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# people's VOICE

## Nobel Prize for War?

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## End the abuse of power in Ontario!

see page 2...



Photo by Ed Bil

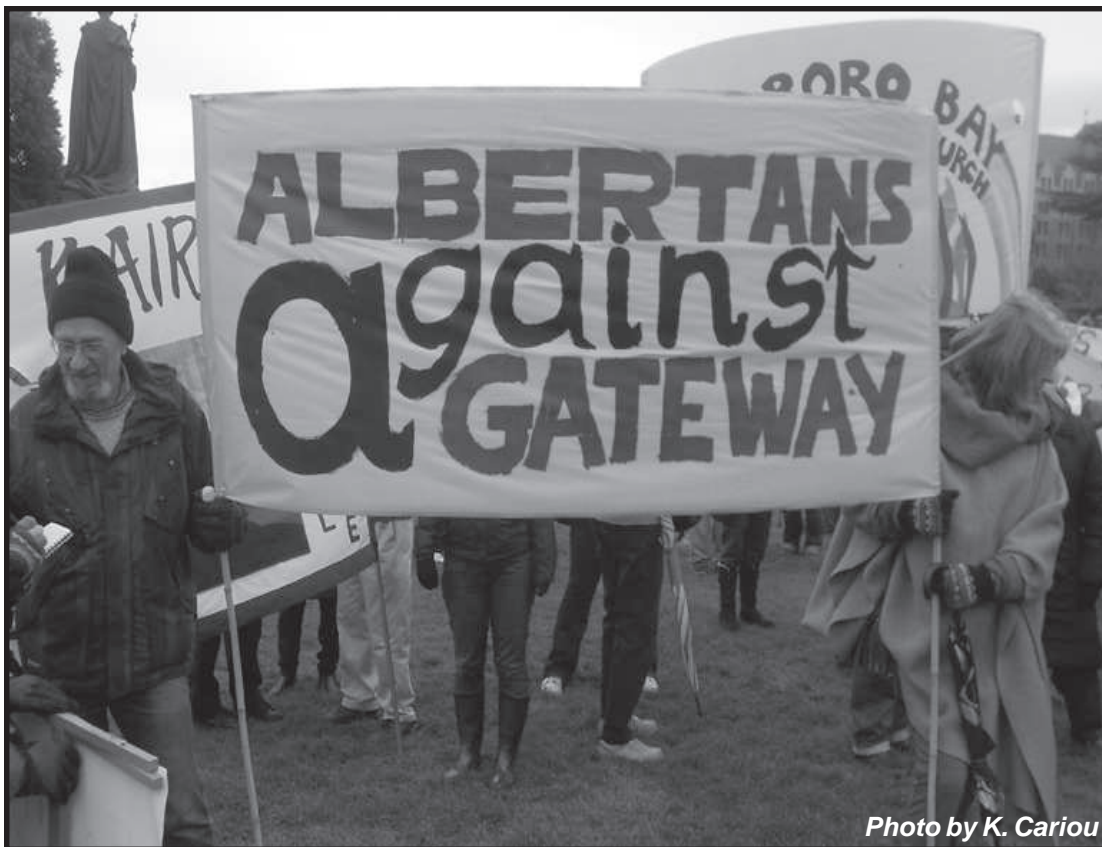


Photo by K. Cariou

## Thousands rally against tar sands tankers and pipelines

*The fight to block expansion of unprocessed bitumen exports took another big step ahead on Oct. 22, when First Nations, trade unions, environmentalists and many others united in Victoria. See report & photos on Page 7.*

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### New omnibus attack

The dictatorial Harper Tories are doing it again. Just months after ramming an omnibus budget law through Parliament, Bill C-45 has introduced another 457 pages of sweeping changes to Canadian laws.

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### Vancouver housing

The Mayor's Task Force seems unlikely to create more affordable housing in Vancouver, but the alternatives so far look inadequate.

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### "Incurable capitalism"

Is it possible to overcome the capitalist economic crisis by restraining the corporations with reform measures? Or do we need to organize with the goal of abolishing an incurable system?

# Recall the Ontario Legislature: end the abuse of power!

*The proroguing of the Ontario Legislature by Premier Dalton McGuinty has met widespread opposition from the labour and progressive movements. On Oct. 19, the Communist Party of Canada (Ontario) issued the following statement:*

The Communist Party of Canada (Ontario) condemns Liberal Premier Dalton McGuinty's indefinite proroguing of the Provincial Parliament and suspension of parliamentary democracy, and demands the government recall Parliament and end its abuse of power.

Unable to pass his government's anti-democratic "Protecting Public Services Act" (Bill 155) - which would legislate a wage freeze and suspend free collective bargaining across the public sector - the Premier wants to dispense with Parliament and try to impose his

program of austerity without legislation. The government also hopes to evade any accountability or responsibility in the ongoing exposure of wrong-doing by government Ministers and agencies.

The Liberals were counting on the Tories to support Bill 155, but the Tories are demanding the government go much further. The Tories are already campaigning to disembowel existing labour laws under the slogan of "flexible" labour law "reform". They want to eliminate the Rand Formula, make Ontario a right to work jurisdiction, and break the back of the labour movement as has been done in Wisconsin, Ohio, and other US states.

The Premier has said he will use the next months to force a negotiated wage freeze onto public sector unions. A negotiated wage

freeze has the support of NDP leader Andrea Horwath according to statements made at a recent news conference filmed by CP24. While the NDP opposed a legislated freeze, they support a negotiated freeze. The NDP caucus apparently believes that working people should pay for an economic crisis caused by corporate greed and ably assisted by right-wing governments in Ontario and elsewhere. The 99% would disagree with the caucus, just as they disagreed with Bob Rae's social contract in 1993.

The Liberals' anti-labour, anti-democratic austerity agenda has provoked massive public opposition, including ongoing protests and demonstrations. The proroguing is bound to generate even more opposition as public outrage at the government's abuse of power spills over.

The Communist Party calls on the Premier to immediately recall the Legislature, and move quickly to withdraw Bill 155, repeal Bill 115, and allow the province's public employers and public sector unions to move forward to freely negotiate unfettered collective agreements.

The Premier must also take the strong medicine needed to clean up the corruption caused by years of privatization and deregulation by stealth, including ORNGE and other P3 arrangements, and by vote-buying in ridings with gas plants.

The Communist Party also demands that the Premier and the Liberal government, as well as the Tories and the NDP remove themselves from collective bargaining and let the public employers and public sector unions exercise their bargaining rights to negotiate free and unfettered agreements.

We stand with labour and all those who oppose this



Rally against Bill 115 at Queen's Park. (PV photo by Ed Bil)

government's austerity policies, and the efforts to download the costs of the economic crisis onto the backs of working people through this on-going attack on public sector wages, pensions, jobs and public services. A massive struggle against austerity in the streets and at the bargaining table is the only way

to beat back the attack on wages, incomes, jobs and living standards, and save public services and assets.

Another Ontario is possible. And urgent. The Communist Party offers a 10 point prescription that is a pro-people alternative to austerity. For details visit [www.comunistpartyontario.ca](http://www.comunistpartyontario.ca).

**Vancouver's Annual**

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## Nov. 14 launch for new book on Workers' Unity League

*Raising the Workers' Flag: The Workers' Unity League of Canada, 1930-1936, by Stephen L. Endicott, University of Toronto Press*

The last time the Canadian working class faced a crisis as serious as this one - during the Great Depression of the 1930s - they emerged with a new form of working class organization and new tactics. It was then that industrial unionism exploded and along with it a new radicalism that included historic strikes, movements of the unemployed, political demands linked to struggles, and the famous sit-downs. The question confronting us today is what kind of new organizational forms and tactics-strategies might emerge from "this" crisis.

The past won't give us answers, but it does carry clues. In this regard, a new book by Stephen Endicott is a very worthwhile read. It is about the Workers Unity League, which was established by Canadian Communists at the end of the 1920s and for six years led heroic strikes outside the existing unions and developed a militancy and class sensibility that was then collapsed into the unions it earlier fought. It mines new archival material from the RCMP and Communist Party and not only discusses the debates that led to the decision to operate outside of the existing unions and the circumstances that led to an eventual reversal, but also - and especially important in the present context - the particular organizing strategies used at a time of great attacks on the working class while the official leadership of labour floundered.

This ranged from organizing the unemployed to unionization of new sectors to mobilizing strategies when prospects of winning seemed so dim. And of course, it poses the difficult question of the possibility of union revival in the absence of an organized left. It's a book that one does not have to agree with to benefit from. There will certainly be many disagreements with it, but the details on opposing views over strategy and the experience with particular tactics are a rich source for the discussions we need to engage today.

The book launch is on Wed., November 14, 6-8 pm at the Ben McNally Bookstore, 366 Bay St., Toronto, ON, M5H 4B2. This is a private event, so the store will be closed, but tell them you are there for the Stephen Endicott book launch. ●

## Marking 90th anniversary of the working class press



Our year-long celebration of the 90 years of the communist press in Canada continues with this front page, from a Pacific Tribune supplement dated April 28, 1978. This special 8-page edition featured articles on key working class struggles from British Columbia history, such as the 1938 occupation of the Vancouver Post Office, the 1903 murder of fishermen's union organizer Frank Rogers, and the 1947 Nanaimo Laundry Workers Union strike. A memorial for one of the leaders of the laundry workers, Vi Dewhurst, will be held on Oct. 28, just after this issue of People's Voice is mailed to readers (see page 11).

# The labour movement and the youth

## PV Commentary by Rick Gunderman, Hamilton

In the midst of the capitalists' economic crisis, organized labour in Canada has been seeking for several years now to reorient itself to meet the needs of the working class.

Attacks on the public sector include the imposition of a wage freeze in various jurisdictions, the designation of ever-more segments as "essential services" to undermine the right to strike, and back-to-work legislation. The response needs to be a determined, united and militant struggle of the working class.

Promising developments in the Canadian labour movement have shown the willingness of organized labour to not only survive, but to grow and regain their prominence and influence. These include the formation of the Common Front led by the Ontario Federation of Labour, the involvement of organized labour in Quebec in the student strike, and the decision of the Canadian Auto Workers and the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers to form Canada's largest private-sector union.

Amid these positive developments, however, are underlying concerns, especially for progressive youth. Unionization rates are particularly low among young workers, with many youth and

students employed in tenuous, part-time labour. Despite several militant struggles, such as those waged by workers at US Steel, Caterpillar and Vale Inco, Canada continues to experience deindustrialization due to outsourcing and continued dominance of transnational capital. This has left far fewer good-paying, unionized industrial jobs for Canadian youth than our parents and grandparents had available to them.

Successive governments, the grip of neo-liberal ideology on the mass media, and of course the unceasing efforts of monopoly and finance capital to demonize organized labour, have all attempted for the last several decades to smash the labour movement.

It's not difficult to see why. To the extent that some unions in Canada rejected business unionism in favour of social unionism, the Canadian labour movement had a greater capacity for survival than their brothers and sisters in the United States.

Social unionism combines militant struggles against the employer with broader involvement in community and social justice struggles. What could cause a capitalist to tremble with greater fear?

In spite of decades of concerted attacks by the capitalist class, as well as a delay in presenting an

effective response, organized labour in Canada has survived and is showing signs of reinvigoration and a renewed desire to fight the capitalist system.

From a dialectical point of view, this is good news. Struggles are the key means by which the working class acquires its political and class education, and it appears that the Canadian labour movement is preparing for many new struggles. Having seemingly "went to sleep" since the class struggle shifted in favour of the capitalists in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the reawakening of the labour movement will demonstrate that the only effective way to advance the working class is through unapologetic, dauntless, and above all else united class struggle. The complete bankruptcy of the twin policies of business unionism and class collaboration will be laid bare for all to see.

It's too soon to predict a massive union drive among young workers. However, the appearance of young workers' committees among various unions, such as CUPE and OPSEU, is encouraging. Should the labour movement as a whole focus at least a significant part of its efforts on refreshing its ranks with young, class-conscious workers, the survival and advancement of organized labour in Canada will be all but assured.

The tradition of social unionism is of vital importance to the unity of organized labour with all those rejecting neo-liberalism and seeking social justice. This naturally includes the student movement, alongside feminists, anti-racists, environmentalists, anti-war activists, LGBTQ persons and their supporters, seniors' rights advocates, etc.

The case of the unity of the student movement in Quebec with these forces is illustrative. The Liberal government of Jean Charest

responded with police brutality, anti-democratic and oppressive laws and a slanderous campaign against the students. In the end, however, the unity of all progressive people in Québec forced Charest to resign and brought the Parti Québécois to power.

Organized labour in Québec, like most popular democratic forces in the province, is considerably more active and confrontational. Their example has proven to be effective. The gains of the movement in Québec this year cannot be said to be revolutionary, but they have left the people's forces with a seemingly much less hostile environment in which to work. Those with experience in political activism know how valuable this is.

At the same time, movements cannot slow down after victories,

major or minor, but must always continue full speed ahead. This is the lesson of the last one-third of the 20th Century for the labour movement across Canada.

The student movement would do well to reflect on their own experiences, including the dramatic weakening of student activism as a result of OUSA and CASA raiding CFS-affiliated student unions. The comparisons and contrasts with the experience of the labour movement will provide further valuable insight. In the end, this will serve to reinforce this truth: that only a determined, united and militant struggle of the working class can challenge the rule of capital and the increasingly anti-democratic nature of the Western world's governments. ●

## Four Directions Walk raises solutions to fight poverty



Flag carriers arrived at the Manitoba Legislature from Winnipeg's perimeter on October 20, ending the fifth annual Four Directions Walk to End Poverty. People welcomed the walkers at the Leg, continuing Winnipeg's largest annual anti-poverty activity. The Walk is organized to spark debate about realistic solutions to end poverty in the People's Charter. Hundreds of Charters and posters are decorating the streets in Winnipeg's core area.

## Omnibus Bill "attack on democracy" says Council of Canadians

On Oct. 18, Finance Minister Jim Flaherty introduced the Harper government's new 457-page omnibus budget implementation Bill C-45.

*Toronto Star* columnist Tim Harper listed some of the changes in Bill C-45 which "cannot be properly scrutinized (by MPs) to hold a government to account."

These include: amendments to the Canada Shipping Act and the Fisheries Act; changes the definition of an aboriginal fishery; eliminating environmental restrictions on building a bridge across the Detroit River; amendments to the Indian Act to change voting rules for land designation; changes to benefits and salaries for federally-appointed judges; amending the Customs Act to make it easier for the government to collect information on passengers; a temporary refund on Employment Insurance premiums for small business owners; elimination of the Hazardous Materials Information Review Commission; changing the Navigable Waters Act to eliminate impediments to pipelines, power lines or forestry equipment.

C-45 will also mean new changes to the Environmental Assessment Act. The Bill makes workers pay taxes on their employers' contributions to group health and accident insurance plans, and sets time limits on worker complaints under the Canada Labour Code.

The Council of Canadians strongly criticized Stephen Harper's first omnibus budget bill, and says Bill C-45 continues "this

undemocratic manipulation of our political system."

"This bill calls our whole democracy into question," says Maude Barlow, national chairperson of the Council. "Laws are now made unilaterally by the Prime Minister, with no regard for the people or their parliamentarians."

C-45 has been defined as a budget bill to ensure that the vote is a confidence vote. MPs - including Conservative backbenchers - cannot amend this bill, even to protect the interests of their own communities. As a result, warns the Council, the Prime Minister's Office, a small group of political appointees, now have more power than MPs.

The last omnibus bill contained everything from the gutting of environmental assessments to Employment Insurance cuts. It extended the age to collect pensions, shut down long-standing government agencies, and made fundamental changes to the Fisheries Act.

Bill C-45 again denies House of Commons Committees the chance to examine areas pertaining to their expertise. MP pension reductions, pipelines, small business tax credits, interprovincial trade rules, cross-border travel and environmental assessments will be reviewed by a few members of the Finance Committee in a very compressed and superficial manner, says the Council. The group says it will stand with many organizations and individual Canadians in rejecting these tactics to remove political oversight and accountability. ●

## Greetings to Hospital Employees Union

By Peter Marcus

The 28th biennial convention of the Hospital Employees' Union takes place Nov. 4-9 in Vancouver, at a time of unprecedented and unrelenting attacks against public services and assets, and against workers and their unions, by big business and governments. The financial meltdown of 2007-8 has accelerated restraint into austerity, increased pressure for privatization and contracting out, and provided an excuse to target benefits, rights and compensations which we have fought to win for generations. The ultimate aim is to get rid of unions altogether, or render them ineffective. The objective is to enhance corporate profits and power all over the world. In British Columbia, the HEU is at the forefront of the struggle against this agenda.

After the contracting out of 2004 by the Campbell Liberals, thousands of health care workers were replaced by contract workers, who were paid in some cases \$8 less. The rest had their pay reduced, subjected to being off-sited and moved around like chess pieces. Centralized services forced locals to amalgamate disparate sites with

little in common but their health services, resulting in increased local stresses. Some of the ground has been regained by HEU, but the living wage of around \$20 has not been reached by many health workers, particularly those under contract by the multinational corporations.

The HEU played a major role in stopping governments from tearing up collective agreements through the union's Supreme Court case. But HEU cannot struggle alone, and the union does not need to fight battles on two fronts - against the pro-corporate employer and against another union.

The raid by BCNU for Licensed Practical Nurses was divisive and played into the hands of our capitalist enemy, setting back any possibility of uniting health care workers under one union roof. A united union movement with its potential wider community allies must build a mass fightback, or lose almost everything won through struggles over many decades. The choices are that stark.

Also in jeopardy are many public services and assets, including health care. All these can be privatized or handed over to charities. We see the effects in

the United States, where costs of health insurance are through the roof. Do Canadians really want that? Do we really want to enhance corporate profits? I think not.

The CLC, the B.C. Federation and the Vancouver and District Labour Council have passed resolutions to nationalize energy resources. We also need public ownership of the banks, and we need to reduce the arms budget to pay for services like health care and to create good, socially beneficial, and green jobs.

I believe it has been a mistake to depend on one political party, the bureaucratic process or even the legal system. The union movement must have its own political agenda, using militant tactics and strategies, such as those of the Quebec students and the Greek workers, to improve the situation of workers and the broader 99% of society against the capitalist system of the 1%.

I wish you well in your deliberations, and I extend solidarity from the Communist Party of Canada.

(Retired Vancouver hospital worker Peter Marcus is a member of HEU and of the Communist Party of Canada.) ●

# EDITORIALS

## Public ownership of energy

Across the planet, ownership and control of natural resources - especially energy - is an urgent issue. U.S. imperialism and its allies are shifting their military might into the Middle East and Asian Pacific regions, largely to secure domination over such resources. The human cost is enormous, from those killed in the occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan, to the lives cut short by spending on weapons rather than clean water, housing, health care and other urgent needs.

This is the backdrop for the escalating struggle over economic policies within the borders of the Canadian state. From the Abbott Plan - the post-WW2 decision of the emerging Canadian ruling class to become a supplier of raw materials for the Yankee war machine - to the free trade era, manufacturing and secondary industry have declined, and reliance on raw materials has grown.

Today, the sharpest fight is over the extraction and export of unprocessed tar sands bitumen. In this situation, some argue that Canada should block energy deals with Chinese-based companies, or that the Canada-China Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement is "worse" than other FIPAs signed by the undemocratic Harper government without public debate. This approach is based on the absurd claim that China is less democratic or more militaristic than the United States or other western imperialist powers.

Here's the real question: why not nationalize energy resources in Canada? Public ownership under democratic control would offer a path to redress the historic theft of Aboriginal lands and resources, and to use energy resources to meet Canadian domestic needs and dramatically reduce carbon emissions. The blind greed of the ruling class cannot remain the determining factor in setting economic policy. The call for public ownership must be raised within the growing struggles to end the destructive extraction and export of the tar sands.

## Estelle passengers true heroes

Canadians were relieved to hear that Jim Manly, the former Member of Parliament, had been released from an Israeli prison. We join with others in extending our thanks to all the passengers and crew of the Freedom Flotilla vessel *Estelle*, for their courageous action against the illegal blockade of Gaza.

Details are gradually emerging about the brutal conduct of Israeli troops during their seizure of the vessel, which was bringing humanitarian aid to the people of Gaza. Israel's lie that the *Estelle* may have been bringing weapons to Gaza is utterly ludicrous; few boats have ever been subjected to such intense and public searches before sailing.

Several passengers on the *Estelle* were members of parliament from Norway, Sweden, Greece and Spain. But no current Canadian MPs were on board, and none dared express support for the solidarity mission. This is sad but hardly surprising, since the Harper Tories and the corporate media immediately demonize any public figures who criticize the Israeli state's apartheid policies. One of the worst examples is the *National Post's* shameful slander of Gaza solidarity activists as "holocaust deniers." Such media could look at Canada's home-grown white supremacists for some real anti-Semitism; perhaps their reluctance stems from embarrassing links between these hate groups and ultra-right activists inside the Conservative Party.

Fortunately, criticism of Israel's policies is stronger in other countries. As the Flotilla organizers said, "the *Estelle's* mission was successful in declaring to the world that Israel's blockade of Gaza is inhuman and illegal, and showing to the Palestinians in Gaza that our solidarity is relentless and we will come again." Very true, and the Harper Tories will not silence us here in Canada.



## SPEAKING FRANKLY

## Don't blame Chinese workers - blame capitalism

### PV Commentary

The news that 2,000 coal miners are being recruited in China to work in British Columbia sent shock waves through the labour movement, especially since these workers will be paid below current wages in the industry. But in sharp contrast to the anti-Asian riots by some Canadian workers a century ago, there have been no expressions of racism by trade unions in the current situation.

According to The Tyee online news site, Chinese miners being recruited for temporary work in Canada must pay for the privilege, and their actual wages are less than advertised.

Posing as a Chinese miner, a Tyee journalist contacted two of three companies that placed ads on a Chinese website, and found that the workers are paying fees to recruiters in exchange for jobs in Canada. One recruiter, who claimed to be working for the B.C.-based Canada CIBS Investment and Trade Group, said 30,000 yuan (\$4,700) is paid upon a contract being signed in China. An additional 50,000 yuan (\$7,800) will be paid over 20 months after arrival in Canada, through \$400 monthly deductions from the workers' paycheques.

The advertisement offered jobs in Canadian mines at a rate of \$25 to \$30 per hour, but according to the recruiter the wage is actually between \$22 and \$25 per hour.

Speaking on CKNW radio, B.C. Jobs Minister Pat Bell claimed that the company had "undergone an exhaustive search" for Canadian applicants and had "come up empty handed."

That argument does not convince Frank Everitt, president of USW Local 1-424.

"I just think it's shameful, I think there are enough people in Northern B.C. that they could recruit for the mine," said Everitt. "It's not that we haven't done it, it's just that nobody has put the resources to it and it's a scam to bring guest workers in."

According to the Steelworkers, the three companies involved always intended to hire temporary foreign workers. They received government approval to bring up to 2,000 miners into B.C. to work in new mining operations, by claiming not enough Canadian workers are

available. Job postings by the companies list standard qualifications such as mining experience and training certificates, plus "Other languages: Mandarin."

The ads appeared online through Human Resources and Skills Development Canada's job posting service, and were placed by HD Mining, Canadian Kailuan Dehua Mines, and Canadian Dehua International Mines Group, searching for hundreds of workers to fill a variety of positions at four mines.

"Never in the history of Canadian mining have we ever seen a requirement to speak Mandarin mentioned in a posting for a job in a Canadian mine," says Steve Hunt, the Steelworkers' Western Canadian Director. "A requirement like that automatically eliminates the vast majority of Canadian job applicants from consideration. What possible justification can the company provide for requiring Mandarin to be spoken in a mine in B.C., other than being a convenient and disingenuous way to claim there are no qualified Canadian applicants?"

This situation appears to be simply another example of the Harper Tory government's cheap labour strategy. While cutting back on immigration and refugee numbers, the Tories have expanded the Temporary Foreign Worker Program, and allowed employers to pay temporary workers 15% below the standard wages. It appears that in this case, the differential will be in the 30% range or even higher. There are now an estimated 300,000 temporary foreign workers in Canada, triple the number of a decade ago, employed in virtually every industry and region of the country.

Understanding that the government/employer strategy is pitting Canadian vs. "foreign" workers, the labour movement is reaching out to temporary workers, offering assistance in standing up for their rights. This struggle will be ever more crucial as right-wing forces try to blame foreign workers for high unemployment and falling living standards.

It is probably no coincidence that neo-Nazi and white racist movement in Canada, which declined in the mid-1990s, has begun to re-emerge in recent years. Similar trends are seen in Europe,

such as the fascist Golden Dawn anti-immigrant party in Greece.

Our problem is not Chinese workers, who have a fundamental human right to seek better-paying employment in other countries. Unemployment and economic crisis are endemic to capitalism, regardless of the specifics of the labour market at any particular moment. Neither is our problem that "bad" foreign companies are hurting "good" Canadian companies. (Tell that one to victims of Canadian-based mining firms in many Third World countries!)

Our problem is the capitalist system itself, and a far-right Tory government eager to help corporations slash wages, working conditions, pensions, and social benefits, in short to increase exploitation with the aim of boosting private profits. The solution is greater unity of all workers - organized and unorganized, employed and unemployed, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, Canadian-born and migrants, young and old, of all genders, no matter what our language or ethnic backgrounds.

As the saying goes, an injury to one is an injury to all. The Chinese miners being recruited to work here are being injured through lower wage rates. Our fight is not to keep them out - it will be to help them win the same wages and working conditions achieved through generations of struggle by miners in this country. ●

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# Vancouver's Housing Task Force draws criticism

By Kimball Cariou

Bike lanes, chicken coops and civil liberties may spark hot debates in Vancouver, but local controversies often revolve around housing. That's not surprising, since single detached home prices average about a million dollars here, and one-bedroom condos cost over half a million. Over 50% of Vancouverites under 34 years old spend more than half their income on housing. Renters pay \$1500 or more for a two-bedroom suite. Despite some progress, homelessness remains a major problem. Many working people move to the suburbs, accepting the commute to get lower housing costs.

Against this background, Vancouver's task force on housing affordability was eagerly anticipated. Released in late September, the task force's recommendations met a skeptical reaction, not just from groups representing renters and low-income people, but even among sectors which tended to back the governing Vision party in the past three civic elections.

Some pundits attribute this response to "communications" errors. Civic affairs blogger Frances Bula wrote, "the 15-point priority action plan in Appendix A was just too big a wad of policy to swallow for many people... There were too many nuances and technical terms for reporters, even some hard-working ones, to get everything that was in there."

There's an element of truth to this analysis. Looking for easy targets, the media jumped on the task force's so-called "thin streets" proposal, essentially a plan to encourage new housing developments beside existing buildings along certain streets. This unpopular idea was quickly re-branded an "option" for neighbourhoods to consider - basically a way to drop the idea, without admitting that the concept was a fiasco.

But while the complexity and bulk of the report meant some misunderstandings, its general direction confirms the orientation of Mayor Robertson's Vision majority. On the one hand, they argue that building more housing will reduce prices for middle and low-income people. But to make this happen, they rely on private developers who have a huge stake in driving up prices. Compounding the problem, investment in Vancouver real estate has become international in scope.

Having been elected in 2008 and 2011 largely on promises to make Vancouver more liveable and affordable, Robertson does hope to deliver.

But Vision may be trapped in a bind which he helped to create. The Mayor and his Vision councillors argue that they have a responsibility to ensure that more housing is built. This commitment, they say, sets them apart from neighbouring Burnaby, also governed by a centrist party linked to the NDP. The Burnaby council's view is that housing is a provincial and federal responsibility which should not be downloaded to municipalities.

Grassroots social housing advocates have tried for years to make the demand for a National Housing Strategy a priority issue. One campaign has been to earmark

1% of total federal spending for social and low-income housing. Anti-war groups point out that this could easily be achieved through a reduction in Canada's growing military spending.

But for tactical reasons, Vision has done relatively little to press Victoria and Ottawa for such commitments, even though the federal government boasted homelessness by eliminating funding for social housing during the 1980s and '90s.

Vancouver faces sky-high prices for the relatively few spaces available to build on, and few political tools except incentives and zoning changes. So the Vision majority often gives quick approval for new high-rises, despite significant neighbourhood criticism. Vision is increasingly regarded as a developer-friendly party, especially since some of the same developers make big campaign donations.

Nothing in the Task Force changes this overall picture. One positive recommendation is to establish a Vancouver Housing Authority, a proposal first raised by the Coalition of Progressive Electors. It's also true that the Task Force calls for six-story apartments on major streets, or stacked townhouses and rowhouses, not the high-rises favoured by giant developers like Westbank, PCI, or Wall Developments.

But will these smaller-scale projects lower housing costs? There are few teeth in the well-intentioned hopes to encourage

developers to make some percentage of new units available at vaguely-defined affordable rates. Builders large and small want to make maximum profits; prices may fall only when the Vancouver bubble bursts, after twenty years of feverish speculation.

Unfortunately, the debate on the Task Force has so far been limited mainly to criticisms of Vision's pro-market strategy.

One important response came from COPE, which lost its two city council members in a major electoral setback in 2011. COPE's Housing Affordability Committee has issued a 12-page report, which warns that "the refusal of City Hall to build affordable housing capable of competing with and under-cutting the private sector has left Vancouverites to rely on the private market alone. The City's dependence on private condominiums as the dominant form of housing tenure has fuelled unaffordability."

The COPE report criticizes the "incentivization of private construction" through tax exemptions and subsidies, the city's inadequate consultation

process, a failure to acknowledge the impact of gentrification, and the lack of any meaningful definition of "affordability."

There is much to commend in the COPE report, which calls for an end to "renovictions", alternative forms of housing tenure, and other urgent reforms.

But the report also has some puzzling weaknesses. One is the implicit agreement with Vision that the housing crisis can mainly be resolved at the local level. In fact, there is only one reference to the responsibilities of provincial and federal governments, in the final sentence of the document.

Without major funding commitments from higher levels of government, how will social, low-income, non-market and co-op housing be built? Here the report has little to say. For many years, COPE has urged that the city's Property Endowment Fund be tapped for urgent priorities such as low-income housing. Yet the report does not mention this important potential revenue source. Nor does it include COPE's call for reversing the property tax shift which has benefited the city's business sector.



## Canada's toxic spill of anti-native racism

By Eric Walberg, PressTV, Oct. 19, 2012

News that should warm the heart of any supporter of native rights and critic of Stephen Harper - that native activists will finally get a voice at OPEC (however weak) - has been greeted by the silence of the liberal lambs. Where are voices of reason? Where is the opposition in Canada's so-called democracy?

The only public response to former Roseau River chief Terrance

Nelson's efforts to help his people - Canada's First Nation (as opposed to the settlers who stole the land and who export and destroy our resources) - is to accuse him of treason, of consorting with the enemy, the enemy being a nation which has never threatened Canada, the US or any other nation with aggression. A nation which is instead the victim of harsh sanctions and unrelenting subversion by Canada and its "friends."

Nelson and former Dakota Tipi

chief Dennis Pashe were in Iran this week meeting with government officials and academics. According to APTN (Aboriginal Peoples Television Network), the Iranian government is willing to back First Nations leaders if they want to address OPEC at its next

confab December 12 in Vienna, to get a better deal on the 2.5 million barrels a day of oil that is pumped from Indigenous territories and sent by Canada to the US.

Nelson plans to tell OPEC that the native people of Canada are the true owners of Canada's petroleum resources. "We call upon the government of Canada to consider the experiences of other countries regarding fair distribution of the natural resources' income. The OPEC nations have had a similar history in dealing with colonial powers," said Nelson in Tehran.

Nelson met with Mohammad Javad Larijani, Iran's secretary for the High Council for Human Rights.

"As we defend the rights of people in Bahrain, Iraq, Afghanistan and Palestine in the international organizations, we will also defend Canada's Aboriginal population. Canada has exploited and even committed genocide against the Aboriginal people rather than investing in their treasure of cultural and civilization wealth," said Larijani.

"We were warned not to go to

Iran, and Western media have consistently tried to dehumanize and demonize the Iranian people. The people of Iran are nothing like the lies told in Western media," said Nelson on Iran's PressTV. Even as he spoke the EU was blacking out PressTV.

Nelson visited several university classes. The Iranian NGO Peace Lovers Society agreed to provide university scholarships to 10 First Nations students to study in Iran in the area of oil and gas, medicine and economics. Iranians have a lot to teach Canadians about oil and imperial greed. Britain and Russia occupied Iran during both WWI & II, and Britain and the US orchestrated a regime change in Iran in 1953 to make sure the oil kept flowing to the 'good guys'.

Lesson number one: there are no 'good guys' in imperialism; there are only exploiters and victims. Lesson number two: the exploiters are always right and the victims always wrong. Lesson number three: if the victims manage to take control of the oil, asserting their rights, they better watch out, as the exploiters will do everything in their power to snatch back the black gold. Lesson number four: if you manage to unite your people and keep control of the oil, you can survive even the most aggressive aggression.

To read the COPE report, visit <http://cope.bc.ca>.

**OTHER VOICES**



Photo from <http://pomegranatewomenwriting.wordpress.com>.

# "Capitalism's disease is incurable"

*Excerpts from the closing speech of Giorgos Marinou, member of the Politbureau of Greek Communist Party (KKE), at the European Communist Meeting held Oct. 1-2. For more information, visit <http://solidnet.org>, the international website of the Communist and Workers' Parties.*

The experience of the parties that struggle in the EU member-states, as well in the states which do not belong to the predatory alliance, leads to one conclusion: capital is waging a serious unified offensive, the aim of which is to reduce the price of the labour power, to make the working class cheaper, to increase the profits of the monopolies, to transfer the burden of the crisis onto the peoples.

The forces that manage capitalism and its crisis are consistently serving this very goal, irrespective of the form of management which is being followed: the restrictive policy, which deepens recession of the capitalist economy, or the expansive policy that inflates deficits and the debt.

In both cases it is the people who pay for the consequences through the reduction of salaries and pensions, high unemployment rates, abolition of labour and social security rights, commercialization of social services, privatizations, harsh tax measures.

We often hear that the deteriorating situation of the working class, the farmers, the urban middle strata, the undermining of the future of the youth, are due to "unrestrained" capitalism, neo-liberalism, casino capitalism. This is what the European Left Party claims, and likewise SYRIZA in Greece, as well as other forces that wish to manage the system.

This requires attention. It is an organized, planned effort to mislead the people. These characterizations seek to conceal the essence, that what is responsible for unemployment, poverty, people's problems in general, the crises and the imperialist wars, is the capitalist mode of production and not merely a form of its management, that is to say the system which lives and breathes from the exploitation of the working class, from the extraction of surplus value, the

quest for profit, the competition for expansion into new markets; the system which is based on the power of the monopolies and the capitalist ownership of the means of production.

The same holds true for the crisis. The bourgeois staff and all the opportunist formations, above all the European Left Party, are talking about a "financial crisis", a "debt crisis", despite the fact that the depth and the duration of the

crisis will be created in the conditions of the capitalist growth.

Thus, the struggle of the communists acquires great and crucial importance. They have the historical task of strengthening the struggle for the overthrow of the rotten system, so that the working class and the people take power into their own hands and construct the new society, socialism which is more timely and necessary than before. This workers' and people's

crises. The workers' people's power will proceed to disengage from the imperialist unions, that is to say from the NATO of wars, interventions and threats against the peoples, and the EU of the 30 million unemployed and the 127 million who live below the poverty line, the EU built to serve the interests of capital and the multinational companies at the expense of people....

The objective developments, a

in the European continent as a whole. This position underestimates the class struggle at a national level and has a very negative impact on the preparation of the communist parties, the working class and the peoples for the tough class confrontations.

Of course, we need to intensify efforts for European and international coordination of the struggle, but the basic issue is that the communist parties and working class must be strong, well prepared in order to wage the struggle to resolve the capital-labour contradiction. We can, for example, strengthen the international coordinated struggle and take steps in the regroupment of the labour movement at a national level, and on this basis we must lend impetus to the activity of the WFTU. It is an important goal, we have decided on it at the international meetings of the Communist Parties, and we must make some progress on this. From this standpoint, we would like to salute the decision of the trade unions of South Africa, COSATU, which at their recent congress decided to join the WFTU.

The KKE is struggling on a daily basis for goals of struggle which correspond to the people's interests. It struggles for an increase in the taxation of capital, at the same time it is struggling to increase salaries and pensions, for free social services, for reduced taxation of families from the popular strata.

The combining of the goals of struggle is necessary, but what is central is the direction in which this struggle is incorporated. What is central is that the struggle for one or the other problem is incorporated into efforts for improved organization of the working class, a changed correlation of forces. It must be incorporated in the struggle for the overthrow of the system, for the abolition of the regime of exploitation... ●



Greek Communist banners at the Acropolis in Athens during a general strike.

capitalist crisis have refuted them. They have also been refuted by developments in Greece, Portugal, Italy, Spain as well as in other states and the EU as a whole.

The facts stress that it is a crisis of the capitalist mode of production, a crisis of capital over-accumulation that expresses the sharpening of the main contradiction of the system. Capitalism's disease is incurable. The crisis, and generally the crises, show that the system has declined, that its historical limits have been surpassed...

Even when the capitalist motor restarts, growth will be marked by the most savage exploitation, which will take place on the ruins of the workers' and people's rights. Capitalist competition will intensify, the system will become more aggressive, its possibilities for concessions will be subsequently reduced even further.

The preconditions for a new

power expresses the interests of the many.

The means of production, the wealth will be under the ownership of those who produce it, who create it. The economy will be organized according to the satisfaction of the people's needs, it will develop in a planned way, to ensure the right to work for all as well as free social services.

This path of development will negate the causes of the capitalist

deep economic and political crisis, an imperialist war can provoke a revolutionary situation, and pose the question of the system's overthrow. It would be better for this to take place not in one country on its own, but in a group of countries. This will help us wage the struggle from better positions.

But at the time when history knocks on the door of one or another country, we cannot say that we will wait for the overthrow

## Why we need to get out and march

*Tens of thousands rallied in London, Glasgow and Belfast on Oct. 20, in opposition to the austerity policies of Britain's Conservative-LibDem coalition government. Jeremy Corbyn, the left-wing Labour MP for Islington North, helped mobilize for this important event. Corbyn was asked "what is the point? One day won't make any difference." Here is an excerpt from his response, from the Morning Star newspaper.*

Since 2010 the coalition government has not just aggressively cut but has fundamentally restructured society by increasing the wealth gap and hacking away at the welfare state. Tory ministers lay the blame for the sovereign debt problem firmly at the door of the benefits system - and the "greed" of the unemployed or disabled. This is a grotesque attempt to divert attention away from massive corporate tax evasion.

The cuts that have taken place so far have increased unemployment, blighted the

hopes of a generation of young people and ushered in a new radical conservatism that blames all economic ills on any form of regulation. As the cuts in housing benefit deepen, the poorest lose their homes. Through the disgraceful Atos interviewing procedure, those on disability benefits are put through terrible stress and face losing their benefits. From diminishing health and safety protection and trying to buy out employment rights in exchange for shareholdings to refusing to even grant ILO minimum provision on workers rights, the government's anti-worker agenda is plain to see.

The Coalition will forever be remembered as the social-cleansers of Britain. When we march it is to protest against all of these things and to show solidarity with those protesting elsewhere. Contingents from all over Europe will be able to relate their experience of cuts, privatisation, mass unemployment and attacks on workers' rights. Every eurozone country that has had a programme of austerity forced on it by the European

Central Bank has seen the jobless figures rise, state assets sold off and a massive increase in the numbers of young people who are unemployed and not in any kind of education...

Social democratic parties that preach the supposed "responsibility" of the banks are electorally punished - witness Greece's Pasok and Spain's PSOE. Last weekend left parties, socialist and communist, scored big gains in the Czech Republic's regional elections.

Saturday's demonstration is about an alternative - a society that ensures all are protected from destitution and poverty. A society that does not go to war or build nuclear weapons. A society based on valuing everyone, not worshipping inequality and greed. To those who see no alternative we have to demonstrate there is - that poverty and inequality are not inevitable, that it is possible to create a society where all can have the opportunity to fulfil their potential. ●



# 5,000 rally against tar sands exports

By Kimball Cariou

October 22 saw a powerful show of opposition to the expansion of tar sands pipelines and tankers along the British Columbia coast. About 5,000 people gathered on the lawn of the Legislature in Victoria, including hundreds trained in non-violent civil disobedience. In the end, police did not make arrests, an indication that the B.C. government prefers to avoid a direct confrontation with the movement against exports of diluted bitumen dug out of the tar sands in northern Alberta.

Held on a Monday (rather than a weekend when travel might have been easier), the rally was remarkable for its diversity. Hundreds arrived from communities in the northern interior and along the coast. Busloads of First Nations people joined activists from across Vancouver Island and the Vancouver area, and from many other places across North America. Flags of the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union (CEP) and the CAW, which have just voted to form a new union, flew prominently in the centre of the rally. Every major environmental group was represented, along with a host of groups based in smaller cities



and towns.

The rally also united a wide range of political beliefs. Many participants were NDP or Green Party members, but others were Liberals or even Conservatives concerned about protection of the west coast. Communist Party members distributed hundreds of leaflets and copies of *People's Voice*, and took part in civil disobedience workshops held the previous day. And of course many demonstrators came from non-partisan or anarchist outlooks.

The rally was opened by First

Nations leaders who led a march to the Legislature along the Victoria harbour. For several hours, speakers from organizing groups were interspersed with songs and First Nations drummers, as the civil disobedience unfolded. Over 300 volunteers risked arrest, erecting a black banner 235 metres in length, to show the size of an oil supertanker. Stakes to hold up the fabric were hammered into the lawn, in violation of the law, and the banner was extended across Belleville Street, also an illegal direct action. Police simply watched, and some even quietly agreed with the aims of the protest.

Far behind in the polls, Premier Christy Clark is trying to ride the wave of anti-Enbridge sentiment. On the morning of the rally, the *Globe and Mail* reported that Clark calls the dispute over potential revenues from the pipeline a "national crisis." But few in the crowd took Clark's posturing seriously, and the movement is increasingly united against any expansion of bitumen exports, for any price.

The strength of that opposition was seen again on Oct. 24, when thousands of people took part in over 60 local actions across the province against pipelines and tankers.

For more reports on the Oct. 22 action, including coverage of speakers and performers, visit <http://defendourcoast.ca>. •

Scenes from the rally in Victoria: at left, long-time Communist activists Grace Stevens and Grace Tickson from Nanaimo. At right: CEP and CAW flags; First Nations leaders in traditional regalia; civil disobedience volunteers blocking Belleville Street. Photos by Kimball Cariou, except the First Nations leaders, which is from <http://defendourcoast.ca>.



## Why Canadians must oppose the war threat

By Darrell Rankin, Winnipeg

The question of war or peace in the Middle East is at a critical moment. The people and sovereignty of Iran and Syria are in grave danger. A small spark could set off a huge war engulfing many countries, including the NATO military alliance.

Backed by the corporate media and joining other Western powers, the Harper government is imposing sanctions and cutting diplomatic ties as a cover for its own war preparations. Adding to the problem, it is hard to find disagreement on this issue between Harper and the main opposition parties.

We need millions of Canadians to understand that Harper's war drive must be stopped. We need to explain the reasons behind Harper's role on the world stage, and his government's growing isolation from the world majority on the issue of peace in the Middle East.

We need to pressure Parliament to make Canada a voice for peace and disarmament in the region.

Working people would lose from such a war, as any party that represents workers should know.

Trade unions and other popular organizations in Canada need to help build the anti-war movement. This would be the greatest act of solidarity with working people of all nations and religions in the region, because a new war would kill workers of all kinds.

We need to understand the motivations why the corporate ruling class here and in the Middle East is moving towards war. Only a small handful of people would benefit, especially the arms dealers. To them, a new war is useful as a tool to blind workers and prevent their unity for a better world.

The Harper Tories have the foolish expectation that a new war would place Syria and Iran under the reactionary control of Turkey and Saudi Arabia, and give more time for Israel to tighten its grip over the Palestinian people.

Like masters at the chess board, Western powers want to alter the Middle East balance. Colonial

attitudes that support regime change in Arab countries are alive and well in Ottawa and other Western capitals. But wars do not always reach the desired end.

For the West, the usual reason for Middle East wars - oil - is receding to the background. There is a growing anti-popular, reactionary purpose to the latest war drive.

According to Prime Minister Stephen Harper the "hopeful spring of democracy" has given way to an "angry summer of populism... (R)arely has the free and democratic world been less secure."

These are convenient words for a true imperialist. They paint the world as full of threatening chaos, a world we must bring under control for the danger to disappear.

The words are a ruse employed by apologists to justify the drive to dominate other nations. They are used to conceal the danger and chaos created by imperialism in the first place, through sanctions, the arms race and open bellicose threats.

At first, a war might help the most reactionary circles in the West, who continue to use workers as pawns and cannon fodder. These corporate global overlords intend to crush the democratic, popular character of the Arab Spring and stop it from spreading.

As emphasized by Harper's own words, hatred of the popular movements is a prominent motivation behind the threats to Iran and Syria. War is a desperate measure by the West and its allies in the region to crush the popular movements and the hopes for global anti-imperialist unity. Even more serious, another Middle East war could easily grow into a world war, pitting the West against China and Russia.

Intense military preparations in several global hotspots are putting realistic solutions to hunger and climate change on the back burner, where the big oil and grain corporations want them to be. Militarism guarantees that the jobless will continue to go hungry.

Communist and workers' parties have long stated that

another world war can be stopped by a very broad anti-imperialist alliance. A new Middle East war would complicate building this unity.

From that perspective, it is vital to block a new war against Iran or Syria. At home and globally, the peace movement has much work ahead to explain the democratic alternatives to war.

We need to build broad, popular support for comprehensive, mutually agreed and verifiable disarmament in the Middle East, and for the right of the Palestinian people and all nations in the Middle East to decide their future.

This means ending arms shipments into Syria that violate its sovereignty. Canada must end arms sales to regimes that are violating Syria's sovereignty, such as Saudi Arabia, Turkey and the United States.

One thing has not changed about the escalating war threat. The wallets of the Western arms corporations are growing fat off the Middle East.

This is a war we must stop! •



# GLOBAL CLASS STRUGGLE

## Labour and left parties unite in Egypt

In a historic development, two independent workers' groups and several Egyptian political parties joined forces on Oct. 15 to establish the National Front for the Defense of Labor Rights and Union Liberties.

The goals of the front include the cancellation of the restrictive Trade Union Law 35/1976, the issuing of the draft Trade Union Liberties Law promoting workers' right to free association, protecting unionists and labourers against punitive sackings, confronting labor violations perpetrated by the state and/or employers, and a just pay-scale.

The National Front brings together the two largest independent workers' groups - the Egyptian Federation of Independent Trade Unions (EFITU) and the Egyptian Democratic Labor Congress (EDLC) - and left parties, including the Egyptian Social Democratic Party, Egyptian Communist Party, Tagammu Party, Karama Party, Socialist Popular Alliance Party, Constitution Party, Adl Party, Egyptian Socialist Party, and other movements.

The conference was opened by Ahmad Hassan al-Borai, the former manpower minister, under whom the draft Trade Union Liberties Law was formulated. As he announced, "This front is not only for confronting the vicious attacks on union rights, but also for the protection of basic labor rights and the realization of social justice."

Borai added that his draft union law was prepared by September 2011, "yet remained a dead paper which was shelved and collected dust" under the rule of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, then at the hands of the People's Assembly, and most recently at the hands of the new manpower minister, the Muslim Brotherhood's Khaled al-Azhar.

The total membership of the participating labour federations is estimated at less than three million, with nearly 2.5 million belonging to the EFITU. Many other new independent unions remain unaffiliated. The state-controlled Egyptian Trade Union Federation (ETUF) still claims a membership of 4.5 million workers.

## AFL-CIO slams California Prop. 32

The AFL-CIO hopes that "this election year will finally put a stake through the heart of efforts by corporations and extremist right-wing millionaires to silence the voice of California's working families in the political arena."

On the California ballot this year is Prop. 32, which the AFL-CIO calls "a near-clone of 2005's Prop. 75 and 1998's Prop. 226, which voters defeated by 53% to 47%. Both times, huge mobilizations by working families turned back the millions of dollars from Republican PACs and corporate and anti-worker extremists. These are the same

groups that are behind Prop. 32."

The so-called "Stop Special Interest Money Now Act," Prop. 32 would ban the use of voluntary payroll deductions by union members who want to contribute to their union's political activity. It would not stop campaign spending by secret corporate-backed PACs and the wealthy.

As the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor says, "Prop. 32 exempts secretive super PACs and corporate front groups, which



can raise unlimited amounts of money from corporate special interests and billionaire businessmen, to support their candidates or defeat their enemies."

Prop. 32 created exemptions for Wall Street hedge funds, real estate investors, insurance companies and other well-heeled special interests, allowing them to continue contributing directly to candidates.

But the initiative would severely restrict union members in both the public and private sectors - teachers, nurses, firefighters, police officers etc. - from speaking out on issues such as cuts to schools and colleges, police and fire response times, patient safety and workplace protections.

## Decriminalise sexual labour, says study

A new study of laws and policies affecting sex workers across 48 countries in the Asia-Pacific region has found that criminalisation increases their vulnerability. The *Sex Work and Law* report found that criminalisation laws limit the rights of sex workers, and reduces access to health services, in particular scanning and treatment of HIV/AIDS.

The report was jointly issued by the United Nations Development Programme, the UN Population Fund and the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS.

The study found that countries which had decriminalised sex laws have seen lower cases of HIV transmission among sex workers. Removing criminal penalties in New Zealand and in the Australian state of New South Wales has demonstrated that implementing work place health and safety standards, and seeing this as a health issue, has greatly improved access to HIV and health care services. This approach has been more effective than a strategy used in Thailand, focused on aiming for 100% condom usage.

A UN spokesperson for the

report, Julie Cabassi, says "what we need to do is involve health authorities in reviewing the occupational health and safety standards in the industry."

## Czech unions call anti-austerity rally

The Czech "Stop Government" platform, comprising unions and civic groups, is planning a major demonstration in Prague. The protest will hit the declining state of democracy in the Czech Republic, the disintegration of welfare rights, and the rising social certainties faced by families.

The Stop Government rally will be held at Wenceslas Square on November 17, with some 20,000 participants expected.

The most recent union-organized mass demonstration in Prague, last April 21, drew some 100,000 people to protest the anti-popular centre-right government of Petr Necas, comprising his Civic Democrats (ODS), TOP 09 and LIDEM. For that rally, unions rented buses and a special train to Prague for members. Similar steps are not planned for this mobilization.

Despite the labour movement's dissatisfaction, Jaroslav Zavadil, chair of the CMKOS federation, says that the trade unions would not leave tripartite discussions with the government and employers.

## "Labour reforms" ruled illegal

So-called "reforms" to Greek law aimed at cutting labour costs for employers are illegal because they violate workers' rights, according to an Oct. 19 judgement by a Council of Europe committee. The non-binding decision could be used by trade unions to mount a legal challenge.

The Council's social rights committee ruled that two measures ordered by Greece's international creditors contravene the European Social Charter and should be scrapped. Adopted in 2010, the measures extended the "trial period" during which workers can be dismissed without notice to one year, and cut the minimum salary for workers under 25 years of age to two-thirds of the national minimum wage.

The committee said the longer trial period ran counter to a clause in the charter which says workers are entitled to "reasonable" notice before their employment is terminated, and that the lower wage meant young Greek workers had fallen below the poverty line of 580 euros a month. Budgetary readjustments in response to the global economic crisis should not lead to an erosion of workers' rights enshrined in the European Social Charter, it said.

The committee makes recommendations to the Council of Ministers of the 47-nation Council of Europe, which can then call on a member state to take corrective action.

The judgement could prove embarrassing to the Greek government and its creditors, as they impose new cuts worth 11.5 billion euros to secure the next

tranche of a 130-billion-euro bailout needed to keep Greece afloat. The ruling was issued a day after the latest general strike shut down most of Greece. Tens of thousands of people marched in Athens and other major cities on Oct. 18, against cutbacks which are deepening the country's worst post-war recession.

The Council of Europe was founded in 1949 to "promote co-operation on legal standards, human rights, and the rule of law." It is separate from the European Union.

## New mass strike in Greece

The 20th general strike in recent years was marked by huge demonstrations in Athens, Thessalonica, Piraeus and dozens of cities all over Greece on Oct. 18. In the corporate media, coverage of the strike centred on violent clashes between police and black-hooded individuals. But the main role in the mobilizations was played by the All-Workers Militant Front (PAME), which called the day a powerful response to the anti-popular austerity measures of the government, the EU and big capital.

"We do not fall for the games aimed at disorientating, mocking and trapping the Greek people regarding the so-called negotiation," said Sotiris Poulidikogiannis, President of the Metalworkers Union of Piraeus, at the central strike rally in Athens. The three-party government of ND-PASOK-Democratic Left, he said, "have finalised the raft of measures ordered by the monopolies."

Poulidikogiannis continued, "From the day when capital established the EU, it has sought

through it to maximise its profitability, by cutting back every labour right-gain-freedom. All those who speak about a bad negotiation, subservience, foreign occupation, etc. are playing a dirty role. On the one hand they make a lot of noise and talk tough, and on the other hand they assist the attempt to conceal the truth from the people, from the working class. To exonerate the big employers so that their destructive activity can proceed unchecked.

"They have given a triple role to the fascist gang of Golden Dawn in this plan: to turn Greek workers against immigrants, to use their slave-trading employment agencies to patronize the Greek workers and to hand them over to the employers as cheap labour, and to operate as a para-state repressive apparatus against the class-oriented movement... We call on the workers, and the people to reject Golden Dawn in a mass and determined way, so that they have no factories or meetings where they can go to and speak and spread the poison of racism and xenophobia, and talk about the allegedly good patriotic capitalists."

Plans by employers and the government for net salaries of 580 euros or less, he warned, are preparing the people for a life of "work from dusk until dawn with starvation wages. No hope of free time, no possibility of our children going to university, no access to basic health and welfare services, work until extreme old age with meagre benefits instead of a pension... This is not development but transformation of the workers into the slaves of the 21st century."

Instead, he called for people's power, utilizing all the productive potential of Greece, through public ownership and national planning, to meet the needs of working people.

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

## Send me information on the Communist Party of Canada



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

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# Electoral gains for European communists

## PV Vancouver Bureau

Two European communist parties made significant advances at the ballot box during October.

In municipal and provincial elections held Oct. 14, the Workers' Party of Belgium (PTB) emerged as a strong Left force in the whole country. A total of 31 municipal councillors, 17 district councillors in the city of Antwerp, and four provincial councillors were elected from the "PTB+" list of candidates. In total, the PTB+ list won 52 local seats in 12 municipalities, seven city districts and two provinces, compared to the previous figure of 15 local seats in just 8 municipalities.

The PTB's objective was to hold its existing 15 seats, and to win a first-ever seat in three major cities: Antwerp, Liege and Brussels. But a dynamic grassroots campaign, focusing on social issues - housing, health care, cleanliness, mobility, education, jobs, taxes - won more votes than the PTB had hoped for.

Party chair Peter Mertens is among four PTB members on the city council of Antwerp, where the party won 8% of votes. The PTB also took 17 seats in the various Antwerp district councils. In Liege, the party got 6.5% of the vote, electing two city councillors, including PTB spokesperson



Raoul Hedebouw. And in the industrial municipalities of Seraing and Herstal (surrounding Liege), the PTB took 14%, winning 5 and 4 seats, making it the second biggest party in the area. In Seraing, a member of the Communist Party of Wallonia-Brussels was elected on the PTB+ list. In Brussels, the party won two seats.

The party held its seat in the city of La Louviere, and also kept its six councillors in the industrial



municipality of Zelzate, near Gent (with 22% of the vote, becoming the second biggest party). In Genk, the PTB improved from one to three seats, taking 8.8% of the vote. Also unexpectedly, the PTB won its first seats in Charleroi, Mons and Flemalle, and received 3% or more of the vote in several other cities.

At a victory party in Antwerp, PTB chair Peter Mertens said: "Finally, there will be a party in Antwerp that will wage a social opposition" against the rightist Flemish nationalist party NVA. "We now have to transform our election victory into a strong organization that can put pressure from the bottom up. Our challenge now is to build a Left alternative and wage a militant opposition."

The NVA proposes to split up Belgium after the federal, regional and European elections of 2014. The current federal government, led by social democrat Elio Di Rupo, is pursuing a policy of harsh austerity measures. To counter both dangers as firmly as possible, says the Workers' Party, a strong social opposition from the Left will be necessary, from the local up to the national level. The PTB aims to work closely with trade unions and other social movements to take up this challenge, keeping true to its slogan of "People, not profit."



KSCM (Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia) leader Vojtech Filip.

Meanwhile, the left forces made gains in the Czech Republic, where the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSCM) scored its largest number of regional government seats since 2000.

The Communists are generally regarded as the main winners of the Oct. 13 regional elections. Although the Social Democrats (CSSD) took the largest share of votes (23.6%) they lost 75 positions over their 2008 results, while the KSCM received 20.4%, electing 182 candidates, up from 15% and 114 seats last time.

Third place went to the right-wing ODS party, with 12.3%, followed by the TOP 09/STAN coalition with 6.6% (TOP 09 is a fiscally conservative party; STAN is the "Mayors and Independents" party) and the Christian Democrat/People's Party with 5.8%. The turnout of 36.9% was considered rather low, said the Communists.

The Social Democrats won in

nine regions, the KSCM in two regions, and the ODS only in Plzen region.

"The KSCM confirmed its growth in the polls", said Vojtech Filip, chair of the KSCM Central Committee. To be successful on such a large scale, said Filip, shows that the KSCM is perceived as a modern left-wing party, able to face corruption and other issues in the Czech Republic. He believes that the KSCM's role in the regional governments of Moravia-Silesia and Karlovy Vary has been positively evaluated by voters.

The first round of elections for the Senate (upper House of Parliament) also saw successes for the Communists. Twelve KSCM candidates went through to the second round of voting on Oct. 19-20, with four in first place and likely to be elected. Currently, there are two KSCM members in the Senate. ●

## "Untouchability" forum highlights caste oppression in both India and Canada

By Gurpreet Singh

A public dialogue on caste oppression, particularly untouchability in Indian society, was held in Surrey last month. The Chetna Association, a group of the Dalit activists' network that speaks for the so-called "untouchables", hosted the event. Members of "low caste" groups shared their first hand experiences of discrimination, both back in India and within the local South Asian community.

A prominent social justice activist from India, Prof. Jagmohan Singh was the guest speaker. Prof. Singh is a nephew of Bhagat Singh, the towering leftist revolutionary who participated in the freedom

struggle and was hanged for killing a police officer under the British occupied India. A historical essay on the question of untouchability, written by his uncle, revealed how caste-ridden orthodox Indian society has continued to oppress "low caste" people in menial jobs. These people are not allowed access to temples and water wells in many parts of India. Despite the official ban on untouchability and caste based oppression, they are forced to engage in manual scavenging.

Prof. Singh revealed that one of his granddaughters is married to a Dalit, and urged the local South Asian community to shun the usage of casteist and racist slurs against any oppressed group. As General

Secretary of the Association For Democratic Rights (AFDR), he has been documenting cases of atrocities against Dalits, tribal groups and religious minorities in India.

During a question and answer session, others shared their ugly experiences. Among them was Chetna Association President Surinder Ranga, who disclosed how the "upper caste" goons exploited him when he was a young boy back in India.

Mohan Lal Karimpuri, another Dalit activist, stunned everyone in the gathering by saying how devotees at a Sikh temple in the Vancouver area used discriminatory language against their community in his presence, despite the fact that the Sikh religion denounces the age-old caste system practised by orthodox Hindus.

Sukhy Dhillon, a teacher from Surrey, acknowledged that such prejudices continue to prevail among the dominant caste groups within the local Sikh community.

Prof. Singh also visited the recent vigil staged by members of the Musqueam Band on Marine Drive in Vancouver, to oppose condo construction at Cesna?em (the Marpole village midden), their 3,000 years old burial site.

Prof. Singh expressed his solidarity with indigenous groups struggling for their rights in Canada. He believes such groups, like aboriginals and Dalits, have been marginalized as part of empire-building processes in each country. It is no coincidence, he said, that the colonization has devastated the lives of both the First Nations in Canada and people back in India. ●



### The Fifth of the Month to Free the Five

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

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

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

Phone 1-202-456-1111

Fax 1-202-456-2461

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

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

## Rights group says militias executed Gaddafi loyalists

From the Morning Star (UK)

Human Rights Watch alleges that Libyan rebels "summarily executed" scores of fighters loyal to Muammar Gaddafi, and probably the president himself, when they overran his hometown a year ago. A report by the US-based group on rebel abuses following the October 2011 capture of Sirte is one of the most detailed descriptions of war crimes committed by the militias that toppled the ex-leader.

The 50-page report *Death of a Dictator: Bloody Vengeance in Sirte*, details Gaddafi's fate when he tried to flee the besieged city. His convoy was struck by NATO aircraft as it fled and the survivors were attacked by militias who captured and disarmed them.

"The evidence suggests that opposition militias summarily executed at least 66 captured members of Gaddafi's convoy," said spokesperson Peter Bouckaert.

HRW found a video clip showing prisoners from Gaddafi's convoy being abused by rebels. The remains of at least 17 were later identified in a group of 50 bodies, some still with their hands tied behind their backs.

Bouckaert said the group's "findings call into question the assertion by Libyan authorities that Gaddafi was killed in crossfire and not after his capture."

Suleiman al-Fortia, a member of the dissolved National Transitional Council, still insisted that "all the killings took place in a crossfire."

But HRW said that, "under the laws of war, the killing of captured combatants is a war crime and Libyan civilian and military authorities have an obligation to investigate violations of international humanitarian law." ●

**REDS ON THE WEB**

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

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

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

[www.solidnet.org](http://www.solidnet.org)



## The best film about the Russian Revolution

**REDS, written, directed and produced by Warren Beatty. Review by Glen Truax.**

This is simply the best film about the Russian Revolution. This is also, without qualifications, one of the best movies ever made. I wept, I clapped. I can't remember the last film that made me do that.

*Reds* was shot and released in the seventies, then re-released in 2006. Both of these times are crucially important. In the seventies, there was a film revolution. Audiences had developed taste, and wanted more from their films. The Hollywood system of movies being essentially produced like fodder by big companies like Universal or MGM had ended; in its place, maverick producers like Robert Evans were willing to gamble on equally maverick directors like Polanski, Coppola, Terence Malick etc.

This was the era of the *Godfather* films, *Apocalypse Now*, *Chinatown*, *Star Wars* (although that was far from intellectual, it was still a cultural bedrock), *Manhattan*, *The French Connection*. I could go on. That was the atmosphere - it's simply unthinkable that a film like *Reds* would ever be made today. A 2.5 hour docu-film, starring Warren Beatty, Diane Keaton, and Jack Nicholson, singing the praises of leftism and portraying the police and the FBI as bully-boy thugs, would never get made today. It might get reissued, but in a corporate climate where they make sequels for *Sex and the City*, it would simply never get produced.

On the other hand, the fact that they chose to reissue *Reds* in 2006 was very telling. It's a subversive film, and by that point Americans were pretty sick of the Iraq war, and the fallout from Katrina. Bush and Cheney were reviled, and I'm astonished that they're still alive. The guillotine is too good for them.

The film follows the life and times of John Reed, a socialist journalist who wrote what is considered to be the best book on the Revolution, *Ten Days that Shook the World* (and if you haven't read it, drop everything and grab a copy NOW). The film moves from little old Portland, Oregon, to New York, and finally

to Russia.

One of the key concepts that the film plays around with is location. Portland is described as a provincial outpost, Greenwich Village is a bohemian paradise (at least in 1913) where people take everything from a very liberal stance. There's a lot of heated arguments between intellectuals but very little gets concretely done (does this sound familiar?).

### People's Voice at the movies

1917 comes, and with it America's foray into the war. Also in early 1917, the Czar of Russia is overthrown, replaced with a shaky provisional government. Beatty and his hellfire wife, played with unspeakable grace by Diane Keaton, head to Russia, which is in utter chaos. The Reds had not yet taken total control, as that would have to wait until October, but it's made very clear that the Bolsheviks are riding a wave that seems uncontrollable.

When the Revolution does come, it's almost ecstatic, like a great flood gate had been opened. There's really no way to describe it. A successful revolution is like a snowflake turning into a blizzard - there has to be momentum behind it, and as Jack Nicholson, playing Gene O'Neill, archly remarks "All the workers in America want to make enough money so that they

don't have to work anymore". The individualist streak is very strong in North America (more so in the States than Canada, but still), which may explain why genuine, heartfelt class warfare happens in isolated incidents, such as Madison and New York.

The film also makes clear that the personal is the political, something that the really gung-ho Bolsheviks don't understand. For them, they can leave their families, and indeed their very personalities at the door, when great historical moments arise. Even someone like John Reed can't entirely drop everything he holds dear, and his relationship with Diane Keaton is pivotal to the plotline.

But most important, this film is inspirational. It makes you want to create, to form bonds, to unite. So damn the "politically incorrect" (i.e. right-wing) commentators who only remember Stalin and the gulags. Damn the people who apathetically shrug their shoulders, say "Marx is dead", and then continue to run the same gerbil wheel for the rest of their lives. Damn supposedly "liberal" commentators who harrumph and make comments like "Communism is good in theory, but...". Of course Marx is, in fact, not alive. And Stalin did some horrendous crimes. What should also be remembered, and treasured, is the revolutionary moment, that critical period of time when options are suddenly, for one time only, available to the masses. Rent or download this movie. ●



Diane Keaton and Warren Beatty in a scene from *Reds*.

## Canadian troops still in Afghan combat role

Judging by the public response to street-corner leaflet and petition actions by anti-war groups, most Canadians seem to believe that Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) personnel are no longer engaged in combat operations in Afghanistan. Some realize that about 1,000 Canadian troops remain in the country, mostly engaged in training the Karzai regime's police and military. But the mainstream media's intensive coverage of the "end of combat operations" has led many Canadians to mistakenly conclude that the CAF has completely withdrawn from Afghanistan.

Now it has emerged that some CAF personnel continue to engage in combat roles, in blatant violation of a Parliamentary decision to end such involvement.

According to internal documents obtained through freedom-of-information requests by the Canadian Press news agency, the Harper Tory government agreed last year to a request from

National Defence to ease the prohibition on Canadian troops from participating in combat operations, by establishing an exemption for those serving with NATO allies.

Apparently about half a dozen Canadians, mostly air force personnel, continue to serve in the volatile Kandahar region where the CAF played a key role in fighting the Taliban insurgency starting in 2005.

This is in sharp contradiction to the supposedly "iron-clad" policy that barred soldiers from Kandahar province after Dec. 31, 2011, a date established in a motion adopted by Parliament in 2008.

The Canadian Press reports that the Privy Council Office was asked in the spring of 2011 to approve an exemption for soldiers "working in exchange positions with allied nations." The measure was supported by Defence Minister Peter MacKay, who has never made this decision public. ●



## MUSIC NOTES

By Wally Brooker

### Saint John prepares for CFMA Awards

The 8th annual Canadian Folk Music Awards will be held Nov. 15-17 in Saint John, New Brunswick. Local organizers plan a celebration with community performances, open mics, and nominee showcases. Festivities will culminate with a gala on Nov. 17, where winners in 17 award categories will be announced. Host of the bilingual event is Benoit Bourque of the Quebecois band La Bottine Souriante. The CFMA awards celebrate the diversity and depth of roots music in this country. Among the 86 nominees are artists from across Canada, representing a wide variety of genres, including singer-songwriters, traditional musicians, Quebecois, blues, bluegrass, and "world music." Unfortunately two categories have been eliminated this year. There will be no award for aboriginal songwriter or world solo artist. CFMA should redress this backsliding next year. Also, how about an award for best social justice songwriter? For info: <http://folkawards.ca/>.

### Carry it on, Pete Seeger

Pete Seeger, now 93, has been in the news a lot this fall. For starters, he's released two new albums. "A More Perfect Union" teams Pete up with songwriter Lorre Wyatt. The pair have written 15 new songs and are helped out by a cast of friends including Bruce Springsteen, Emmy Lou Harris, and Steve Earle, plus neighbours from down the road. "Pete Remembers Woody," timed to coincide with Guthrie's 100th birthday, includes personal recollections interspersed with new versions of Woody's songs recorded by Pete and others (including Arlo Guthrie). Pete's still performing too. In August he was a guest on the popular "Colbert Report," singing his anti-war song "Quite Early Morning." In September he participated in the gala "Woody 100" concert at Brooklyn College. If that's not enough there's also the recent release of "Pete Seeger: His Life In His Own Words," an anthology of writings including letters, published articles, stories and poetry. For info: [www.peteseegermusic.com/](http://www.peteseegermusic.com/).

### Chicago symphony musicians fight back

Perhaps there was something contagious about the recent successful Chicago teachers strike. Two days after teachers ratified their agreement, 100 members of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra walked off the job in opposition to management demands for a 5% pay cut and increased employee benefit contributions. Other orchestras have been hit hard in the past year, notably Detroit symphony musicians who swallowed a 25% pay cut after an epic six-month strike. CSO musicians had accepted wage concessions in their previous contract, and management, flush with cash, figured they could exact another pound of flesh. But community support was strong and the musicians weathered the media abuse. On Sept. 25 they ratified a compromise: a 4.7% wage increase but steeper employee benefit contributions. Perhaps the CSO's Oct. 3 appearance at Carnegie Hall's season opener was a factor in the quick settlement. Still, after a tough year, symphony musicians can celebrate a modest victory.

### UK musicians rally for Morning Star

A 33-track double benefit album for British socialist daily *Morning Star* is receiving critical praise in UK folk circles. R2 Magazine rated the album five stars and online music journal NetRhythms chose it album of the month. If you're a socialist and a fan of contemporary people's music, you'll probably find a lot to like in this cornucopia of musical styles. Performers include Birmingham's 15-piece mega folk band The Destroyers, former Housemartin singer Paul Heaton, and celebrated political singer-songwriter Robb Johnson. "We're All in It Together" is curated by singer-songwriter Michael Weston King and released on Red Planet Records. For a sample check out The Destroyers' delightfully malicious "Where Has The Money Gone?" on YouTube. If you follow *Morning Star's* free online edition, you can support the paper and discover a vital contemporary progressive UK music scene by purchasing the album. For info: [www.morningstaronline.co.uk](http://www.morningstaronline.co.uk).

### Earth losing its animal soundscape

The failure of capitalism to engage sustainably with nature has led to unprecedented species extinction. Now, what this means to the earth's soundscape (the acoustic environment, including natural sounds, animal sounds, and the sounds of human activity) has been documented. Bernie Krause is a musician, author, and bio-acoustician. In the sixties he pioneered the analog synthesizer and became an influential electronic music composer, with an acclaimed series of albums and film soundtracks. In 1975 Krause turned to the emerging field of bio-acoustics. Since then he's released 4500 hours of soundscape recordings, including 15,000 animal species. He's well qualified to report that the earth's animal soundscape is fast disappearing. Krause estimates that half of his recordings are now archives, because the habitats are gone or hopelessly compromised. "Little by little," he writes in his important new book *The Great Animal Orchestra*, "the chorus of the natural world is in the process of being quietened." For info: [www.wildsanctuary.com/](http://www.wildsanctuary.com/).

# Toxic spill of racism....

continued from page 5

For a half century now, the Canadian government has tried to whitewash its exploitation of natives. Wrote New Democratic Party MP Thomas Berger in 1966: "They began by taking the Indians' land without any surrender and without their consent. Then they herded the Indian people onto reserves. This was nothing more nor less than apartheid, and that is what it still is today."

\* Aboriginal people were deprived of their land and cultural traditions. Children were removed from their families and forcibly sent away to residential schools where many were sexually abused by their white teachers.

\* Aboriginal people are three times more likely than non-Aboriginals to be victims of violent crime, and at even higher risk of sexual assault.

\* Aboriginal people are six times more likely to be in prison. Only 2.8% of the Canadian population, natives

account for 18% of federal prisoners. In the Prairies, 50% of prisoners are Aboriginals.

\* First Nations children in western countries live in Third World conditions, with an estimated 80% of urban Aboriginal children under the age of 6 living in poverty.

Harper refused approval of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2007. Canada's ambassador John McNee complained at the time that the UN declaration gives "Indigenous peoples the right to the lands and resources which they have traditionally owned". He said this language was too vague, leaving the government open to expensive law suits. Instead Harper issued a cost-free apology in 2008 for the "lasting and damaging impact on Aboriginal culture, heritage and language" resulting from Indian Residential Schools.

Canada is facing a fateful moment in its history: will it stand up to the oil industry and safeguard our resources

and environment for future generations? Native leaders like Nelson are allies in protecting the future, but are treated like enemies. "Friends" are those who destroy the environment through oil spills and destructive extractive processes, so-called "extreme energy", the notorious "oil sands" that the Harper government is promoting now in traditional native lands.

The real equation is: Extreme energy = extreme methods = extreme disasters = extreme opposition. The campaign against Nelson is a toxic spill of anti-native racism, blatantly supporting both the oil-mongers and war-mongers. The real terrorist in the equation is not Iran or Nelson, but Canada's angelic-looking prime minister and his shrill chorus in the mainstream press, urging war on Iran, denying natives their long-infringed rights, and preventing them from even talking to those who are sympathetic to them.

For those who believe the demonizing depiction of Iran in the media, the US travel writer Rick Steves provides a healthy corrective in his 2008 travelogue about Iran ([www.ricksteves.com/iran/](http://www.ricksteves.com/iran/)). He met hundreds of ordinary people and returned convinced that whatever the differences, Iran was no enemy and deserves our understanding.

He points out the irony is that Iran represents what a sensible Christian (American or Canadian) would like culturally - modest dress for women, no alcohol, religious education, promotion of family values, the discouraging of lewd public behavior, drugs and premarital sex. "Both societies seek a defense against the onslaught of modern materialism that threatens their traditional family values."

The difference for fundamentalist Harper being that Iran combines that with national independence and use of the country's resources to help the people, not a handful of rich executives.

This supposedly makes Iran 'undemocratic'. In contrast, the "democratic" EU last week was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, for "the advancement of peace, reconciliation and democracy", even as it fuels the war fever against Iran and infringes "reconciliation and democracy" by banning PressTV from European airwaves and imposing even harsher sanctions.

Thomas Berger is one of the NDP's great elders. Why isn't the NDP defending native rights today, especially with regards to resource management and environmental protection - where the natives have a lot to teach the white man? Why doesn't Harper apply for Canada's admission to OPEC, and make Canada a vigorous, independent voice in world affairs?

He was awarded the 2012 World Statesman of the Year for his work as a "champion of democracy". His achievements include increasing Canada's arms spending, keeping troops in Afghanistan, militarizing the Arctic, and beginning construction of the \$880 million Communications Security Establishment in Ottawa to "distinguish Canada as a leader among its intelligence allies".

In other words, to remake Canada as a security-obsessed adjunct to the US. In our Looking Glass world, this makes Canada 'democratic'.

In the words of Humpty Dumpty, "When I use a word, it means just what I choose it to mean - neither more nor less."

Canadian Eric Walberg is a journalist specializing in the Middle East, Central Asia and Russia. He is the author of *Postmodern Imperialism Geopolitics and the Great Games* (2011). ●

## Violet Dewhurst, 1915-2012

Violet Dewhurst, a long-time member of the Communist Party and activist in the trade union, women's and peace movements, died peacefully at Sechelt, British Columbia, on October 12 at the age of 97.

In the early years of the Great Depression Vi dropped out of school to work as a domestic servant at a dairy farm in the Fraser Valley. This was a fortunate juncture in her life: not only did she get a job, she met her future husband, Alfred Dewhurst, a skilled dairyman. Alf's family were Liberals, but the younger generation were more attracted to the new Cooperative Commonwealth Federation, and they formed a CCF club in their village of Harrison Mills. A short time later, under the influence of Alf and Vi's radical brother-in-law, the CCF club passed a motion to join the Communist Party of Canada, which they all did. Vi's membership in the Communist Party dates from this period, 1934 or 1935.

Vi and Alf moved their young family to Alberni in 1938, Alf seeking work in the forestry industry. There they took part in the organizing campaigns of the International Woodworkers of America and the anti-fascist campaigns of the pre-war period.

Vi went to work in a laundry, and Alf was business agent of IWA Local 1-85. It wasn't easy being a communist, since the Party was illegal during the early years of the Second World War. In spite of working and raising a young family, Vi found time to help build the Ladies Auxiliary of the IWA, campaigning for a Second Front, and contributing to the war effort. During the war the IWA was able to establish pay equity in the woodworking industry.

In 1945 the family moved to Nanaimo, after Alf went to work for the Labor-Progressive Party (LPP, as the Communist Party was named at the time), becoming Vancouver Island Organizer. Violet found work at the Imperial Laundry, and became a leading member of the Nanaimo Laundry Workers Union. In 1947, she was dismissed by the company for invoking union prerogatives contained in the collective agreement. When she was escorted from the premises, her union sisters and brothers walked out in support, an illegal act. The laundry workers were the first union local to challenge draconian labour laws introduced by the provincial government of the day.

In 1949, Alf became Provincial Organizer of the LPP and the family moved to Vancouver. Vi was active in the peace movement, an important task when another world war seemed imminent.

In 1956, Alf was elected to the Central Executive Committee of the LPP, and Vi and Alf moved to Toronto. Vi was fully involved in Communist Party activities, and as always, remained a Canadian Congress of Women activist.

In 1982 Vi and Alf returned to B.C. After Alf's death in 1983, Vi lived in the Vancouver area before settling in Sechelt, where she spent her final years. She participated in the local peace council well into her eighties, and always supported many left-wing causes.

Violet is survived by her children, Beverley Gidora and Joseph Dewhurst; four grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren and three great-great-grandchildren; predeceased by one grandson. A memorial meeting will be held on Oct. 28, 2 pm, at 8066 Redrooffs Road, Halfmoon Bay, BC. ●

**In Memory of Comrade Vi Dewhurst, fighter for peace, equality, labour rights and socialism for over 75 years.**

**Deepest condolences to Vi's family and friends, from the Central Executive Committee and the BC Provincial Executive Committee, Communist Party of Canada**

# What's Left

## White Rock, BC

**Social Justice Films**, Friday, Nov. 30, 7 pm, "The Lesson Plan", First United Church, 15385 Semiahmoo.

## Vancouver, BC

**La Trova Nuestra**, Latin American Pena, 8 pm, Oct. 26, Nov. 30, and last Friday each month, 706 Clark Dr., \$10 admission, all welcome.

**Left Film Night**, "Hugo Chavez Speaks," Sunday, Oct. 28, 7 pm, Centre for Socialist Education, 706 Clark Drive. For details, ph. 604-255-2041.

**Justice, Not Charity**, conference on charity and public schools, organized by Coalition of Progressive Electors Education Committee, Sat., Nov. 3, 9 am-4 pm, Peretz Centre, 6184 Ash St. For registration info, visit [www.cope.bc.ca](http://www.cope.bc.ca).

**Peace and Revolution Banquet**, Sat., Nov. 10, doors open 6 pm, at Peretz Centre, 6184 Ash St. Great cultural program and dinner, tickets from Centre for Socialist Education, 604-254-9836.

**Celebrate a Decade of Resistance**, tenth anniversary of the StopWar peace coalition, Fri., Nov. 23, doors open 7:30, WISE Hall, 1882 Adanac St., with Solidarity Notes, The Carnival Band, Joe Keithley, MC Charles Demers. Tickets from StopWar members or at the door (\$10-20), or at High Life Music, 1319 Commercial Drive.

## Winnipeg, MB

**Marxism Course** begins in November. Call Communist Party (Manitoba) to register, ph. 586-7824 or email [cpc-mb@changetheworldmb.ca](mailto:cpc-mb@changetheworldmb.ca)

## Toronto, ON

**Celebration of the life of Charles Roach**, Sat., Nov. 10, 2 pm, U of T Convocation Hall, 31 Kings College Circle (University Ave/College St., Queen's Park Stn)

**Raising the Workers' Flag**, launch of book by Stephen Endicott on Workers' Unity League, Wed., Nov. 14, 6-8 pm, McNally Bookstore, 366 Bay St. (Private event - tell the store you are there for the Endicott book launch).

## Brampton, ON

**Fighting Austerity in Ontario**, speaker Liz Rowley, CPC (Ontario) leader, Sunday, October 28, 2:30 pm, at the Brampton Soccer Centre, 1495 Sandalwood Parkway East, Room 1. Call 416-428-9583 for information.

## Montreal, QC

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

**News for people, not for profits!**



## People's Voice deadlines

**November 16-30 issue: Thursday, Nov. 8**

**December 1-31 issue: Thursday, Nov. 29**

**Send submissions to PV Editorial Office, 706 Clark Drive, Vancouver, V5L 3J1 <[pvoice@telus.net](mailto:pvoice@telus.net)>**



## La Trova Nuestra

**Friday, Nov. 30, 7:30 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."

# The Nobel Peace Prize for War

By Michael Parenti

Those who own the wealth of nations take care to downplay the immensity of their holdings while emphasizing the supposedly benign features of the socio-economic order over which they preside. With its regiments of lawmakers and opinion-makers, the ruling hierarchs produce a never-ending cavalcade of symbols, images, and narratives to disguise and legitimate the system of exploitative social relations existing between the 1% and the 99%.

The Nobel Peace Prize would seem to play an incidental role in all this. Given the avalanche of system-sustaining class propaganda and ideological scenarios dished out to us, the Nobel Peace Prize remains just a prize. But a most prestigious one it is, enjoying a celebrated status in its anointment of already notable personages.

In October 2012, in all apparent seriousness, the Norwegian Nobel Committee (appointed by the Norwegian Parliament) bestowed the Nobel Peace Prize upon the European Union (EU). Let me say that again: the European Union with its 28 member states and 500 million inhabitants was awarded for having "contributed to the advancement of peace and reconciliation, democracy, and human rights in Europe." (Norway itself is not a member of the EU. The Norwegians had the good sense to vote against joining.)

Alfred Nobel's will (1895) explicitly states that the peace prize should go "to the person who shall have done the most or the best work for fraternity between nations, for the abolition or reduction of standing armies and for the holding and promotion of peace congresses."

The EU is not a person and has not worked for the abolition or reduction of standing armies or promotion of any kind of peace agenda. If the EU award looked a bit awkward, the BBC and other mainstream news media came to the rescue, referring to the "six decades of peace" and "sixty years without war" that the EU supposedly has achieved. The following day, somebody at the BBC did the numbers and started proclaiming

that the EU had brought "seventy years of peace on the European continent." What could these wise pundits possibly be thinking? Originally called the European Economic Community and formed in 1958, the European Union was established under its current name in 1993, about twenty years ago.

The Nobel Committee, the EU recipients, and the western media all overlooked the 1999 full-scale air war launched on the European continent against Yugoslavia, a socialist democracy that for the most part had offered a good life to people of various Slavic nationalities - as many of them still testify today.

The EU did not oppose that aggression. In fact, a number of EU member states, including Germany and France, joined in the 1999 war on European soil led largely by the United States. For 78 days, U.S. and other NATO forces bombed Yugoslavian factories, utilities, power stations, rail systems, bridges, hotels, apartment buildings, schools and hospitals, killing thousands of civilians, all in the name of a humanitarian rescue operation, all fuelled by unsubstantiated stories of Serbian "genocide." All this warfare took place on European soil.

Yugoslavia was shattered, along with its uniquely designed participatory democracy with its self-management and social ownership system. In its place emerged a cluster of right-wing mini-republics where everything has been privatized and deregulated, and poverty has replaced amplitude. Meanwhile rich western corporations are doing quite well in what was once Yugoslavia.

Europe aside, EU member states have sent troops to Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and additional locales in Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia, usually under the tutelage of the U.S. war machine.

But what was I to expect? For years I ironically asserted that the best way to win a Nobel Peace Prize was to wage war or support those who wage war instead of peace. An overstatement perhaps, but take a look.

Let's start back in 1931 with an improbable Nobel winner: Nicholas Murray Butler, president

of Columbia University. During World War I, Butler explicitly forbade all faculty from criticizing the Allied war against the Central Powers. He equated anti-war sentiments with sedition and treason. He also claimed that "an educated proletariat is a constant source of disturbance and danger to any nation." In the 1920s Butler became an outspoken supporter of Italy's fascist dictator Benito Mussolini. Some years later he

beating down on those who dared resist U.S. power. In his writings and pronouncements Kissinger continually talked about maintaining U.S. military and political influence throughout the world. If anyone fails to fit Alfred Nobel's description of a prize winner, it would be Henry Kissinger.

In 1975 we come to Nobel winner Andrei Sakharov, a darling of the U.S. press, a Soviet dissident who regularly sang praises to



*The bombing campaign against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was conducted by 19 of NATO's member states, including the most powerful European Union countries. The attacks began on March 24, 1999, lasting for 78 days, and killing between 1,200 and 2,500 people, according to different estimates. Economic infrastructure, schools, healthcare institutions, media outlets and cultural monuments sustained heavy damage. At the state television, RTS, 16 employees were killed in a NATO airstrike. This photo shows a home destroyed in the city of Nis.*

became an admirer of a heavily militarized Nazi Germany. In 1933, two years after receiving the Nobel prize, Butler invited the German ambassador to the U.S. to speak at Columbia in defense of Hitler. He rejected student appeals to cancel the invitation, claiming it would violate academic freedom.

Jump ahead to 1973, the year one of the most notorious of war criminals, Henry Kissinger, received the Nobel Peace Prize. For the better part of a decade, Kissinger served as Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs and as U.S. Secretary of State, presiding over the seemingly endless blood-letting in Indochina and ruthless U.S. interventions in Central America and elsewhere. From carpet bombing to death squads, Kissinger was there

corporate capitalism. Sakharov lambasted the U.S. peace movement for its opposition to the Vietnam War. He accused the Soviets of being the sole culprits behind the arms race and he supported every U.S. armed intervention abroad as a defense of democracy. Hailed in the west as a "human rights advocate," Sakharov never had an unkind word for the horrific human rights violations perpetrated by the fascist regimes of faithful U.S. client states, including Pinochet's Chile and Suharto's Indonesia, and he aimed snide remarks at the "peaceniks" who did. He regularly attacked those in the West who opposed U.S. repressive military interventions abroad.

Let us not overlook Mother Teresa. All the western world's media hailed that crabby lady as a self-sacrificing saint. In fact she was a mean spirited reactionary who gladly welcomed the destruction of liberation theology and other progressive developments in the world. Her "hospitals" and "clinics" were little more than warehouses for the dying and for those who suffered from curable diseases that went untreated - eventually leading to death. She waged campaigns against birth control, divorce, and abortion. She readily hobnobbed with the rich and reactionary but she was so heavily hyped as a heavenly heroine that the folks in Oslo just had to give her the big medal in 1979.

Then there was the Dalai Lama who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989. For years the Dalai Lama was on the payroll of the CIA, an agency that has perpetrated killings against rebellious workers, peasants, students, and others in countries around the world. His eldest brother played an active role

in a CIA-front group. Another brother established an intelligence operation with the CIA, which included a CIA-trained guerrilla unit whose recruits parachuted back into Tibet to foment insurgency. The Dalai Lama was no pacifist. He supported the U.S./NATO military intervention into Afghanistan, also the 78 days' bombing of Yugoslavia and the destruction of that country. As for the years of carnage and destruction wrought by U.S. forces in Iraq, the Dalai Lama was undecided: "it's too early to say, right or wrong," said he in 2005. Regarding the violence that members of his sect perpetrated against a rival sect, he concluded that "if the goal is good then the method, even if apparently of the violent kind, is permissible." Spoken like a true Nobel recipient.

In 2009, in a fit of self-parody, the folks in Oslo gave the Nobel Peace Prize to President Barack Obama while he produced record military budgets and presided over three or four wars and a number of other attack operations, followed a couple of years later by additional wars in Yemen, West Pakistan, Libya, and Syria (with Iran pending). Nobel winner Obama also proudly hunted down and murdered Osama Bin Laden, having accused him - without a shred of evidence - of masterminding the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

You could see that Obama was somewhat surprised - and maybe even embarrassed - by the award. Here was this young drone commander trying to show what a tough-guy warrior he was, saluting the flag-draped coffins one day and attacking other places and peoples the next - acts of violence in support of the New World Order, certainly every bit worthy of a Nobel peace medal.

There are probably other Nobel war hawks and reactionaries to inspect. I don't pretend to be informed about every prize winner. And there are a few worthy recipients who come to mind, such as Martin Luther King, Jr., Linus Pauling, Nelson Mandela, and Dag Hammarskjöld.

Let us return to the opening point: does the European Union actually qualify for the prize? Vancouver artist Jennifer Brouse gave me the last (and best) word: "A Nobel Prize for the EU? That seems like a rather convenient and resounding endorsement for current cutthroat austerity measures. First, corporations are people, then money is free speech, now an organization of nation states designed to thwart national sovereignty on behalf of ruling class interests receives a prize for peace. On the other hand, if the EU is a person then it should be prosecuted for imposing policies leading directly to the violent repression of peaceful protests, and to the misery and death of its suffering citizens."

In sum, the Nobel Peace Prize often has nothing to do with peace and too much to do with war. It frequently sees "peace" through the eyes of the western plutocracy. For that reason alone, we should not join in the applause. ●

Michael Parenti is the author of *The Face of Imperialism and Contrary Notions*. Visit his website at [www.michaelparenti.org](http://www.michaelparenti.org)

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