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BC Rail plea bargain: a massive coverup

Commentary by the Communist Party of BC, Oct. 23, 2010

The "BC Credibility Gap" took a quantum leap on Oct. 18 to replace the Grand Canyon as North America's biggest chasm. The plea bargain for Dave Vasi, Bob Virk and Aneal Basi has extended the stench of corruption to embrace the bourgeois court system and public prosecutor in the tender arms of cover-up and concealment.

A public trial seven years in the making, millions in investigative costs and six million in legal defense bills was snatched from an expectant and waiting public at the very edge of a political precipice that would have revealed that something is very rotten in the province of British Columbia. The charges of fraud, money laundering, leaking insider information and breach of trust were effectively quashed, and guilty pleas of reduced and minor charges were accepted from Dave Basi and Bob Virk. Dave Basi and Bob Virk got

two years house arrest, and Virk has to pay a fine of \$75,600, the amount he got paid for his info. This amounts to the bribe money being transferred from Virk's pocket into the BC treasury. Bob Virk's cousin Aneal had charges of money laundering stayed and walked away free.

The plea bargain, the slap on the wrist house arrest sentences, and the government agreement to pay the \$6 million legal bills of the defendants, are the cost to cover up the stench of corruption that would have been exposed to a waiting public if the trial proceeded.

The list of witnesses grilled and exposed would have included: Gary Collins (Finance Minister at time of police raid and Dave Basi's boss), Judith Reid (Transportation Minister and Bob Virk's boss), Martyn Brown (Chief of Staff and advisor to Gordon Campbell), Bormman, Kiernan and Elmhurst (lobbyists for OmniTRAX and bribe-payers), Bruce Clark (BC Deputy Premier and federal Liberal bagman), Ken Dobell (Campbell's chief advisor), Kevin Mahoney

(BC Rail Vice President and fixer for CN who ultimately won the bid).

If the trial had proceeded, the underbelly of government duplicity and double dealing would have been exposed and the real caucuses that run the province from the shadows would have been on public view. This would have been so refreshing it had to be silenced, but there is not enough whitewash in the universe to ever make it look clean.

The whole mess, from Gordon Campbell's campaign lies never to privatize BC Rail, to the intrigue, bribery, influence peddling and insider dealing, is a classic cover-

up of the players and messengers of the corporate world and their theft of public property. The small fry took the dive to protect the big fry, and in return they had their legal expenses paid for out of the public purse, get to serve their time in and around their homes, and will probably be looked after in some manner by the thankful and protected big fry.

The premier has ruled out a public inquiry, which is the only hope to get a glimpse of the dealings and the dealers; even if an inquiry happens, the guilty will be protected from prosecution by

inquiry immunity. Nevertheless we support and campaign for a complete inquiry.

With all the anger, shock and astonishment, another crime has been conveniently omitted and covered up - the crime of brazenly corrupting and paying bribes to public officials. The admission of guilt in receiving bribes as part of the plea bargain proves the crime of paying bribes, and should identify the guilty parties. Where are the charges for that?

Something is so rotten in the state of BC it would probably make Hamlet feel trivial. ●

Howard Kaplan elected in Toronto

While the mayoralty race in Toronto ended with the victory of far-right candidate Rob Ford, there were some positive results in the Oct. 25 civic election. A full assessment will appear in the Nov. 16-30 issue of *People's Voice*.

Most notable for the progressive forces, Howard Kaplan was elected to the Toronto School Board in Ward 5. Kaplan is a well-known activist in the movement to win adequate funding for the public education system. He campaigned to expand early learning programs, reduce class size, support special education services and accommodations, eliminate user fees and restore adult education. His campaign manager was Liz Hill, a former Toronto trustee known as the strongest defender of public education on the Board.

With the support of labour and public education supporters, Kaplan placed first out of six candidates in Ward 5, with 4788 votes out of 17,587 (27.2%), over 1100 votes ahead of second-place candidate Robin Shugar.

In Hamilton's English Public School Ward 4, a candidate with a similar platform, Julian Holland, ran a strong first-time campaign. Holland finished 3rd with 1057 votes, or 17.8%. ●



Howard Kaplan, the new Ward 5 School Trustee

Conservatives press anti-immigrant bill

Commentary by Michael Oosting

On Oct. 21, Federal Immigration and Public Safety Ministers Jason Kenney and Vic Toews unveiled Bill C-49. Dubbed the "Preventing Human Smugglers From Abusing Canada's Immigration System Act," this legislation deals a harsh blow to the rights won over the past few decades for potential immigrants to this country.

This bill comes in the wake of the arrival of the ship *Sun Sea* which brought undeclared Tamil immigrants fleeing poverty and oppression. The Conservatives have been threatening to deal with this "serious" problem for the past year, the result being what they call a "tough new strategy on human trafficking".

Despite heavy criticisms, the government maintains that the sole goal of this bill is to limit human trafficking, not immigration. But why does the Conservative government consider human trafficking, of which there are only 36 reported cases in all of Canada, all of them small scale, a serious problem?

The truth is that C-49's real target is undeclared immigrants, as well as potential legal immigrants. No major changes to Criminal Code on smugglers themselves were made, though there are several major changes pertaining to those being smuggled. As of Bill C-49's passage, immigrants who arrive "illegally" have only 48 hours to prove refugee status at a detention review hearing before they are required to serve a year in jail. Even if the refugee claim proves valid, they are required not to leave Canada for five years under any circumstances, and are subjected to a five year ban on sponsoring their relatives to come to the country.

Proving his true intentions, Kenney spoke of the "\$50,000 price tag" which undeclared refugees allegedly cost the taxpayers per head. Kenney also referred to the targets of the bill as "despicable." Stockwell Day, head of the B.C. Conservative Caucus, was quick to commend Kenney for "defending our communities" against those who "abuse our system."

One of many critics of the bill is Davood Ghavami, head of the Iranian-Canadian Congress of Canada, who commented, "Are they targeting the refugee or the smuggler? That is the key question. If they are targeting the smuggler, we have no problem with that and we can work with that... they are targeting the individual refugee, that's where the concern lies."

Lorne Waldman, the lawyer representing the Tamil refugees who arrived onboard the *Sun Sea*, has stated that "I see very little in this legislation that has to deal with human smugglers. Now they are introducing a mandatory minimum, and that is the only one that has any real relation to smuggling at all, most of the other measures are related far more to punishing [those] who try to come by smuggling."

Why the Conservatives consider human trafficking a major issue, with only the aforementioned 36 cases being reported, is still not fully apparent. But it fits a scapegoating pattern in which the Conservatives desperately try to whip up public sentiment against various groups of migrants, including Tamils, Mexicans and Roma people fleeing persecution in Europe.

Waldman has said she may be willing to take legal action against the bill later in the legislative process. Whether a legal challenge will succeed is anyone's guess, but we can only hope that this newest anti-Immigrant attempt is thwarted before further crimes against immigrants are committed by the Tory government. ●

US profits rocket but still no jobs

By John Wojcik, People's World

US firms awash with a record \$189 billion in profits earned in the last business quarter are spending their money not to create jobs, but to buy the mid-term election next month. Recent press reports show a 600 per cent increase in corporate election spending over the amount spent in the mid-terms four years ago, and in recent weeks money has been pouring into the campaigns of conservatives. Republicans have swamped the Democratic competition by more than seven to one in corporate money.

Meanwhile, an analysis by the Wall Street Journal found that companies in the Standard and Poors 500-stock index posted record second-quarter profits of \$189 billion, up 39 per cent from last year and the sixth-highest quarterly profit total in US history.

As unemployment rates remain high and as workers and small businesses are denied loans, corporations are shamelessly adding to their profit-generated cash piles by borrowing vast sums at almost 0 per cent interest, according to the *New York Times*.

Virtually none of the unprecedented amounts of cash the companies are sitting on is being spent on new factories, equipment or jobs.

The money is flowing, however, into right-wing election campaigns. Since the Supreme Court lifted limits and loosened disclosure laws for corporations they can, in addition to making direct contributions, fund outfits like the little-known American Future Fund in Iowa, which has spent \$7 million on behalf of Republicans.

The group has spent \$800,000

to unseat just one Democrat - Representative Bruce Braley of Waterloo - and has launched its campaign against him with TV commercials all over Iowa saying: "Braley supports building a mosque at Ground Zero."

Braley had tried to avoid being baited on the issue, saying it was a "zoning matter" that should be

Profiteer Watch



decided in New York.

Efforts by shadowy groups like the American Future Fund seem to be part of a larger co-ordinated strategy because they allow companies to contribute anonymously in some cases and directly in others. This gives the Republicans enormous flexibility in how to campaign in one location as opposed to another.

The right-wing election effort can operate via attack ads in one location, through the Tea Party in another and through the official Republican candidate in still another.

"We can't match this spending dollar for dollar," said AFL-CIO trade union federation president Richard Trumka when he visited a union phone bank in Chicago recently. "But we will match it and win by putting boots on the

ground. A mobilised and engaged movement operating across the country is the power that can prevent millionaires and billionaires from buying the election."

While 175,000 union members and their allies marched for jobs in Washington DC on October 2, thousands of union members knocked on doors in a get-out-the-vote drive over the weekend.

In Ohio, union canvassers combed Cincinnati, Cleveland, Dayton and Columbus explaining to other union members how the fight for jobs is connected to voting for the Democrat Ted Strickland for governor and Lee Fisher for the US Senate.

In addition to filling 28 buses to the Washington demonstration, the Pennsylvania AFL-CIO held a Day of Door-Knocking Action with hundreds of union members participating.

In Kentucky, where Tea Party candidate Rand Paul called this weekend for raising the retirement age and extending the Bush tax cuts for the rich, unions also mounted a door-to-door effort which they say reached thousands of voters.

In California union members did mass distributions of a new leaflet warning voters about the Wall Street corporate agenda of Republican gubernatorial candidate Meg Whitman and US Senate candidate Carly Fiorina.

As the November 2 election day gets closer there are signs that the boots-on-the-ground strategy may be able to overcome the right's cash advantage.

The latest Los Angeles Times/Greenberg Quinlan Rosner poll of the California Senate race, for example, shows Democratic Senator Barbara Boxer with a strong lead over Republican Carly Fiorina. Boxer has 51% - an eight-point lead. ●

COPE Councillors push to end Vancouver tax shift

Vancouver city councillors David Cadman and Ellen Woodsworth are opposing plans by the Vision majority on council to continue with a pro-business tax shifting policy for the upcoming budget. The proposed 1% tax shift from business to residential tax payers would be in addition to the millions of dollars shifted already since the right-wing Non-Partisan Alliance (NPA) began the policy in 2006.

COPE Councillor Woodsworth has called on Mayor Gregor Robertson to halt the shift, pointing out that Vancouver businesses already benefit from one of the best tax climates in North America. "We have one of the lowest business tax rates in the country when you factor in federal, provincial, and municipal rates," notes Woodsworth. "I just can't support another reduction in their taxes by shifting it to residents who are already hurting due to job losses, service cuts, high housing costs, and increases

to utility rates."

The 1% shift, combined with the Mayor's stated goal of keeping any tax increase to an overall level of 2%, would mean a tax increase of 4% for residential property owners, but only 1% for businesses.

COPE Councillor Cadman finds



Councillor Ellen Woodsworth

that breakdown unacceptable. "We're asking our residential taxpayers to pay a 4% increase, and see their vital services cut, all in the name of a tax policy that was conceived of when our economy was booming. Now is not the time to balance our budget on the backs of seniors, families, children, and the at-risk," says Cadman.

The position of Cadman and Woodsworth continues a policy advocated by COPE since its formation 40 years ago, as an electoral alliance of progressive and labour forces in Vancouver. Both Councillors want a more equitable approach, to stop the shift, and save civic services and jobs. "If we can ask home owners to absorb 4%, then there's no reason why businesses can't do the same," they point out.

Almost \$40 million have been identified by city staff as efficiencies that have helped draw down the next projected deficit from over \$60 million to the \$20.6 million Vancouver faces today.

"These are huge savings that our staff have worked hard to find and it's clear that all that's left are vital services that contribute to our city's amazing quality of life," says Cadman, who warns that cutting into this quality of life will cost far more down the road with increased

levels of crime, poor health, and marginalized communities. "Continuing with the shift, and slashing services is extremely short sighted."

The ongoing tax shift is expected to be a controversial issue leading up to municipal elections which take place in November 2011. ●

Caregivers slam B.C. disabled housing cuts

PV Vancouver Bureau

A coalition of social service agencies, trade unions, and activist groups has condemned the rapid closure of group homes and cuts to services for developmentally disabled people in British Columbia. The groups want an independent review of the actions by Community Living B.C., a crown agency controlled by the Campbell Liberal government.

The issue erupted over the summer, when the province initiated moves to relocate developmentally disabled adults to potentially unsafe and unsuitable housing. The moves are the result of cost cutting to CLBC, which has been ordered by the Liberals to find roughly \$22 million in "efficiencies" this year. The agency is relocating some clients to the controversial "home share program", where clients are housed in the private residence of a host-manager, often against their wishes.

A lack of public oversight has given CLBC a free hand to reduce services. "British Columbia's community living sector is in crisis," the groups said in a recent letter to Jane Holland, B.C.'s Advocate for Service Quality. "Adults with developmental disabilities are at risk. Service and support options are being reduced. Individuals and families are not

being consulted."

The letter was signed by senior officials of the B.C. Coalition of People with Disabilities, the Developmental Disabilities Association, B.C. Government and Service Employees' Union, Moms on the Move and B.C. Family Net Society. The groups urged Holland to recommend halting the "cost-driven" group home closures.

A *Victoria Times-Colonist* article says that Holland, who reports to Housing and Social Development Minister Rich Coleman, has rejected the request, claiming it falls outside her role of helping adults with developmental disabilities get access to available supports and services. Meanwhile, Coleman's office says the request has been forwarded to Community Living B.C., which is preparing a response.

Dawn Steele of the Moms on the Move advocacy group called Holland's refusal "an admission that there is no independent oversight... She's obviously been put in a straitjacket."

James Cavalluzzo of the B.C. Government and Service Employees Union, which represents a number of group home workers, says that up to 20 homes were slated to close or had shut down. In all, about 200 employees had been affected and about 100 have lost their jobs. ●

People's Voice builders

As an independent publication with a minimal staff, *People's Voice* relies on volunteers to build circulation and raise funds. In our previous issue, we reported on the activities and ideas of Toronto-area press-builders, including their use of PV display tables at annual events like Word on the Street and the Poetry of Resistance festival.

Another important form of press-building is street distribution, which is done from time to time by supporters in various cities. In most of Canada, winter weather makes this activity difficult to continue year-round.

But one Vancouver press-builder takes advantage of the milder west coast winters to

circulate *People's Voice* throughout the year. Peter Marcus, a member of the Vancouver East Club CPC, began doing his street corner distributions about a decade ago, usually at the intersection of Main and Broadway. This carefully chosen location is in the heart of a lively working class area with high pedestrian volumes, close to bus stops and coffee shops.

Peter's approach is deliberately low-key. He began taking a bundle of (100) to hand out starting around noon, going for two or three hours depending on the weather, with a coffee break to warm up. Sometimes he returned the next day.

When Peter started, he usually gave out 25-30 papers, collecting

just a few dollars in donations. While others might have concluded that the returns weren't worth the effort, he was determined to keep going, in the belief that the numbers would grow. This wasn't just an optimistic guess - he was certain from his many years of experience as a Hospital Employees' Union activist that as working class people noticed the paper, they would be more inclined to take a copy and make a small donation.

Within a couple of years this strategy began to pay off. The numbers of papers Peter hands out has increased gradually. Since he retired from paid employment, he devotes more time to this project, and distributions often total up to 200. Donations vary widely on any given day, but the annual income raised from this effort regularly tops \$1,000. The biggest single donation came near the end of one recent damp, windy afternoon - two twenty-dollar bills from a generous passerby.

These funds are an important boost to the *People's Voice* budget. But even more important, the distributions are a valuable political effort, an opportunity to speak directly to hundreds of people every year about the issues they take seriously. This might range from the war in Afghanistan to the struggle for progressive policies at City Hall, but it's always a good way to take the pulse of ordinary Vancouverites. And it raises the profile of *People's Voice*, which is widely recognized in the labour and people's movements in Vancouver as a valuable part of the overall struggle to inject socialist ideas into political debates.

The Editorial Board of *People's Voice* salutes Peter Marcus for his outstanding contributions as a press-builder, which include circulating the paper at many picket lines, demonstrations, and union conventions. If readers in other areas want to start similar street distributions, please contact us for information and assistance. ●



Peter Marcus handing out *People's Voice* on a chilly January day in Vancouver. (PV photo: Lucian Sanchez)

NFU calls for improved farm policies

Widespread frost starting in mid-September on the prairies has compounded an extremely difficult year for farmers. Many who were hit by major flooding last spring lost their final hopes of getting a decent crop.

"Farming is always a difficult and risky occupation. The economic losses will be substantial due to reduced quality, weight, and outright destruction of late seeded crop. This year will negatively impact for a long time across the West," warns National Farmers' Union President Terry Boehm.

The NFU points out that while the weather is largely uncontrollable, government policy and programs, such as crop insurance, are another matter.

"It is imperative that we have a robust and well financed crop insurance program to get us through years such as this," says Boehm. "I think that the crop insurance program will increasingly become a necessity for all farmers, as weather conditions are always capricious in agriculture."

The NFU is calling on governments to implement policies that will allow farmers to make a fair living from the market. NFU research has shown that farm income in Canada has been zero or negative over the past quarter century.

"Agriculture is an extremely difficult way to make a living and we need to realize that reality when we develop domestic and international policies. Farmers are subjected to all sorts of pressures, weather or otherwise. Farmers need thoughtful policies that protect them from seed and fertilizer monopolies, excess railway charges, bad trade deals like the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement currently being negotiated with Europe, and meat packer concentration. This would go a long way with enabling farmers to deal with weather disasters such as the ones experienced this year," states Boehm. ●

EDITORIALS

Put the warmongers on trial

After eight terrible years in Guantanamo, with no prospects for a fair trial, Omar Khadr has pleaded guilty on charges of killing a U.S. soldier. The plea-bargain Khadr was compelled to accept does not reflect any actual guilt, since he was simply a child soldier caught up in the imperialist invasion of Afghanistan. But the conclusion to this stage of Omar Khadr's case will be yet another permanent stain on Canada's international record, marked by the shameful refusal of the Harper government (and its Liberal predecessors) to lift a finger to ensure that he was provided the rights guaranteed to children in war zones.

This mockery of justice comes at a time when the NATO war in Afghanistan is increasingly seen as a terrible mistake which should be ended quickly. Opposition to extending the Canadian military mission remains at 60% or more across Canada. A recent U.S. poll found that just 37% of Americans support the war, and 52% believe the conflict is "a new Vietnam for the U.S. military." German soldiers have begun wearing badges that state "I fight for Merkel" as a form of protest, reflecting polls which find that over 62% of Germans want their troops to come home. Afghans themselves are desperate to end the conflict, forcing the Karzai regime and its opponents to engage in preliminary peace talks.

And yet the slaughter continues. A recent Australian study estimated that 4.9 million Afghans have died directly or indirectly as a result of the conflict. Nor is there any end to the denials and cover-ups by Canadian officials. For example, months after a special House of Commons committee was set up to examine 40,000 Afghan detainee documents, not a single page has been cleared for public release.

Free Omar Khadr now. Put the real criminals in the dock - the NATO warmongers who have ravaged Afghanistan for nine years, including Stephen Harper and his colleagues.

The ugly Canadians

Living next door to the biggest bully on the block, Canadians are sometimes unaware of the destructive international role of corporations based in our country.

The truth is exposed in a report obtained recently by Mining Watch Canada, revealing that Canadian mining companies are implicated in four times as many violations of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) as mining companies from other countries. Commissioned by the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada in 2009, the report was never released to the public.

The report discusses 171 high-profile CSR violations by mining companies between 1999 and 2009. Sixty-three percent of these violations are linked to companies from just five countries, including Canada. Canadian mining companies are involved in more than four times as many violations as the next two highest offenders, Australia and India, says Mining Watch.

The report's authors conclude that "...Canadian companies have been the most significant group involved in unfortunate incidents in the developing world. Canadian companies have played a much more major role than their peers from Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States. Canadian companies are more likely to be engaged in community conflict, environmental and unethical behaviour...", despite signing "good corporate behaviour" voluntary guidelines. Since strenuous efforts are needed even within Canada's borders to police these companies, their disrespect for human rights and the environment abroad is no surprise.

Currently Bill C-300, legislation calling for greater corporate accountability in developing countries, is before the House of Commons. Measures to reign in these "ugly Canadians" are needed, along with steps to block the economic warfare conducted against Canadian workers by TNCs like Brazil's Vale and Australia's BHP Billiton.

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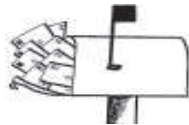
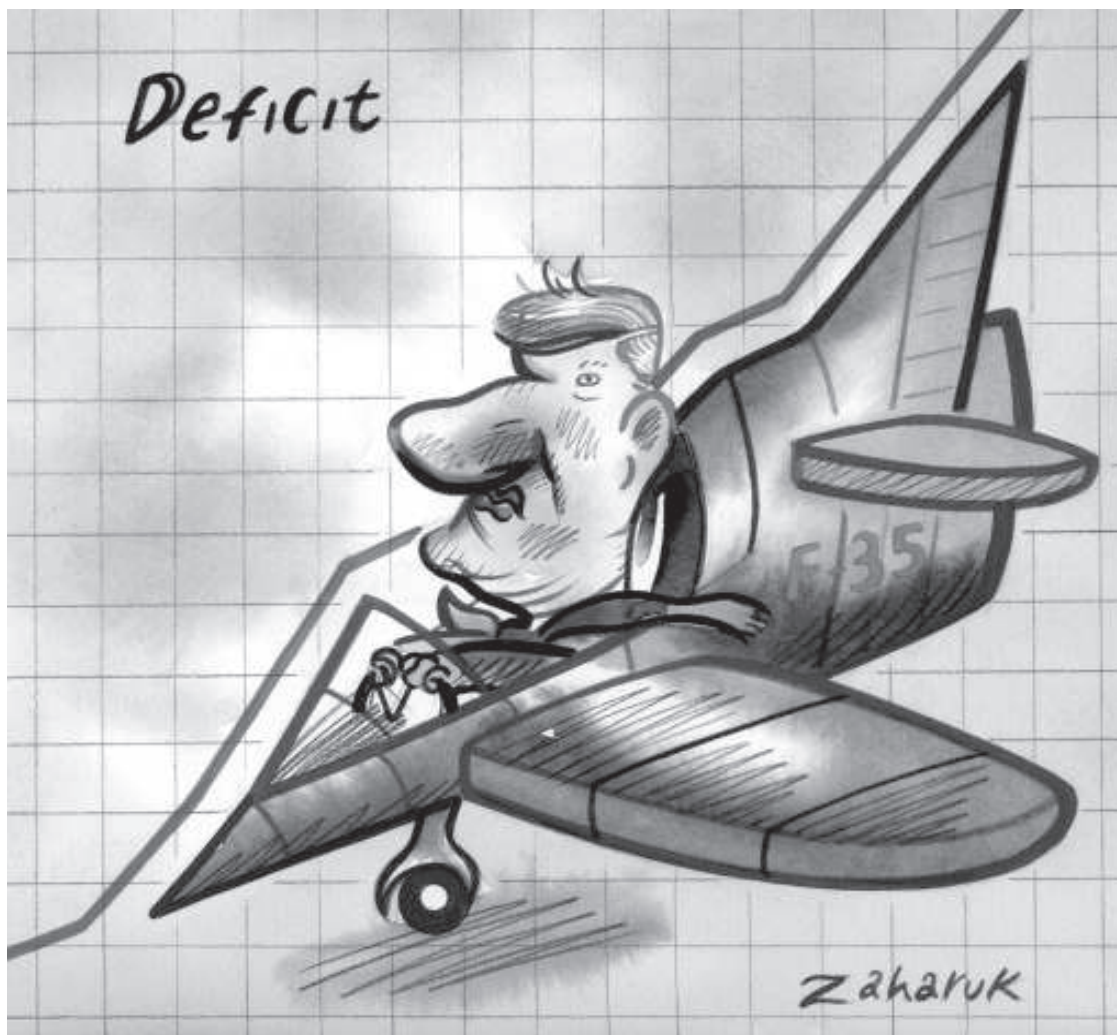
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LETTERS

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Letters to the Editor

Disturbing websites promote Rob Ford

It has recently come to my attention that a right-wing web site named "Blazing Cat Fur", which is well known on the Internet for disseminating Islamophobic rhetoric; is promoting the sale of t-shirts which support Toronto City Councillor Rob Ford's 2010 Mayoral Campaign. The t-shirts in question are apparently emblazoned with the slogan "Vote for Rob Ford - He's Not A Communist".

While there is nothing wrong per se with an individual, who is presumably and hopefully acting independently of Rob Ford's Mayoral Campaign, selling t-shirts to promote the election of their preferred candidate; I personally believe that Mr. Ford should publicly distance himself from the individual behind the controversial web site in question, who is apparently selling t-shirts on his behalf. The "Blazing Cat Fur" website also

provides a link to Rob Ford's Mayoral Campaign.

Why is Mr. Ford, who could very well be the next Mayor of Toronto, allowing this Islamophobic web site to continue to sell his campaign merchandise?

The web site in question has also recently been investigated by the Canadian Human Rights Commission. The web site in question was one of the blogs which participated in the highly controversial so-called "Everybody Draw Mohammed Day" earlier this year, in which people were invited to draw cartoons and sketches of the Prophet Mohammed and submit them for online publication. While I am not a Muslim myself, I am aware that depictions of the Prophet Muhammad, the founder of Islam, are considered deeply offensive by Muslims. It would appear as if the blog in question has been attempting to

systematically, deliberately, and continuously denigrate Islam in general and Muslim-Canadians in particular. I personally found the contents of the web site in question to be deeply offensive. As a Canadian, I am deeply disturbed by the way many Islamophobic web sites tend to vilify and demonize Muslims these days. I have many Muslim friends and peers.

By the way, I do not represent any candidates currently contesting the 2010 Toronto Mayoral election. I am a private citizen who is just deeply concerned about Toronto City Councillor Rob Ford's disturbing association with this virulently Islamophobic web site.

John Lipka

Where is the outcry?

Re: "G20 defendant jailed for speaking at university forum," *People's Voice*, Oct. 16-31.

The unreported detail here is that Alex Hundert initially refused to be released under these draconian bail conditions and on October 14 was thrown in the "hole" (solitary confinement) where he was threatened with being held until his eventual release from prison, whenever that might be, if he did not consent to the repressive bail conditions.

Solitary confinement is a form of torture designed to "break" someone and was used on two or three of the so called "Toronto 18."

Mr. Hundert has not been convicted of any "crime" related to the G20 protests. This practice is a blatant attempt to criminalize dissent. It is an attempt to harass and intimidate anyone who dares to think about confronting injustice.

If this activity by the state was committed by the Iranian or Chinese government there would be vigorous condemnation by the government of Canada. Where is the outcry for Alex Hundert and the others still held in jail for their G20 resistance?

Ted Turner, Toronto

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The ruling class fears fiscal disaster

PV Commentary

Marxists are sometimes called "forecasters of doom", supposedly taking satisfaction from the grinding poverty which worsens when the capitalist system sinks into depression.

This is nonsense. The cyclical crises studied by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels over 150 years ago were a relatively new phenomenon at the time, but they grasped that capitalism would inevitably face "booms and busts" on a frequent basis. Their view was based on scientific understanding, not wishful thinking.

Those who accuse Communists of being "too negative" should read an Oct. 4 speech by US Federal Reserve Chair Ben Bernanke, confirming what Communist parties have been saying for some time: the present crisis is far from over, and in fact far deeper socio-economic traumas are likely as capitalist governments seek to overcome fiscal deficit/debt crises through radical "readjustment".

Bernanke's statements should be a powerful "wake-up call" to those in the labour movement who hope that "the worst is over." His argument is that spending on health care and pensions must be drastically scaled back to allow U.S. capitalism to avoid fiscal disaster. In other words, working people must suffer to help the system survive; meanwhile, Communists are out in the streets in countries from India to Greece,

building opposition against this recipe for human destruction.

In his own words (our emphasis in bold font) the central banker of the United States says "Future budget deficits and debts are rising indefinitely, and at increasing rates... One way or the other, fiscal adjustments sufficient to stabilize the federal budget will certainly occur at some point... The only real question is whether these adjustments will take place through a careful and deliberative process that weighs priorities and gives people plenty of time to adjust to changes in government programs or tax policies, or whether the needed fiscal adjustments will be a rapid and painful response to a looming or actual fiscal crisis."

"The recent deep recession and the subsequent slow recovery have created severe budgetary pressures not only for many

households and businesses, but for governments as well... **Meeting these challenges will require policymakers and the public to make some very difficult**

how we see it...

decisions and to accept some sacrifices....

"The recent deterioration was largely the result of a sharp decline in tax revenues brought about by the recession and the subsequent slow recovery, as well as by increases in federal spending needed to alleviate the recession and stabilize the financial system. As a result of these deficits, **the accumulated federal debt**

measured relative to national income has increased to a level not seen since the aftermath of World War II.

"... If current policy settings are maintained, and under reasonable assumptions about economic growth, **the federal budget will be on an unsustainable path in coming years**, with the ratio of federal debt held by the public to national income rising at an increasing pace. Moreover, as the national debt grows, so will the associated interest payments, which in turn will lead to further increases in projected deficits..."

"It may be scant comfort, but the United States is not alone in facing fiscal challenges. **The global recession has dealt a blow to the fiscal positions of most other advanced economies**, and, as in the United States, their expenditures for public health care and pensions are expected to rise substantially in the coming decades as their populations age. Indeed, the population of the United States overall is younger than those of a number of European countries as well as Japan..."

"It would be difficult to identify a specific threshold at which federal debt begins to pose more substantial costs and risks to the nation's economy. Perhaps no bright line exists; the costs and risks may grow more or less continuously as the federal debt rises. **What we do know, however, is that the threat to our economy is real and growing...**"

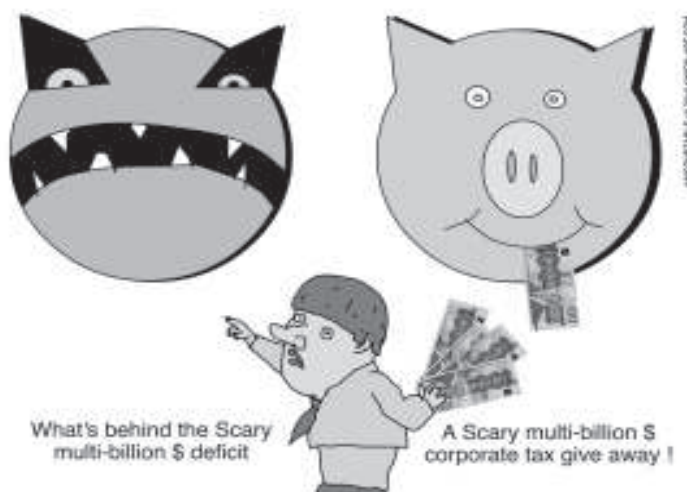
Bernanke's warning to his fellow members of the ruling class is crystal clear. Capitalism faces major challenges in the coming years, not due to the failures or weaknesses of individual leaders, but because of the system's internal contradictions.

The ruling class of the U.S. and other major capitalist powers are weighing up their options. One such possibility is rejected out of hand - the "people's alternative" proposed by the Communists and other left forces, including higher taxes on the corporations and the wealthy, drastic cuts in military spending, and policies to improve the lives of working people and protect the environment.

Instead, as we can see in the huge struggles in Europe over pensions, jobs, salaries and working conditions, the favoured choice of the capitalists is to force workers to put in longer hours for more years. This strategy not only increases the total wealth (and profits) generated by workers, it reduces the rising levels of government debt associated with social programs (such as health care) and public pensions.

But to impose this reactionary program, the ruling class must break the resistance of the working class and its allies. The arrest of over 1,000 people in Toronto during the G20 Summit was a dress rehearsal for the negative response when full-scale capitalist shock policies are imposed in Canada. The Conservative campaign to scapegoat racialized communities is another example of ruling class preparations to divide and conquer working class opposition.

This anti-democratic tactic raises the growing threat of fascism and militarism. The only suitable answer is broader unity of the labour movement and its allies, around a comprehensive platform of progressive policy demands, backed up by militant mass action in the streets and workplaces across Canada. The time to build this response is now, before it's too late. ●



CPC condemns new bail conditions on Alex Hundert

Statement by the Central Executive Committee, Communist Party of Canada

The Communist Party of Canada joins with other democratic forces across Canada to condemn the outrageous bail conditions imposed on political activist Alex Hundert. Arrested before the massive June 26 protests against the G20 summit in Toronto, Hundert has since been systematically harassed by the police and courts, in blatant contravention of his constitutional and legal rights to freedom of speech and association. On Oct. 12, new and even more onerous conditions were imposed, including non-association with several other prominent activists and organizations involved in the G8/G20 protests, a ban on planning or participating in public meetings or marches, and even a ban on expressing his political views in the media. This ruling followed his incarceration on Sept. 17 for supposedly violating previous bail conditions against taking part in demonstrations, for the alleged offense of speaking at a university panel forum.

Hundert initially refused to accept these conditions, choosing to remain in jail rather than being silenced by the state. But on Oct. 13, he was told by authorities at the Toronto East Detention Centre that unless he

signed the bail conditions, he would be placed in solitary confinement. Facing this threat of torture, he



PV photo: Ed Bil

signed the conditions and was released.

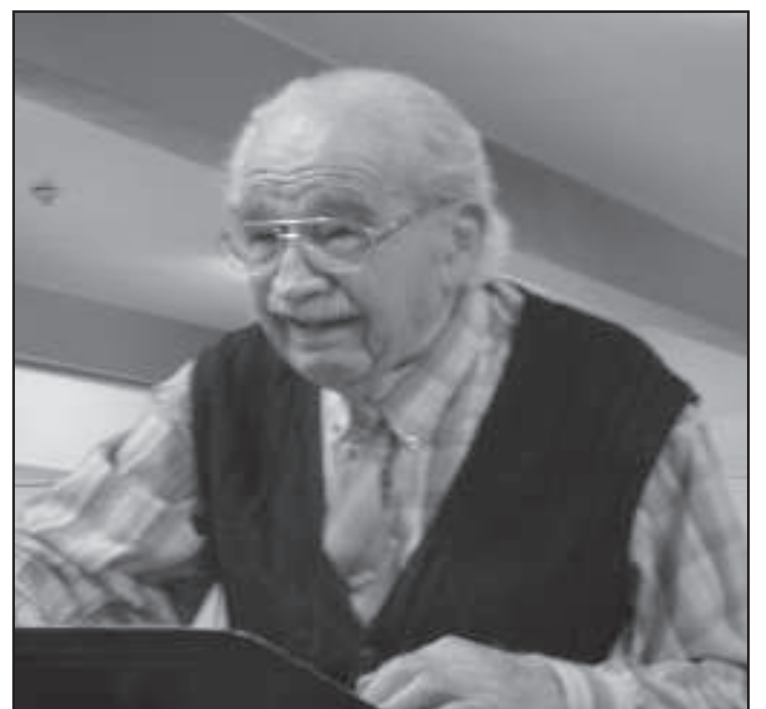
The attack against Alex Hundert's rights sets a dangerous precedent for muzzling free speech in Canada. In effect, the police and courts, with the support of politicians who applaud the police or remain silent, are trying to establish their ability to prevent any protests against incredibly expensive, destructive and wasteful events sponsored by the state, such as major sporting events or international summits hosted by Canada. An injury to one is an injury to all; this sweeping assault on democracy must be

rejected by the entire labour and people's movements.

We renew our call for a full, independent public inquiry into the police and state actions during the G8/G20 summits, including the arbitrary arrest of over 1,000 people, the biggest such mass arrests in Canadian history. By focusing their attack on Alex Hundert and a handful of other activists, the police and right-wing political forces hope to divert attention from the powerful criticism levelled by many organizations against this massive abuse of power. There are many unanswered questions about the repression before and during the Summits, and we will continue to demand that the full truth about this exercise in terrorizing the Canadian public be exposed and prevented from happening again.

In a related development, on October 14, over 100 conspiracy charges were dropped against people arrested at gunpoint in a June 27 police raid at the University of Toronto. This is further proof that the political campaign to vilify critics of the G8/G20 summits never had any legal justification. Alex Hundert must be immediately freed, and any bail conditions which restrict his democratic rights must be removed. All charges which still remain arising from the repression during the Summits must be immediately dropped. ●

Winnipeg tribute to Constantine (Kosty) Kostaniuk



The tribute to Constantine (Kosty) Kostaniuk could not have been warmer or more heartfelt a day after his 95th birthday, Oct. 19. Friends and family gathered at Winnipeg's historic Ukrainian Labour Temple to hear about Kosty's life-long involvement with the cultural and political activities of the Ukrainian Labour-Farmer Temple Association, now the Association of United Ukrainian Canadians, which he said "added years to my life and life to my years." Kosty still performs with the hall's orchestra, mandolin ensemble and choir. We add our own heartfelt congratulations to a firm supporter and reader of the People's Voice - From the Manitoba Bureau and the PV Editorial Board.

Why Canada lost its bid for a Security Council seat

By Yves Engler

In a stunning international rebuke Stephen Harper's government lost its bid for a UN Security Council seat last week. The vote in New York was the world's response to a Canadian foreign policy designed to please the most reactionary, shortsighted sectors of the Conservative Party's base - evangelical Christian Zionists, extreme right-wing Jews, Islamophobes, the military-industrial-academic-complex, mining and oil executives and old cold-warriors.

Over the past four years, Harper's government has been offside with the world community on a whole host of issues. Canada was among a small number of countries that refused to recognize the human right to water or sign the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. On two occasions Ottawa blocked consensus at the Rotterdam Convention to place chrysotile asbestos, a known toxin, on its list of dangerous products and in November Finance Minister Jim Flaherty refused to even consider British PM Gordon Brown's idea of a global tax on international financial transactions.

Close to the companies making huge profits on the Tar Sands, the Conservatives repeatedly sabotaged international climate negotiations. They angered many in the Commonwealth by blocking a resolution calling for a "binding commitment" on rich countries to reduce emissions and at a UN climate conference in Bangkok last year, many delegates from poorer countries left a negotiating session in protest after a Canadian suggestion to scrap the Kyoto Protocol as the basis of negotiations.

The Conservatives extreme "Israel no matter what" position definitely hurt its chance on Tuesday. "It's hard to find a country friendlier to Israel than Canada these days," explained Israeli Foreign Minister, Avigdor Lieberman, who emigrated from Moldova when he was 20 but still feels fit to call for the expulsion of Palestinian citizens of Israel.

The Conservatives publicly endorsed Israel's 2006 attack on Lebanon, voted against a host of UN resolutions supporting Palestinian rights and in February Ottawa delighted Israeli hawks by cancelling \$15 million in funding for the UN agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA). The money was transferred to Palestinian security reform.

For the past three years Canada has been heavily invested in training a Palestinian security force designed to oversee Israel's occupation of the West Bank and "to ensure that the PA [Palestinian Authority] maintains control of the West Bank against Hamas," as Canadian ambassador to Israel Jon Allen was quoted as saying by the Canadian Jewish News. According to deputy Foreign Affairs minister Peter Kent, Operation PROTEUS, Canada's military training mission in the West Bank, is the country's "second largest deployment after Afghanistan" and it receives "most of the money" from a five-year \$300 million Canadian aid program to the Palestinians.

At the same time as Canadian "aid" strengthens the most

compliant Palestinian political factions, the Conservatives have refused any criticism of Israel's onslaught against the 1.5 million people living in Gaza. Canada was the only country at the UN Human Rights Council to vote against a January 2008 resolution that called for "urgent international action to put an immediate end to Israel's siege of Gaza."

Later in 2008 Israel unleashed a 22-day military assault on Gaza that left 1,400 Palestinians dead. In response many governments condemned the bombing and Venezuela broke off all diplomatic relations. Israel didn't need to worry since Ottawa was prepared to help out. The Canadian embassy now represents Israel's diplomatic interests in Caracas.

While Brazil and Turkey tried to dissipate hostility towards Iran, Harper used his pulpit as host of the G8 to pave the way for a possible U.S.-Israeli attack. A February 17 Toronto Star article was headlined: "Military action against Iran still on the table, Kent says." The junior foreign minister explained that "it's a matter of timing and it's a matter of how long we can wait without taking more serious preemptive action."

"Preemptive action" is a euphemism for a bombing campaign. Canadian naval vessels are already running provocative maneuvers off Iran's coast and by stating that "an attack on Israel would be considered an attack on Canada," Kent is trying to create the impression that Iran may attack Israel. But it is Israel that possesses nuclear weapons and threatens to bomb Iran, not the other way around.

While Ottawa considers Iran's nuclear energy program a major threat, Israel's atomic bombs have not provoked similar condemnation. The Harper government abstained on a number of near unanimous votes asking Israel to place its nuclear weapons program under International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

controls and in September Bloomberg cited Canada as one of three countries that opposed an IAEA probe of Israel's nuclear facilities as part of an Arab led effort to create a nuclear-weapons-free Middle East.

Over the past four years, Harper's government has been offside with the world community on a whole host of issues. Canada was among a small number of countries that refused to recognize the human right to water or sign the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. On two occasions Ottawa blocked consensus at the Rotterdam Convention to place chrysotile asbestos, a known toxin, on its list of dangerous products and in November Finance Minister Jim Flaherty refused to even consider British PM Gordon Brown's idea of a global tax on international financial transactions.

Not content with taking on Iran, the military-minded Conservatives turned on Russia. Harper referred to Russia as "aggressive" and in a throwback to the Cold War, Defence Minister Peter MacKay added that Ottawa would respond to Russian flights in the Arctic by flying Canadian fighter jets near Russian airspace. Making sure that Moscow got the message, during a July 2007 visit to the Ukraine MacKay said Canada would help provide a "counterbalance" to Russia.

Ottawa even prioritized the military over aid in the face of the incredible suffering caused by Haiti's earthquake. Two thousand Canadian troops were deployed while several Heavy Urban Search Rescue Teams were readied but never sent. Foreign Affairs Minister Lawrence Cannon explained that the teams were not needed because "the government had opted to send Canadian Armed Forces instead."

Overthrown in February 2004 by a joint U.S./France/Canada destabilization campaign, Haiti's most popular political party, Fanmi Lavalas, has been barred from participating in elections. The Conservatives supported Fanmi Lavalas' exclusion, congratulating Haiti's puppet government for bringing "a period of

stabilization" good for "investment and trade." Ottawa backed up its words with deeds, adding tens of millions of dollars to a Haitian prison and police system that has been massively expanded and militarized since the 2004 coup.

shift in aid was to stunt Latin America's recent rejection of neoliberalism and U.S. dependence.

One issue mentioned in a number of media reports about Canada's loss last week had to do with the Congo. At the G8 in June the Conservatives pushed for an entire declaration to the final communiqué criticizing the Congo for attempting to gain a greater share of its vast mineral wealth. Months earlier Ottawa began to obstruct international efforts to reschedule the country's foreign debt, which was mostly accrued during more than three decades of Joseph Mobutu's dictatorship and the subsequent war.

Canadian officials "have a problem with what's happened with a Canadian company," Congolese Information Minister Lambert Mende said referring to the government's move to revoke a mining concession that Vancouver-based First Quantum acquired under dubious circumstances during the 1998-2003 war. "The Canadian government wants to use the Paris Club [of debtor nations] in order to resolve a particular problem", explained Mende. "This is unacceptable."

The mining industry increasingly represents Canada abroad. Canadian miners operate more than 3,000 projects outside this country and many of these mines have displaced communities, destroyed ecosystems and resulted in violence. This doesn't bother the Harper government, which is close to the most retrograde sectors of the mining industry. Last year they rejected a proposal - agreed to by the Mining Association of Canada under pressure from civil society groups - to make diplomatic and financial support for resource companies operating overseas contingent upon socially responsible conduct. Despite countless horror stories suggesting the contrary, the Conservatives claim that voluntary standards are the best way to improve Canadian mining companies' social responsibility.

Finally, the Conservatives have knowingly supported torture in Afghanistan and embraced an increasingly violent counter-insurgency war. Apparently, Canadian Joint Task Force 2 commandos regularly take part in nighttime assassination raids, which are highly unpopular with the Afghan population.

Losing the Security Council seat will hopefully cost the Conservatives some votes and temper their more extreme international positions. But, for those of us working to radically transform Canadian foreign policy the consequences of the loss may be much greater. There has probably never been a bigger blow to the carefully crafted image of Canada as a popular international do-gooder, a mythology that blinds so many Canadians to our country's real role in the world. ●

(Yves Engler is the author of *The Black Book of Canadian Foreign Policy and Canada and Israel: Building Apartheid*. He is on a speaking tour on "Why Canada lost its bid for a Security Council seat". Anyone interested in organizing a talk please e-mail: yvesengler@hotmail.com)

Stephen Harper never hid his contempt for the United Nations

UN peacekeepers aren't real soldiers

It's just a talking shop.

I'd rather go to a Tim Horton's opening than attend at the UN

The UN is insufficiently pro Israel.

So when Canada lost to Portugal for a seat on the Security Council of course he blamed Michael Ignatieff!

kempkes union-art.com 2010

End the policy of mass repression in Canada!

Statement from the Central Executive Committee, Communist Party of Canada, Oct. 22, 2010

The latest revelations regarding the "PROFUNC" blacklist prove that the Cold War era witch-hunt tactics included highly organized plans to intern thousands of Communists and other critics of the anti-democratic, anti-working class, pro-war policies of the Canadian state.

When evidence of this plot first surfaced a decade ago, the Communist Party of Canada condemned this draconian operation and demanded full disclosure of the plans. Now, the CBC's Fifth Estate has exposed in chilling detail the extraordinary extent of these internment preparations.

Back in February 2000, the Communist Party of Canada condemned this plot as "entirely consistent with the prevailing anti-communist policies of the Canadian state," not just an isolated relic of history.

Ever since our formation in 1921, the Communist Party has faced continued harassment from police and security forces. Tim Buck, our Party's long-time general secretary, and seven other Party leaders were arrested and imprisoned during the 1930s under the notorious Section 98 of the Criminal Code which outlawed so-called "subversive organizations." An attempt was even made to assassinate Tim Buck in Kingston Penitentiary.

Many Communists were interned at Petawawa and Kananaskis during the Second World War, and even blocked from joining the Canadian Armed Forces during the military struggle against Hitler fascism. Party offices and meeting halls were closed; printing presses and other assets were seized, and our press and publications banned. Following WWII, the Party and its activists suffered state-organized persecution for decades during the "Cold War" period.

In fact, mass suppression of civil rights and democratic freedoms has been a constant political factor from the origins of this country. The military defeat of the Métis resistance struggles, the War Measures Act, the mass internments of ethnic groups during the First and Second World Wars, relentless police attacks against the labour movement - all these illustrate the reality that from its very beginnings, the Canadian capitalist state has used the police, military, courts and spy agencies against its "enemies".

The PROFUNC program was not created out of thin air; it was a more organized and sweeping version of earlier repression, based on the foul lie that the Communists were "agents of a foreign power." The PROFUNC (PROminent FUNCTIONaries of the Communist Party) list was created in 1950, under the direction of Royal Canadian Mounted Police Commissioner Stuart Taylor Wood. This blacklist grew to include some 16,000 "suspected communists" and 50,000 "communist sympathizers" to be observed and potentially interned during a state of emergency such as war against the USSR. The

TOP SECRET																							PROFUNC RECAPITULATION										18-3-53		COPY No. 5	
DIV.	GROUP 1							GROUP 2							GROUP 3			PICKUP TOTAL		APPROVE TOTAL		DECISION TOTAL		TOTAL												
	MEM	TRY	APP	OTHER	TR	APP	TOTAL	MEM	TRY	APP	OTHER	TR	APP	TOTAL	MEM	OTHER	TOTAL	TRY	TR	OK	OK	TR														
"A"	21	20	0	10	0	0	31	13	4	4	10	3	0	21	13	25	38	16	9	12	5	07	43	130												
"B"	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	3											
"C"	260	145	141	93	38	27	604	134	24	24	54	13	7	238	207	112	279	225	69	175	21	401	235	876												
"D"	220	162	157	87	27	24	637	340	69	67	130	44	43	620	303	131	434	199	119	170	110	965	308	1200												
"E"	513	327	225	171	122	111	1479	494	96	50	250	31	30	825	423	177	600	408	27	450	24	1409	250	1987												
"F"	142	87	29	20	24	20	282	20	0	0	28	0	0	130	104	20	210	113	0	100	0	993	113	900												
"G"	8	1	1	1	1	1	8	1	-	-	1	-	-	0	0	-	0	0	-	0	-	0	0	0	0											
"H"	27	15	15	1	1	1	60	21	1	1	1	-	-	23	24	0	30	16	1	15	1	73	10	89												
"I"	5	-	-	1	-	-	6	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	0	-	0	-	-	-	-	0	1	10												
"J"	121	133	125	29	20	24	352	114	22	22	12	19	10	404	219	151	369	160	114	104	112	1025	202	1355												
"K"	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-											
"L"	1635	648	641	297	228	126	3575	711	76	67	335	35	34	924	712	312	1024	1074	111	1007	103	2006	814	3082												
TOTAL	2830	1755	1714	673	400	400	3205	2201	341	310	950	148	139	2073	2465	565	3447	2846	489	2394	422	7523	2420	9945												

This faded PROFUNC document from 1953, marked "top secret", provides exact numbers of detainees to be "picked up" by provincial RCMP divisions. The page lists the number of male and female targets (totals of 7525 and 2420 respectively at this date) and other categories.

identities were kept in sealed envelopes filed at Mountie detachments across the country.

A separate arrest document was written up for each potential internee. These C-215 forms were updated regularly, including descriptions, photographs, vehicle data, and other information. Even "escape routes" from the personal residences of those on the list were noted.

"Mobilization Day" (M-Day) was designated as the day to arrest and transport people on the PROFUNC list to temporary detention centres across Canada, including Casa Loma in Toronto, a country club in Port Arthur, and Regina Exhibition Park. From these centres, male detainees would then be transferred to penitentiaries across Canada, while women would be interned at facilities in the Niagara Peninsula or Kelowna. Their children would be sent to relatives or interned with their parents. Internees who broke prison rules could be held indefinitely, or shot while attempting to escape.

Some people have expressed shock that prominent non-communists were included in the PROFUNC list, such as Saskatchewan Premier Tommy Douglas, whose 'crime' was apparently his association with Communists in the fight to win universal Medicare in Canada. The point, however, is that any attack on democracy and freedom inevitably expands to target all those who might speak out in opposition.

This was shown during the 1970 October Crisis, when PROFUNC was used to help detain hundreds of so-called Front de libération du Québec suspects, most of whom had no affiliation with the FLQ. Almost all of these "suspects" were eventually released without charge, but the goal was to terrorize a wide range of progressive activists, just as the Cold War accusations aimed at undermining the militant labour and people's movements of the 1940s and '50s.

The PROFUNC list remained in force during the 1970s; in fact, the Canadian Penitentiary Service received updated PROFUNC lists to make them aware of the number of potential internees.

It was not until the 1980s that Solicitor General Robert Kaplan introduced administrative changes to remove the barriers which Communists and others faced in trying to cross the Canada-U.S. border. These changes effectively ended PROFUNC by forcing the RCMP to scrap the list.

The wrongful and illegal activities of the RCMP were well documented by the MacDonald Royal Commission back in the early 1980s. 'Dirty tricks' included unlawful spying and wiretapping, theft of documents, destruction of property, the use of *agent-provocateurs*, etc. The revelations about the RCMP's scandalous role in subverting and attacking a wide range of democratic movements

compelled the federal government to turn over authority for domestic espionage to the newly-created CSIS. But this move did not eliminate the menace to civil rights and democratic freedoms; it merely made CSIS the main perpetrator.

This threat remains very real today, especially given the consistent efforts by the minority Harper Conservative government to crush, silence and jail opposition voices, and to create scapegoats to divert public anger from the impact of the capitalist crisis and anti-working class policies. The so-called "war on terror" is used to justify wide-ranging surveillance and infiltrating of people's opposition movements, to portray racialized communities as potential

"enemies" which must be closely watched by CSIS, and to bar anti-war activists from entering Canada.

The vast expenditure of taxpayers' dollars on "security" for the Winter Olympics and the G8/G20 Summits was not intended to block non-existent or wildly inflated "security threats," but rather to intimidate Canadians from expressing public opposition against the policies of the federal and provincial governments. The mass arrest of over 1,100 protesters during the G20 Summit in Toronto is powerful evidence that plans to suppress dissent remain very much alive at the highest levels of the Canadian state.

The latest revelations reinforce our demand that the Canadian government must make public all documents relating to this sordid affair, including the names of individuals whose civil and human rights were to be violated. We demand an official apology to the Communist Party and to the families of all those individual Communists who were targeted under the PROFUNC plan.

We reiterate our long-standing call for the abolition of the RCMP (which prepared the PROFUNC lists), and for the disbanding of CSIS, which conducts surveillance of present-day critics of government policies.

We urge the entire labour and democratic movement - the main target of the drive to criminalize dissent in Canada - to demand a complete and final end to the policy of drawing up plans for the mass crushing of opposition forces. The defeat of the Harper Tories will be an important step in building the movement for a more democratic Canada, and we pledge to continue to do everything in our power to achieve these goals. ●

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GLOBAL CLASS STRUGGLE

"The Hobbit" boycott over

The New Zealand Actors' Equity Union says it will begin negotiating new conditions with the Screen Production and Development Association. The union recommends that all international performance unions lift a boycott on *The Hobbit* films.

"Following positive developments in discussions between SPADA and NZ Actors' Equity over the last week and in an effort to re-establish stability in the New Zealand film industry, NZ Equity has recommended to all international performance unions that they rescind any forms of advice to their members that they not work on the feature film production *The Hobbit*," it said in a release.

Tunisian workers face government restrictions

Tunisian authorities should end arbitrary restrictions on independent trade and student unions, Human Rights Watch said in a report released Oct. 21. The government has refused to recognize independent unions, limited their ability to assemble peacefully, and unfairly prosecuted members, effectively shrinking the space in which unions can operate outside of government control. The government has denied such interference, but the facts contradict its rebuttals, Human Rights Watch said.

The 62-page report, "The Price of Independence: Silencing Labor and Student Unions in Tunisia," documents a tight system of control over unions and union activists, highlighting in particular the plight of labor, student, and journalist unions that have criticized government policies.

The government has refused to recognize unions that have followed the required registration procedure for legal status, prevented members from meeting and holding events, and arrested and arbitrarily detained union activists, some of whom allege that security forces tortured them. The government and its allies have also intimidated journalists and orchestrated the replacement of the leadership of the independent journalists' union with a board consisting entirely of government allies.

"No realm of civil society in Tunisia is safe from government interference, not even trade unions, if they are considered critical of the government," said Sarah Leah Whitson, Middle East and North Africa director at Human Rights Watch.

The right of citizens to form unions freely and operate independent of government interference is secured in Tunisia's Constitution and Labor Code. In practice, Human Rights Watch found that the government deprives independent unions of legal status by refusing to acknowledge receipt of their notification papers, including the Tunisian Journalists' Union in May 2004 and the Tunisian General Confederation of Labor in February

2007. In both cases, the government claims that it has no knowledge of the filings, even though the unions' founding members said that they submitted them in person at the Tunis Governorate and sent additional copies by registered mail. The only legally registered labor union outside the Tunisian General Labor Union, a confederacy of all Tunisian unions, is the National Syndicate of Tunisian Journalists.

Foxconn dispute in India

Twelve Foxconn workers and union leaders remained in prison for days after hundreds of workers striking the plant were arrested on October 9 in the Nokia Special Economic Zone in Chennai, India. More than 1,200 permanent



workers belonging to the Foxconn India Thozhilalar Sangam (FITS) union, which is affiliated to Center For Indian Trade Unions (CITU), at the plant have been involved in weeks of struggle to have their union recognized and to negotiate wage rises and other demands.

On October 9 police arrested hundreds of workers who had been picketing the plant for several days. Around 319 workers including the trade union leaders were remanded into custody and transferred to Vellore central jail. Remaining workers were let off and around 200 women workers were taken to a bus stop and asked to leave. When the women refused and demanded to be arrested also, they were abused and forced off the police vehicle.

On October 13, the court granted bail to 307 workers. The remaining 12 workers and union leaders remained in jail, including A. Soundhirarajan, CITU State General Secretary and E. Muthu Kumar, CITU District Secretary, Kanchipuram and FITS President.

Workers at the plant with four years experience earn INR 4,800 (US\$106) per month. FITS is demanding a basic pay of INR 10,000 (US\$221), other additional bonuses and health checks and medical insurance.

The company has also retaliated by deducting eight days of wages from striking workers' pay, and suspending 23 union activists and leaders. Foxconn refuses to negotiate on the grounds that it has an agreement with an alternative union, the Foxconn India Thozhilalar Munnetra Sangam (FITMS). Management apparently reached a wage agreement with FITMS 15 days after FITS lodged its wage demands. FITMS claims membership of 696 workers and

reached a deal with Foxconn for a wage increase to INR 8,999 (US\$ 177).

Despite the government's Labour Commission advising the company to negotiate and victimize the workers, the government has failed to take steps to remedy the situation. Instead, police have been used to repeatedly harass, arrest and detain the striking workers.

There are approximately 7,800 workers at the Foxconn India plant, including 1,800 employed on a permanent basis and 6,000 contract or trainee workers.

Jute strikers hamper exports

An indefinite work stoppage by 1200 workers of 14 jute baling presses is hampering export of jute and jute goods through Mongla Port in Bangladesh. Under the banner of the Wages Implementation Action Committee (WIAC), the workers walked out on Oct. 18 to demand a weekly pay raise, from Tk 863 (\$12.50 Can.) to Tk 1726 (\$25 Can.) for carrying 100 bales of jute from warehouses to the baling presses. Each bale weighs 150 kilograms, requiring tremendous strength to carry.

Mohammad Motaleb Hossain, general secretary of WIAC, told the media that they would not end the strike until their demand is fully met. It is very difficult to maintain families of jute press workers with the small amount of weekly wages they get when prices of all consumer goods including rice continue to rise, said the WIAC leader.

Kausar Sheikh, convenor of Daulatpur chapter of Bangladesh Jute Association, termed the work stoppage illegal and "detrimental to economic interest of the country." But Sheikh could not tell how much financial loss press owners have incurred due to the strike. Bangladesh produces over 800,000 tonnes of jute annually; the industry employs about 120,000 workers. Another 4 million farmers produce jute for the industry, which is enjoying a revival as a result of declining use of plastic bags in many countries.

International rally at Sodexo HQ

Sodexo workers from around the world brought their message to Sodexo's doorstep on Oct. 20. They rallied with supporters at noon outside Sodexo's global headquarters in Paris, and then poured into the lobby to request a meeting with the company. Their message was clear - Sodexo must respect workers and live up to its social commitments.

When the delegation returned outside, Sodexo workers from Colombia and the US and union leaders from Morocco, Colombia, France and the US addressed a crowd of Sodexo workers from Paris, Lyon, and Marseilles. They heard what it's like to work for Sodexo around the world.

In country after country, Sodexo pulls in billions while workers often struggle to make ends meet and many face unsafe working conditions. When workers have tried to improve working

conditions and lift themselves out of poverty by forming a union, they have frequently faced retribution.

In recent weeks, Sodexo workers recently went on strike against Sodexo at 11 different locations across the US. In late September, workers in Colombia and the Dominican Republic held high profile events to protest the company's poverty wages and anti-union behaviour.

Drivers win Mumbai port dispute

Port drivers in India have won agreements with two contractors in Maersk's Gateway Terminals India (GTI) terminal in Mumbai in what has been a lengthy and bitter industrial dispute. The interim agreements between the ITF-affiliated Transport and Dock Workers' Union, which represents the drivers, and Thakur Infraproject and Casby Logistics, which are contracted to GTI, were reached on October 14. The agreements follow the settlement of a full collective agreement in June with another contractor in the terminal, Allcargo.

The interim agreements cover some 250 workers in the port; they will benefit from a monthly increase in wages of RS2,111 (US\$48) as well as improved conditions.

SR Kulkarni, president of the TDWU, commented: "The settlement was concluded against many odds including the unrelenting hostile posture of GTI, which has been exploiting the workers through the system of contracting and sub-contracting container transport."

The union will now look to ensure that a final settlement is reached with the contractors on the same basis as that negotiated

with Allcargo. The contracted workers' prolonged struggle to win union representation has previously been met with violence.

New threats on Irish workers

Ireland's Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) has warned the Croke Park agreement may have to be torn up as the economy faces massive cutbacks of 15 billion euros to correct its budget deficit. That is twice the sum agreed by the Government and the EU Commission under a 2014 deadline set by the Public Services Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions..

Under the deal, which was forced down the throats of union members last spring, the government promised not to cut pay further or to introduce compulsory layoffs in return for agreement by major unions not to conduct strikes against "wide scale reforms." In effect, the deal imposes much of the burden of Ireland's economic crisis on the backs of public sector workers. Just four months after the deal was settled, new attacks on these workers are being prepared.

The government think tank warns it has been forced to suggest that "mandatory redundancies in the public sector might have to form part of the adjustments". If implemented over four years, the ESRI warns the cuts could turn out to be a "tipping point" for the economy.

Unemployment could stay above 10% indefinitely if the economy gets stifled under the burden of budget cutbacks, leading to a "protracted recession", says the report. Over the next two years, unemployment is forecast to stay above 13% as consumer demand remains depressed.

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

Send me information on the Communist Party of Canada

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

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

Aid cargo breaks Gaza blockade

By Tom Mellen, UK
Morning Star, Oct. 22

International solidarity activists began unloading the tonnes of humanitarian aid on Oct. 22 that they brought into Gaza in defiance of Israel's illegal blockade. They expected to take a few days to distribute more than 3 million euros worth of food, medicines and other desperately needed supplies.

The Lifeline 5 convoy left London on September 12, passing through France, Italy, Greece and Turkey before arriving in Syria in early October. After a lengthy delay at the Syrian port of Lattakia, the convoy of 137 lorries crossed over to El Arish in Egypt before entering Gaza through the Rafah crossing.

A Palestinian welcoming committee gave the 340 solidarity activists from around the world a heroes' welcome and chanted slogans in support of George Galloway, the former Respect MP for Bethnal Green and Bow who

helped to sponsor the convoy.

Egypt barred Galloway and sixteen others from entering its territory, citing the clashes that kicked off when a previous Viva Palestina convoy arrived in El Arish in January.



A representative of the democratically elected Hamas administration, Ahmed Youssef, thanked Viva Palestina organisers. Viva Palestina activist Kevin Ovenden declared that the mission had achieved a "real victory" by arriving smoothly in Gaza with the "symbolic" aid.

Fellow campaigner Zaher Berawi criticised Cairo's insistence on "excluding convoy official George Galloway," and said he hoped the issue of the former parliamentarian's banning could be resolved in the future.

Israel eased its blockade of Gaza after the international outcry over its bloody attack on the *Mavi Marmara* solidarity ship on May 31 in which Israeli Defence Force soldiers killed nine Turkish civilians.

Tel Aviv has recently allowed cars, household items and food into Gaza. But desperately needed construction materials and some medicines are still barred. The Israelis insist there is no need for



George Galloway, the former British MP who helped launch the Viva Palestina convoy, second from right at the start of the action on Sept. 12 in London.

aid shipments, branding them propaganda. But Youssef said that Israel exaggerates the extent to which it had eased the blockade and called for more solidarity missions to challenge it.

Viva Palestina campaigners pledged to continue knocking holes in the blockade until it is broken completely. Activist Mohammed Sawalha said that

another flotilla would set sail for Gaza within the next few months.

During a visit to Syria on Oct. 19, former US president Jimmy Carter branded the blockade "one of the most serious human rights violations on Earth". Carter described Israel's blockade as an "illegal collective punishment" and "an impediment to peace." ●

Israeli Communists meet Palestinian President

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) held an Oct. 15 meeting with leading members of the Communist Party of Israel (CPI) and the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality (DFPE/Hadash), the electoral party in which the Israeli communists play a leading role. Abbas said he would not recognize Israel as a Jewish state, and that he opposes population exchanges as part of any permanent peace agreement.

During the meeting in the west bank city of Ramallah, Abbas said, "Had we given up on our principles, we would have signed an agreement years ago."

According to those who took part in the hour-long meeting, the Palestinian president said the direct talks with Benjamin Netanyahu have not progressed and that the Israeli prime minister insists on the continuation of construction in the West Bank's Jewish settlements. Abbas reiterated that he would not agree to resume negotiations as long as settlement construction continues.

Abbas noted that the negotiations with Israel during former Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's term did progress, and mentioned the Arab initiative as a key element of the peace process. "We won't budge from the Palestinian principles with regards to a final agreement," he said.

Abbas said that in 1993, following the Oslo accords, the Palestinians recognized the State of Israel. "We want Israel to recognize the state of Palestine within the 1967 borders," he told the Hadash members.

Yasser Abed Rabo, secretary of the Palestinian Liberation Organization's Executive Committee, as well as other PLO officials, also attended the meeting. He spoke of the "unacceptable demand" to recognize Israel as a Jewish state, adding that this

demand was aimed at thwarting the implementation of the right of Palestinian refugees to return.

Hadash chairperson and leading CPI member, Mohammad Barakeh said the meeting was held "in the shadow of racist laws, such as the amendment to the Citizenship Act and the demand to recognize Israel as a Jewish state, as well as the demand for population exchanges."

"We refuse to accept these developments and we will fight them," the Communist Knesset member said. "We came to Abu Mazen and the Palestinian Authority officials in order to hear a clear and official stance regarding the stalled negotiations, and we made it clear that we would not be a herd of sheep during the negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians."

After the meeting Barakeh announced that on Oct. 16, a mass Jewish-Arab demonstration would be held in Tel Aviv under the banners "Together against racist laws" and "Against transfer and despair - marching for common hope!" The rally drew over 10,000 participants.

Called by the CPI and its partners in Hadash, the initiative was joined by other democratic organizations and parties which oppose the preparations for revoking the citizenship of Arab citizens and deporting them ("transfer"), and which defend democratic space in Israel. Among the partners in the Oct. 16 rally were Meretz, Yesh Gvul, Gush Shalom, Fighters for Peace, the Negev Forum for Co-existence, Agenda, the Mizrahi Rainbow, the Women Democratic Movement in Israel (Tandi), the Communist Youth (Bank-Shabiba), Emil Touma Institute; and co-existence organizations such as Shutfut, the Abraham Foundation, Sikkui and others. ●

Middle East Catholic Bishops condemn Israeli occupation

From the UK Morning
Star, Oct. 24

A conference of Middle East Catholic bishops in Rome demanded at the weekend that Israel accepts UN resolutions calling for an end to its occupation of Arab lands. The bishops also warned Israel that it shouldn't use the Bible to justify injustices against the Palestinians.

The bishops issued the statement at the close of a two-week meeting, called by Pope Benedict XVI to discuss the plight of Christians in the Middle East. The Catholic church has long been a minority in the largely Muslim region but its presence is

shrinking further as a result of war, conflict, discrimination and economic problems.

During the meeting several bishops blamed the Israeli-Palestinian conflict for spurring the flight - a position echoed in their final statement.

While the bishops condemned terrorism and anti-Semitism, they laid much of the blame for the conflict squarely on Israel. They listed the occupation of Palestinian lands, Israel's separation barrier with the West Bank, its military checkpoints, political prisoners, demolition of homes and disturbance of Palestinians' socio-economic lives as factors that have made life increasingly difficult for Palestinians.

They said they had reflected on the suffering and insecurity in which Israelis live and on the status of Jerusalem - a city holy to Christians, Jews and Muslims.

"We are anxious about the unilateral initiatives that threaten its composition and risk to change its demographic balance," they said.

They called on the international community to apply UN security council resolutions adopted in 1967, which called on Israel to withdraw from Arab land conquered in the six day war that year.

"The Palestinian people will thus have an independent and sovereign homeland where they can live with dignity and security," they said. ●

Over 1000 victims in railway accidents in India

By B Prasant, PV
Correspondent in India

Over the past two years, a series of accidents in the Indian Railways (IR), one of the largest networks of railroads in the world, has left more than a thousand men, women, and children dead or injured as the IR is overwhelmed with accidents.

The principal reason why the mishaps have occurred has to be searched for, and found, in the utter negligence of the present IR management, led by the Railways Minister Mamata Banerjee, the chief of the right reactionary Trinamul Congress (TMC), a regional outfit with links both to corporate capital and to the US-supported 'left' guerrilla groups who are as sworn anti-communists as she is.

Three factors have caused the accidents to happen, IR sources tell

People's Voice. First, maintenance work has been neglected to the point where even daily upkeep of the most ordinary and basic kind like washing the coaches/ compartments is not undertaken, because of lack of accountability by officials who are mostly out pleasing the TMC leader-as-Railways-minister with services of the political kind.

Second, the tracks are not looked after. The recent accidents over the past three months revealed that most trains run on rails that are replete with cracks, hastily-repaired warps and bends, and loose clips and fish plates. The vibration caused by the ill-maintained undercarriage of the trains adds to the possibility of quick derailment especially along sweeping turns.

Third, added to the existing problem-ridden scene has been the ill-gotten, unplanned efforts of the

Railways minister to inaugurate new trains, along new routes, but using left over and discarded equipment, including engines and coaches. This in particular has been the specific cause for the spate of accidents that has visited the major rail networks in east and north India.

The TMC supremo does not attend office, does not meet officials, not to speak of the engineering staff, and would not bother about the accidents beyond raising the unfounded point that these mishaps 'are caused by acts of anti-TMC sabotage'. Of late, she has laid herself open to perjury and other legal proceedings by naming the Communist Party of India (Marxist) as the sole sabotaging reason why accidents have occurred even in areas and zones where the CPI(M) has a weak political presence. ●

rebel youth

Now is the time to organize!

inside

Harper's G20: "This is the story of my arrest" Why were such brutal means used? The case for mass action.

Special Focus, pages 22-29



Rebel Diary

"Culture that comes from people who are under conditions of oppression is gonna lead to resistance.

Which is the main reason why corporations buy out, co-opt, pimp that culture..."

PAGE 16

le Festival mondial de la jeunesse et des étudiant-e-s

17th World Festival of Youth & Students

PAGE 18

congrès convention!

YCL-LE 2010

War, misery, exploitation, apathy and poverty cannot be our future.

Young people cannot and should not remain indifferent.

Now is the time to unite and organize!

PAGE 31

PLUS: Une synthèse des mouvements de lutte de la jeunesse; Pollyscattergood's good; Une tite Toune; La Guerre et la Paix

Rebel Youth at the G20 demos

The latest Rebel Youth hit the stands last month, and as always, it's packed with great reading for radicals young and old.

RY is at its best presenting the stories of youth engaged in today's struggles, and issue #10 is no exception. Check out the riveting first-hand account of a Young Communist League member who was illegally arrested on Saturday, June 26, during the police repression against demonstrators at the G20 Summit in Toronto: "I was in Queen's Park, the designated 'legal protest zone.' I was chanting along with other protesters when hundreds of riot police suddenly stormed the group. After watching them beat my friend unconscious, I ran from the line of police. I was tackled into a bush by several officers. I said repeatedly, 'I am not resisting.' As I was being carried away, a female

officer hit me in the face and said, 'shut up, you commie c***'..."

This comrade goes on to detail the appalling extent of police brutality in Toronto. Anyone who thinks "fascism could never happen here" should take note - the methods and mentality of Pinochet's jackboot thugs are emerging in Canada today.

Accompanying this shocking story, YCL Ontario Organizer Drew Garvie presents his analysis of the reasons behind the massive police assault at the G20. These actions, he concludes, were not spontaneous or the result of overzealous behaviour by some officers. That would be scary enough. Even more terrifying, the "reign of terror" strategy was worked out well in advance by the officials around Stephen Harper, Dalton McGuinty, and Toronto Police Chief Blair. It's another

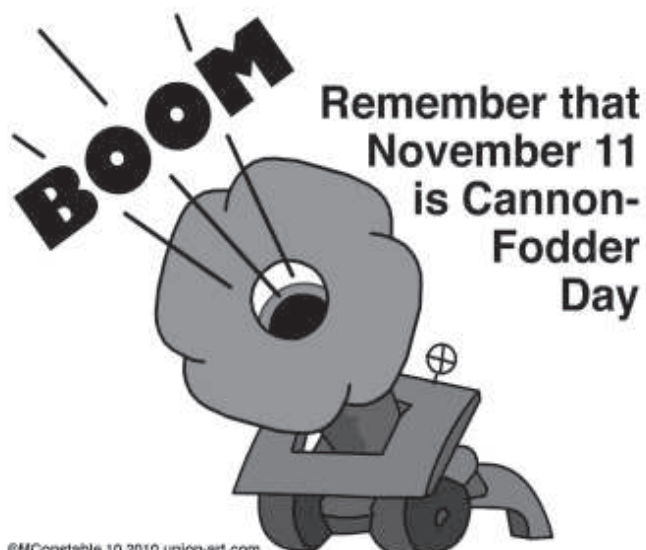
warning signal that the limited and hard-won rights to free speech and civil liberties in Canada are under intense attack by a ruling class which sees few other options to block a rising tide of popular discontent.

How to resist? That's the theme of another contribution, by YCL General Secretary Johan Boyden, who argues that both opportunist reformism and the "diversity of tactics" lead to a dead end for youth and working people. Boyden effectively makes the case for mass struggles designed to win the majority of the Canadian working class for radical change.

This issue of RY has much more to catch the interest of readers, including materials on the upcoming 17th World Festival of Youth and Students, which takes place in December in South Africa. Issue #10 has several dynamic pieces on culture, such as a look at Vincent Bugliosi's convincing book, *The Prosecution of George W. Bush for Murder*. Also reviewed are English singer/songwriter Polly Scattergood, a remake of the 1973 anti-war B-movie *The Crazies*, and the Waterloo-based *Rebel Time Radio* show.

Anglo-Canadians can once again brush up on our high school French by reading several contributions in that language. Come on, unity means understanding - give it a try! •

Subscribe today: send \$12 for 4 issues by cheque to "Rebel Youth Magazine" 290A Danforth Ave., Toronto, ON, M4K 1N6



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MUSIC NOTES

By Wally Brooker

Honduran regime targets musicians

September 15, the anniversary of the independence of Central America from Spain, has become a focal point of resistance to the June 2009 coup that overthrew the democratic regime of Honduran President Manuel Zelaya. At this year's celebration in the city of San Pedro Sula, musicians at a peaceful mid-day concert were attacked with tear gas and water cannons by the armed forces. The immediate target was the outspoken band Café Guancasco. The soldiers smashed their rented sound system and stole their gear. While current president Porfirio Lobo Sosa seeks (with U.S. support) to sanitize the regime's international image, hundreds of peaceful activists have been murdered. Café Guancasco is calling for artists throughout the world to take sides with the Honduran people. For info visit <http://quotha.net/node/1207>.

Detroit Symphony Orchestra on strike

Detroit Symphony musicians (AFM Local 5) went on strike Oct. 4 against management demands to downsize the orchestra, impose 33% salary cuts, eliminate pension contributions and slash health insurance. The musicians had already accepted a draconian salary cut of 22% in response to claims that a \$9 million deficit means that Detroit can no longer afford a "world-class orchestra." On Oct. 11, violin virtuoso Sarah Chang cancelled a recital at a "replacement concert" after receiving a flood of messages from musicians, including AFM President Ray Hair. Solidarity is growing as musicians from the Cleveland Symphony Orchestra and New York's Metropolitan Opera Orchestra plan to perform at a benefit concert in Detroit on Oct. 24.

Mayworks 2011 submission deadline

Nov. 8 is the official deadline for musicians and other cultural workers to submit a project proposal for Toronto's 2011 Mayworks Festival. Founded in 1986 by the Toronto & York Region Labour Council, Mayworks is Canada's largest and oldest labour arts festival. It was built on the premise that workers and artists share a common struggle for decent wages, healthy working conditions and a living culture. Mayworks' goal is to promote the interests of cultural workers and trade unionists, and to bring working-class culture from the margins of cultural activity onto centre stage. For an application form and info, visit www.mayworks.ca/.

The Creole Choir of Cuba

Readers who have thrilled to the music of choral groups like Sweet Honey in the Rock and Ladysmith Black Mambazo will want to hear The Creole Choir of Cuba. This 10-piece ensemble sings in creole, Cuba's second language. Known at home as Grupo Vocal Desandann ("Descendants") the choir's members are descendants of Haitians who were brought to Cuba in the 19th century to labour in the sugar and coffee plantations, or more recently, those who fled the horrors of the Duvalier dictatorship. Founded in 1994, the choir began to take its songs of resistance outside of Cuba in 2009, after signing with Peter Gabriel's Real World Records. Dates for a North American tour have yet to be announced, but readers can check out their new album *Tande-La* at www.realworldrecords.com/.

Placido Domingo sings Pablo Neruda

Celebrated tenor Placido Domingo sings the role of exiled Chilean poet Pablo Neruda in *Il Postino*, a new opera by Mexican composer Daniel Catan currently running at the Los Angeles Opera. It's based upon the popular 1994 film of the same name, itself an adaptation of Chilean writer Antonio Skarmeta's 1985 novel *Ardiente Paciencia*. Set in the early 1950s on an island off the coast of Italy, the communist poet is befriended by his young postman who has learned that Neruda is the "poet of the people" and the "poet who loves women." The shy young man seeks to win a local innkeeper's daughter, and the poet obligingly teaches him the meaning of metaphor. Reviews have been positive and apparently the opera does not shy away from its communist subtext. Next it's off to Vienna and Paris. Hopefully the Met will stage it so *Il Postino* can be seen by the masses in its high-definition simulcast series. For info visit www.peoplesworld.org/communism-at-the-opera/

Irwin Silber: 1925-2010

Folk music activist, author and editor Irwin Silber passed away on Sept. 8 at the age of 84. As co-founder of *Sing Out!* magazine in 1950 (with Pete Seeger and musicologist Alan Lomax), Silber was one of the architects of the folk music renaissance that reached a mass audience in the 1960s. *Sing Out!* published songs by Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger, Malvina Reynolds, Leadbelly, Bob Dylan, Phil Ochs, Joan Baez and Judy Collins. In earlier times, he was executive director of People's Songs, an organization that promoted the music of the American labour movement. Irwin Silber founded Paredon Records in 1970 with his partner, singer and activist Barbara Dane. Until its demise in 1985, the company released the music of revolutionary movements from around the world. It's now part of Smithsonian Folkways. •

Left gains in Brazilian elections

Special to PV

The first round of national/parliamentary elections in Brazil, held on Oct. 3, showed an overall improvement of the left-centre alliance in both the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate, and at the municipal level. There was also an increased vote for the Partido Comunista do Brazil (PCdoB), a partner in the coalition government led by the Workers' Party of Brazil (PT).

In the presidential campaign, Workers' Party candidate Dilma Rousseff got 46.9%, which represents the vote of more than 47.6 million Brazilians. On Oct. 31, Rousseff is widely expected to defeat right-wing candidate Jose Serra, who won 32.6% of the first round

vote, becoming the successor to President Lula da Silva.

In the state elections, the PT elected four governors in the first round, and will run in the second round in other two states.

The "Lulista" bloc of ten parties (called "For Brazil To Keep On Changing") elected a total of 311 candidates to the 513-member Chamber of Deputies. For the first time, the PT emerged as the biggest party in the Chamber, winning 88 seats, up from 79. The centrist Brazilian Democratic Movement Party (PMDB), which is part of the government, dropped from 89 seats to 79. Among the more radical parties in this coalition, the PCdoB elected 15 deputies (currently 12), Brazilian Socialist Party (PSB) will have 34 deputies (currently 27), and the

Democratic Labour Party (PDT) elected 28 (currently 23).

"Pro-Lula" parties which are not part of the governing coalition elected 48 deputies, and the Green Party elected 15, a gain of two. Six parties in the centre-right "Brazil Can Do More" alliance elected just 136 deputies, a loss of 44.

In the 81-member Senate, two-thirds of the seats were up for election. The Lulista bloc now has 50 Senators, a gain of eight. The PT has grown from 8 to 13 Senators. The PCdoB will have two (a gain of one, with a new Senator from Amazonas), and the PSB and PDT will have four Senators each. The PMDB now has 20 Senators. The right-wing bloc now has just 10 Senators, down from 25. ●

Labour issues raised in Winnipeg civic election

By Darrell Rankin

The group that organized two large rallies at Winnipeg's City Hall against the privatization of water services also campaigned to defeat the big business-developer majority in City Council in the October 27 municipal elections, which took place shortly after *People's Voice* went to print.

The Winnipeg Labour Election Committee put up thousands of posters to defeat Mayor Sam Katz and six councillors who voted for a secret 30-year contract with the giant water corporation, Veolia. The LEC also organized a picket line in front of Katz's campaign office, garnering supportive honks from passing motorists (See Youtube, "Peaceful picket line to defeat Sam").

"For six years Sam Katz has presided over a city where the number of children relying on Winnipeg Harvest for their food has skyrocketed," said the LEC in a statement launching the



Rally against water services privatization in Winnipeg.

campaign.

It is a city "where more garbage collection workers earn close to the minimum wage and have no union, where active public transit was effectively squashed, and where the water department will be removed from democratic control, partly privatized and ready to serve the giant land speculators outside Winnipeg."

The Winnipeg Labour Council, for its part, endorsed several city council and school board candidates who were NDP members. Some NDP-affiliated candidates such as Mayoralty candidate Judy Wacyleisa-Leis declined to seek the endorsement of the Labour Council.

The WLEC may be reached at wlec@mts.net or (204)792-3371. ●

Preparations full speed for Youth Festival

By Johan Boyden

Organization for the 17th World Festival of Youth and Students (WFYS) in Johannesburg, South Africa, is steaming ahead. The festival, the largest gathering of progressive, anti-imperialist youth in the world, will come together Dec. 13-21 under the slogan of "We will defeat imperialism; for peace, solidarity, and social transformation!" Over 20,000 youth are expected to attend.

The festival movement received a strong boost earlier this fall as Latin American leftists Fidel Castro, Socorro Gomez (president of the World Peace Council) Manuel Zelaya and Hugo Chavez all endorsed the cultural, social, and intellectual meeting of activists. Committees have formed in over 120 countries around the world, especially across Africa. This WFYS will be the first festival held in an English-speaking country since the festival movement began at the end of the Second World War, and the first in sub-Saharan Africa.

On the ground in Johannesburg, an international organizing committee is busy with preparations, visiting and

reviewing internal mass transit, sites for accommodation, conference centers, halls for seminars and inter-exchange meetings, and spaces for the solidarity fairs, information fairs, as well as sports and cultural events.

The schedule of the 17th WFYS is perhaps best described as magnificent. The programme comprehensively covers a wide-range of youth and people's struggles for peace, sovereignty and self-determination, sustainability and socialism, and against war, racism, sexism, homophobia, racism, xenophobia and other social malaise caused by imperialism.

Four conferences will take place over the festival, as well as a large number of regionally-themed seminars from the Americas, Europe, Africa, and Asian and the Pacific; there will be sports events including a soccer contest against imperialism, and a marathon for peace; and poetry, hip hop, music, photography, and painting contests.

There will also be fourteen inter-exchange meetings - large gatherings where youth from different struggles and communities from all around the

world can compare their experiences - including aboriginal youth, young trade unionists, youth of faith for peace, students, young artists, recent detainees, independent media, young artists, youth involved in municipal politics, and young women.

This is the challenge set for the all-Canada organizing committee as well - to build a delegation that reflects the diversity of the youth and student activism across the country, and that returns with a stronger, fighting sense of being part of a youth movement. These ideas are expressed in a declaration of the Canadian delegation being released soon.

Efforts to build a cross-Canada delegation have resulted in local committees in Halifax, Vancouver, Ottawa, and Guelph, as well as a Quebec National committee in Montreal. Toronto, Hamilton and Niagara will also launching committees soon and work is beginning in Edmonton and Winnipeg.

Youth interested in promoting or attending the WFYS should get in touch with the local committees; or write directly to the festival co-chairs: David Molenhuis (chairperson@cfs-fcee.ca) or

What's Left

Winnipeg, MB

Labour Election Committee, campaign evaluation meeting, Tue., Nov. 9, 7 pm, Workers Organizing Resource Centre, 280 Smith St.

Peace Alliance Winnipeg monthly meeting, Tue., Nov. 9, 7 pm, 745 Westminster Ave.

Manitoba-Cuba Solidarity Committee monthly meeting, Mon., Nov. 15, 7 pm, Workers Organizing Resource Centre, 280 Smith St.

Marxism course, classes begin early next year. Pre-register with the Communist Party - 586-7824 or cpc-mb@mts.net.

Vancouver, BC

Halloween Benefit Dance, with popular folk cabaret band *Maria in the Shower*. Celebrate the 65th anniversary of People's Co-op Books, Sat., Oct. 30, doors open 7:30, Russian Hall, 600 Campbell Ave. Tickets \$10 advance/\$15 door, from the bookstore, 1391 Commercial Drive.

Solidarity Notes 10th Anniversary Concert, Friday, Nov. 5, 7:30 pm, Unitarian Church, 49th & Oak. Tickets \$20 from People's Co-op Books, no one turned away.

Socialist Revolution Celebration, Sat., Nov. 13, doors open 6 pm, Peretz Centre, 6184 Ash St. Guest speaker Roger Keeran, co-author of "Socialism Betrayed." International buffet and music, door prizes, book displays. Sponsored by Centre for Socialist Education, tickets \$20, call 604-254-9836.

George Galloway, part of a cross-Canada speaking tour on Palestine, Afghanistan and Free Speech, Monday, Nov. 22, 7 pm, St. Andrews-Wesley, Burrard & Nelson. Organized by StopWar.ca., tickets at People's Co-op Books.

Toronto, ON

An Evening with Robert Meeropol, son of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg, Sat., Oct. 30, 7:30 pm, Winchevsky Centre, 585 Cranbrooke Ave. Suggested donation \$15, proceeds to Rosenberg Fund for Children. To RSVP, call 416-789-5502.

Blair lied, Iraqis died. Anti-war rally at the Tony Blair/Christopher Hitchens debate, Friday, Nov. 26, assemble 5:30 pm, rally 6-7, Roy Thompson Hall, 60 Simcoe St., (south of King St. West, TTC St. Andrew). Organized by Toronto Coalition to Stop the War.

Montreal, QC

Palestinians And Jews United, vigil against the occupation, every Friday at noon, Sainte-Catherine and Union (near Metro McGill).

KEVIN NEISH TOUR

Kevin Neish, Canadian survivor of the Israeli attack on the *Mavi Marmara*, is on a speaking tour this month to help raise funds for the Canadian Boat to Gaza campaign. Upcoming dates include: **HALIFAX** - Friday, Nov. 5, 7 pm, Loyola Complex, Room 170, 923 Robie St., St. Mary's University; **HAMILTON** - Sat., Nov. 6, 6 pm, potluck dinner at Unitarian Church, 170 Dundurn St. South; **LONDON** - Sun., Nov. 7, noon, London Muslim Mosque, 151 Oxford St. West; **WINDSOR** - Sunday, Nov. 7, 6 pm, Caboto Club, 2175 Parent Ave.; **REGINA** - Monday, Nov. 8, 7 pm, Salam Restaurant, 2115 Broad St.; **YELLOWKNIFE** - Tue., Nov. 9, ph. 867-445-8876; **EDMONTON** - Wed., Nov. 10, email jardiyoussef@hotmail.com; **VANCOUVER** - Friday, Nov. 12, 7 pm, Unitarian Church, 49th & Oak. For more details, visit www.canadaboatgaza.org.

GEORGE GALLOWAY SPEAKING TOUR

George Galloway, the former British MP who was barred last year by the Harper Tories, has won his legal fight to enter Canada. Galloway's cross-country speaking tour this month will visit a number of cities, sponsored by the Canadian Peace Alliance, Canadian Boat to Gaza, Canadian Arab Federation, Independent Jewish Voices, and the Defend Free Speech Campaign. For details, contact the CPA at 416-588-5555, or your local anti-war and solidarity groups.

People's Voice deadlines:

NOVEMBER 16-30 issue: Thursday, Nov. 4

DECEMBER 1-31 issue: Thursday, Nov. 18

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

Pension struggle rocks France

PV Vancouver Bureau

Cast by the western mainstream media as “greedy workers” wanting to retire early, the people of France have mounted a titanic struggle for the rights and interests of their sisters and brothers across Europe, and even internationally. As this issue of *People's Voice* went to press on Oct. 26, the battle over President Nicolas Sarkozy's drive to raise the retirement age was nearing a climax, with the launch of yet another round of mass strikes, rallies and fuel blockades.

Opposition members of parliament initially tried to block the pension legislation by introducing hundreds of amendments. But on Oct. 21, the government imposed a special procedure to pass or reject all remaining amendments in a single vote, rather than debating and voting on each amendment separately.

The Sarkozy government planned to hold a “final” vote on its proposals on Oct. 27, defying polls that show the president's approval rating has dropped below the 30 percent level. Two-thirds of the population explicitly backs the struggle to block the legislation, despite a desperate campaign by the media and the right-wing political elite to slander the resistance as “violent”.

French university students walked out on Oct. 26 to defend the right to retire at 60, and trade unions have called their seventh one-day nationwide strike and

day of rallies on Oct. 28, and another walkout on Nov. 6.

As the National Assembly vote drew near, fuel stations around the country were closing, amid strikes at refineries and blockades of fuel depots by strikers resisting attacks by squads of riot police. Injunctions have been served against many striking oil workers, who have continued to hold out.

The Transportation Ministry said on Oct. 25 that about one-third of the country's 12,500 gas stations had run out or were low on fuel. In the Paris region, 35 percent of filling stations were out of at least one fuel product, and the figure was similar in the western areas of the country.

On Oct. 25, workers at seven out of France's 12 refineries voted to continue their strikes over the pension issue. Votes were pending at two other refineries. The seven plants which voted to prolong stoppages included all six of Total's French refineries together with the Berre L'Etang plant operated by Lyondellbasell. The walkouts began in mid-October, on the heels of a strike starting in late September at the country's main oil hub of Fos-Lavera.

Jean-Luc Botella, an official from the General Confederation of Labor (CGT), blamed the government for the refinery strikes.

“The government is responsible for the blockade today because it has not managed to organize a single



French Communist Party member on the picket line during one of the recent national general strikes.

round of negotiations in the last six months but instead has simply imposed a reform on us,” Botella said.

Charles Foulard, another leading member of the CGT union, told a rally of strikers at an oil refinery near Paris that “Today, they're launching raids on our

Those who dismissed the huge protests in Greece earlier this year as an “exception” now face the reality that opposition is growing everywhere in Europe.

social benefits, raids on our pensions, raids on the exercise of our right to strike. When are they going to be rounding up union representatives? When are they going to be locking up union officials?”

Around 70 tankers carrying fuel were waiting at anchor off the southern port of Marseille unable to dock and unload.

Right-wing forces are enraged by the ongoing popular resistance, calling the struggle a “relic from another century.” Typical was Jean-Francois Cope, leader of Sarkozy's right-wing UMP in parliament, who ranted to *Le Parisien* newspaper that “Strikes, protests, yes, but taking the economy hostage is intolerable. Most of the country paralysed by the actions of a handful of extremists. Everyone should understand that we have no other choice.”

The “handful” referred to by Sarkozy's deputy are in fact millions of workers and students, who have been in the streets regularly since September.

Sarkozy has defended the measures, which include increasing the number of years at work to draw full pensions to 41, as “inevitable” in the face of a rapidly growing population and burgeoning budget deficit, but opponents accuse him of making workers pay while protecting the rich and big finance capital.

The President's rhetoric matches the recent speech by U.S. Federal Reserve Chair Ben Bernanke to a business luncheon. Bernanke warned that “fiscal adjustments” which may be “rapid and painful” are needed in response to a looming fiscal crisis. To pay for health care and retirement security, Bernanke said, “will require policymakers and the public to make some very difficult decisions and to accept some sacrifices.”

“The threat to our economy is real and growing,” Bernanke concluded, “which should be sufficient reason for fiscal policymakers to put in place a credible plan for bringing deficits down to sustainable levels over the medium term.”

Not surprisingly, the top U.S. banker has only advanced proposals to make working people pay for tackling this impending crisis, by surrendering pension benefits and other social gains won in past decades. Neither the U.S. nor any other major capitalist country has taken steps to address the fiscal shortfall by cutting military spending or reversing the huge tax breaks handed to the

wealthy and the corporations over the past 20-30 years.

The walkouts are “threatening to derail the economy”, claims the government, which says the strikes are costing as much as 200 to 400 million euros daily. Christine Lagarde, the finance minister, argued that “we shouldn't be weighing down this recovery with campaigns that are painful for the French economy and very painful for a certain number of small and medium-sized businesses.”

Trying to blame workers for the clashes caused by police attacks, Lagarde says that images broadcast around the world of demonstrators at industrial sites have also cost France in terms of its international image for investors. “It's the attractiveness of our territory that's at stake when we see pictures like that,” she said.

Those who dismissed the huge protests in Greece earlier this year as an “exception” now face the reality that opposition is growing everywhere. Spain saw mass strikes on Sept. 27 against the Socialist government's anti-labour “reforms” (see PV, Oct. 16-31), and the French protests have been even more dramatic. The drive to make working people shoulder the entire burden of an economic crisis created by big capital is pushing popular anger across Europe to new heights.

This anger is linked to popular understanding that the Greek-style “reforms” have produced a bitter harvest in that country. The “Socialist” Greek government's draconian austerity measures have reduced the budget deficit by almost 40 percent, and cut government spending by 10 percent, almost twice as much as demanded by the European Union and the International Monetary Fund (IMF)

But these “reforms” have affected every aspect of the Greek economy. Purchasing power is dropping, consumption has nosedived, and the number of bankruptcies and unemployed are on the rise. The Gross Domestic Product shrank by 1.5 percent in the second quarter of 2010, and tax revenue has dropped off. Cuts of up to 20% of retirement benefits and salaries of public sector workers have left most Greeks with much less money to spend. One-sixth of all shops in Athens have had to file for bankruptcy. Political scientists are predicting that at some point, the situation in Greece will again explode.

This prediction looks increasingly likely across Europe. ●



Refinery workers have led the struggle, defying injunctions and attacks by police riot squads.

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Strikers have blocked highways in some actions.