 8, 2014. The hunger strike began in the Gohar Dasht prison in solidarity with other political prisoners. Three days into the action the prison management transferred Zamani to Ghezel Hesar prison, with no explanation. Zamani has spent eight days in solitary confinement since his transfer to Ghezel Hesar prison. So far he has lost seventeen kilos. In Ghezel Hesar, 20,000

prisoners are held, including 13,000 on drug and criminal charges.

Zamani is a member of the Syndicate of Paint Workers of Tehran, but the regime does not recognise independent unions and many trade unionists have been arrested for attempting to organise such bodies.

A joint statement "holding the Islamic Republic of Iran responsible for Mr. Zamani's health and well-being", signed by trade unionists and progressive personalities globally, demands "immediate and unconditional release for all incarcerated workers and political prisoners in Iran."

"Solidarity work in defence of Iranian workers and trade unionists, who are engaged in a difficult struggle for better pay and conditions of work, is a vital part of CODIR's activities", said CODIR Assistant General Secretary, Jamshid Ahmadi. "We must work to ensure that the reality of life inside Iran for those fighting for basic rights is brought to the attention of their colleagues across the world."

CODIR regards the current

period as an important opportunity to pressure the government of President Hassan Rouhani, who was elected last year on a promise of reform inside Iran. The organization is keen to make sure that Rouhani's declared willingness to reform is tested on the domestic front, where there has been insignificant movement on trade union rights and the freeing of political prisoners.

"Those supporting Iranian trade unions must push to get the Iranian government to positively respond to their demands, for better pay and conditions and for trade union rights", continued Ahmadi. "We call on the government of Iran to enact ILO conventions 87 and 98 without delay."

Almost a year after Rouhani was elected on a platform of respect for human and democratic rights, the economy continues to struggle under the weight of economic sanctions. The regime's economic policy has brought more factory closures, unemployment, unpaid wages and poverty pay.

Letters urging the release of Shahrokh Zamani and other detained trade unionists can be sent to the following:

President Hassan Rouhani
<rouhani@csr.ir>
Ayatollah Ali Khamenei
<info@leader.ir>
Islamic Republic of Iran Judiciary
<ijpr@iranjudiciary.org>
and <info@judiciary.ir>
Ministry of Justice
<office@justice.ir>
Or by Twitter: @khamenei_ir;
@HassanRouhani



Association of Greek-Canadian
Veterans of the
National Resistance
(1941-1945)
290 Danforth Avenue,
Toronto, Ont., M4K 1N6
Tel. 416-466-2336

We send Greetings to all progressive
people on this May Day 2014



NO
to the
austerity
agenda

Solidarity this **Mayday**
Public sector workers club
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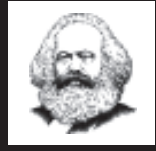
May Day 2014

UNITE AND FIGHT AGAINST
AUSTERITY AND WAR!

Stop the "Hudak Attack" in Ontario!

For Peace, Democracy and
Socialism!

Ontario Committee ~ Communist Party of Canada



Marxist Theory

Opposing global warming and supporting fascism

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

There's a supposed plot idea for a movie (or a novel) being circulated on the Internet at the moment that goes like this: 97 percent of the world's scientists contrive an environmental crisis, but are exposed by a plucky band of billionaires and oil companies.

I don't know if it has success written all over it, but it is certainly topical. The great majority of the naysayers about global warming are conservative, right-wing politicians with a vested interest in denying the reality of global warming. They represent or are financially dependent on corporations that market fossil fuels or manufacture goods that depend on or are derived from fossil fuels. They are provided with vocal support by a tiny group of scientists - almost none of whom are climate scientists - who nevertheless have discovered that they can achieve a certain amount of notoriety if not fame (and also oil company funding) by speaking out against global warming.

Every move by governments to protect the public from harmful products marketed with great gusto by greedy corporations has been met by those corporations digging up an obscure scientist who in return for corporate dollars is willing to go on an international lecture tour to deny that food additives are harmful, or that there is any link between cigarettes and cancer, heart disease and the rest, or that oil

drilling in the Arctic poses environmental risks, or that mean global temperatures are rising.

A number of commentators have pointed out the obvious: that if the deniers turn out to be right, and we unnecessarily restrict greenhouse gas emissions, turn away from fossil fuels and develop green sources of renewable energy, no great harm will have been done. We can wipe our brows, say "Phew!" and relax our restrictions if we wish. But the world will not have suffered any irreparable harm.

On the other hand, however, if the bulk of the scientific community is right, and we take no action to halt global warming (as Tony Abbott would have us do), then the world is going to see rising sea levels, galloping desertification, more destructive storms and droughts, and possibly the end of all life on Earth. Who in his right mind would take that risk, gambling the future of the planet on the assurances of the global warming deniers?

NITV (National Indigenous Television) is running a documentary series called Tipping Points. The two episodes I have seen were about the thawing of the Arctic permafrost. The scientists were working in Alaska, but the same thing is happening in Canada and Siberia: the permafrost is thawing out and melting. As one of the scientists said: five million years ago the Earth's temperature rose about five degrees, but it took several thousand years to do so. The latest cycle of global warming is also expected to raise the

temperature by up to five degrees - but in just the space of two centuries!

The scientists working on the thawing of the permafrost also point out that if the permafrost melts completely, it will release into the atmosphere all the CO2 and methane currently locked away in the frozen soil and water that comprises the permafrost. It is estimated that that would mean the release into the atmosphere of an additional two trillion tonnes of greenhouse gasses!

This is not a statistic that we can afford to ignore. We cannot simply hope that it will not be as bad as feared and do nothing, trusting in a handful of scientists who disagree with almost all their colleagues. And even they do not all deny the reality of global warming. Many of them simply don't agree that humans have caused it.

The common sense thing to do is to assume that humans have caused it, and to take all practical measures possible to change the practices believed responsible and reverse the process. As I said before, if it turns out to have been unnecessary, so what? Where's the harm? But if the climate scientists are right, and we ignore them, we will be playing fast and loose with the future of life on Earth.

Meanwhile, Western leaders have been playing fast and loose with the truth about the situation in Ukraine. The population in Crimea voted overwhelmingly in favour of union with Russia in a poll that was scrupulously fair and legal. The US government, of course,

wholeheartedly committed to democracy as it is, promptly announced that it would not recognise the results. Who cares what the people want? It's what Uncle Sam wants that counts!

Inevitably other Russian-speaking parts of Ukraine have demanded the right to vote on seceding from Ukraine and joining Russia, as the motley gang of fascists and ultra-nationalists who have seized control in Kiev try to impose their racist neo-fascist policies (with their anti-Jewish and anti-ethnic-Russian agenda) on the rest of the country.

It is being borne in on Western leaders that their heavy reliance on fascists in Ukraine (and also in Venezuela) may have been a tactical error, as it alerted the populace to the real nature of the forces supposedly "fighting for democracy". Significantly, the news footage of the people

demonstrating in favour of joining Russia has included numerous shots of people vocally and visibly opposing fascism.

In the 1970s in Chile, when the US was trying to destabilise the government of Salvador Allende, they mobilised (and paid) gangs of fascist thugs to take control of the streets away from the Left. This is clearly the same tactic they used in Kiev and are now trying to use in Venezuela. When it doesn't work, as it didn't in Chile and hasn't in Venezuela, they tend to drop all pretence of heeding the democratic will of the people and resort to an outright military coup.

Or they invade, in order ostensibly to restore order (and democracy, of course), which was their scenario in Libya, and would have been also in Syria had Russia not been so firm. That imperialism is so openly supporting fascists is a worry for the whole world. ●

Fernando Gonzalez urges freedom for his fellow fighters

Prensa Latina, HAVANA, April 15

Fernando Gonzalez, the Cuban who fought terrorist plots hatched from the United States against his country, made an urgent call here for the immediate liberation of his fellow fighters still held prisoner in the United States, a punishment he said was meant as vengeance for Cuba's revolutionary process.

"From the very beginning of this process we were conscious that we were being made to pay for being revolutionary Cubans," said Gonzalez, in reference to the case that has become known internationally as the case of the Cuban Five.

Fernando Gonzalez, Rene Gonzalez, Gerardo Hernandez, Ramon Labanino, and Antonio Guerrero were the five Cubans put on trial in Miami in 2001. The latter three remain incarcerated, while Fernando Gonzalez and Rene Gonzalez (no relation) are back in Cuba after having completed long sentences.

"We were punished for having worked on behalf of the Cuban people, on behalf of the Cuban revolution, and even for working for the U.S. people, since we thwarted terrorist actions that might have harmed them," said Gonzalez, in an interview posted at the Cubadebate website.

Regarding his return to Cuba, Gonzalez said he felt free "and not just as a result of having been released from prison. I have the freedom that I was denied in the United States. Here I have the freedom to do what I want, including political freedom."

He recalled that he was taken to Phoenix in a highly reinforced convoy, and later to Miami. The operation lasted some 36 hours.

"I was always handcuffed, and in the middle of this huge security operation that was a surprise to me. I was even handcuffed in the plane that brought me to Cuba, albeit with plastic cuffs, which were cut when the plane opened its door at Havana's Jose Marti airport. Only then did I feel free," he said.

Gonzalez said he was grateful for the international support for the Five and urged a continuation of the struggle to free Gerardo (condemned to two life sentences plus 15 years), Ramon (30 years) and Antonio (21 years and 10 months). "Our friends in solidarity throughout the world must continue pushing for the three to be released and returned to Cuba as soon as possible," he stressed. ●



The Fifth of the Month to Free the Five

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

E-mail: president@whitehouse.gov

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

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

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

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

Bill C-23 must not pass, say small registered parties

In our previous issue, we reported that registered political parties currently without representation in the House of Commons met recently in Ottawa to discuss Bill C-23, "An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act and to make consequential amendments to certain Acts".

Unfortunately, a news conference planned for April 11 was cancelled due to unforeseen circumstances. But the parties listed below agreed to issue the following statement. These parties are also concerned about many provisions in Bill C-23 aside from those outlined here. Many of these concerns remain, despite the recommendations for several amendments, issued on April 15 by the Senate committee studying C-23.

The Conservative Party of Canada, overseen by Prime Minister Stephen Harper, is hoping to steal the next federal election. Bill C-23, the so-called Fair Elections Act, is their game plan. We are working together to stop the Conservatives, and to protect every Canadian's right to vote in a fair and honest election that is free of voter suppression schemes, of election fraud, of the denial of fundamental rights, and all

watched over by an independent and effective Elections Canada.

The Conservatives and Stephen Harper are terrified because they can't win a fair election; they hope they can win a rigged one.

Opposition to Stephen Harper's Bill C-23 is almost universal, condemned by national and international election officials



and experts on democracy and elections. It is supported only by Conservative politicians who hope to benefit from its worst provisions. Bill C-23 helps people commit election fraud and get away with it; encourages mayhem, confusion, and long delays on election day; and deprives hundreds of thousand of Canadians of their right to vote.

Bill C-23 goes even further. It prevents Elections Canada from warning Canadians who are targeted by fraud and voter

suppression schemes. It even bars Elections Canada from encouraging citizens to vote, especially youth, new Canadians and First Nations people.

From now until the next election and beyond, if necessary, we will be working together to protect Canadians from Stephen Harper's and the Conservatives' cowardly, self-serving attack on their fundamental right to vote. We will fight for our fellow Canadians and their hard won rights wherever we can - in the courts, in the streets, in elections, on social media, in class rooms - wherever Canadians who believe in democratic rights and honest government gather.

We reach out to all Canadians to help us stop Stephen Harper and the Conservatives stealing their elections and stealing their rights.

- *Animal Alliance Environment Voters Party of Canada*
 - *Canadian Action Party*
 - *Christian Heritage Party*
 - *Communist Party of Canada*
 - *Libertarian Party of Canada*
 - *Marijuana Party of Canada*
 - *Marxist-Leninist Party of Canada*
 - *Party for Accountability, Competency and Transparency*
 - *Pirate Party of Canada*
 - *Progressive Canadian Party*
 - *Rhinoceros Party*

Three candidates in CLC president race

PV Vancouver Bureau

The 27th Canadian Labour Congress convention opens May 5 in Montreal. For the first time in memory, there are now three candidates for president, including the incumbent, Ken Georgetti, who has held the position for fifteen years.

The first to come forward was Hassan Hussein, who has a strong track record as a labour and community organizer in Ontario. Hussein quickly won endorsements from union bodies and activists who see the need for stronger militant strategies. Then, CLC Secretary-Treasurer Hassan Yussuff entered the race in mid-April, issuing an open letter titled "Leadership for a Bold Labour Movement."

Yussuff, who has held that position since 2002, was born in Guyana, becoming a trade unionist in Ontario's auto plant sector. He argues that "There is a wind of change blowing in Canada's trade union movement," and he wants to "give voice to that change and work with you to lead our movement."

His statement goes on to say, "There is a desire and a demand to return to the offensive for rights and progress for workers after decades of retreat and decline. There is an eagerness for new leadership that is truly reflective

of the diverse reality of today's working class and ready to step forward with new energy and creativity. There is a need for a new labour movement using its power and resources to connect and give leadership to social movements for democracy and sustainability..."

In an implicit critique of the Georgetti leadership, Yussuff continues, "The movement can continue to tell itself that it is doing all it can; that we still hold influence in spite of years of right-wing economic policy and US-Republican style politics; that the CLC's ongoing campaign for CPP expansion has kept this social priority on the national agenda; that two-tier contracts are not as prevalent here as south of the border. But the reality is that the lives of workers and their families are getting tougher; both in their workplaces and their communities."

Yussuff adds, "When labour fails to mobilize its members and to impact employers and governments in the workplace and in the streets, it will have limited effect on decisions."

He calls for "a more inclusive and respectful leadership at the CLC," reflecting a widely held view that the current leadership has not acted in such a manner, either towards labour's community partners or even its own affiliates.

The current proposal to gut the authority and powers of local labour councils may be the most visible example.

Speaking to People's Voice, several rank and file or mid-level trade union activists have asked whether Yussuff is too closely identified with the current leadership to make the changes which are necessary to reinvigorate the CLC.

The first candidate for president, Hassan Hussein, has drawn attention to the serious issues facing working people, while also calling for major changes to the CLC's structure and approach.

In a new document called "My commitment - The first 100 days and beyond," Hussein makes specific proposals, including immediate consultations with Federations of Labour and Labour Councils about their issues and struggles, and enhanced financial and staff resources for the Labour Councils.

He promises to reduce the number of Executive Assistants to the President (from 4 to 1), and allocate those resources to staff support in the field. Pledging to lead by example, Hussein would also reduce his own pay and compensation, helping to "free up resources more usefully put towards grassroots organizing and local leadership development."

He hopes to "work with affiliates on developing cross-union training sessions for members on organizing drives and effective mobilizations.... Working with affiliates, Federations and Labour Councils, I will develop online resources to help workers in labour disputes and to build labour solidarity with workers on strike. I will modernize the CLC's use of social media to spread the word on workers struggles to union members and social movement allies in an immediate and popular way."

And pledging to go further, he calls for an "open dialogue between the CLC and our allies in the social justice community on ways to support each other and build a broad coalition to challenge the austerity agenda and build an inclusive, democratic country."

This would start with cross-Canada "Fairness Works" town halls around Labour Day 2014 "to engage the activist base of our movement and to broaden the campaign beyond television ads. Community and social movement allies would be included."

Hussein would also open a discussion on labour's program for the 2015 federal election at the Canadian Council, with Labour Councils and online, so that the CLC can "position itself as an important voice in the organizing that has already begun in the country to get rid of the Harper Conservatives and their anti-worker, anti-democratic and big business agenda."

"We need an independent labour vision and platform to mobilize members, present to the political parties who want to form the next federal government, and engage our allies," he argues.

Hussein wants to "place equality issues at the heart of the work of the Canadian Labour Congress. The role of the Women's

and Equity Vice-Presidents and of the committees of equality-seeking groups will be critical sources of ideas."

He promises to "meet at the first opportunity with these worker representatives to seek advice about the campaigns and issues facing equality-seeking members, about what role the labour

movement should be playing and about how we integrate equality into all of the CLC's campaigns."

He concludes, "My commitment is to find every way possible to listen to and engage our union activists and leaders in developing our vision and in mobilizing our members for positive social change." •

VDLC slams "Fair Elections Act"

By Peter Marcus, Vancouver

The Vancouver and District Labour Council had two speakers at its monthly meeting on April 15. Peter Leahy of the International Longshore Workers Union (ILWU) spoke about the International Transport Federation, which serves as an advocate for transport workers around the world, particularly seafarers who often face horrid conditions.

Denis Lemelin, National President of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers, talked about the attack of the federal Conservative government against his union.

The VDLC resolved to endorse a letter being sent to Prime Minister Harper on the first year anniversary of the Bangladesh factory collapse, and to participate in an action on April 24. Delegates authorized a \$100 dollar donation and to help promote the "On to Ottawa" Caravan to Ottawa and the August 21-24 People's Social Forum.

The delegates also endorsed a call to "decline approval" of the proposed "Fair Elections Act," and replace it with reform incorporating the proposals of Elections Canada for enforceable standards for the conduct of parties, for voters to challenge election results obtained through fraud or corrupt or illegal practices, and to protect voters from future election fraud.

Joey Hartman, president of the VDLC, reported that the Metro Vancouver Alliance's first meeting held recently at the Maritime Labour Center hosted 650 people. She noted that there will be a rally on May 1 in support of locked out IKEA Richmond workers who have been on a picket line for almost a year.

The May Day march on Commercial Drive in Vancouver will be led by the Carnival Band, and author Mark Leirer will speak at the rally. Hundreds of Unite Here Local 40 workers were laid off at Roger's Arena, and have to re-apply for the same jobs on line, despite the fact that some have little or no computer skills. Hartman mentioned that as a delegate representing the VDLC, she will officially remain neutral in the campaign by three candidates for presidency of the Canadian Labour Congress taking place May 4-9 in Montreal.

The health care facilities group of unions, dominated by the Hospital Employees' Union, will be taking strike votes as negotiations are at a virtual standstill due to the intransigence of the employers and the provincial government. The Day of Mourning for dead and injured workers will be observed at 12 noon on April 28, at New Westminster Quay. •

May Day Greetings!



**Unite and Fight against
Austerity and War!
For Peace, Democracy
and Socialism!**

East Toronto Club ~ CPC



**Unite Against War
and Imperialism!**

CanadianPeaceCongress.ca

LATIN AMERICAN SOLIDARITY COMMITTEE-SASKATOON

On International Workers' Day, we honour the courage of those on the front lines of struggles, and the past achievements of people's movements in shaping this country.

We stand up against attacks on our public services, including the privatization of education. We call for the respect of all workers migrating from all nations. We oppose Canada's ongoing colonial relations with Indigenous peoples and its imperialist foreign policies that accelerate displacement and environmental destruction around the world.

Organize, unite and fight, for an alternative to the neoliberal capitalist agenda, spearheaded by the Harper and Wall governments.

On May 1st, celebrate International Workers' Day in Saskatoon!

Meet at the Peace Monument in Rotary Park at 6 PM, for speakers, performances, free food, and a march to Friendship Park. For info, email <info@maydaysaskatoon.ca>.

**Let's make May Day an example of our
determination and solidarity!**

Celebrate People's Movements!

Labour Council changes could stifle grassroots activism

By Sam Hammond

Delegates to the 2011 Canadian Labour Congress convention adopted a new structure comprised of the Canadian Council, the Executive Committee and the National Campaign Committee.

Since its 1956 founding from the merger of the Trades and Labour Congress and the Congress of Canadian Labour, the CLC has evolved from a delegate-driven body that elected all its Officers and Executives, to an affiliate governed body. The Canadian Council comprises 75 not elected at Convention, and 10 elected at Convention: the President, the Secretary Treasurer, two executive Vice-Presidents, five Equity Vice-Presidents and one Youth Vice-President.

This last and most drastic structural move completed a fifty-five year metamorphosis, from a leadership elected by a rank and file Convention, to a governing body of professional trade unionists selected outside of Convention and imposed on the delegate body. In this historic flip, the majority had become the instruments of the few.

The major eruption in 2011 Convention came from the Labour Councils and the Labour Council Caucus, which were completely left out of the new model of governance. Despite the knee-jerk genuflection to the importance of the grassroots Labour Councils, the "boots on the ground" of policy and organization, they were completely shut out of the Canadian Council and even worse, the National Campaign Committee. Nor was their role or connection to the National Campaign Committee defined. Understandingly this created major angst. But the Canadian Council was ready, and proposed and carried a resolution instructing the "Commission on Structural Review" to:

* review the structure, the role, the finances, the capacity and the effectiveness of labour councils and federations of labour;

* examine ways to encourage

increased participation and activism by union members at the local and regional level by examining new ways for activists to become engaged and work together;

* explore ways to ensure that the CLC Constitution is enforced so that all affiliated unions shoulder their responsibility in the finance

How we see it....

and capacity building of the federations and labour councils; and

* report regularly to the Executive Committee and Canadian Council on this review.

The Canadian Council then established a "Labour Council Task Force" to report back to the Commission on Structural Review, which it did in September 2013. The five member "Task Force" was chaired by Paul Moist from CUPE. It met with local union presidents and Labour Council presidents in twelve communities between October 2012 and May 2013.

The Report contains all the bland requisites to compliment the role and importance of Labour Councils, but ignores completely the financial obligations of the CLC, and stresses involvement in electoral politics. It talks of many things the Labour Councils should deal with, but leaves the onus on the Councils themselves. It defines problems, but tends to leave them hanging. It encourages involvement with labour's allies, and very close co-operation with social action groups. This is of course positive.

Out of the Report there flows a Resolution to the Canadian Council, which reliable sources say will go unchanged for adoption at the 2014 Convention. The Resolution has 11 recommendations. The first two are as follows:

1. The CLC will develop a set of model by-laws for labour councils, containing a preamble specifying the focus of labour councils as follows:

- engage in political action by participating in municipal, provincial and federal election campaigns;

- conduct ongoing political activism: addressing local issues, working with community groups, lobbying and advocacy of municipal councils, school boards, members of provincial legislatures and members of Parliament;

- participate in campaigns of the CLC, federations of labour and affiliates by providing support and coordination;

- engage in media relations and public communications campaigns to raise the profile of the labour movement in the community;

- communicate with affiliates and union members to provide information on important issues; and

- promote the identity of the labour movement by organizing events for designated days, such as Labour Day, Day of Mourning, International Women's Day, National Aboriginal Day, December 6.

Any variation of the model by-laws must be approved by the President of the Congress.

2. The CLC will convene an annual meeting of local union ranking officers and designated affiliate staff in each labour council region to:

- develop a strategic plan with goals and objectives for the community;

- elect a labour council executive from the affiliate representatives; the term of office for the executive will be three years; and

- create working groups and

committees which will involve affiliates; these could include strike and bargaining support, community outreach, municipal election campaign, media relations, and union communications and campaigns.

The other nine points cover education and training, secure on-line sites for local union and Labour Council officers, develop and maintain a data-base, effective communication strategies, guidelines for retiree and community groups, involvement of CURC and retiree chapters of local unions, young worker involvement and on-line financial reporting.

What are the big changes? The set of model by-laws are unknown at this time, but can only be amended with the permission of the CLC President. Veto power over by-laws which are as yet unknown and will be written without consultation. Governance by decree.

The biggest change is in Section 2. The CLC, Local Union ranking officers and designated affiliate staff (which staff and designated by whom?) will meet in each region to elect an executive for three years, create working groups and committees and develop a strategic plan.


Whatever happened to delegates? If they still exist, they will have an executive, committees

and working groups provided for them by Local Union officers and designated staff (janitors? CLC Staff Reps?) who they may never see again for three years. The Labour Councils will no longer be delegate-driven bodies, and we do not even know if they will have elected delegates.


The proposed role of the Labour Councils will be transmission belts for campaigns decided at higher levels of the bureaucratized CLC. The Resolution destroys the last vestiges of ground level creativity and decision making. The result will be a contrived and controlled local bureaucracy, a mirror image of the higher unelected bodies created in 2011, which will stifle the last traces of local autonomy, input and activism by the rank and file.

What is in the minds of the Canadian Council? Is there no moral commitment to democracy? Is it fear of the membership or contempt that devises the stratagem of "we know what's best"? Is it necessary to control everything from the top? Is this the way to build strong community roots? Did anyone consider involving a delegation from every Labour Council to develop proposals for their own governance, and request finances and services from the Canadian Council? That would certainly weld unity and restore confidence. The present Resolution will not. ●

Vancouver & District
Labour Council



Greetings of Solidarity
May Day 2014
International Day of the Worker



A day of unity for workers
of all countries.

*Many small differences may divide us but
our common interests as workers unite us!*

MAY DAY GREETINGS!

**Defend the
rights of
immigrant
workers!**

Lower Fraser Club,
Communist Party
of Canada

**Salute to
workers
on May
Day 2014!**

**Nanaimo
Club CPC**

MAY DAY GREETINGS

From CUPE Local 1004
Vancouver BC

**Serving our community
since 1911**



Unite Against War and Imperialism!



**Toronto Association for
Peace and Solidarity**

THE CORPORATE ATTACK ON YOUTH IN CANADA

The Young Communist League will hold its central convention May 24-25 in Toronto. We reprint here some excerpts of the political resolution under debate by YCL members across the country, from the section on "The Corporate Attack On Youth In Canada."

Young people searching for a concrete example of the attack by big business in Canada have to look no further than the last three budgets of the Harper Tories: liquidating basic labour and environmental regulations and offering in exchange the promise of further privatization, precarious work, unemployment, inaccessible education, and the shackles of prison or cannon-fodder in new imperialist wars.

In many ways, our claim as the YCL-LJC has been confirmed: every problem confronting the youth is connected with the serious political problems in Canada, the Harper government's anti-people and anti-environment austerity agenda, and the capitalist economic crisis. The way the problem is presented is either/or: it's either accessible education or health, either money for youth or money for seniors. This is a false paradigm.

As the Communist Party wrote in its May Day statement last year, from the perspective of the ruling class, the weakening of the trade union movement is the key to reducing the cost of labour power, and not only among organized workers. They know that such reductions will put tremendous downward pressure on the wages and incomes of all workers, most of whom have no union protection. Finance capital realizes that the labour movement - because of its size, resources, ability to take job action, and organization - is the only social/class force capable of uniting broad sections of the people against its offensive.

The first target of the new Harper majority after the 2011 election was organized labour (CUPW, the Air Canada and CP Rail workers, etc.). The second target in 2012 was Employment Insurance. The Harper Conservatives "war on labour" in the federal jurisdiction gave a green light to right wing provincial and municipal governments to demand that workers yield concessions or face the legislative hammer, such as Ontario's attack on the bargaining rights of teachers. Since 1982, federal and provincial governments in Canada have passed 199 pieces of legislation to restrict, suspend or deny collective bargaining rights. What is qualitatively new is the speed, ferocity and punitive nature of these legislative attacks.

At its core, this offensive aims

at crippling and ultimately destroying the organized labour movement. The federal passage of C-377, requiring unions to disclose salaries, time spent on political activities and expenses, was only the beginning. There are now ominous signals that the Harper

living standards. The enemy of Canadian workers is not our sisters and brothers from other countries, but rather the anti worker policies of the federal government and the big corporations.

The other attack on workers outside of the organized labour movement is in cuts to Employment Insurance. These are not simply a cut in federal funding to a social program. They are cuts to a system into which all working people must directly pay into, no matter who they are, and which is intended to guarantee employment. The working class majority, whose sweat and toil by

land and resources, and that only genuine equality of all nations in this country, large and small, can begin to overcome this ongoing genocidal policy...

Recent policies of the Harper Conservatives have made matters worse. Budget bills C-38 and C-45 prompted mass united resistance in the form of Idle No More in the Winter of 2012-2013. Bill C-45 included changes to the Indian Act that makes it easier to lease out reserve land for economic development without adequate consultation with First Nations. Bill C-45 also, strips protections from 99 percent of lakes and rivers

often live in poor quality housing.

Life expectancy is 8-20 years less for Indigenous peoples due to extreme poverty. On average, 50 percent of First Nations children live below the poverty line. Teen suicide rates are much higher among Aboriginal youth. In Nunavut, the rate of death by suicide among Inuit is currently 10 times the Canadian suicide rate.

Many young Aboriginal women and men also wind-up in jail or on the streets. While 4.3 percent of the Canadian population identifies as Aboriginal, 20 percent of the male prison population and 32.6 percent of women prisoners are Aboriginal.

The Harper government has continued to ignore treaties, give mining and oil companies blank cheques, continue unequal funding for education and housing, bury land claims, and in general exacerbate this crisis. In short: a war has and continues to be waged against all Aboriginal peoples. A slow and steady genocide has been committed against First Nations, the Metis and Inuit peoples. We are all on Aboriginal land, and the idea of the treaties was to share and share alike what this land has to offer. Now it is time for the state and corporations to pay the rent! The concept of land ownership was unheard of, until colonial governments forced it upon Aboriginal peoples. Sharing and cooperation were trampled by capitalist values of exploitation of land, profit from misery and feelings of superiority. (Solidarity statement with National Aboriginal Day, 2009).

All these policies amount to genocide and can only be reversed by respect for Aboriginal sovereignty and self-determination.

The attack on young women

Women account for 50.4% of the Canadian population but they still make just 75% of male salaries in Canada (which is not far from the global average of 70%). Likewise, women make up the vast majority in part time and precarious jobs (80% of part time workers in the world, 67.5% in 2009 across Canada). Since 1980, the number of women having part time jobs around the world has more than doubled, which is also true in Canada. Because of this situation, the 2013 Employment Insurance reforms of the Conservatives will most likely have a greater negative affect on women who in general have less access to programs based on the number of hours. Moreover, the job lost with the economic crisis has especially affected young women through unemployment but also an increase in violence against young women.

As women celebrate the 2014 International Women's Day, many struggles they face are still long-haul demands. Large sectors of the economy and jobs are still closed to women, while other sectors remain are still "female ghettos" continues. These so-called job ghettos are generally

see CORPORATE, page 15



YCL members at the International Women's Day 2014 march in Toronto. (Photo: Ed Bil)

Conservatives are preparing to impose "right to work" legislation on all workers under federal jurisdiction. "Back to work legislation violates the basic rights of working people by subverting the rights of their unions to fair collective bargaining and the use of legal strike action," we said when Harper's first waves of attacks came against CUPW.

The shift to the use of temporary, non-unionized workers, paid minimal wages and benefits, is part of a wider reactionary agenda which the Harper government, and its pro corporate counterparts at the provincial and municipal levels, are carrying through on behalf of finance capital. Their goal is to accelerate the accumulation of capital through every conceivable means (privatization, state-restructuring, corporate tax cuts, etc.), and to weaken and suppress working class and popular resistance. Positively, temporary workers can now unionize - at least in theory. There are three-times more temporary workers in Canada since 2002, and immigration from temporary workers has outpaced immigration on a route to becoming citizens.

At the same time, right wing forces fan the flames of racism, blaming migrants for high unemployment and declining

"hand and brain" has produced all the wealth in this country, are being robbed.

The federal government has built up a huge surplus of \$57 billion since the mid-1990s, the result of deep cuts in benefits paid to unemployed workers and rules that prevent most unemployed workers from qualifying for benefits at all.

In rural and coastal areas, like the homelands of the Acadian people, the government has never shown any interest in building infrastructure so that there can be work all year long. It is the work which is seasonal, not the workers, who are not to blame for the structure of the economy. Rather, EI is an essential subsidy to big capital in these regions to keep their work force afloat on "the pogy".

The economic system imposed on us has brought with it a reduction in secure employment and a massive increase in precarious work.

Mass unemployment benefits the wealthy by holding down wage rates. Marx called it "the surplus army of labour." This basic truth is behind the Harper government's move to reduce access to Employment Insurance, by forcing jobless workers to apply for any available opening, regardless of qualifications and the conditions of the job.

Aboriginal peoples & youth

For years, the ruling class has painted Canada as a happy and unified country where everyone gets a fair deal, including Aboriginal peoples. But a new wave of Aboriginal struggle has made it clear that Canada was built on the theft of Aboriginal people's

REDS ON THE WEB

www.communist-party.ca

www.peoplesvoice.ca

www.ycl-ljc.ca

rebelyouth-magazine.blogspot.com

<http://solidnet.org>

May Day 2014: our struggle for the future

May Day message from the Central Executive Committee, Communist Party of Canada

This May Day 2014, more than five years have passed since the US housing bubble burst and quickly spread to a global financial crisis, the most acute and dangerous since the 1930s. The neo-liberal agenda of the main imperialist powers had exported a global movement of unregulated and unrestrained capital, free trade agreements, a glut of super exploitation, theft of public property and privatization of public services, provoking a crisis so acute in its scale and breadth that it threatened collapse.

The managers of imperialism could not repair their own damage so they bought themselves a temporary reprieve by plundering public property, expropriating public funds to rebuild bankrupted enterprises, transferring funding for social programs and superstructure from the public purse into their investment houses. They richly rewarded themselves, increasing military budgets, and corrupting markets to the extent that it has created a world unemployment crisis, terrible privation, hunger, disease and war.

Imperialism, the last stage of capitalism, is in an incurable stagnancy marked by declining rates of profit which in turn brought on the crisis, a crisis which is not just cyclical but also structural in nature. If the rate of profit has declined, the absolute volume of profit has not.

Never in the history of humanity has been so much wealth expropriated by so few, from so many. This grisly achievement rests on the shoulders of impoverishment, hunger, disease, environmental degradation and war. Political leaders who refuse,

or even hesitate, to deliver their nations into the gristmill of unrestricted capital are targeted.

Yet the people resist and create new leaders because the opposite of exploitation is struggle, resistance, socialism. The flashpoints of resistance in Europe, Latin America, Africa and Asia on the front lines of anti-imperialism are a living phenomenon that represents the global undercurrent

the ruling class that enriches itself at the expense of our social programs, that seeks to fill their bank accounts with the proceeds of privatization, the sell-off of our natural resources, the stolen dreams of our precariously existing youth and the continuing plunder of the indigenous peoples.

According to David Macdonald, Senior Economist at The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, "Canada's wealthiest 86 people represent only 0.002% of the population but they're so flush they could buy absolutely everything owned by every person

universal tuition-free education, or anything that gives us a modicum of democracy and social security. The truth is that we, the working people of Canada, cannot afford them.

The Harper Tories and the people they represent seek a larger share in the global plunder of imperialism, and a bigger role in the military subjugation of peoples. They seek to shed the cloak of junior partners and dream of full partnership in the imperialist camp. They offer our young people the choice between the military, the food banks, or the part-time

our family.

There is a growing ripple of unrest in our country that has not yet found reflection in the trade union leadership, has not found its conscious realization of what precisely is wrong, has not resulted in the articulation of class struggle expressed in program and ideology. It is part of the undercurrent of global unrest, the potential of developing struggle, and it exists in thousands of minor skirmishes every day wherever people labour, in the proud struggle of indigenous nations, in the struggle of students.

It is just as natural for working people to struggle and organize as it is to live and work. The brave people who demonstrated at the G20 in Toronto, the proud Six Nations people who still refuse to give up the Douglas Creek Land, the Idle No More movement, the Occupy movement, the Quebec students and many, many other struggles - all these demonstrate the beginnings of what is coming, demonstrate what consciousness and organization can accomplish.

May Day is a time of reflection of past struggles, a time to remember martyrs and fighters, landmarks of our history, international solidarity and awareness of self, class consciousness. The most important thing that International May Day brings is the realization that all our culture, our martyrs and our struggles are for the future, for a vision of a future free from exploitation, war and greed. A future of peace and prosperity. That is why the concept of May Day must be on the streets, in the workplaces, in internationalist solidarity and in the unbreakable expression of the people's will, unshakeable, anti-imperialist and visionary.

That vision is socialism, and that is the vision of the Communist Party. •



of massive and developing fightback. The imperialist response is destruction of civil liberties, the corruption of democracy and the development of militarism and war as domestic and foreign policy.

In Canada the Harper Tories represent the most rapacious elements of capital, that section of

in New Brunswick, they could buy up all of New Brunswickers' cars, all of their houses, all of their undeveloped land, all of their stocks, bonds, pension funds and RRSPs, all of their jewelry, all of their furniture-everything-and still have billions to spare."

Yet they tell us we cannot afford denticare, pharmacare, childcare,

existence of the fast food services. Every month they engineer figures to show unemployment is decreasing and every month there are more unemployed.

They manufacture the lie of labour and skill shortages so they can use the "Temporary Foreign Worker Program" to hold down wages and super-exploit trafficked "guest-workers" from other countries, while maintaining high levels of unemployment to keep our young people desperate and vulnerable. The "guest workers" are our brothers and sisters who they seek to use and then discard. But we are not deceived, we will embrace them and fight for them because they are of our class, of



**Unite for peace, jobs, equality and democracy!
Defeat the Harper Tories!**

MAY DAY GREETINGS



**Central Committee,
Communist Party of Canada**

www.communist-party.ca

MAY DAY 2014

**Greetings from the
Friends of the KKE
Toronto**

**MAY DAY GREETINGS
to working people in British Columbia**

Stop the attack on the BC Ferry system

*No to tar sands pipelines and tankers - defend jobs
and the environment on the West Coast*

B.C. Provincial Committee, Communist Party of Canada

706 Clark Drive, Vancouver, V5L 3J1
604-254-9836 cpinfo.bc@gmail.com



May Day Greetings

Stop fascism and austerity!

**Unite for peace, social
justice and labour rights!**

**Vancouver East Club, CPC
604-255-2041**

Colombia: Popular Agrarian Summit Calls for Strike

By Zoe Pepper Cunningham, a researcher for the McGill Research Group Investigating Canadian Mining Companies in Latin America. This article first appeared at <http://mrzine.monthlyreview.org/2014>

A national strike in Colombia - involving groups of indigenous peoples, Afro-Colombians, students, women, small miners, petroleum workers, and campesinos (farmers) - may begin on May 1st.

The decision to strike if the government does not respond by the first week of May was made during the Peasant, Ethnic, and Popular Agrarian Summit, held March 15-17 in Bogota. Over 4,000 delegates, activists, and leaders converged in the capital to discuss issues facing the agrarian and popular sectors.

For some delegations, this meant traveling 30 hours on a bus, or facing threats and intimidation during their journeys. For example, on the night of March 13, three armed masked men attacked a bus carrying a delegation from the

southern department of Nariño on the Pan-American Highway. The attackers fired their guns several times inside the bus, injured the driver, and proceeded to threaten and rob the passengers. Despite these challenges, people arrived at the summit energized and ready to participate in this historic moment of social and political organizing.

The summit is part of an ongoing attempt by Colombia's social organizations to provide space for people to articulate the problems they are facing and to collectively create solutions for a new order in the country. This process was constructed after the agrarian strike in 2013, when campesinos took to the streets and demanded an end to displacements, exploitation of labor, land and resource expropriation by multinational corporations and the government, and international free trade agreements; and a right to a dignified life.

The economic situation for small farmers in Colombia drastically deteriorated in 2011, when the free trade agreement between the United States and Colombia was signed and the free

trade agreement with Canada was implemented. Between 2011 and 2013 agricultural imports to Colombia increased by 70%. Colombia now imports large quantities of cheap rice, corn, potatoes, meat, chicken, and milk from the U.S. and Canada (all products of small farmers in Colombia). The free trade agreements have also strengthened the agro-industrial sector within Colombia and encouraged the monoculture of cash crops, such as African palm oil, and trees on large-scale plantations. African palm oil has been at the center of the cash crop boom because it is an agrofuel, but its cultivation has grave impacts on the life of campesinos. First, because it is not a food product it creates dependence on food imports and weakens food sovereignty within Colombia. Second, the cultivation of African palm oil deteriorates the quality of the soil and prevents future use of the soil for other plants. Moreover, the free trade agreements have served to impoverish the local producers of these products and bolster the economies of wealthy North American countries.

The agrarian strike began on August 19, 2013. Campesinos from the petroleum sector, small-mining sector, potato-growing sector, milk-production sector, and coffee-production sector mobilized in 22 departments across the country. Campesinos and their allies participated in a variety of actions, such as long-term

roadblocks on highways and marches in Colombia's major cities. The mobilizations during the strike resulted in 19 dead, 600 injured, and hundreds detained.

The government responded to the strike with the "Pact for Agrarian and Rural Development," which was essentially a development program for the agro-industrial elites, favoring the industrial monoculture of exportable cash crops while largely ignoring the problems of small subsistence farmers. The minister of agriculture recently proclaimed: "I am not a friend of the poor campesinos who only farm for self-support and no more." Given that the strike was realized by small farmers whose livelihoods have been threatened by free trade agreements and agro-industrial production, this pact was widely criticized and rejected by social movements.

Thus, on September 12, 2013, agrarian, campesino, indigenous, Afro-Colombian, and popular organizations participated in the Agrarian Summit to discuss and evaluate the different experiences of the strike. One of the major conclusions was the necessity to have a consolidated list of demands during negotiations with the government. On December 13, around 250 leaders from Colombian organizations met in Bogota for the Agrarian Pre-Summit to analyze the government negotiation tables and to plan for the Popular Agrarian Summit of

Campesinos, Indigenous, and Afros in 2014. The grand summit in 2014 was planned as a space where people from across the country could meet and construct a united list of demands and plan the next mobilizations with which to advance them.

The Agrarian Summit was a success by all accounts. Working groups convened to discuss issues that were raised during the strike such as land, collective territories, and territoriality systems; a campesino subsistence economy vs. the model of spoliation; mining and energy; illicit cultivations of coca, marijuana, and opium poppy; political rights, guarantees, victims, and justice; social rights (health care and education); relationship between the city and the countryside; and peace, social justice, and a political solution. Participants wove their own personal and community experiences in with the broader social, economic, and political context to analyze these themes and make sharp critiques.

The discussions after the working groups' meetings were dedicated to creating plans for future mobilizations. In all of the discussions, unanimous consensus was reached that there must be another national strike. Delegates stressed that this strike cannot just be of the agrarian sector: the next strike will be a national agrarian, civic, popular, and urban strike. The resolutions were used to create a strong united agenda which will be used in future government negotiations.

When the strike commences, thousands will be taking their voices and demands to the streets. Folks in many regions have already started strategizing their mobilizations, choosing key locations for roadblocks of multinational corporations and their operations, or key locations on the inter-country highways used to export and import goods. Stay tuned during this exciting moment in Colombian history!

Participating organizations in the summit include, but not limited to, Mesa de Interlocución Agraria (MIA - Roundtable of Agrarian Dialogue), Coordinador Nacional Agrario (CNA - National Agrarian Coordinator), Congreso de los Pueblos (Peoples' Congress), Proceso de Comunidades Negras (PCN - Process of Black Communities), Mesa de Unidad Agraria (MUA - Agrarian Unity Roundtable), Coalición de Movimientos y Organizaciones Sociales de Colombia (COMOSOC - Coalition of Social Movements and Organizations of Colombia), Organización Nacional Indígena de Colombia (ONIC - National Indigenous Organization of Colombia), Movimiento por la Constituyente Popular (MCP - Movement for the Popular Constituent Assembly), Marcha Patriótica (Patriotic March), Federación Nacional Sindical Unitaria Agropecuaria (FENSUAGRO - National United Agriculture and Livestock Trade Union Federation), Asociación Nacional de Zonas de Reserva Campesina (ANZORC - National Association of Peasant Reserve Zones), and Asociación Campesina Popular (Popular Peasant Association). ●

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MAY DAY 2014

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WFTU meets with Arab trade unions

Interview with George Mavrikos, General Secretary of the World Federation of Trade Unions, about the Arab Trade Union Conference, in Athens on May 10-12, 2014.

Which is the objective of the meeting held in Athens?

An international meeting of Arab trade union organizations will take place with the initiative of the WFTU. The participation will be very large.

Trade union members and friends of the WFTU are invited. It will be an open, democratic, modern trade union Conference, where each trade union will speak freely, will contribute its positions. The developments in the Arab world, Middle East, the Mediterranean, the Gulf are critical, are important and in this Conference we will discuss the tasks, the role of the trade unions and the workers for this period.

The Conference will discuss about the labour issues, the salaries, the social security rights for workers. It is a clear fact that salaries are low, unemployment is terrifying. Trade union rights for the working women concern us, the needs of the youth are high. All these topics will be discussed openly and concrete resolutions will be taken. Resolutions for action. Amongst our objectives, is also the functioning of WFTU offices in more countries in the region so that the presence of the WFTU will strengthen at the regional and sectoral level.

Although you are originally from Greece, you have met many Arab trade unionists. What is your opinion about the Arab trade union movement?

I was born and raised in a small Greek island with 2,000 inhabitants by a family of cattlemen. Our history, our culture, our traditions, our land are similar to the Arabic. We both, Arabs and Greeks have great civilizations. Hence, I feel as a true brother to the Arab workers.

It is true that I have met, I have cooperated, I have worked with great Arab trade union leaders. From all of those that I met in person, I can say that they are militants, honest, proud, people-

loving men and women who are stable in their friendships and are in love with their histories and countries. I believe the majority are like that.

I should not mention names, since I am afraid I will leave someone out. But I can say, I have definitely gained many great friends amongst the Arab trade unionists.

It is also true that I have also met, as a General Secretary of the WFTU, many leaders of the Arab World. I will only mention one. I met together with Yasser Arafat inside his headquarters. The



WFTU General Secretary George Mavrikos

meeting was held in very difficult conditions as we had to break the blockade that the Israeli army had forced against the Palestinian leader. During our meeting the Israeli tanks destroyed half of the building we were in... Yasser Arafat will remain in history as a legendary leader of the Palestinian people and an all-time international militant leader. A great personality, worthy of our admiration and love.

How would you describe the relations between WFTU and ICATU?

The ICATU has a rich and long militant history. From its foundation until today it has defended the rights of the Arab workers and all the workers in the Arab countries. Consistently, ICATU defended the Palestinian struggle, the struggle of the people of Libya, Lebanon, of all the people in the Arab countries.

ICATU teaches pride and

decency. The WFTU since its foundation has had honest, fraternal relations with ICATU. In the contrary, the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC, formerly the ICFTU) has only had a hostile attitude against ICATU. The real reason for this hostility is that the ITUC historically supported the positions and the strategies of Israel. ITUC supports the strategy of imperialism (e.g. in Iraq, in Libya, in Syria, in Egypt, in Tunisia, in Algeria etc.) that wants to divide the Arabs, to intervene in the internal affairs of the unions and place trade unionists-puppets inside the trade unions.

It is the duty of all the militant trade unions in the Arab world to support ICATU, to help it become stronger. This would be for the benefit of the working class in the Arab world, for its great history, great culture and its militant characteristics. The WFTU centrally will continue its course along with ICATU in the Middle East, the Maghreb and everywhere, in all the continents and inside all the international organizations where the role of ICATU may become stronger.

What is the situation today in the International Organizations?

The situation in the international organizations is not good. The correlation of forces is negative. Take into consideration that there are numerous resolutions taken by the United Nations in favour of the Palestinian issue which remain only words, while for the invasions of imperialism against Libya, Iraq, Mali etc. one resolution of the UN was enough to be directly implemented.

Unfortunately, the situation in the ILO, at the central and regional level is not good as well. There is no equality, no democracy, no representativeness. A monopoly continues to exist and operate. A characteristic example is that the ACFTU of China with 290 million members (more than the members of WFTU and ITUC combined) is represented in the Governing Body of the ILO with only one seat of the 31 that exist. So it is clear, that there is no democracy. This heavily reflects in the work and the positions of the ILO.

The last years, the WFTU gained more affiliates and become very strong in the Arab world. What are the reasons for this upward course?

It is true that all the large trade union organizations in the Arab world are either members or they cooperate closely with the WFTU. All the large trade unions are in our family. The trade unions of Sudan, Egypt, Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, Algeria, Mauritania, Djibouti, Somalia, Iraq, Bahrain and other smaller trade unions from Tunisia, Morocco, Libya.

This is mainly because WFTU respects its members and friends. Does not intervene in their internal affairs, respects their religious, linguistic and other differences, respects their history, their culture, their traditions.

Our objective is to strengthen the democracy and the militant characteristics of all the trade unions. To help them obtain democratic constitutions, to hold

regular Congresses and elections. To strengthen their anti-imperialist orientation, their internationalist character and the solidarity expressed between the Arab trade unions with priority to the struggle of the Palestinian people to have their own country with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Your opponents raise the argument that the WFTU supports the governments. Which is your response to that?

The WFTU, the class-oriented trade union movement is not "governmental trade unionism". We do not support governments; we support the people, the working people, the movements. For example, in Libya, in Iraq our position was not to defend Gaddafi or Saddam Hussein. We were against the imperialists because we believe that the only ones with authority to decide for their present and future are the people themselves. This is our position in Venezuela, in Syria, in Egypt, in Ukraine, in Colombia, everywhere.

The imperialists do not choose to intervene against Syria, against Iraq, against Libya, against Ecuador, against Mali, against the Central African Republic for the purpose of "democracy" and "freedom". The imperialists invade to steal, to plunder, to loot the natural wealth producing resources, for new fields of control, to get the oil, the gas, the waters, the agricultural production. The imperialists invade to gain geostrategic positions, to promote their geostrategic interests.

So those who say that the wars serve peace, democracy and freedom are hypocrites. They lie. It sounds like a joke, the black

propaganda of some, that the Kings, the Monarchs of the Gulf, Erdogan and others are interested for the democratic rights and the popular freedoms.

The position of the WFTU is crystal clear. The imperialist aggression to stop. All the Arab territories to be liberated. The relevant prisoners to be released and the refugees to be allowed to return to their homes.

The people are the only ones with power to decide freely and democratically for their present and future. The wealth of the countries belongs to the people and not the monopolies and the multinational trusts.

It is a stable position of the WFTU that all trade unions should demand from the governments the satisfaction of labour rights. Against any government, the trade unions have the duty to struggle for the workers.

What is the message that you want to send to the Arab people?

The World Federation of Trade Unions was, is and will continue to remain their stable ally. We are stable on the side of the working class and the working people of the Arab world. For a fair world, without imperialist interventions and capitalist exploitation. Your countries are all rich. They have gold, oil, silver, sun, sea, gas, fertile land with many natural beauties, unique historic and cultural heritage. You have the Nile. You have worthy working people, scientific personnel, strong unions, militant experience. Thus, if the people take the initiative and the power, the future of the region for the younger generations could certainly be better than today. ●



The World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) was established in 1945, after the victory over Hitler fascism, to bring together trade unions across the world. During the Cold War, many unions with left leadership were driven out of labour federations in Canada and the US. Unions which supported the anti-communist policies of imperialist governments formed the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions. In recent years, a number of important unions have affiliated to the WFTU including the Rail Maritime Trade Union in Great Britain, the Unione Sindicale di Base in Italy, and the Congress of South African Trade Unions. The WFTU has working partnerships with national and industrial trade unions worldwide, as well as with the Organization of African Trade Union Unity (OATUU), the International Confederation of Arab Trade Unions (ICATU), the Permanent Congress of Trade Union Unity of Latin America (CPUSTAL), and the General Confederation of Trade Unions of CIS countries. Headquartered in Athens, the WFTU has affiliates in over 100 countries, with more than 80 million members. It has consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, the ILO, UNESCO, FAO, and other UN agencies.

May Day 2014

**Workers of the world,
unite! You have
nothing to lose but
your chains.**

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GLOBAL CLASS STRUGGLE

Safety protests hit Rio Tinto

Protesters and unions from around the world criticised mining company Rio Tinto on April 15 over lapses in safety leading to the deaths of 41 people and a string of environmental abuses.

The global trade union IndustriAll accused Rio of "very wide breaches of fundamental rights" and said the Anglo-Australian mining company could have done more to prevent the 41 deaths last year.

Kemal Ozkan, assistant general secretary of IndustriAll, said the deaths of 33 gold miners when a tunnel collapsed at a Rio joint venture mine in Indonesia last May could have been avoided. He said that the Indonesian human rights commission found that the operators of the Grasberg mine, owned with US company Freeport, "had the ability to prevent this from happening but didn't".

Jan du Plessis, Rio's chair, admitted that the Grasberg mine, the world's largest gold mine, was "far from perfection". But he said safety and environmental issues would not be improved by the company pulling out of the operation in Papua.

Native Papuan people protesting against the Grasberg mine, which has also been at the centre of alleged environmental abuses, were joined by others complaining about alleged human right and environmental abuses in Madagascar, Australia, Namibia and the US. Perle Zafinandro, the leader of a community protest group against Rio's majority-owned coastal forest mine in Madagascar, accused the company of "land grabbing and environmental devastation".

Rio's chief executive said the level of compensation for people displaced by the QIT Madagascar Minerals mine was negotiated by the Madagascar government, which owns 20% of the mine. He committed to "turning the area back to what it was" by running a plant nursery to rehabilitate the area.

But Zafinandro said: "How are you going to get these trees to grow on the dead sands left behind?"

UGTT nominated for Peace Prize

The Norwegian Nobel Committee has accepted the nomination of the Tunisia's UGTT labor federation for its peace award. The union was nominated by the presidents of four major Tunisian universities a few days after the adoption of the Tunisian constitution in January 2014.

The UGTT was one of four civil society organizations brokering political negotiations that helped end a months-long political deadlock after the assassination of assembly member Mohamed Brahmi in July 2013. It's head, Houcine Abassi, personally met with Tunisia's political leaders dozens of times over the course of talks. These efforts eventually contributed to the ratification of Tunisia's post-

revolution constitution and the formation of a caretaker government tasked with seeing the country through to future elections.

The UGTT said its nomination was due to "the leading role" it played in "the defense of the values of freedom, democracy, and peace" and its "effective contribution throughout its history in defending [Tunisia]".

Founded in 1946, the union played a key role in Tunisia's struggle against French colonialism.



ITF & ACFTU sign memorandum

The ITF (International Transport Workers' Federation) has signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the ACFTU, the All China Federation of Trade Unions, that commits both organisations to a process of dialogue and information sharing. Founded in 1925, the ACFTU is the largest trade union in the world, with 134 million members in 1,713,000 primary trade union organizations. The ACFTU is divided into 31 regional federations and 10 national industrial unions.

The MOU was signed in Beijing by ITF acting general secretary Steve Cotton and ACFTU vice-president Jiang Guangping, who is also a member of the Governing Body of the International Labour Organization. It identifies multiple areas of possible co-operation and institutes biannual meetings to check on progress.

ITF president Paddy Crumlin commented: "The signing is an important and historical further step forward. It is indicative of the continuing consolidation of the network of effective and influential trade unions worldwide in providing realistic, attainable and strategic support for workers in the essential international transport industry."

ITF acting general secretary Steve Cotton explained: "There are many areas where the interests of our organisations overlap, such as the enforcement of the Maritime Labour Convention and the promotion of decent work for seafarers, as well as in the ports, rail, urban transport and aviation sectors, and the rights of women transport workers."

Haitian apparel workers' poverty

Despite a 45 percent increase in apparel exports since the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, the women and men who sew T-shirts and

jeans primarily destined for the U.S. market barely earn enough to pay for their lunch and transportation to work. A new Solidarity Center survey finds the average cost of living for an export apparel worker in Port-au-Prince is 26,150 Haitian gourdes (about \$607) per month. Yet workers are paid only between 200-300 gourdes (about \$4.64-\$6.96) for an eight-hour day. After insurance and social security deductions, most export apparel workers spend more than half of their salaries on transportation to and from the factory and a modest lunch, leaving little to sustain a family or keep a roof over their heads.

"Workers interviewed in this study had to forgo basic necessities given the disparity between their earned wages and the cost of living," according to the report. "When asked what they would purchase if they had sufficient income, workers responded with: more food to feed their families, land to build a home, (and) a car or moped to drive their children to school."

The Solidarity Center survey finds that a real living wage must be approximately 1,000 gourdes (about \$23) per day to enable workers to meet basic needs. Haitian unions are demanding a minimum wage increase to at least 500 gourdes (about \$11.60) per day and assert that anything lower equates to starvation wages. Haitian law mandates a reduced minimum wage for the sector, which is the lowest in the Western Hemisphere.

Housing (rental) costs spiked immediately after the earthquake, but prices have since fallen by nearly 28 percent. Yet workers still live in substandard housing and pay up to four times more than what they did prior to the disaster. Some families are unable to afford their children's transportation to school, so many students must walk, sometimes long distances and along busy roads.

Gains for SA platinum miners

In mid-April, the world's largest platinum producers increased a pay offer for miners as a strike that has crippled operations entered its 13th week. Anglo American Platinum Ltd. and Impala Platinum Holdings Ltd., the two largest producers, will increase the monthly wages of the lowest-paid underground workers to 12,500 rand (\$1,192) a month by July 2017, the companies said on April 16 after talks with the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union. The union has led more than 70,000 workers in a strike since Jan 23. Lonmin Plc, the third-largest, will offer a similar increase.

The offer of R12,500 covers basic pay along with holiday and living-out allowances, the companies said. Other benefits bring the cost per employee to R17,500, they said.

The companies have increased their annual pay-rise offers from a previous position of a maximum of 9 percent to 10 percent, Anglo Platinum and Impala said, claiming that they "can ill afford the revised settlement offer."

Anglo says it has lost 5.8 billion

rand in lost revenue due to the strike, while Impala has lost 4 billion rand. Workers at the three producers have forfeited more than 6 billion rand in lost wages, according to a website run by the companies.

The AMCU rose to prominence after at least 44 people died, including 34 in a single day, at Lonmin's Marikana mine in August 2012, when workers downed tools in support of a demand to increase pay to 12,500 rand. The lowest-paid workers currently earn R5,000 to R6,000 a month. The strike has shut some of the biggest mines in South Africa, which accounts for more than two-thirds of the world's platinum, used for jewelry and as auto-catalysts in vehicles.

Heinz plant closure in Belgium

Unions and management at the Turnhout H.J. Heinz plant in Belgium have reached an agreement on a social plan and packages to compensate the job losses for almost 190 employees after the factory shuts down.

The decision to close the factory was made despite the fact that the plant is profitable and is the only one supplying sauces for food services in Europe. The closure will have a dramatic effect on the economy of Turnhout, a town with a population of 40,000.

Workers were so angry that they blocked production and burned the Heinz corporate flag. The company's initial offer was miserable, "an anorexic plan, shameful for a company, that makes so much profit," in the words of trade union secretary Dirk Verhaegen (CSC Food and Services), the spokesperson for the four unions which created a

joint front to challenge the management decision.

Dutch dockers beat pension theft

The retirement benefits of 8,000 Dutch dockers are set to be positively impacted after a settlement was reached over pensions held by corporate giant Aegon. The Dutch foundation of dockworkers, unions and employers has reached the deal regarding "blocked pension capital" held by Aegon since its takeover of the pension firm in 2007. The settlement consists of a redemption package with a total value of approximately 188 million Euros. Dockworkers and port employers will vote in a referendum in May to assess the outcome of the negotiations.

In reaction to the settlement, the chair of FNV dockworkers union Niek Stam said: "The so-called blocked capital originally amounted to a little over 700 million Euros. In 2010 our foundation received 500 million from the people who sold the Optas insurance firm to Aegon. With Aegon's contribution we now attain a total of 688 million."

"And all those years employers and employees stood together in our struggle for justice. A great help was the support of our union colleagues in the United States, Great Britain and Australia. I am deeply grateful to the Brotherhood of Teamsters, ILWU and ILA for putting pressure to Transamerica/Aegon in San Francisco, to RMT and Unite for organising our 'Put the money back' campaign at the Wimbledon warm-up tournament in Eastbourne, and to MUA for demonstrating with us at the Aegon-offices in Sydney."

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

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The striking heroes gunned down 100 years ago

By Peter Frost, UK Morning Star

The date is April 20 1914. A few flecks of snow fall on the quiet campsite built by striking miners nestled at the entrance to a canyon in the foothills of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. The camp, with its many immigrant miners, is celebrating the Orthodox church's Easter.

At around 10 am a strange visitor creeps into the campsite. It is an armoured car and the six barrels of its Gatling machine gun suddenly break the silence as they pump bullets into the tents. Other

men empty cans of paraffin on to the flimsy dwellings and set them alight. On this day here in the coalfields of southern Colorado, 18 innocent men, women and children died in what became known as the Ludlow massacre.

Coal miners in Colorado and other western states had been trying to win the right to join the union for many years. By 1913 many had joined the United Mine Workers (UMW) and had started what would be a 14-month strike to increase their wages and the right to belong to a union.

The employers, led by the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company

owned by John D. Rockefeller Jr., fought back violently. His father John D. Rockefeller, founder of Standard Oil, was the richest man in the world.

Capitalists like Rockefeller did all they could to keep wages and conditions for their workers at rock bottom and were perfectly happy to employ and pay local police, the state or National Guard or private armies of thugs and strike-breakers to achieve their obscene profits. They were happy with a situation that saw their workers not just without a union but also living in company-owned houses and paid in company scrip that

could only be spent at the company store with its high company prices.

Thrown out of those company houses at the beginning of the strike, the Colorado miners and their families had set up a tent colony on public property outside the town.

The massacre was a carefully planned, 14-hour attack on that tent colony by Colorado militiamen, coal company guards and other thugs hired as private detectives and strike-breakers.

The Baldwin Felts Detective Agency was a well-known private army that made its money as violent strike-breakers all over the US. It had been employed to break the strike. It brought an armoured car mounted with a Gatling machine gun - strikers called it the "Death Special."

This bosses' army shot and burned to death 18 striking miners and their families. Four women, two of them pregnant, and 11 small children died holding each other in the trenches under the burning tents. The miners had dug foxholes in the tents so the women and children could avoid the bullets that were randomly shot through

the tent colony by company thugs. Labour historians believe as many as 200 people lost their lives in the terrible strike.

Not one of the bosses or their perpetrators of the slaughter were ever punished, but scores of miners and their leaders were arrested and blacklisted, never able to work in the coal industry again.

The massacre caused protests outside Rockefeller's New York mansion. Public opinion decided that Rockefeller's methods were unacceptable. Rockefeller's spin doctors worked overtime to try to clean up his image, but public outrage led to congressional inquiries and limited new labour legislation.

Woody Guthrie was later inspired to write the song "Ludlow Massacre" about the incident. It is still sung today on picket lines and union events.

A monument erected by the United Mine Workers of America stands today in the ghost town outside Ludlow, Colorado, in remembrance of the brave and innocent souls who died for freedom and human dignity a century ago. •

May Day Greetings



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Appeals discussed by Chelsea Manning lawyers

Based on reports by Kevin Gosztola, <http://dissenter.firedoglake.com>

The appeals process is beginning for Chelsea Manning, the U.S. soldier convicted of violations of the Espionage Act and other offenses. Assigned in 2009 to an Army unit in Iraq as an intelligence analyst, Manning had access to classified databases. In early 2010 she leaked classified information to WikiLeaks, including videos of a 2007 Baghdad airstrike, and the 2009 Granai airstrike in Afghanistan; 250,000 U.S. diplomatic cables; and 500,000 Army reports that came to be known as the Iraq War logs and Afghan War logs. Much of the material was published by WikiLeaks or its media partners between April and November 2010.

Manning was sentenced in August 2013 to 35 years confinement with the possibility of parole in eight years. In a statement the day after sentencing, she made public her decision to transition to her female gender identity, but has been denied hormone replacement therapy by the U.S. Army.

At a recent forum in Washington, Manning's new lawyers spoke about the appeals process. Nancy Hollander, a defense attorney who has defended various individuals accused of terrorism or national security offenses, and Vincent Ward, with a background in the military justice system, are at the "beginnings" of the appeal.

They say that "misuse of the Espionage Act," the over-classification of information, the selective prosecution of individuals by the government for leaks, "unlawful command influence," "unlawful pretrial punishment," and violations of "speedy trial rights" will all be issues raised during the appeal.

Hollander said Manning's convictions for violating the Espionage Act set a "dangerous precedent." She added, "If this case stands, along with some other recent cases, whoever leaks a single page of classified information or even non-classified information runs the risk of prosecution under this act."

Manning was found guilty of five Espionage Act offenses, which is quite significant in the war on leaks and whistleblowers waged by President Barack Obama's administration.

"The Espionage Act was meant to punish spies and saboteurs and people who steal things from the United States and take them to foreign countries to benefit that country or to specifically hurt the United States. It was never meant for whistleblowers. It should never be used in these kinds of cases," Hollander says. "It is frightening that the Espionage Act has essentially become a strict liability crime, that intent required is the intent to disclose and we simply cannot let that continue... The lack of criminal intent is frankly horrifying to me as a lawyer, that Chelsea was convicted and is going to spend 35 years in jail without any burden on the government whatsoever to prove that she

intended or had reason to believe that this disclosure would harm the United States or advantage a foreign government."

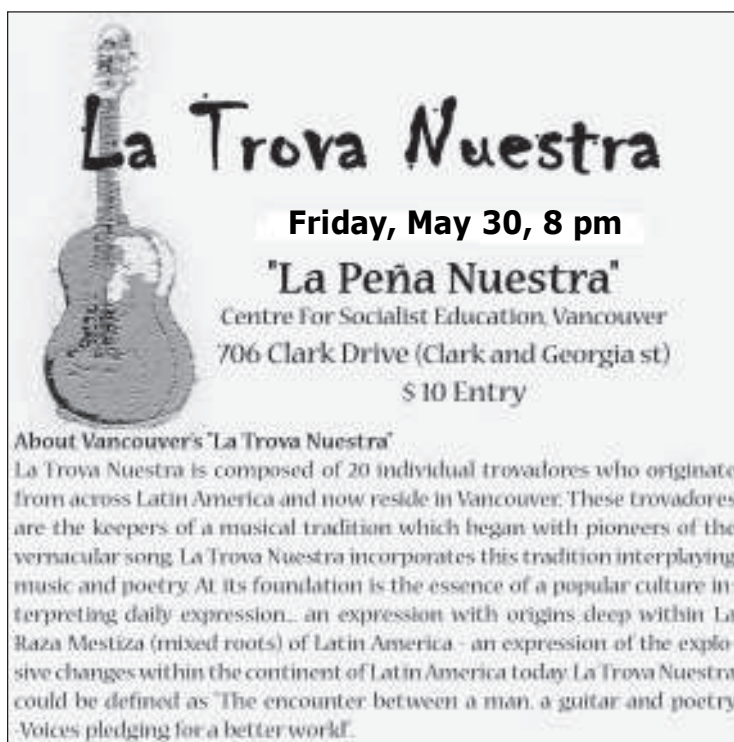
Hollander drew attention to the over-classification of "national security information," noting that at Guantanamo Bay prisoners' "thoughts, perceptions and observations" (including of their own torture) have been classified by the government.

"This kind of over-classification is wrong. It's illegal," she said. "It's a violation of the executive order that creates classified information. The government cannot classify information solely to prevent embarrassment to itself. That's right in the executive order and that's exactly what it is doing more and more.... The Espionage Act is a draconian act. It has hardly ever been used in the history of this country. And it's been used

more by this administration than it has altogether. It has to stop if we're to have any freedom of speech, if the First Amendment is to exist at all. We cannot prosecute people who tell us what our government is doing and remain a free society."

Hollander added, the months of solitary confinement for Manning "were outrageous. They were unnecessary. They were completely punitive. No other country in the world uses solitary confinement exactly the way we do; certainly, none of the European countries. It destroys the mind. It destroys the body and there was no excuse for it in this case." •

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La Trova Nuestra
Friday, May 30, 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.'

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MUSIC NOTES

By Wally Brooker

Calls for Neil Young to honour BDS

Petition campaigns have been launched to persuade rock superstar Neil Young to withdraw from a concert scheduled for July in Tel Aviv. Canadians for Peace and Justice in the Middle East and Independent Jewish Voices Canada are asking Young to respect the call from Palestinian civil society for boycott, divestment, and sanctions until Israel ends its illegal occupation of Palestinian territories, recognizes the right of its Arab-Palestinian citizens for equality, and allows Palestinian refugees to return to their homes. In honouring the boycott, Young would join company with musicians like Roger Waters, Brian Eno, Annie Lennox, Carlos Santana and Elvis Costello. Throughout his long career Neil Young has demonstrated sympathy for native struggles on the North American continent. Earlier this year he gave a series of high-profile "Honour the Treaties" concerts to raise funds for the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation in aid of its legal battle to halt tar sands expansion on its territory. One might expect that he'd be able to see the similarities between the oppression of native peoples in North America and that of Palestinians. To sign a petition visit www.cjpme.nationbuilder.com/neil_young or ijvcanada.org.

Remembering Guthrie's 'Deportees'

In 1948 the great American troubadour Woody Guthrie composed *Deportee (Plane Wreck at Los Gatos)*, a protest lyric about the racist mistreatment of migrant workers. After hearing on the radio that 28 migrants who were being deported from California back to Mexico had died in a plane crash at nearby Los Gatos Canyon, Guthrie was struck by the fact that only the names of the flight crew and the security guard were given. The anonymous workers' bodies were buried in a mass grave in Fresno, California. A decade later Guthrie's lyric was set to music by schoolteacher Martin Hoffman. The song soon became an American folk standard, after being popularized by Pete Seeger and recorded by a host of musical luminaries. Flash forward to 2014. Folksinger-activist John McCutcheon and a group of like-minded activists had a brainstorm: they guessed that Immigration and Naturalization Service archives in Washington would have a record of the victims' names in the 1948 deportation order. Well, they found the names, and raised the funds to erect a monument at the mass grave site. You can view the moving dedication ceremony and hear the names of the victims read out at a special concert. Visit YouTube and search for "Deportees John McCutcheon".

Breakthrough JUNO for A Tribe Called Red

Mainstream media coverage of the JUNO Awards usually dwells upon best-selling icons of pop culture like Drake, Arcade Fire, and Teagan and Sara. There's plenty of celebrity gossip too. Will fans boo Justin Bieber? Will Robin Thicke show up? For this writer, however, it's the less hyped recipients who really deserve the attention. These would include 2014 Contemporary Jazz Album winner Christine Jensen (*Habitat*), World Music Album winner David Buchbinder (*Walk to the Sea*), and (most notably), Ottawa-based electronic DJ crew A Tribe Called Red. The latter took home the award for Breakthrough Group of the Year at the gala ceremony, broadcast from Winnipeg on March 30. Although they didn't get to perform, it was gratifying that their win was shown on the national telecast. A Tribe Called Red is a powerful supporter of the Idle No More movement. In 2013 they were voted best group by the Aboriginal Peoples Choice Music Awards, and their second release, *Nation II Nation*, was voted best album. Their hard-driving 'pow-wow step' music and brilliant video productions challenge and subvert the ideology of the Canadian settler state. You can download their eponymous first album (it's free) and view their videos at www.atribecalledred.com.

Funding flap at Beaches Jazz

Toronto's annual free Beaches Jazz Fest attracts an estimated 500,000 visitors a year. It's the biggest festival of its kind in Canada, yet it has to fight for the pittance of funding it receives from Ontario's Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport. After a public outcry when the 25-year-old festival's funding application was rejected outright, the government announced that \$75,000 had been 'found'. What had really happened was that the Wynne government had been embarrassed by the revelation that, while it was depriving a popular free festival of support, it was giving huge grants to superstar rapper Drake (\$300,000 for a 2-day concert that hopes to draw 60,000 people) and Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment (\$500,000 to attract the 2016 NBA all-star game). According to online ticket agencies, a pass to Drake's upcoming OVA Fest at Toronto's Molson Amphitheatre starts at \$291. Of course funding priorities that privilege corporate spectacles over grassroots culture are not unique to the current Ontario government. They are unfortunately typical of most contemporary capitalist regimes. The Beaches Jazz Fest runs from July 18-23. For more info visit www.beachesjazz.com/.

Greetings to the workers of the world!

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Manitoba Committee,
Communist Party of Canada

**MAY DAY
GREETINGS!**

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for profits!**



**Happy May Day
to all our readers!**

People's Voice
Editorial Board

What's Left

Burnaby, BC

Mother's Day Pancake Breakfast, 10 am, Sunday, May 12, proceeds to PV Drive, back at 5435 Kincaid St., last call for pancakes 12 noon. All you can eat, \$12 adults, \$8 under 12. Sponsored by Burnaby Club CPC, 604-294-6775.

Kamloops, BC

Walk for Peace, Social Justice, and the Environment, Sat., May 3, promoting equity & celebrating diversity, starts 10 am at Stuart Wood Elementary School with music, food, & children's activities. Walk begins 12 noon.

Victoria, BC

May Day Rally, 4 pm, Thur., May 1, at intersection of Vancouver and Pandora Streets. Speakers from Together Against Poverty, Victoria Labour Council, Committee to End Homelessness, Social-Environmental Alliance, and march to McDonald's on Pandora St.

Hear CPC leader Miguel Figueroa, Friday, May 16, for details of time and place ph. John Shaw, 250-920-4233.

Saskatoon, SK

May Day rally, Thursday, May 1, 6 pm, meet at Peace Monument in Rotary Park for speakers, performances and free food, march to Friendship Park. For info, email <info@maydaysaskatoon.ca>.

Winnipeg, MB

Fraud, Fascism and Ukraine, Tues., May 10, 7 pm, forum on situation in Ukraine with Darrell Rankin, Leader, Communist Party of Canada-Manitoba. Tues, May 10, 7 pm. For location, ph. (204)586-7824.

Mayworks Festival of Labour and Arts, full program at www.mayworks.org. Includes Pete Seeger Tribute, Friday, May 9, West End Cultural Centre, doors open 7 pm.

Toronto, ON

May Day of Action, Thursday, May 1, 5:30 pm, rally and march starting at City Hall, ending at Little Norway Park in solidarity with striking workers at Porter (Queens Quay and Bathurst).

Setting the stage for change, May Day political and cultural evening, Sat., May 3, 6:30 pm at Steelworkers Hall, 25 Cecil St. Free admission, speakers, live music, poetry and dance, food and refreshments, organized by the United May Day Committee.

Women's Labour History Walking Tour, Sunday, May 4, 10-11:30 am, meet at corner of Spadina and College, highlighting the struggles of labour and feminist movements from the 1850s to the present.

Montreal, QC

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

US spies "used Twitter to undermine Cuban government"

A news agency investigation revealed on April 2 that US spooks used a US aid programme to create a "Cuban Twitter" network designed to undermine the island's government.

Through a long-term campaign, the Associated Press uncovered a project built with secret shell companies and financed through foreign banks. The project, which drew tens of thousands of subscribers, sought to build an audience of mostly young Cubans and push them

toward dissent. Yet its users were neither aware it was created by a US agency with ties to the State Department, nor that US contractors were gathering data about them for political purposes.

Details uncovered contradict the US Agency for International Development's (USAID) long-standing claim that it does not conduct covert actions.

USAID went to extensive lengths to conceal Washington's ties to the project. Executives set up a corporation in Spain and an

operating company in the Cayman Islands to pay the bills so the "money trail will not trace back to America." Subscribers' messages were funnelled through other countries and never through US-based computer servers.

"There will be absolutely no mention of US government involvement," according to a 2010 memo from Mobile Accord Inc, one of the project's creators.

The project, dubbed ZunZuneo, was launched shortly after the 2009 arrest in Cuba of US contractor Alan Gross. He was imprisoned after repeatedly travelling to the country on a clandestine USAID mission to expand internet access using sensitive technology available only to governments.

ZunZuneo began in 2009 when Washington-based Creative Associates International illicitly obtained half a million Cuban mobile phone numbers from a Cuban source. Project organisers used those numbers to start a subscriber base.

ZunZuneo organisers wanted the network to reach critical mass so dissidents could organise "smart mobs" to trigger demonstrations or "renegotiate the balance of power between the state and society."

Organisers created a network that looked like a legitimate business, including the creation of a companion website and marketing campaign.

But behind the scenes, ZunZuneo's computers were storing and analysing subscribers' messages and other information, including gender, age, "receptiveness" and "political tendencies." •

People's Voice deadlines

May 16-31 issue: Thursday, May 8

June 1-15 issue: Thursday, May 22

Send submissions to PV Editorial Office,
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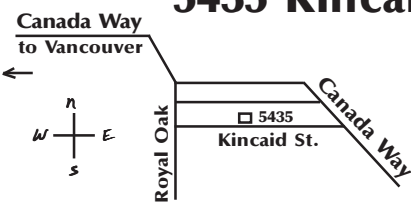
10 am, Sunday, May 11

(last call for pancakes - noon)

\$12.00 (kids under 12 \$8.00)

Back to Burnaby location

5435 Kincaid St. Burnaby



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to People's
Voice



Corporate attack on youth...

continued from page 8

low paid and linking with "care giving" work, because of the sexist and gendered views. Anyone who looks at the career promotional material given to high school students can see this kind of gendered separation in the photos.

Moreover, the responsibility of children and domestic tasks are still in majority done by women. Marxist feminists call this the "double burden" of women. It is a reality which has become much more difficult as privatization shifts caregiving work more and more back into the home. Single-parent families are still mainly lead by women, especially young women.

The Conservatives have followed the lead of the federal Liberals (who abolished the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women and cut funding to the National Action Committee on the Status of Women NAC). On coming to power, the Harper Conservative also cut the proposed federal program for child care, at that point had not been only a demand of the women's movement for decades but also a paper demand of most political parties for fifteen years, and replaced it with a system of tax credits. The Tories then closed 12 of 16 offices of the Status of Women Canada, eliminated the funding of any women's organization involved in advocacy, and amended the Act on Equitable Compensation to prevent the use of courts to advance pay equity. •

NO TO MODI: Social justice activists launch campaign against Hindu Right in Canada

From Radical Desi News Bureau (abridged)

As Indian voters are poised to elect a new government, a campaign to stop an arch-Hindu nationalist leader from becoming the Prime Minister of the world's largest secular democracy has picked up in Canada.

Narendra Modi, the Chief Minister of the Gujarat state of India and the Prime Ministerial candidate of the Hindu nationalist Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) is contesting two ridings, including Varanasi, one of the centers of Hinduism.

Modi is known as a hardliner within Hindu right-wing circles. But he is credited for development in his state by his supporters, and some polls indicate that the BJP and its allies are likely to emerge as the single largest political formation, albeit short of a majority.

But a group of social justice activists of Indian origin in this part of the world are not ready to give up. A campaign through social media, such as Facebook, has been launched by radical South Asian activists in Toronto. Support for the "No to Modi" campaign continues to grow.

Ponni Arasu, a vocal critic of Modi and the Hindu right, is in the forefront of the campaign. She is not only challenging the "sectarian politics" of Modi, but also the "myths" of development and progress in Gujarat, which are being positioned to sell his image.

Arasu is associated with the Center for South Asian Studies of the University of Toronto. She is a queer feminist researcher who has been involved in many social movements.

Since the Congress-led coalition has lost credibility due to a leadership vacuum and allegations of corruption and massive scams, there are high hopes among supporters of the opposition BJP and its allies for Modi, who is seen as an "effective and efficient leader with powerful oratory skills" and a "solid alternative" to the Congress leaders.

Arasu warns that people need to follow what is being said in the mainstream media with skepticism. "Those who make such statements must ask themselves what is he determined to do," she says. "Is he going to turn India into another Gujarat?"

Modi's government is accused of engineering large scale violence

against Muslims following an alleged attack on a train carrying Hindu pilgrims in Godhra in February 2002. The train was burned, leaving 59 people dead. The Gujarat government has claimed that it was a terror attack by Muslim extremists, while one commission of enquiry found that it was an accident, perhaps caused by a cooking gas cylinder used by the Hindu pilgrims aboard.

The pilgrims were returning from a disputed site in Ayodhya, the birth place of Lord Ram, who is widely revered by Hindus. The Hindu fanatics had razed an ancient mosque built in Ayodhya in 1992, in the presence of the BJP leaders. The Hindu revivalists claim that the mosque was deliberately built by Babar, an Islamic ruler, after demolishing the Ram temple. The BJP election manifesto released in April has clearly stated its mandate to rebuild the Ram temple at the disputed site. Many top notch BJP leaders were accused of inciting the mobs that razed the mosque.

Eyewitness accounts of the 2002 events suggest that there was a fight between Hindu pilgrims and some local Muslims at the Godhra station before the train was burned. The Hindu fanatics belonging to the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), an extremist religious group, were given a free hand to murder innocent Muslims following the episode. Modi reportedly told the police to let the Hindu protesters vent their anger, and BJP leaders were seen leading the mobs. According to the statistics of the government, 975 people died, of which 713 were Muslims. Human rights watchers believe this was done to win the next assembly election by whipping up anti-Muslim emotions. In fact, Modi was re-elected to power, and never convicted for these crimes. Maya Kodnani, a former minister in his government, was convicted in 2012 for involvement in mass murders. Notably, Modi has been repeatedly denied entry to US and Canada for these incidents.

Much before this violence, the BJP government was also accused of shielding Hindu extremists, who targeted Christian missionaries in tribal areas of Gujarat during late 1990s. The Christian missionaries have been frequently accused of mass religious conversions by the Hindu fundamentalists.

As if these incidents were not

enough, recently Sikh migrant farmers from Punjab in Gujarat were physically attacked for not vacating land they were allotted years ago by the state government. This was done to ensure that the barren land close to the Indo-Pakistan border in Gujarat was transformed into fertile agricultural land. For this the enterprising Sikh farmers from Punjab were invited to settle down there. The government is now

indebted to the RSS, which makes no bones about its disliking for secularism.

The group was banned following the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi, the passive resistance movement leader against British occupation who believed in a secular India. His opposition to the killings of the Muslims after the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947 on religious lines had irked the Hindu



forcing the farmers to vacate on the grounds that they are outsiders.

Arasu explains that there is nothing surprising behind the attacks on non-Hindus in Gujarat, as the BJP subscribes to the philosophy of Hindutva or exclusionist Hindu nationalism. "Do not forget that the BJP cannot be separated from the Rashtriya Swayam Sewak Sangh (RSS), the most influential ultra Hindu nationalist organization which was established with a clear objective to form Hindu nation", she notes. The two still remain inseparable; she believes that even any moderate face within the BJP won't make any difference. "Anyone other than Modi will be equally harmful if the BJP gains a brute majority."

Most BJP leaders were groomed by the RSS in their volunteer camps. Modi himself is an RSS member. He recently acknowledged that he is

extremists, one of whom, Nathuram Godse, murdered him.

Arasu feels that the Congress party, in spite of its official support to secular and democratic policies, has also failed to protect secularism. It has rather used faith based politics for narrow political ends. "Two examples are good enough to judge the role of the Congress in protecting India; one is the imposition of Emergency and its involvement in the 1984 anti-Sikh pogrom".

But sectarian politics is not the only cause of worry. "The myth of development in Gujarat is also problematic", according to Arasu. She says the development model of Gujarat has benefitted only a few rich people, while the manual scavenging by the so-called untouchables and lack of nutrition among the tribal children in Gujarat proves that the development is incomplete.

Nishrin Jafri Husain - who lost her father, Ahsan Jafri, in the Gujarat massacre - agrees with Arasu. Jafri was a former Congress Party MP. He was burned to death by the mob even though he tried to seek help from high officials to protect Muslims who took refuge in his house. His influence did not work; he also became a victim of the bloodshed that resulted in at least 35 deaths in that single locality. Allegations that Modi was directly involved in the incident that led to Jafri's death have not been proved in the courts so far. He was given a clean chit by the Special Investigation Team in 2012.

A resident of Delaware, Husain was in US when the tragedy occurred. "I am pleased that there are some justice loving people in Canada who have taken up this cause. India is going to go through a bad period if Modi becomes the Prime Minister... He has no credentials to prove that he can represent a country like India."

Modi is not off the hook yet, she says, as investigations into the massacre are still pending.

Chinmoy Banerjee of SANSAD, the South Asian Network for Secularism and Democracy, a group which has consistently opposed Modi's policies and also the communal politics of the Congress, says the group supports the initiative launched by Arasu. Describing Modi as a "hate monger", Banerjee says, "he will be terrible for minorities."

He believes that the corporate world and the media in India are creating a false image about Modi, since the growth rate in Gujarat is no better than some other prosperous and developed states of India. "There in an unequal development in Gujarat under him as the poor continue to live in terrible conditions," says Banerjee.

Husain also questions the claims of development in Gujarat: "There is no development in Muslim areas. The localities where the minorities live lack amenities, like gutter system and roads. Aren't they Indians?"

She also expresses her disappointment over the changing attitude of the US government. Nishrin has been closely following the activities of the groups, including Coalition Against Genocide, which have been in the forefront of the campaign to block Modi's entry to US. Former US Ambassador to India Nancy Powell met Modi in February, raising speculations that he may eventually get a chance to visit the US.

"This is a pure mockery," Husain says. "First you raise a hue and cry about religious intolerance and then you change your position for economic and political considerations."

The Indian American Muslim Council, an advocacy group and founder member of Coalition Against Genocide, expressed its outrage in a powerfully worded statement which criticized the US administration's outreach to "infamous Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi, banned from entering the US for his egregious violations of religious freedom".

Sunil Sharma, a volunteer with Sikh Nation, which organizes annual blood donation camps in Canada in memory of the victims of the 1984 anti-Sikh carnage, also supports the initiative. "This is not a time to shut our eyes," he says. "We must stand up and question people with right wing background and involvement in politics of genocide."

However, Overseas Friends of the BJP recently organized a public event in Vancouver to show its support for Modi's candidacy. Interestingly, a few prominent supporters of the ruling Conservative Party of Canada were in attendance. It is pertinent to mention that the Conservatives represent right-wing politics in Canada much like the BJP in India. The organizer of the event, Aditya Kumar Tewatia, says that Modi is best suited for India to ensure overall development of the country.

He hopes that Canada, which has also denied entry to Modi in the past, will invite him to visit once he is elected as Prime Minister.

The chorus on both sides of the fence is likely to grow in Canada as the election results come. Whether Modi becomes the Prime Minister or not, the big fight in India has already spilled over and reached North America, creating both anxiety and excitement.

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