

NOV. 16-30,
2012
VOL. 20
#19
\$1.50

people's VOICE

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Printed in Canada by union labour
on recycled paper  118-44
Publications Mail Agreement #40011632

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Indigenous crisis

Despite many years of broken promises, Canadian governments have failed to tackle problems of Indigenous poverty. Instead, the situation is now considered a major humanitarian crisis.

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Down on the farm

The beef industry has been in the news a lot this fall. Here's how things look from the view of a family running a small ranch.

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Corporate profits seem to have run into a slump in the U.S. Is this just a temporary blip, or does it reflect a fundamental problem for an economic system based on private greed?

Social Assistance review: "brighter prospects" or dead end?

The Communist Party of Canada (Ontario) has expressed deep concern over the Report of the Social Assistance Review Commission (SARC). Here are excerpts from a statement by the party's Ontario Committee.

Four years into the deepest economic crisis in recent memory, the official provincial unemployment rate is over 8%, youth unemployment is at 20%, and nearly one million Ontarians relying on social assistance. The federal government's attacks on pensions and Employment Insurance benefits add to this "perfect storm against the poor". People would be justified in expecting radical proposals and real action from the SARC.

Unfortunately, the recommendations fall far short of what is needed to reduce and eliminate poverty in Ontario. Worse, the provincial Minister of Community and Social Services, John Milloy, has indicated that the report's meagre improvements, such as increasing assistance payments by \$100 per month, will not be implemented...

There are some very modest reforms in the SARC Report, but this thin veneer of progressiveness cannot salvage a deeply flawed set of proposals. The main objective of the SARC Report is not to increase assistance rates and improve services, but to reduce the number of people receiving social assistance. Instead of reducing poverty, by guaranteeing a liveable income for all Ontarians, the SARC and the Ontario

government seem more interested in playing with statistics. The main vehicle for reducing recipients is the proposed elimination of the distinction between the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) and Ontario Works (OW) categories. The report recommends a new formula for determining assistance rates, but does not specify what that formula would be. In any case, rates are tied to the provincial minimum wage, which is wholly inadequate; basing assistance rates on a benchmark that is already too low is only a guarantee of poverty.

While the report does recommend an increase of \$100 in assistance payments, this is simply not enough. It would take a 56% increase in assistance rates to bring them back to the levels before the Harris government's vicious 22% cut; even then, the rates are far below poverty levels. Disappointingly, the SARC accepts that the \$100 increase will be offset through the elimination of other benefits, like the Special Diet Allowance (SDA) and the Community Start Up and Maintenance Benefit (CSUMB).

Similarly, the report recommends an increase in the earnings exemption of people receiving social assistance and employment income. In principle this is a welcome idea, but while the SARC's proposal would enable (although not guarantee) a significant increase in income level, it would still leave recipients with a maximum annual income of less than \$12,000, 40% below the official poverty line.

The inadequacies of the SARC Report are compounded by the

brutality of the provincial government, which has already moved to cut social assistance benefits. In particular, the elimination of the CSUMB, due to end in January 2013, abandons thousands of poor people to homelessness and slams the door on women in poverty who are trying to leave abusive situations. Furthermore, the Liberals have already virtually eliminated the SDA by changing the eligibility rules to exclude nearly everyone who needs it.

One of the SARC Report's more insidious proposals is to create "Employer Councils", as a vehicle for moving people off assistance and into the workforce, meeting "employers' needs". People living in poverty clearly need a liveable income, and decent jobs are clearly a key method for achieving this.

However, the SARC recommendation reeks of Mike Harris' workfare on steroids. At a time when corporations and right-wing governments are using every possible weapon to drive down wages, reduce pensions and benefits, and weaken unions, this recommendation is an early Christmas gift for the bosses. It is a classic and cynical capitalist scenario - create a huge population of poor and unemployed people, then prey upon their desperation to weaken the working class as a whole...

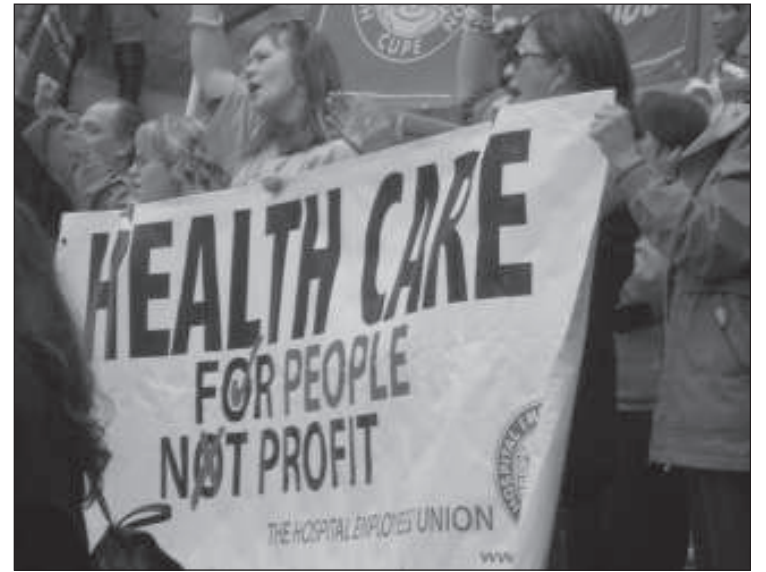
The depth of poverty in Ontario demands immediate attention. There is unprecedented wealth in the province, more than sufficient to provide a liveable income for all. What is lacking is the political will to make the necessary changes, to make the wealthy and corporations pay their fair share of taxes so that assistance rates can

be sufficiently increased.

The SARC Report does indeed promise "Brighter Prospects", but the main beneficiaries are corporations and the rich. They will see their power and wealth undiminished while thousands of poor people are placed into the workforce at poverty wages, and workers in this "legislated two tier wage system" are pitted against one another. For poor people, the SARC Report offers some small relief but, in the main, continues to channel them toward the same dull dead-end.

Alternatives are possible, but they won't materialize without a strong, united struggle. The "We Are Ontario" campaign of the Ontario Common Front is currently the key vehicle for such a struggle at the provincial level. The Communist Party calls on the labour and progressive movements to continue to mobilize against austerity, to demand immediate and real action to reduce poverty, and to press for fundamental, progressive reforms that put people before profit. ●

HEU rallies for fair contract



More than 630 delegates for the 28th biennial convention of the Hospital Employees' Union in early November. Delegates elected Victor Elkins as their new president for the 2012-2014 term. Hundreds of delegates converged on the Vancouver Art Gallery on Nov. 7 to demand fair collective agreements covering more than 70,000 health care workers in B.C. who've been without contracts since last spring. They were joined by members of BCGEU, HSA, CUPE, UFCW and other unions impacted by collective bargaining in the facilities, community health and health science professional subsectors. (Photo by K. Cariou)

Ontario Communists demand People's Recovery

The Communist Party of Canada (Ontario) joins with the labour, anti-poverty and social justice movements in expressing disappointment with the SARC recommendations, and outrage at the government's dismissal of even a paltry \$100 increase in assistance. Ontario Communists are promoting a "10-Point Prescription for a People's Recovery". This plan includes measures to curb corporate power and put people's needs before profit, one whose implementation would be a significant step toward opening the door to socialism. The Communists call for raising wages and incomes, job creation, affordable social housing, progressive tax reform, expansion of quality public services (denticare, vision care, pharmacare and long term care), elimination of tuition fees, real rent controls, and a quality, affordable and regulated public childcare system. Visit the Communist Party of Canada (Ontario) web site, at www.communistpartyontario.ca.



The St. Michel Bridge massacre

With Notre Dame looking on, Parisian police killed over 200 Algerian workers peacefully demonstrating in 1961. The Algerians were victims of repression in their war of liberation from France. Many were drowned off the Pont St. Michel, their bodies washing up on the banks of the Seine for weeks. The politicians and press were silent.

1961: Algeria won their independence in 1962.

© Williams 7/12

Saskatchewan labour ready to fight back

By Darrell Rankin

The Brad Wall government's surprise 90-day comprehensive review of provincial labour law was the main focus of the Oct. 31-Nov. 3 Saskatchewan Federation of Labour convention. Delegates were solidly united to fight should the government revoke the 40-hour work week or make Saskatchewan a "right to work" province - ending the closed shop.

Nearly 600 delegates heard labour minister Don Morgan say on the last day of the convention that the still-secret labour law is not "an attack on unions." But the high number of labour fed presidents in attendance was a sign that Canada's entire union movement is watching carefully.

Held last spring, the review could be the opening salvo in a much broader attack against labour rights across the country. The responses posted online showed that corporations used the opportunity to create an anti-labour wish list.

The review backfired, creating widespread alarm and unity among labour activists. The NDP, Wall's main opposition in the Legislature, held its own hearings with broader input, recommending to keep existing laws and to index the minimum wage to inflation. The Communist Party's response (heavily censored on the government's website), proposes



SFL delegates and allies rally at the Legislature in Regina. (PV photo by D. Rankin)

ways to create good-paying jobs, strengthen labour rights (e.g., ban scabbing), and end discrimination, among others.

Delegates were roused by SFL president Larry Hubich's opening remarks, and gave two other federation presidents standing ovations - Ontario's Sid Ryan and Alberta's Gil McGowan. Also attending was MFL president, Kevin Rebeck.

"Why target working people and their organizations?" said Hubich. "(I)n spite of attempts by governments... who have tried to convince people that life in Saskatchewan is about letting everyone fend for themselves... their unions have always worked for a world that is fair and just."

"We believe that our goal is to make life better, together. Not to pave the way for corporations to do whatever they want or take whatever they want from our province, and that corporations should only be allowed to operate in a community if they improve the lives of the people that live in the community."

If Don Morgan's comments at the convention are serious, Wall and his corporate backers are thinking twice about carrying out a full blown assault. Saskatchewan's trade union movement isn't asleep. Instead, hundreds of delegates rallied at the provincial legislature in support of labour rights, and many spoke from the floor against growing inequality and low wages. ●

NUP: a step forward or just another merger?

By Sam Hammond

If contradiction, whether antagonistic or not, is the propellant of motion, then the velocity of the New Union Project is certainly understandable. The dominant contradiction is objective and has a history: the history of Canadian labour and the class struggle that sets the backdrop for the phenomenon of The New Union Project. The irreconcilable interests of labour and capital define this contradiction.

The contradictions and debates within labour, no matter how sharp, can be viewed as non-antagonistic, even creative, except where capital (ideological, physical or both) fifth-column itself into the Labour movement as it has from Cold War McCarthyism to the present. Objectively speaking, the penetration of the neo-liberal agenda by recognizable degrees - acceptance, apathy, or even outright advocacy - are all symptoms of corporate ideological intrusion.

The other side of the contradiction is the history of courageous and real struggles, waged by the people over generations, to win the social programs that we are trying to defend. Unity and renewal requires an independent working class program with an historical objective, and a departure from acquiescence, collaboration and defeatism. Any move forward must be propelled by resistance to the corporate agenda. Failure to do so means loss and retreat; there is no neutral gear in this vehicle.

This is what makes the New Union Project of such vital importance. The NUP moved through its second stage in October, with the unanimous support of the CEP Convention in Quebec City. The excitement and hope generated within the labour movement, and particularly amongst progressive activists, received another boost as the groundwork for the founding convention of the new union was confirmed. It is a fact now, it will happen.

Whatever contradictions exist now, resolved or not, will determine whether the dream of renewal and fightback becomes reality, or wakes up to another larger version of the same-old same-old. Another merger, with more members and not much else, would be a tragedy, because within the vision of the organizing committee lies a new level of development and a new direction for Canadian labour, enthusiastically supported across the working class and watched warily by the corporate opposition.

The founding of the CAW in 1985 was carried out in an environment of militant rejection of concessionary bargaining, refusal to bow to the Detroit Three, and the determination by Canadian autoworkers to be masters in their own house. The birth of CEP had its own characteristics, but it emerged and grew because it had the militancy and strength to provide a home for smaller unions (as did the CAW) who had to reorganize because of changing technology and demographics. Both unions added new chapters to Canadian labour and generally strengthened the working class. These are the traditions needed

now in a new and more aggressive form. They must be elevated and built upon.

But over the years, in a chain of bitter decisions and skirmishes, within the two unions and between them, there have also been processes and trends that threaten the proposed renewal. The threat is like a serpent with two heads sharing a common body.

Within the two unions, under tremendous legal and economic corporate/government pressure, concessionary bargaining that started as a rearguard action developed into negotiating tactics that will be hard to reverse, especially with the auto makers. The acceptance of two-tiered wages, pensions, etc. is absolutely incompatible with the stated goals of the New Union Project, but took place concurrently as the CAW leadership adroitly came to the crossroads and went both ways. In CEP, the paper industry has pried concessions from the union on a different scale, but they are there as well.

The Strategic Vision Document adopted at the October CEP Convention contains within it the other serpent's head, which put the two unions at loggerheads during the Days of Action against the Harris Tories in 1997. CEP was one of the larger "Pink Paper" unions that advocated withdrawing from extra-parliamentary struggle, abandoning social justice partners and contracting out political struggle exclusively to the NDP. The Strategic Vision document calls for unqualified support for the NDP, and political campaigning to elect first NDP federal government in history.

Without qualification or programmatic guarantees, this means agreement with the NDP's acceptance of Harper's military budget, the bombing of Yugoslavia and Libya, future support for attacks on Syria, support for Israeli occupation of Palestine, no real fight against free trade, and probably acceptance of CETA. The list is longer. This is not an attack - it is an observation of the NDP's performance.

The acceptance of the neo-liberal agenda by social democracy globally, and its role as implementers in many countries, is also reflected in the NDP agenda in Canada. This role is in direct contradiction to the program and ideology in the New Union Project, and to most of the Strategic Vision Document. Social democracy's historic position is to accept capital, to support the unattainable reform of capitalism, as an alternative to the struggle for real working class and people's power. If this ideology is not rejected, it will ultimately destroy renewal, just as it has led to the present environment of defeat.

The most creative and productive way forward is through the debates over how to build appropriate democratic structures, and over inclusion of the unemployed, Aboriginal peoples, racialized communities, LGBT and social justice activists, environmentalists, peace groups, the women's movement. In the resolution of these structural and program items is the birth of something new and needed. It is difficult to see anything

antagonistic or non-productive in such debates.

But the debate over unqualified support for the NDP contains within it the relationship to capitalism itself. The historic resistance of the NDP to coalitions and united front movements is one of sectarianism and class propriety. It will not allow these formations to develop without interference and control.

The two-headed monster of concessionary acquiescence and politics contracted out to social democracy is a threat to the New Union Project. On the other hand, extra-parliamentary movements, militant action, inclusive coalition partnering, and an adversarial labour movement will force Parliament and parliamentary parties to adopt the agenda of the masses or disappear. The broadest possible involvement and the most inclusive social forces can make the dreams of millions into reality. ●



CAW and CEP flags were prominent at the Oct. 22 "Defend the Coast" rally in Victoria. (Photo: K. Cariou)

Indigenous peoples face humanitarian crisis in Canada

Excerpt from an article by Pam Palmater, a Mi'kmaw citizen and member of the Eel River Bar First Nation in northern New Brunswick. She heads the Centre for Indigenous Governance at Ryerson University. For the full article, visit <http://indigenounationhood.blogspot.ca>.

This blog post is not an official report, but is modeled off situation reports from international groups and organizations about specific crises in other countries. Canada portrays itself as a model nation but always hides the darker side of the historic genocide perpetrated on Indigenous peoples and the aggressive assimilatory actions it is taking currently - which only serve to make poverty in First Nations much worse...

Although the Government of Canada has been presenting a picture of stable relations with and improved living conditions for Indigenous Nations, the reality on the ground shows many Indigenous individuals, families, communities and Nations suffering from multiple, over-lapping crises. Although federal, provincial, Indigenous and independent researchers have all verified the crises, Canada has refused to act. This is resulting in the pre-mature deaths of hundreds, even thousands of Indigenous peoples every year. Many of those that do survive, do so with higher levels of injuries, disabilities, diabetes, TB, heart disease, and other preventable health issues.

There is a children in care crisis



Dr. Pamela Palmater

where 40% of children in care in Canada (30,000) are Indigenous children.

The crisis of over-incarceration of Indigenous peoples in state prisons shows 25-30% of prison populations are Indigenous and increasing.

The water crisis of 116+ First Nations not having clean water and 75% of their water systems being at medium to high risk is well-known.

The housing crisis is particularly staggering when you consider that 40% of First Nations homes are in need of major repair and there is an 85,000 home backlog.

There is a growing crisis of violence against Indigenous women with over 600 murdered and missing Indigenous women in Canada. The health crisis results in a life expectancy of 8-20 years less for Indigenous peoples due to extreme poverty.

This does not include the cultural crisis where 94% of Indigenous languages in Canada (47/50) are at high risk of extinction. These are all exacerbated for communities who

suffer from massive flooding due to hydro-electric operations.

The gap between Canadians and Indigenous peoples with regards to education, employment, skills training, food security, water security, health care, and mental health services continues to increase. Statistics are often manipulated by Canada to show that conditions are getting better, but when reviewed over a 20 year period, the statistics are clear that the socio-economic conditions of Indigenous peoples are on a downward trend. The levels of poverty and ill-health in northern Indigenous communities are even more acute. Suicide rates are amongst the highest in the world with suicides starting at much younger ages, like 9 years old. While Canada rates in the top 4 countries when measuring the human development index, when Indigenous peoples are isolated, Canada drops to 78th.

Indigenous Nations in Canada have attempted to work with federal and provincial

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NIAGARA NEWS BULLETIN

People's Voice Niagara Bureau

* After front-page exposes by whistleblowers and record-breaking protests and an occupation, **Marineland park in Niagara Falls** is suing one of its ex-workers for \$1 million. The worker, who was terminated last month, issued a statement saying she is not backing down. Earlier the City had colluded with Marineland to sell its public land in front of the park which had been used for protests. Recently nearly 1,000 people demonstrated at the park's closing, with 100 breaking off and shutting down a show by occupying the arena.

* A St. Catharines & Thorold **food bank** announced that half of the people it feeds are children.

* Welland City Council's official **petition to save its hospital** from being closed in favour of new P3 (public-private partnership) hospitals outside the city reached the 11,000 mark, with city councillors themselves collecting up to 1,000 signatures a day at the local mall. Nearby Wainfleet township council also officially endorsed and is distributing the petition. The provincial health minister denounced efforts to save the hospital as bringing "politics" into health care, although she conceded to reporters it was "democracy" that there would be opposition.

EDITORIALS

No time for celebration

As U.S. election returns rolled in, most Canadians breathed a sigh of relief. The nightmare of a White House and Congress controlled by ultra-right bigots and warhawks was blocked, at least for the next few years.

Many people had feared that the right-wing corporate media, and "voter suppression" tactics, might help elect Mitt Romney. But the outcome reflects significant demographic and political trends. President Obama won by 3.5 million votes, thanks to support from trade unions, women, the Black and Latino communities, youth, and LGBT groups. These voters rejected the Republican lie that only wealthy, straight, white males "deserve" to govern. In many states, progressive forces won battles over union rights, marriage equality, and other major issues. Both the Democrats and the Republicans are dominated by big capital, but on Nov. 6, the working class majority of the 99% prevailed over the corporate elite, which desperately wanted a Republican president.

Unfortunately, there is no time for celebration. The global capitalist crisis is now in its fifth year, leaving hundreds of millions of working people facing poverty and hunger. The "austerity" attack against collective bargaining, wages, pensions and social programs is becoming even more aggressive. Unchecked greenhouse gas emissions are leading to catastrophic superstorms. The U.S. and its NATO allies still spend nearly a trillion dollars a year on military build-ups, and the threat of imperialist wars against Syria and Iran remains very real. The re-election of President Obama does not end the drone war against Pakistan, or the brutal Israeli occupation of Palestine.

These problems require mass mobilization of the working class and its allies, both on immediate demands, and around the compelling necessity to end capitalist exploitation. The U.S. election shows that the far right can be blocked at the polls, but this is just the first step in the fight for a better world.

Beware the dropping shoes

In Stephen Harper's Canada, there's no point in waiting for the next shoe to drop. The real trick is to avoid the barrage of shoes flung by this far-right government.

Just as Canadians are fighting back against more secret trade deals and another omnibus budget bill, the Tories have announced plans to privatise federally-funded social programs. Human Resources Minister Diane Finley has issued a "call for concepts", asking businesses, not-for-profits and the volunteer sector to provide so-called "fundamentally new ideas." Finley says the government wants to tap into a "gold mine" of private-sector funding. Yes, there's a gold mine here - for the corporations.

The neoliberal concept is that the private sector will provide the capital for projects that the federal government currently operates (perhaps Employment Insurance?). It's simple, Minister Finley says - pick a corporation or a not-for-profit to do the work, and the government pays the bill, naturally including a return on investment. If the program's objectives are met, the government even adds a premium.

There's no need to test drive this abomination, which has been tried here and in other countries, with predictable results. Taxpayer dollars become private profits. Program recipients are shafted, universal coverage goes out the door. The rich get richer, the poor get poorer. Not-for-profits which currently offer important services either get trampled in the mad rush for contracts, or turn into megabodies which act like corporations, complete with fat bonuses for their new CEOs.

Contrary to some arguments, Harper's gang don't want to "downsize" the state. They do want to eliminate social programs while boosting the military, the police, the courts and the prison system. It's a short and slippery road to hell. We can't let it happen.

PEOPLE'S VOICE

ISSN number 1198-8657 Published by New Labour Press Ltd.
Canadian Publications Mail Sales Product Agreement #40011632

Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to Circulation Dept.,
People's Voice, 706 Clark Drive, Vancouver, BC, V5L 3J1
Tel: 604.255.2041 Email: pvoice@telus.net

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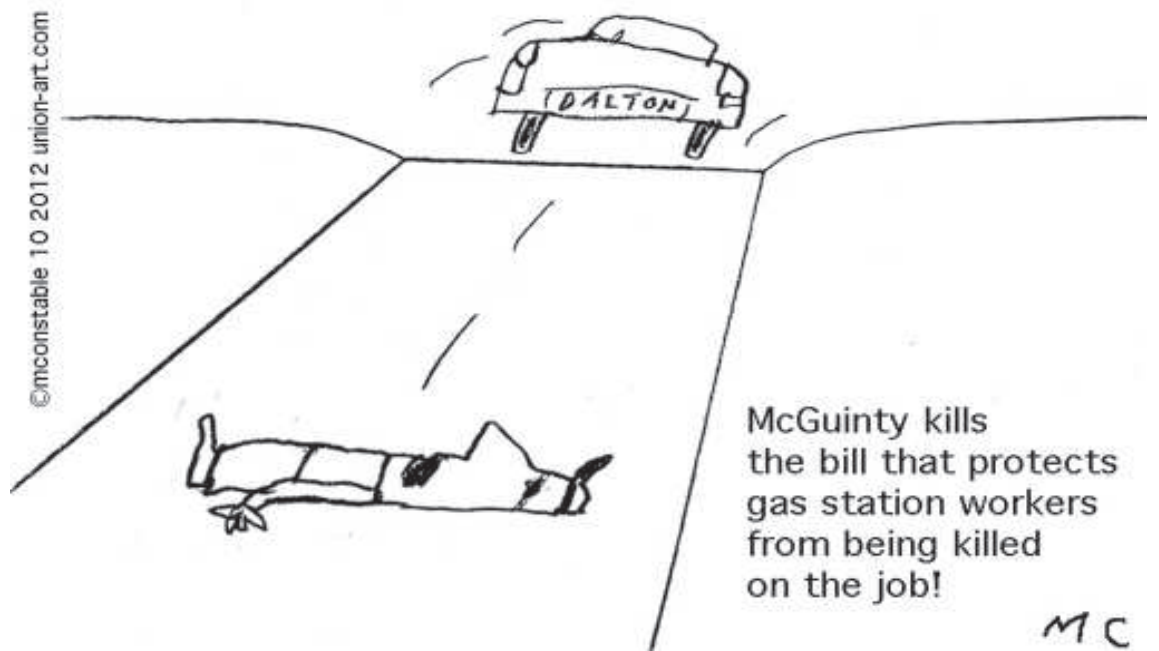
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Proro "gate"



SPEAKING FRANKLY

Life disproves Gorbachev's "universal human values"

By Darrell Rankin

The last president of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev, is frequently trotted out by our corporate elite as a role model. It is a sad image because of the harm he inflicted on the working class of this world, especially the workers of his own country.

But our establishment loves Gorbachev for his record of concealing troubling matters from the minds of young people. You won't hear him talk about the festering sores of capitalism, about how to create good-paying jobs, solve injustice to Aboriginal peoples, cut tuition, end poverty, or prevent war. But you will hear him say that youth have a great future if they work hard.

Gorbachev is used as an ideological tool to trump reality and history. A decade after he presided over the counter-revolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union, the average male life expectancy in Russia dropped to 57, by about 15 years. A rapacious class of entrepreneurs - many former communists like Gorbachev - looted Russia's public property.

Outside Russia, the capitalist world was triumphal. The new imperialist diktat was epitomized by the creation of the World Trade Organization in 1994. People with a lingering desire for social change were told "there is no alternative" and "history has ended." But today, people are shaking off this confusion.

The Arab Spring, the left's gains in Latin America, the European resistance to the financial oligarchy, a leap in strike actions, the Occupy movement, and the Quebec student strike are all signs that resistance is growing to global capitalism.

When Gorbachev surrendered to capitalist ideology, capitalists promised a "peace dividend," ending the heavy burden of the arms race. Instead we face a very shaky economic future and permanent, global war.

Capitalism's profiteering also threatens nature on a scale that could kill billions of people. Locked into an endless race to make more profit, our capitalist overlords are ignoring the warnings of scientists about the need to end militarism, tar sands development and reliance on fossil

fuels, which all produce enormous profits for the one percent.

We are all doomed unless our guide is "best science," not fast money. Capitalism bears responsibility for the growing economic crisis, for militarism and war, and the impending environmental catastrophe.

So why did Gorbachev depart from Marxism? He was elected to the highest positions in the Soviet Union at a time of dramatic nuclear tensions. An enormous anti-war movement forced U.S. President Reagan to hold summit meetings with Gorbachev, resulting in the 1987 US-Soviet Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty.

Yet this is when Gorbachev began to yield ideological ground, especially with his idea that universal values would now guide humanity's future. This ignored the rapacious appetite of U.S. military-industrial corporations. Gorbachev followed a long line of ideological misleaders who argue that capitalism guided by "values" is no different than socialism, so socialism can be safely discarded.

In Gorbachev's words, "We are entering into a world of new dimensions, in which universal human values are acquiring the same meaning for all and in which human freedom and well-being and the unique value of human life must become both the foundation and basis for universal security and the supreme criterion by which we measure progress." (Speech at the Second Summit of CSCE Heads of State or Government, Paris, Nov. 19-21, 1990. He first used the concept in a 1988 speech at the United Nations General Assembly.)

What do these fine words actually mean? Are freedom and human values consistent with the capitalist world we see today, which is in a state of permanent war and crises?

"Freedom" means different things to different people. Capitalists want the freedom to cut wages, but workers faced with such a demand view it as unreasonable. To capitalists, the freedom to make a private profit is the highest noble aim, but for socialists, this "freedom" is a threat to working people.

Gorbachev's view that capitalism and socialism would become a happy couple was nothing more than a regurgitation

of the "convergence" theory advanced by bourgeois academics - notably in the 1930s and 1970s - to hide the growing failures of capitalism, and the success of socialism in creating a more fair society, defeating Hitler fascism or averting nuclear Armageddon.

The occasional capitalist embrace of "human rights" is a response to the successes of socialism and the working class. It is a way to hide capitalism's failures, like starting two world wars and the nuclear arms threat. For example, the defeat of Nazi Germany led to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the United Nations' Charter. The massive strike wave in Canada in the 1970s (the greatest hurrah of the militant unionists who came out of the Depression and War) led to Trudeau's Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Marxists were never fooled into thinking that "universal values" would give us peace and paradise as long as capitalism rules the roost. The two world systems never converged, but capitalism did gain a temporary upper hand, and the spectre of nuclear war has not been removed.

Despite Gorbachev, we are still in the historic epoch of the transition from capitalism to socialism, and workers still have a world to win - if we can prevent catastrophic new wars and environmental destruction. •

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Canadian Network on Cuba launches "Sandy Relief Fund"

At 1:25 a.m. on Oct. 25, Hurricane Sandy entered Cuba, just west of Santiago de Cuba, as a category 2 hurricane. However, the extent and speed of Sandy gave it a destructive capability as great as any of the category 5 hurricanes. Its central path took it rapidly through the provinces of Santiago de Cuba, Holguin and Guantanamo, the former two provinces being the most populous in Cuba after the City of Havana.

The hurricane devastated the heroic city of Santiago de Cuba, destroying houses, damaging public buildings and monuments, leaving the city without water supply, electricity, shops, markets and trees. Despite massive evacuations, it took a toll of some 11 human lives, an unusually high number in Cuba for hurricanes (mainly by collapsing buildings). 132,733 houses were affected with 15,322 totally destroyed and 43,426 losing roofs. Massive damage, not yet fully calculated, was caused in Guantanamo and Holguin before the hurricane left this province near Banes, precisely where hurricane Ike had entered four years earlier.

President Raul Castro, visiting Santiago de Cuba on Oct. 28, said that only urgent temporary measures can be taken and that the recovery of Santiago would take years.

The emergency measures are

well underway. Roads to healthcare centres and other essential services were speedily cleared. Linemen have been arriving from seven provinces to work together with local ones to restore electricity and telephone services. Roofing materials are arriving from neighbouring provinces such as Las Tunas. Temporary systems have been set up to provide 85% of the affected population with drinking water, and food supplies have been arriving to Santiago and other severely affected parts of eastern Cuba. Cultural activity has not been overlooked, with some cultural centres being promptly reopened, with artists from different parts of the country joining local artists in lifting the spirits of the people.

Good friends of Cuba have also been prompt to supply assistance. Venezuela, for example, has given 650 tons of help including non-perishable food, drinking water and heavy machinery to Cuba, with some going to Haiti. However, the need remains great. Cuba continues to give its help to Haiti, which, although not directly hit by Sandy, suffered much destruction from flooding, with scores of lives lost.

Cuban provinces as far east as Villa Clara and Cienfuegos suffered from high winds and flooding due to heavy rainfall.

Canadians have responded generously in the past to disasters

affecting Cuba and other Caribbean countries suffering from natural disasters. With great gratitude we recall that from coast to coast they responded to requests from the Canadian Network on Cuba, the umbrella group representing friendship organizations with Cuba. We forwarded to Cuba after 2008, when the country was ravaged by three hurricanes, more than \$404,000.

When on Jan. 12, 2010, Haiti suffered the horrific earthquake, the CNC, recognizing that the most effective way of helping Haiti was through Cuba, mounted its TO CUBA FOR HAITI Campaign, which so far has collected and sent to the Cuban Medical Brigade in Haiti \$453,728.

Cuba needs substantial help, both immediate and long term, to overcome the crisis brought on by hurricane Sandy. Cuba's Ministry of External Commerce (MINCEX) is establishing an account to receive the financial contributions. As in all our previous fundraising efforts, every single penny donated will go to Cuba. Charitable tax receipts will be provided.

Our experience with regard to Cuba's response to natural disasters is that it knows how to multiply the value of any donations it receives. We feel confident, based on the island's unsurpassed humanitarian work both within Cuba and in other countries, that it



Cuban volunteers were quick to begin helping to repair the damage from Hurricane Sandy, but solidarity is needed to help the country which has done so much to assist other victims of natural disasters.

has the skills, the organization and the ethical and moral values to put whatever aid it receives to the best possible use.

The CNC urges everyone who can afford to do so to support this effort by giving a donation:

1) payable to your local Friendship organization and please also write "CNC Sandy Relief Fund" on your cheque's memo line. They will forward the info/money for tax receipts to the Mackenzie-Papineau MF.

2) payable to the "Mackenzie-

Papineau Memorial Fund" and mail to the Mackenzie-Papineau Memorial Fund, Attn: Sharon Skup, 56 Riverwood Terrace Bolton, ON, L7E 1S4. Please also write "CNC Sandy Relief Fund" on your cheque's memo line.

Charitable receipts will be issued by the Mackenzie-Papineau Memorial Fund in 4-8 weeks (Charitable Org - Revenue Canada Reg. #88876 9197R0001). There will be no administrative charges, not even for postage stamps or anything else. ●

Keith Ellis, Coordinator, CNC Sandy Relief Fund
(905-822-1972; zellis@yorku.ca)

Isaac Saney, CNC Co-Chair and National Spokesperson
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Climate change: the challenge of Hurricane Sandy

By Kimball Cariou

A week before the U.S. election, Mother Nature slammed the Caribbean and the eastern coast of North America. Over a hundred people were killed by Hurricane Sandy, and the damage to property and infrastructure is estimated at \$50 billion. The storm devastated the city of Santiago de Cuba (see the Canadian Network on Cuba's relief appeal on page 5), the "Jersey Shore" region, and parts of New York.

The catastrophe may have altered the U.S. campaign, bolstering Barack Obama at a crucial moment, and undermining Republican Mitt Romney, who had previously attacked the need for federal emergency relief measures.

Yet neither candidate addressed the full implications of this massive event. Hurricane Sandy appears to have moved the scientific community from the consensus that human economic activity is driving climate change, to agreement that such storms are already becoming bigger and deadlier.

NASA scientist James Hansen recently wrote in the *Washington Post*, "It is no longer enough to say that global warming will increase the likelihood of extreme weather and to repeat the caveat that no individual weather event can be directly linked to climate change. To the contrary, our analysis shows that, for the extreme hot weather of the recent past, there is virtually no explanation other than climate change."

To his credit, Barack Obama did mention climate change as "a threat to our children's future". British environmental commentator George Monbiot,

writing in *The Guardian*, says this was virtually the only reference to climate change by either candidate.

Monbiot explained, "There are several ways in which the impacts of Hurricane Sandy are likely to have been exacerbated by climate breakdown. Warmer oceans make hurricanes more likely and more severe. A warmer atmosphere holds more moisture, increasing the maximum rainfall. Higher sea levels aggravate storm surges. Sandy might not have hit the United States at all, had it not been for a

blocking ridge of high pressure over Greenland, which diverted the storm westwards. The blocking high - rare there at this time of year - could be the result of the record ice melt in the Arctic this autumn."

This is not just "hindsight". Last February, the journal *Nature Climate Change* warned that global warming is likely to "increase the surge risk for New York City". As storms intensify and sea levels rise, storm surges described as 100-year events would become between five and

thirty times as frequent.

But when Obama took office in 2009, his strategists decided that climate change was too "controversial" to discuss. The President has talked about clean energy, green jobs and improved fuel economy, never explaining why these shifts are necessary.

This form of avoidance continued through a year of droughts and wildfires across the U.S. interior, the Arctic ice meltdown, and the superstorm that just blasted the Caribbean and the United States.

Big Oil, however, tackled the issue head-on, both directly and through its political surrogates. In the Republican platform, "climate change" was mentioned only to attack Obama for taking it seriously. The Republicans called for new coal projects, support for the Keystone XL tar sands pipeline, and oil drilling on the outer continental shelf and the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

A coalition of green NGOs managed to raise \$22 million for election lobbying, only to be outspent by Exxon, which poured \$27 million (one-half of one day's profits) into a counter-campaign.

So what can be done?

As Canada's David Suzuki writes, "The damage of climate change will get worse if we fail to act. And, it will devastate the one thing that many corporate and government leaders put above all else: that human creation we call the economy - the very excuse many of our leaders use to block environmental protection and climate action."

Suzuki points to some "relatively simple" steps: conserve energy, put a price on carbon through taxes and cap-and-trade,

and shift from fossil fuels to clean and renewable energy sources. He calls for reductions in auto use and air travel, and "shifting from rampant consumerism to a more conservative way of living." Rapid tar sands expansion, he says, is incompatible with action to stop global warming.

But in spite of Dr. Suzuki's appeal to "rethink the ways we measure progress and govern our economies," he fails to name the elephant in the room: the capitalist economic system, which demands constant growth, more intense exploitation of labour power, and imperialist wars to seize natural resources.

The "rethink" we do need is a plan to put all energy resources under public ownership and democratic control, and a strategy to use those resources far more carefully to create an economy based on reduced fuel consumption. In other words, a socially-owned economy focused on the needs of people and the environment, not the corporate drive for maximum profits.

The measures urged by David Suzuki and other environmentalists are important reforms. But until the economic and political domination of the big capitalist monopolies is ended by working class power, a truly green, sustainable, peaceful, socialist future will remain out of our grasp. To meet the challenge posed by Hurricane Sandy and climate change, we need to build a powerful People's Coalition, bringing together the organized labour movement, environmentalists, Aboriginal peoples, and all sections of the people whose lives are being sacrificed by Big Oil. ●

(Kimball Cariou is the editor of *People's Voice*)



Is this the end of family farming?

By **Graham L. Wilson,**
Albertan family rancher

For much of my life I have felt like the last of a dying breed, rather than simply one of the next generation. So often I have seen my fellow ranchers, white haired old men in jeans and caps, relics of an age when Alberta's provincial product was raised from the ground and not extracted from underneath it.

Many were either the children of immigrants, or immigrants themselves, such as my late grandfather. The world they describe is unrecognizable from the Alberta of today, long before we became so "prosperous". They remember when being a farmer was not only sustainable, but sometimes quite lucrative. Sadly, this is no longer true. That time has come and gone.

What is even more striking is that at my tender young age of eighteen I too can remember better times. At no point in my life has our family ranch been more than a "hobby" operation, demanding the external employment of my father and older brothers to stay afloat -

something which speaks volumes in itself.

However, I can recall some happier childhood memories of "calf cheques" and the spells of financial freedom they provided us. The bunk-bed of my twin brother and I, for example, was financed through exactly these annual windfalls. A less pleasant memory, several years later, was that after expenses, all the calf money could purchase was a new toilet seat. What changed a profitable side interest into what it is now?

When the mad cow scandal broke out in May 2003, I was nine years old. I was not able to fully comprehend how it would affect my life, and pave the path for all the strife to come. All I can recall was the panic, and the sudden deprivation of those yearly calf cheques. I also recall the varied responses to the panic, such as Premier Ralph Klein's infamous "shoot, shovel and shut-up", and the disloyalty of American ranchers' organizations like R-CALF. Believing that by closing off their Canadian compatriots they would win out, they broke

solidarity with the rest of us and unwittingly fell into the interests of the large agricultural companies.

Even so, we did emerge out of the crisis, battered and bruised, but still standing. Although now hardly profitable, we continued to break even: the price fetched for our calves paid for the cost of feeding the herd over the winter. This security proved vital to our continued operations when the other link in the chain broke. My father lost his embedded technology job after the fall of that great capitalist boondoggle, the Dot-Com Boom, leaving him underemployed for the best part of a decade. It was a difficult balance, but we continued to work it out such that both bovine and human continued to be fed, sheltered and healthy.

Still, the industry continued to stagnate, as the large agricultural corporations continued their efforts to push out small farmers. The margin to pay for our feed became smaller and smaller, until finally a few years ago we started coming in at a loss. The enterprise of three generations of my family had finally become a liability. It was now

financially poisonous to maintain our lifestyle and to retain our family traditions. This is particularly alarming given the relatively low inputs required: winter feed and the occasional salt block or fence repair. Conceivably, our operations should be sustainable and self-sustaining. We thought that this was going to be pretty much the lowest it could get.

This year has proved us wrong. We are now facing the choice between selling our calves at rock-bottom prices, or retaining them over the winter and hope for better in the spring. Since we were fortunately able to get a decent deal on hay last summer, it appears that the latter is our best option. But the hay purchase left a stoppage in our cash flow, driving us to the local food bank. For the first time since my father got his new job in June, we had to choose their feed above our own.

This is not just a one off in our case, but a larger issue affecting ranchers across the Prairies and beyond, all over the developed world in fact. The reasons for the current crisis are emblematic of the decline in Canadian family agriculture as a whole. The E.coli scandal and the atrocious policies of XL Foods are taking most of the spotlight, and rightly so, but ranchers had been nervous for months before that new revelation came to light.

The United States has spent most of the past year in an extreme drought, devastating the production of hay and corn, which has caused a feed crisis and a mass sell-off of livestock. This influx of supply has naturally cratered demand in international markets.

Of course, the innate link between the drought and climate change has been largely ignored and under-reported, along with how this has specifically targeted the most vulnerable. In the face of lower production of their preferred corn-meal, the large feed-lots have simply diversified their choices, making sugary swill out of things

such as surplus Oreo cookies and gummy worms. This is not an option for those of us who feed our cattle grass and hay, as they are biologically suited to do. With lower hay crops, many farmers across the United States have had no option but to sell their stock or watch them slowly starve.

Thus calamities on both sides of the border have created the perfect storm, and like all such storms produced by the contradictory system of capitalism, the smaller and the poorer operations suffer far more. In the end, it is not the large monopolies like Cargill, Monsanto or XL Foods who foot the bill for our lost livelihoods. No, they will profit from the influx of cheap meat, with no added benefit to consumers or their employees. If it wipes out what little parts of the sector remain independent, all the better. A world where there are no family farmers, and no healthy, happy pasture-raised cattle with room to roam, has been the one they have been working towards for decades. Their crusade, with explicit government backing, has been widely successful.

Unless a drastic fightback takes place in support of family farming, the rural diaspora shall continue until the countryside is filled by nothing more than factory farms, animals treated as industrial materials, and a few tenant farmers on the payroll of their rich masters. In the context of a brewing food crisis across all agricultural sectors and in all parts in the world, due to years of mismanagement, unsustainable policies and the ravaging of climate change, this trend should worry everyone. If new blood such as myself and my brothers are the last of our kind, who will retain the skills needed to pick up the pieces when it all comes tumbling down? How can we ever come back to way we once were? Is this the end of sustainable, healthy, and humane ranching as we know it?

(October 17-21, 2012) •



Sunset for the family farm? Photo from the Wilson family ranch in Alberta.

What's next for cattle industry?

PV Vancouver Bureau

The union representing workers at the XL Foods plant hopes that its new managers come in and clean house. Doug O'Halloran of the United Food and Commercial Workers union was cheered by workers at an Oct. 25 news conference when he said those who have been running the operation should be removed.

"Some of the management people have to go," O'Halloran said. "The yellow hats are the workers. The black hats are God or think they are. We all hope some of those black hats are getting their butts kicked down the road, because they're the problem."

O'Halloran was cautiously optimistic about the Brazilian-owned JBS USA taking over management of the plant in Brooks, but "the proof is in the pudding. JBS is going to have to come in here and prove they can run the plant. And in order to do that, they are going to have to reach out to the workers."

The company, which has an option to buy XL, operates eight beef packers in the U.S. with 25,000 union employees. JBS

USA is a subsidiary of Brazilian-based JBS S.A., which calls itself the world's largest animal protein processor.

XL Food's owners had apologized to anyone who got sick from E. coli linked to the plant. But the union has complained that the speed at which the line in the plant operates forces workers to cut corners. Other concerns include inadequate training for temporary foreign workers, and the need for whistleblower protection.

"Cleanliness and safety need to be the priorities when it comes to the food that is being put on Canadian tables," O'Halloran said in an earlier news release. "We've dealt with other CEOs in the meatpacking industry, but we've never come across anyone who wouldn't at least meet with us to talk about food safety."

Meanwhile, the National Farmers Union has called on the federal government to reduce concentration in Canada's meatpacking industry.

The NFU says the ongoing tainted meat scandal demonstrates what can happen when there isn't enough competition in the industry. Without XL - which processes

close to one-third of Canada's overall beef production - producers scrambled to find other markets for their cattle or pay out of pocket to hold onto animals that should be going to slaughter.

NFU board member Glenn Tait says the lack of competition in the meat-packing industry was a problem for Canadian farmers long before the current E. coli scare. The only other major meat processor in Western Canada is Cargill, which can handle up to 4,500 cattle daily at its plant in High River. The two companies control 80 per cent of the national capacity, giving them considerable influence on ranchers, farmers and consumers.

The NFU wants the federal government to enact regulations banning "captive supply." For example, the Nilsson Brothers operate a wide range of agribusiness including auction marts, livestock feeder buying services, and cow-calf ranches. They also own a feedlot near the XL processing plant. When companies are involved at all stages of the supply chain, says the NFU, it drives down the price the typical rancher receives for cattle. ●

A Million Pounds of Beef

The following letter was circulated to media and posted on the website of the National Farmers' Union, www.nfu.ca.

On the morning of October 22, I woke up, made coffee turned on the TV to my favourite news channel. The first thing I saw was the story on the landfill at Brooks, Alberta and the truckloads of meat being dumped and buried there.

My first reaction was shock as to what a million pounds of beef is in terms of volume. Then it brought a tear to my eyes as I realized what it really meant. It meant that nearly 1333 head of cattle were wasted, and some of those wasted animals could have been ones that I raised.

As a rancher I have a social contract with my animals. I provide feed, water and shelter to them and in turn they provide their young to feed Canadians. As part of the contract I am to be humane to them, not to abuse them or mistreat them, to care for them if they are ill, to provide assistance if they need it during birth and above all, to ensure their young are cared for and that their short lives are not wasted.

Now through an act of greed these some 1333 lives were wasted. These were living beings that gave their lives to nurture us - not to be dumped as garbage into landfills.

We have a moral responsibility to ensure we do not mistreat or waste these animals. They deserve better. Canadians must get involved and demand accountability for this wanton waste and demand our food system be restructured so that no more XLs occur. Write your MLA, MPP, MP and County and City councillors and demand change - and demand to be part of that change. And yes please light a candle and place it in your window for those 1333 wasted lives.

Neil Peacock, NFU board member, Cattle Rancher, Sexsmith, AB

Power Shift 2012 questions system

By Johan Boyden

Over a thousand youth, students and young workers gathered at the University of Ottawa at the end of October for a busy weekend of presentations, workshops, seminars, and protests about climate change and social issues, under the banner of "Power Shift 2012."

The conference aimed to bring together "a broad, diverse movement to tackle the root causes of climate and change a fundamentally unsustainable economic system based on corporate greed and perpetual growth." The keynote speeches overflowed into three separate university auditoriums, linked by video stream.

Power Shift billed itself as coming at a key moment in history where "the reality of climate change is one of the central challenges of our time, showing the problem of corporate power and the urgent need for alternatives."

Conference organizers said that "economic and climate crises we are facing have the same roots - the relentless drive to put short-term economic profits over the interests of our communities and the environment."

The mood was upbeat, inspired by the youth mobilizations of the past year, the Occupy movement, the Quebec student uprising, and the powerful show of opposition to the expansion of tar sands pipelines and tankers along the west coast.

"I think this is the first time I've been at an environmental conference that is actually talking

about the system, not just the symptoms," keynote speaker Naomi Klein told participants.

"For a very long time the climate change movement has behaved as if it were the one issue that didn't have an enemy, and we're all in this together. You are coming of age in a society at war with your future" Klein said to loud cheers, pointing to reactionary governments, big corporations, war and especially the energy industry as the culprits.

Former co-spokesperson of the CLASSE, Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois, was equally frank. "The problem is not consumption, it is our economy and production. Our system is broken on a systemic level. The destruction of our environment is a natural and inevitable result" he told the conference, blaming the capitalist system.

"We will not get a second chance. Without radical change we will be faced with extinction. Resistance in these times is not an option, it is a duty", Nadeau-Dubois said.

Several speakers from Quebec gave the student strike as an example of the power of mass mobilization in the streets, also noting the less-well known victory against hydraulic fracturing ("fracking") used to extract shale gas.

The new Parti Québécois government of Pauline Marois has indicated serious concerns over the safety and environmental impact of fracking, with the environment minister talking about a full and permanent ban. Currently, fracking is partially banned in Quebec pending the



Events like the Power Shift conferences and the struggle against tar sands expansion are raising important questions about all aspects of the capitalist economic system. (Photo: K. Cariou)

results of two environmental studies. The energy company Talisman suspended all shale gas exploration in October.

A number of delegations, presenters and speakers came from First Nations communities.

"We have one thing that industry and government will never have, and that's the truth" Crystal Lameman with the Alberta-based Indigenous Environmental Network told delegates. "My children have the right and ... the government has a fiduciary [Treaty] responsibility to give us clean drinking water. And it's not okay that ... when I walk past [the boarder between municipalities], our drinking water is different than others" said Lameman, a member of the Beaver Lake Cree First Nation, about the impact of the Tar Sands on her community and

environmental racism.

"It's not okay that my 14-year-old niece have an asthma attack, that my son got a bleeding nose. And that's what we're living every single day," Lameman said. "It doesn't matter if you're indigenous or not - it's not okay. This is what our future looks like, because they have desecrated a site the size of Switzerland, and they want to expand it ten times."

The Power Shift conferences were first organized in Australia, New Zealand, Britain and Canada after a US conference kicked-off the initiative. Future meetings are planned for India, Africa and Japan.

From the beginning, Power Shift has drawn a broad range of voices speaking out against climate change. The US conferences have featured speakers from former US

Vice-President Al Gore, to journalist and activist Bill McKibben.

McKibben (founder of the group 360.org which uses social media to coordinate climate change protests globally) also spoke in Ottawa. He called on young people not to fear non-violent civil disobedience to halt plans like the Enbridge Northern Gateway or Keystone XL pipelines, and spoke of his arrest last August outside the White House, along with about 70 other activists protesting Keystone XL.

A series of workshops dealt with activist training, led by campus, community and labour activists. Many local student unions as well as the Canadian Federation of Students sent delegates and trainers. While the contribution of the labour movement to Power Shift was smaller, a number of young workers came from unions including the CAW and CEP.

Training sessions addressed anti-oppression and environmental justice, explained climate change issues, policy and science, and discussed questions like indigenous perspectives and working together in local action. There was discussion of direct action as well as lobbying, perhaps reflecting a certain lack of consensus around a common strategy.

Future preparations are focusing on the international climate negotiations, building links with social justice issues, and further campus and community training to draw more young people into the environmental movement. ●

McGuinty on collision course with Common Front

By Liz Rowley

Premier Dalton McGuinty's unofficial pact with the Tories to dismantle free collective bargaining and the right to strike in Ontario's public sector is starting to stink in the Liberal leadership race. McGuinty has stepped down as leader, and will resign as Premier following the Jan. 25 Liberal convention. Most of the declared candidates say they don't need legislation to secure new contracts, and want to repair relations with the teachers' unions and others in the broader public sector.

Front runners Sandra Pupatella and Gerard Kennedy, who have both been out of the Legislature for several years, are particularly critical of McGuinty's anti-labour Bills, and his decision to prorogue the Legislature.

While the Legislature sits idle, McGuinty is seeking to force public sector unions to "voluntarily" comply with a compulsory two-year wage freeze and other concessions, affecting 481,000 workers and 3,200 collective agreements. He is also trying to work out a deal with the Tories, who are campaigning to eliminate the Rand formula and the closed shop. This is McGuinty's big

stick as he pushes union leaders to negotiate wage cuts, since that's what the freeze really means.

Teachers and educational workers in Ontario's English public schools have already been saddled with Bill 115. This legislation forces education unions and elected School Boards to "negotiate" agreements that mirror the wage freeze, pension changes, and changes to the grid, that were accepted by leaders of the English Catholics teachers' (OECTA) and French teachers' unions last summer. Bill 115 enables the Cabinet to impose such agreements, removes the right to strike, and prevents unions or school boards from challenging the legislation in court.

The Ontario Secondary School Teachers, Elementary Teachers, and CUPE have launched a Charter challenge to the legislation, and the Ontario Public School Boards Association has sought intervenor status in the challenge.

Negotiations between OSSTF and the government broke off Nov. 12 after the province made clear that it will not rescind its prohibition on free collective bargaining and the right to strike, despite the union's offer to accept a wage freeze. In response, teachers in secondary schools will end extra-curricular activities, hall

supervision, covering for absent colleagues, attending parent-teacher conferences, etc.

Public sector union leaders have all made clear that the main issue is free collective bargaining and defence of public services. The OFL is gearing up for a Dec. 8 gathering of the "We are Ontario Common Front," the coalition of labour and its social and community allies formed last April to defend public services and labour and democratic rights.

Built on the model of the "We Are Wisconsin" coalition, the Common Front aims to stop the anti-labour, anti-people directions of Ontario's minority Liberal government with mass, independent labour and community political action.

OFL President Sid Ryan has indicated that the Days of Action against Mike Harris in the 1990s are a good example of the kind of action needed to head off this right-wing agenda. The OFL has put much time and energy into organizing across the province, involving the student movement, anti-poverty groups, housing advocates, healthcare

advocates and the OHC among many others. The Communist Party is the only political affiliate, though many NDPers and some Greens are participating.

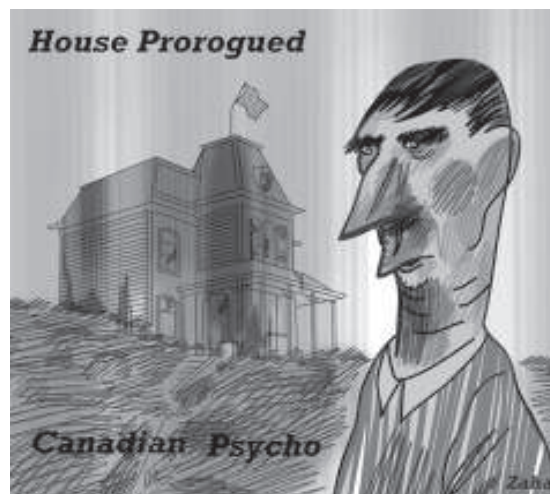
But others are more interested in the NDP's positioning in a provincial election expected next spring, following the Speech from the Throne and a new budget. The soft policies of the NDP caucus are not to be criticized, according to this thinking, and labour's resources should be directed to secure an "Orange Crush" in Ontario, built on the personal popularity of NDP leader Andrea Horwath and widespread anger at the Liberals.

This dangerous approach is no guarantee that the Tories will not be

the main beneficiaries of a Liberal defeat. Nor is there any guarantee that the NDP would do anything very different than the Liberals. Horwath has stated that her caucus supports a negotiated wage freeze in the public sector, with the underlying argument that workers should pay for an economic crisis caused by the banks and the biggest corporations. This is a party that supports austerity. When it was last in government, the NDP attacked workers' rights and wages with the 1993 social contract.

The Communist Party in Ontario is calling on the labour and people's movements to support the Common Front and move the fight into the streets and workplaces. Sustained and escalating mass action and strikes could force the government to back off its austerity policies, and if it doesn't, to elect a new, more progressive government committed to labour's policies and a People's Agenda.

With this in mind, the December 8 Common Front meeting will be very important for labour, and for the fightback overall in Ontario. ●





GLOBAL CLASS STRUGGLE

Violence at Canadian-owned mine

Details are emerging of a violent attack on protesters at a Mexican silver mine owned by Canada's Excellon Resources.

Excellon has been criticised by human rights and labour groups for its role in a festering conflict workers in the Durango region. Communal landowners and workers accuse the company of breaking agreements on issues including water treatment and environmental protection, economic benefits and union representation. Men, women and children from a communal landowners group known as Ejido La Sierrita have been legally demonstrating outside Excellon's La Platosa silver mine for three months.

On Nov. 7, this peaceful demonstration was ended when a group of about 200 men arrived aboard buses and proceeded to destroy the protest camp's installations. Photos and accounts of the incident have received wide coverage in Mexican media, with estimates on the size of the group of thugs ranging from 180 to 300 men. Witness allege the thugs who attacked the camp are members of a so-called "protection union" which is friendly to the company.

Ken Neumann, Canadian National Director of the United Steelworkers (USW), calls the attack "another black eye for Canadian mining companies operating abroad."

New wave of general strikes vs. Euro-austerity

Opposition continues to build across Europe against government austerity measures. Trade unions from Portugal, Spain, Italy, Cyprus and Greece have called for general strikes on Nov. 14. This is thought to be the first time in history a coordinated call for general strikes has been issued in so many countries at the same time.

Other protests are planned in Germany, Austria, Belgium, France, Poland, Denmark, UK, Netherlands, Romania, Finland, Switzerland, Sweden, Czech Republic and Slovenia.

The continental labour action seeks to combat economic policies being imposed by the 'Troika': European Union, European Central Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Teacher, student and parent groups have played an important role in the November 14 strike call. The head of the Education International umbrella group for global teachers unions, Fred van Leeuwen, says, "We are aware of the challenges facing governments due to the debt crisis and the need to reduce deficits. Cutting back on education, however, is not the solution."

The teachers unions say that the EU and IMF should eliminate tax havens, harmonize corporate tax legislation and take effective measures against tax evasion. One study by the unions found that 15 trillion dollars of corporate tax is

not collected every year due to fiscal engineering by multinational corporations.

Arab teacher unions condemn rights abuses

Leaders of teachers' organisations in the Arab region are outraged by the verdict of a Bahraini appeal court, which



sentenced the President of the Bahraini Teachers Association (BTA), Mahdi Abu Deeb, to five years imprisonment for taking part in national demonstrations in 2011. The Vice President of BTA, Jalila Al Salman, was also found guilty and sentenced to six months in jail.

At a conference held November 5-6 in Beirut, 26 teachers' unions from 12 countries condemned the verdict as a gross violation of international standards. They expressed serious concern about increasing suppression of teachers in Bahrain and other Gulf States where democratic change is hampered by the ruling elites. The president of the teachers association of the United Arab Emirates, Issa Alsari, was recently arrested for criticizing the UAE public authorities.

The conference decided that international pressure should be exerted on the Bahraini authorities. It also called on the governments of Egypt, Tunisia and Yemen to immediately release all teachers who are still kept in jail for having taken part in demonstrations against restrictions of democratic freedoms in their countries.

Delegates noted that despite repressive measures, teachers' organisations continue to play an important role in the struggle for freedom and democracy, and to achieve quality education for all children in the region. The President of Education International, Susan Hopgood expressed deep concern about the crisis in Syria and the growing numbers of refugees flowing into neighbouring countries. She called on the governments of Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Turkey to ensure that the many thousands of refugee children be given the possibility to go to school.

COSATU rejects big business blackmail

The Congress of South African Trade Unions has condemned the attempt by Business Unity South

Africa (BUSA) to pressure the government into undemocratically adopting pro-business and anti-worker economic policies, which it fears may be rejected by delegates at the ANC Conference in Mangaung in December.

The CEO of BUSA, Nomaxabiso Majokweni, told Business Day that the government "had to prove that perceptions in sections of the private sector that economic decisions could be affected by the ANC's conference were misplaced".

As the COSATU executive said, "In other words, government should not listen to the 4000 democratically elected delegates of its own party, representing the poor majority of South Africans, but to a small bunch of unelected, rich investors and their 'rating agencies', whose confidence needs to be restored."

"While all South Africans would agree on the need for 'more action and less talk', the poor majority and the working class will not support the kind of 'action' that BUSA is proposing, such as arresting the rising public sector wage bill."

In particular COSATU is opposed to a BUSA proposal for a "total review" of the industrial relations system, to be carried out by "a panel of experts" who would report to the president on what should be changed. BUSA further proposes a "code on strikes and picketing".

Given its past record, BUSA will not be looking for changes to improve workers' wages and working conditions or to protect their rights and, but measures to weaken the labour laws, further limit the right to strike, make it even easier to hire and fire workers, cut the cost of doing business, and intensify the super-exploitation of their employees.

"There is a consistent anti-democratic thread running through these proposals," warns COSATU. "BUSA wants government to be guided not by the elected ANC conference delegates or the representatives of business, labour and community but by a few 'experts'. They want to by-pass established democratic structures and procedures in favour of lobbying government behind the scenes."

Online strike targets Walmart

Black Friday, the day after U.S. Thanksgiving, one of the biggest shopping days of the year, may be dramatically different this year. Organizers are planning a nationwide strike on Nov. 23 against Walmart, the largest retailer in the world, using an online organizing strategy.

Labor organizers are working with social action nonprofit Engage Network as well as the Corporate Action Network watchdog group to pull off a "viral" online strike. Walmart workers interested in joining the day of action are directed to the "makechangeatwalmart" website, either to find a store near them with an organized strike or to "adopt an event" at a store near them.

Brian Young, cofounder of the Corporate Action Network, said on a conference call coordinated by the United Food and Commercial Workers that organizers cannot cover the roughly 4,000 Walmarts across the U.S., but enabling self-appointed leaders online has widened and decentralized the campaign.

The outreach leading up to Black Friday follows a series of unprecedented actions taken by Walmart workers against their employer and working conditions. In October, for the first time in the company's 50-year history, more than 70 workers at multiple Los Angeles-area Walmart stores walked off the job, even though their jobs are not protected by an official union. The strike had a ripple effect, causing strikes in 12 other cities, in large part through online organizing.

The success of these strikes, as well as one over the summer touted as the largest ever protest against the company, and a six-day pilgrimage of warehouse workers in September, would not have been possible without Facebook, Twitter and other web sites, Young said.

Impressive show by PAME in Greek strike

While inside the Greek Parliament the ruling parties were calling on the people to submit in order to save the monopolies, tens of thousands of demonstrators from working class families made themselves heard all over the country on November 7.

In Athens, tens of thousands of demonstrators flooded into Syntagma Square for a second consecutive day. After the encirclement of the Parliament by PAME on Nov. 6, the next afternoon thousands gathered again in the centre of Athens, demonstrating with the flags of PAME, the Greek All-Workers Militant Front. They had responded to the call of many sectoral federations and class-oriented trade unions which belong to PAME, as well as the self-employed and small tradesmen (PASEVE), the students of MAS and the women of OGE.

The massive demonstration extended through all the central roads and Syntagma. The slogans did not stop even during torrential rain, everybody remained in position, and their voices grew louder: "Here with the class struggle, because we cannot live with 400 euros." The PAME mobilization remained organized despite state violence and repression. In the face of the extensive use of tear gas and water cannons, PAME's forces remained until late at night.

The parliamentary group of the KKE (Greek Communist Party) inside the parliament exposed the class character of the measures against wage workers, the self-employed, and the poor farmers. A pro-people way out, said the KKE deputies, means the abolition of the capitalist monopolies and disengagement from the EU.

In the end 153 voted in favour, just enough to adopt the "3rd Memorandum" of cuts to seek further loans from the big European banks. Six members of the PASOK social democratic party were expelled for voting against the memorandum.

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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416-469-2446 <info@cpc-pcc.ca> www.comunist-party.ca

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Atlantic Region CPC

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Washington seeks Syrian puppets for regime change

Bill Van Auken,
*Information Clearing
House, 7 November 2012*

Speaking in Zagreb, Croatia, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton announced that Washington is reorganising the front representing the so-called "rebels" in Syria. The shake-up, which includes the withdrawal of US support from the Syrian National Council, is evidently part of the preparations for a more direct US intervention once the presidential election is over.

Responding to a question about US policy in Syria, Clinton dismissed efforts by United Nations Special Envoy Lakhdar Brahimi, declaring that the US "cannot and will not wait" for the UN to broker a political solution to the war in Syria. Instead, Washington will unilaterally seek to escalate that war with the aim of effecting regime-change and installing a puppet government aligned with US interests in the Middle East.

Clinton went on to describe US efforts to "groom" a new leadership to serve as a front for Washington's neo-colonial project. She allowed that the American government had "facilitated the smuggling-out of a few representatives of the Syrian internal opposition" so that they could appear before representatives of the so-called Friends of Syria, comprised of the US and its allies.

The Secretary of State treated the Syrian National Council, which only last December she had hailed as the "leading and legitimate representative of Syrians seeking a peaceful democratic transition," with unconcealed contempt. Syria's opposition, she proclaimed, could not consist of people who have "not been inside Syria for 20, 30 or 40 years." Instead, it would have to consist of "those who are on the front lines, fighting and dying today to obtain their freedom."

This public jettisoning of the front group that Clinton had so recently promoted as the salvation of the Syrian people for an as yet unidentified assemblage of new "revolutionaries" - hand-picked by the US State Department - constitutes an admission of the failure of US policy thus far in Syria.

Clearly, Washington had

anticipated that its policy of covertly arming and funding armed militia groups in Syria, with the collaboration of Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Qatar, would have toppled the government of President Bashar al-Assad by now. What has become evident is that large sections of the Syrian population, while hostile to the Assad regime, are even more opposed to and fearful of the so-called rebels, a conglomeration of armed groups that has become ever-more dominated by Islamist jihadist elements, in many cases linked to Al-Qaeda, and Sunni sectarian groups.

Clinton's statements were made in preparation for a conference to be convened in Doha, Qatar next week, where the new opposition council is to be formally constituted under the tutelage of Washington and the former US Ambassador to Syria, Robert Ford. He has been directly involved in identifying and selecting "revolutionaries" who appear likely to toe the US line.

"We have recommended names and organisations that we believe should be included in any leadership structure," Clinton told the news conference in Zagreb. "We've made it clear that the SNC can no longer be viewed as the visible leader of the opposition. They can be part of a larger

opposition, but that opposition must include people from inside Syria and others who have a legitimate voice that needs to be heard."

It is difficult to overstate the cynicism and brazenness of the US Secretary of State's approach. Having previously anointed the SNC as the "legitimate" representative of the Syrian people, she now decrees that they are no longer serviceable as the "visible leader" of the opposition. In other words, a new public Syrian face for US imperialist intervention is needed, and Washington has

handpicked the individuals who will make it up.

No doubt, this is dictated in part by the identification of the leadership of the SNC with the Syrian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood and US concerns that within Syria this only strengthens the hostility of those who see the bid to overthrow the Assad government as a sectarian-based war backed by Washington.

While the SNC leaders would still get a piece of the action - perhaps a third of the leadership - under Washington's new arrangement, they would have to

cede formal control to the new front, including those with "a legitimate voice that needs to be heard." What Syrian voices are "legitimate" is to be determined by the US State Department, which, no doubt, will want to see a collection of Alawite, Shia, Kurdish and Christian "assets" brought on board.

The SNC itself, however, has rejected the US plan, calling its own conference in Doha in the immediate run-up to the US-sponsored meeting and indicating that it is prepared to fight to preserve its franchise as the "legitimate" opposition backed by the imperialist powers and the Sunni Muslim regimes in Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Qatar. Where these regimes, which have their own interests in the Syrian civil war, will line up is not altogether clear, and it has been reported that Turkey and Qatar still support the SNC.

There is every possibility that the gathering being organised in Doha will turn into an internecine free-for-all, much like a similar conference convened in Cairo last June, where delegates ended up throwing fists and furniture at each other.

"We also need an opposition that will be on record strongly resisting the efforts by extremists

see US Puppets, p. 11



This image is from an unsteady, hand-held video released in early November, showing bloody Syrian Army prisoners being led against a wall. The prisoners crouch and avert their eyes as "Free Syrian Army" rebels shout slogans and take aim. The gunfire lasts for more than 30 seconds. To view the video, visit YouTube and check for "Syrian rebels execution."

Statement on the Conflict in Syria

Joint Initiative of the Parties that participate in the International Communist Review, from <http://solidnet.org>

Imperialism, disguising its face under the banner of the "Syrian opposition," has embarked upon a bloody assault on the Syrian people. After a brief period of confusion regarding the incidents in Syria, the haze has cleared. There is now no doubt that the rebel group, the so-called "Free Syrian Army" (FSA), which is involved in an armed struggle against the Syrian government is sponsored by the US led imperialism, its counterpart the European Union and its regional clients including Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey. Not only do

they politically endorse the FSA but also finance its activities, train its militia and supply arms for their "holy" struggle.

Although the Syrian people have their own reasons for opposing the Assad regime, the ongoing campaign against the Syrian government does not reflect the will and demands of the Syrian people. The current conflict in Syria cannot simply be defined within the "people versus the dictator" template. Recent regime changes in the Arab world and primarily the notorious overthrow of the Libyan government demonstrated that the imperialists have been exploiting this template to draw support for imperialist intervention in the Middle East. Their goal is to stage the similar scenario in Syria.

The developments in the region express the intensification of the imperialist aggressiveness and the sharpening of the inter-imperialist competition for the acquisition of new markets and the exploitation of the natural resources in the region. The aggression of the USA, NATO, EU and their allies against Syria serves this very goal and aims at the imposition of a government that totally complies with the imperialist dictates and loyally serves their interests. These imperialist forces openly state that through regime change in Syria they aim to isolate and weaken Iran as well. In this sense, it is not a coincidence that plans for a military offensive against Iran have been recently brought to the table again.

Since the attack against Syria is part of a greater strategic plan by the United States regarding the Middle East, other international actors are inevitably getting involved in the issue. Russia,

confident of the capacity of the Syrian regime to resist against the ongoing assault, has sided with the Assad government.

In the region the U.S. government works in close collaboration with Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey. These warmongers have been pouring money, arms and even importing international jihadists into Syria. Under these circumstances, the peoples of Syria who have different ethnic and religious identities are worried for their future and for the future of Syria as a secular and multi-ethnic country.

Turkey, which shares borders with Syria, not only hosted meetings to establish a unified Sunni opposition against the Syrian regime but also deployed the Sunni-Islamist militias in its border cities. In the refugee camps built within Turkey's borders, the militias are living among the civilian refugees, an open violation of international regulations regarding refugee camps. Additionally, in separate military camps, CIA and MOSSAD alongside Turkish intelligence forces are training the Syrian militias. We stress that the tension on the Turkish-Syrian borders is particularly dangerous and note that the majority of the people in Turkey is against any intervention in Syria.

Furthermore, during the courses of the recent events in the Middle

East, we witness that the imperialists and their corporate media and academic mouthpieces label the pro-imperialist forces as "revolutionary." Doing this, they hope to be able to justify the imperialist interventions in the Middle East in the eyes of the people because forces that are called "revolutionary" demand them.

In this regard, as communist and workers' parties we condemn all kinds of imperialist intervention in Syria carried out either through supporting a group inside Syria to fight against the regime or through direct military operation. We recognize that any method that has been adopted or will be adopted by imperialism in Syria violates the Syrian people's right to self-determination.

We declare that throughout this imperialist propaganda, the so-called "revolution" and the intervention have become indissolubly linked. We condemn the apologists for imperialist intervention who praise pro-imperialist forces including the Islamists now fighting against the Syrian people as "revolutionary".

This is a call from communist and workers' parties to all real revolutionary and peace-loving forces, to the people's of the region to raise the level of struggle against the imperialist aggression in Syria and the threats against Iran. •



The Fifth of the Month to Free the Five

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

E-mail: president@whitehouse.gov

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

Phone 1-202-456-1111

Fax 1-202-456-2461

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

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

REDS ON THE WEB

www.comunist-party.ca

www.peoplesvoice.ca

www.ycl-ljc.ca

www.solidnet.org



Give Glenn Beck a heart attack - see this film

Cloud Atlas, written and directed by Lana and Andy Wachowski and Tom Tykwer, adapted from the novel by David Mitchell. *People's Voice* review by Glen Truax.

"The ocean consists of many drops."

The Wachowskis have redeemed themselves, after two *Matrix* sequels, *Speed Racer*, and diminishing returns. This is it, the magnum opus of 21st Century popular radicalism, a direct broadside and a middle finger directed at orthodoxy, conformity, and rapacious self-interest. You know a film is pushing the right buttons when right-wing pundits like Bill O'Reilly take offense. Gee, Bill, I thought this was just entertainment.

Cloud Atlas comes close to one of those "everything is connected" movies, such as *Amores Perros*, and in a certain sense it is. *Cloud Atlas* sprawls across five hundred years, in the form of six stories, mini-movies that drive home the central points while never seeming like a dog's breakfast. While certain aspects pop up in strange places, there's never anything quite as obvious as one generation discovering the secrets of past heroes. Instead, the film builds up these similarities to a rushing argument, a single-minded message that at a very atomic level, the masses are connected, by a process of self-recognition and camaraderie.

The stories follow a trajectory of people finding each other, and joining forces against a common evil, usually represented by either brute reactionary muscle or a somewhat more subtle reactionary mindset. This conservatism is latent in the most fundamental ways, and even simple battles take

on an air of grave importance. Reaction has to be challenged, over and over again.

The stories themselves hit every major form or genre. Do you like post-apocalyptic tribal thrills? You'll get it. Do you like astounding sci-fi, as only the Wachowskis are capable of delivering? You'll get it. How about those silly British comedies which appear to be about nothing? Yes, even that's represented. There's even a wonderful tribute

People's Voice at the movies

to action flicks from the seventies and eighties, featuring a great black action hero of those decades, Mr. Keith David (who starred in the anti-establishment rabble rouser, *They Live*, back in the Reagan era).

Yes, Tom Hanks appears in this film. No, he doesn't ruin anything. And yes, there are racial characteristics within the film which may seem stereotypical and derogatory, but given the contexts of these stories, nobody can be said to be exploited. Intertwining plotlines crash into each other, creating a breathless sensation of movement, giving fans the adrenaline rushes that these films demand.

What is noteworthy is the sense of continual dialogue between simpatico protagonists, and between the revolution and progress, versus elemental, crushing inhumanity. Arguments have been made that *Cloud Atlas* relies too much on heroic individuals, rather than mass groups of ordinary people. This does not take into account the

fact that the solidarity that forms class consciousness is based on small scale, individual human agency, the recognition of similarities between people and their shared interests, and an emotional/logical link found in even the smallest groups.

And while these moments, these sparks of recognition, may have to happen continuously throughout time, in order to drag equality into the picture, the film drives home the fact that the revolution is a continuous process of achievements and setbacks. The fight must, and will be fought as long as human existence continues to evolve.

Just one thought should be kept in mind, regardless of all theoretical navel-gazing: *Cloud Atlas* never bores, and never lacks excitement in even the more



In this scene from *Cloud Atlas*, Korean actor Bae Doona in her role as the cloned fast-food restaurant worker Sonmi-451, confronts military power in the dystopian Neo Seoul.

introspective moments. It is a righteous rebellion of humanity, and never short of exhilarating.

Make Glenn Beck have a heart attack, and see this movie in the theatres. ●

Time to celebrate 100 years of the Ghadar Party

By Gurpreet Singh, Surrey, BC

All secularist and progressive groups active in Canada need to get together to celebrate 100 years of the Ghadar Party, a revolutionary movement launched in the U.S. by Indian immigrants who believed in an armed struggle to liberate India from the British occupation.

The Hind Pacific Association, formed with an objective to defeat British Imperialism through armed rebellion, came to be known as the Ghadar (Mutiny) Party after the name of its official newspaper, first published on November 1, 1913. Ghadar gave a call to Indians to take up arms against the foreign invaders, and ran inflammatory articles and poems.

Most of the founders of the Ghadar Party came to Canada and the U.S. for a better life, and had previously worked for the British army. Many believed they were British subjects and trusted in the "fairness" of British rule. However, racism and a hostile environment against immigrants, particularly in Canada, which also was a British

dominion, transformed them into political activists.

The British Empire did not come to their rescue when they petitioned for equal rights. Thanks to the indifference of the Empire towards the concerns of its coloured subjects, these men were convinced that until their home country was free, they could not earn dignity abroad. Thus, the ground was ready for the Ghadar Party, giving these men a platform to organize against colonialism.

A number of community activists in Vancouver became members of the Ghadar Party, and also participated in campaigns for equal rights in Canada. Indians were not allowed to bring their families back then. They were disfranchised in 1907, and there was a conspiracy to relocate them to Honduras. An infamous "Continuous Journey Law" was passed to keep Canada white. The *Komagata Maru* ship carrying over 300 Indian passengers was turned away in 1914 under this discriminatory law.

Many of these Ghadar activists,

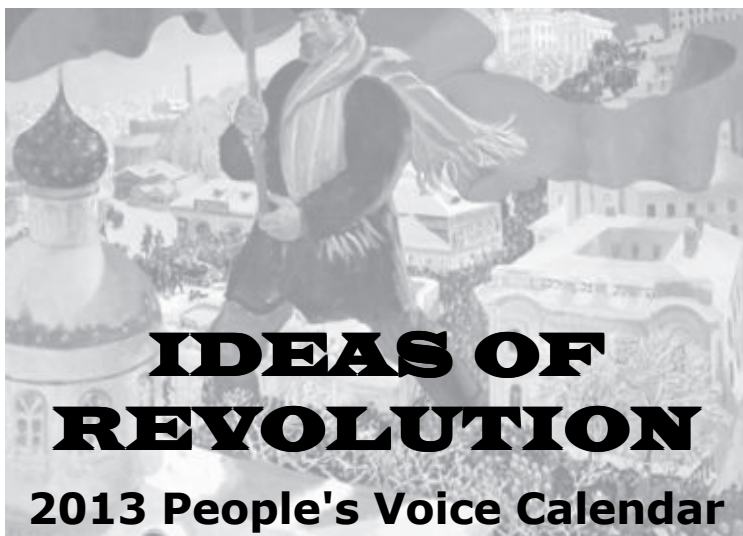
who returned to India with intent to stir an armed revolt, were hanged or sentenced to life imprisonment. In later years, many became Communists while others joined different political parties.

Though the members of the Ghadar Party were predominantly Sikhs, they decided to keep religion and politics apart. It remained a secular movement throughout its political journey. Some prominent non-Sikh names associated with the Ghadar Party were Pandurang Khankhoje, Taraknath Dass, G.D. Kumar, Barkat Ullah and Hassan Rahim. Of these Dass, Kumar and Rahim were active in Vancouver.

Notably, some of the Ghadar party members tried to save Muslims from Hindu and Sikh extremists during religious violence that followed the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947. The Hindu and Sikh fundamentalists targeted Muslims on the Indian side of the border during independence.

Ironically, religious fundamentalist groups are now trying to appropriate the Ghadar heroes to justify their own acts of violence. Such appropriation is visible in Vancouver, where those seeking a theocratic Sikh homeland openly glorify the Ghadar activists alongside their own militants. The idea is to justify the armed movement for a separate Sikh nation and confuse ordinary people.

The pro-Sikh homeland group now controls a temple established by the Ghadar activists in Stockton, California. This group celebrated the centenary of the Ghadar Party recently, projecting the founders as devout Sikhs, but deliberately obscuring the contributions of non-Sikh Ghadar activists. It has become morally important for all secularist groups to jointly celebrate the Ghadar Party centenary, and present its true and undistorted image to make the world understand that they were not trigger-happy religious extremists, but social justice activists who believed in equality and not theocracy. ●



The People's Voice Calendar for 2013 - "Ideas of Revolution" - is now on sale. Dedicated to the struggles of the international working class for peace, liberation, equality and socialism, this year's calendar features quotations by a wide range of revolutionaries, artists, and writers, such as Nelson Mandela, Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, V.I. Lenin, Tim Buck, Soong Ching Ling, Germaine Greer, Evo Morales, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, Claudia Jones, Fidel Castro, Jose Saramago, and Frida Kahlo. The 14-month calendar (Jan. 2013-Feb. 2014) also includes notable dates from the history of the people's movements, and statutory holidays and celebrations for the year.

"Ideas of Revolution" calendars can be ordered by mail for \$10 in Canada, or \$15 in the United States (price includes mailing costs). Send a cheque to People's Voice, 706 Clark Drive, Vancouver, BC, V5L 3J1. For information on bulk rate orders of five or more calendars, contact our Vancouver Editorial Office at <pvoice@telus.net> or phone 604-255-2041.

Residents of Ontario can order directly from the Ontario Bureau of People's Voice, 290A Danforth Ave., Toronto, M4K 1N6, ph. 416-469-2446. The Calendar will be on sale at our Manitoba Bureau (387 Selkirk Ave., Winnipeg), and our Quebec Bureau (5359 Ave. du Parc, Montreal).



Among the early Ghadar activists were these students at the University of California-Berkeley. "Hind" means India, and "stan" means land. For more background and images, visit www.vishnuravi.com/transientcolors/selfreliance.html.

Put the Communist Party on your holiday gift list!

As the holiday season approaches, many of us are thinking about gifts for family and friends, and maybe some holiday cheer after a very busy and active year.

Most December gifts result in a credit card bill come January, but a gift to the Communist Party before December 31st can actually generate a 75% tax rebate when you file your taxes next spring! And, you get the satisfaction of donating to a political party that's totally biased towards working people, youth, women, Aboriginals, migrants, and the unemployed.

The Communist Party has a track record that's 91 years long, fighting for peace, jobs, democracy, sovereignty, equality, and socialism. Though thick and thin, the Communist Party's been there - fighting for unity, for class struggle policies and for mass action by the 99% to defeat the 1% and change the world! It doesn't get much better than that when it comes to "making your list and checking it twice" for a party deserving of your support!

Your gift to the Communist Party of Canada will generate a tax rebates of 75% on the first \$400 you donate this year, a 50% tax rebate on the next \$350, and 33.33% on the next \$450, up to a total of \$1200 for the year.

That means a \$400 donation to the CPC will cost you just \$100 after you file your 2012 taxes; a \$200 donation will cost just \$50; and a \$100 donation will cost just \$25. A \$750 donation will cost you just \$275; and a \$1200

donation will cost \$575 (after filing your taxes).

Any amount you can give will help the Communist Party continue to counter-attack capitalist

globalization, war and austerity, to defend working people and campaign for real and progressive change, for a people's coalition, and for socialism.

You can also donate to the provincially registered parties: the CP-BC, CP Alberta, CPC (Manitoba), and CPC (Ontario), to receive similar tax rebates and benefits.

Send your cheque made out to "CPC", (or to the provincial parties in BC, Alberta, Manitoba or Ontario), to 290A Danforth Avenue, Toronto, ON, M4K 1N6. Questions? Give us a call at 416-469-2446, or email Liz Rowley at erowley@live.ca. •



18th Youth Festival set for Ecuador next year

The 18th World Festival of Youth and Students has been called, to take place in December 2013, in the Ecuadorian capital city of Quito.

Representatives of fifty groups affiliated to the World Federation of Democratic Youth attended the initial planning session, which was held Nov. 11-12 in Quito.

In a news release, organizers said that "issues such as the role of student movements in the social transformation, capitalism in crisis and the post-capitalist alternative, organizational experiences of struggle and resistance, as well as youth, state and revolution, will be discussed. Other issues to discuss are youth solidarity and commitment for world peace, people's self-determination and the Citizen Revolution in Ecuador, as well as the creation of an anti-imperialist platform."

Drew Garvie, a delegate from the Young Communist League of Canada, was in Quito for the meeting. Garvie will report back about the Festival preparations at upcoming events in Canada; see the next issue of People's Voice for further information. •

US puppets in Syria...

continued from page 9

to hijack the Syrian revolution," Clinton told the news conference. Again, the question is what kind of opposition "we," meaning Washington and its imperialist allies, need, not what the Syrian people want.

In any case, such a formal disassociation from "extremism" and cosmetic change in the exile leaders posing as a government-in-waiting will hardly shift the sectarian line up of the ongoing civil war. The CIA, which is orchestrating the funnelling of weapons supplied by the Saudi, Turkish and Qatari regimes, has acknowledged that the lion's share of these armaments is going to the

Islamist militias.

Washington's aim is to cobble together a group that can provide the basis for a puppet regime in Damascus, much as it did with various Iraqi exiles in advance of the 2003 US war on Iraq. As one unnamed senior administration official told Foreign Policy, "We call it a proto-parliament. One could also think of it as a continental congress."

That such a body is being prepared strongly suggests that the Obama administration is preparing a sharp escalation of the US intervention in Syria in the wake of the November 6 election, perhaps including the use of military force to carve out a "safe haven." Such an intervention

would be part of a wider campaign in preparation for war with Iran, posing the threat of a regional and even global military conflagration.

The entire sordid manoeuvre in Doha has underscored the real character of the so-called Syrian "revolution," whose leadership is being directly selected and installed by the US State Department. It further exposes the role of pseudo-left forces, such as the International Socialist Organisation in the US, the Socialist Workers Party in Britain, and the New Anti-capitalist Party in France, which have sought to promote the US-backed war for regime-change as a revolution and legitimise the "human rights" pretext for imperialist intervention. •

Indigenous humanitarian crisis in Canada...

continued from page 3

governments to address these crisis areas, all to no avail. The closest Indigenous Nations came to accessing funding relief for the current crisis was in 2005 when the Government of Canada promised \$5 billion over 10 years to address issues like education and housing. This commitment was later withdrawn when the Conservative Party came to power. Since then, Indigenous Nations, through their individual First Nation communities, represen-

tative organizations and advocacy groups, continue to try to raise public awareness and get Canada's attention - but have been met with funding cuts, instead of assistance.

These funding and other cuts are in direct violation of Canada's domestic laws, legislated mandates and legally binding treaties and other agreements with Indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples in Canada have been in a state of prolonged crisis and casualties continue to increase. The situation has become critical and many Indigenous individuals and communities are in need of immediate

emergency assistance. Other communities not in a crisis, still require that their treaties be upheld, their stolen lands be returned and they have a fair share of the wealth that comes from their traditional territories in order to be self-sustaining...

For more information, see Palmater's article "Stretched Beyond Human Limits: Death By Poverty in First Nations," in the journal *Canadian Review of Social Policy*: <http://pi.library.yorku.ca/ojs/index.php/crsp/article/viewFile/35220/32057> •

What's Left

White Rock, BC

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

Vancouver, BC

Celebrate a Decade of Resistance, tenth anniversary of the StopWar peace coalition, Friday, November 23, doors 7:30, WISE Hall, 1882 Adanac St., with Solidarity Notes, Carnival Band, Joe Keithley, MC Charles Demers. Tickets from StopWar members or at the door (\$10-20), or from High Life Music, 1317 Commercial Drive.

Left Film Night, "Petropolis," documentary on Alberta tar sands, Sunday, Nov. 25, 7 pm, Centre for Socialist Education, 706 Clark Drive. For details, ph. 604-255-2041.

Report from Beirut, Thur., Nov. 29, 7:30 pm, 706 Clark Drive. Hear People's Voice editor Kimball Cariou report back from annual meeting of Communist & Workers' Parties held Nov. 22-25 in Beirut, Lebanon.

La Trova Nuestra, Latin American Pena, 8 pm, Nov. 30, Centre for Socialist Education, 706 Clark Drive, Vancouver, \$10 admission, all welcome.

Winnipeg, MB

Marxism Course begins in November. Call Communist Party to register, 586-7824 or send email to cpc-mb@changetheworldmb.ca.

Toronto, ON

Cafe Cuba! "Will the Real Terrorist Please Stand Up," by award-winning filmmaker Saul Landau, documentary on U.S. support for violent anti-Castro militants. Friday, Nov. 23, 7:30 pm, 1790 Eglinton Ave. West (just east of Dufferin). Free admission, co-sponsored by Accents Bookstore and Canadian-Cuban Friendship Association Toronto.

People's Voice Forum on South Africa, with a long-time activist who served on the ANC executive and was a high-level official of the ANC government, Thurs., Nov. 29, 7:30 pm, GCDO Hall, 290 Danforth Avenue (a block west of Chester station) For information, call 416-469-2446.

St. Catharines, ON

The Fightback Against Austerity, Thurs., Jan. 17, forum with Miguel Figueroa, leader of the Communist Party of Canada, St. Catharines Library Rotary Room, 54 Church St.

Montreal, QC

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

News for people, not for profits!



People's Voice deadlines

December 1-31 issue: Thursday, Nov. 29

January 1-31 issue: Thursday, Jan. 3

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



La Trova Nuestra

Friday, Nov. 30, 7:00 pm

"La Peña Nuestra"

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

About Vancouver's "La Trova Nuestra"

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



Marxist Theory

Where have all the profits gone?

By Zoltan Zigedy, October 26, 2012,
zoltanzigedy@gmail.com

Mid-September marked the fourth anniversary of the Lehman Brothers bankruptcy, widely viewed as the final trigger of the global economic collapse, a shock that remains the dominant factor in global economic life.

Friday, October 19 brought a dramatic drop in US equity values, caused, commentators speculate, by dismal reports of US corporate earnings. The most observant of these commentators did not fail to point out that Friday was also the 25th anniversary of the largest US one-day percentage drop in stock values. The fact that such an anniversary came to mind reflects a general and widespread fear that more economic turbulence is forthcoming.

The growing gloom overshadows the glowing September report of retail sales released earlier in the week. Despite stagnant or slipping incomes, the US consumer turned to the credit card to boost purchases at retail stores, online, and in restaurants. Signs of an improving housing market also fuelled optimism.

Opinions change quickly. A week earlier, on October 9, the International Monetary Fund

The global economy has never "recovered" from the shock of 2008. Nor does it teeter on the edge of another recession. In fact, it is fully in the grip of a profound systemic crisis, a crisis that has no certain conclusion. In this regard, the crisis is very much like its antecedent in the 1930s. The popular picture of The Great Depression as a massive collapse followed by the New Deal recovery is myth. Instead, like our current economic fortunes, it was like climbing a metaphorical grease pole - repeatedly advancing a few feet and then slipping down. Serious students of the Great Depression understand that its "solution" was World War II, with its state-driven, planned, military "socialism."

Of course war itself is no solution, but the organized, collective, and social effort that capitalism only countenances for violence and aggression is a solution. Similarly, the success of the People's Republic of China in sidestepping the harsh edges of the 2008 collapse is due to the remaining features of socialism - public ownership of banks, state enterprises, and economic planning. Never mind that much of the PRC leadership hopes to jettison these features, the

with the political right.

Political liberals and the left, on the other hand, often advocate for the analyses and prescriptions of the school associated with the views of John Maynard Keynes.

Since classical liberalism has been the dominant economic philosophy governing the global

that tactic also brought a host of new contradictions in its wake.

Austerity vs. Growth

Pundits like Krugman and politicians like Francois Hollande posture the theoretical divide as one between austerity and growth,



economy for many decades, common sense would dictate that, after four years of economic chaos and general immiseration, neo-liberalism would be in disrepute. But thanks to the tenacity of ruling elites and the profound dogmatism of their intellectual lackeys, the market fetish of neo-liberalism still reigns outside of Latin America and a few other outliers.

But Keynesianism - broadly understood as central government intervention in markets - enjoys a growing advocacy, particularly with liberals, leftists, and, sadly, "Marxists." Centrist Keynesians advocate intervention in markets from the supply side, most often through credit mechanisms and tax cuts that encourage investment and corporate confidence. Liberal and left interventionists argue for stimulating economic recovery and stability by generating consumption and expanding demand from government-funded projects or government-funded jobs.

The panic of 2008 turned most policy makers toward flirtation with supply-side intervention and generally meager demand-based stimulus, a fact that liberal Keynesians like Paul Krugman are fond of pointing out. Only China adopted a full-blown demand-oriented stimulus program. Yet

a choice between rational growth stimulation and the irrationality of shrinking government spending to reduce debt. In an idealized classless world, this point would be well taken - austerity is an enemy of growth. However, it is naive and misleading to fantasize such a world.

In our era of global capitalism, the idea of cutting government spending and lowering taxes makes all the sense in the world to the ownership class. The resultant transfer of value counts as a significant element in restoring profit growth and expanding accumulation. In a real sense, the popular and apt anti-austerity slogan - "we will not pay for your crisis" - tells only half the story. The other half should be "we will not pay for your recovery."

In the end, it is profit that determines the success and failure of the capitalist system. Accumulation of economic surplus - the value remaining after the bills are paid - is the engine of capitalism, necessary for its motion and its trajectory. The dramatic drop in the Dow Jones industrial stock averages resulting from poor earnings this past Friday only underscores this point. Those who see consumption as the critical element in growth and recovery should recognize that this loss of momentum is independent of, as well as more decisive than, the September report of strong retail demand.

The Tendency of the Falling Rate of Profit

The central role of profit, its growth and momentum in understanding capitalism and its recurrent structural crises has been overshadowed, even among most Marxists, by the infection of left thought with Keynes' crisis theory. Theories of crisis that rest on underconsumption, overproduction, or imbalances reflect this infection and reduce political economy to the study of business cycles and avoidable and terminable economic hiccups - consumption can be expanded, production can be regulated, and balance can be restored. These are the assumptions of social

democratic theory and what divides it from revolutionary Marxism.

Marx saw crisis as fundamentally embedded in capitalism's structure. Processes in the capitalist mode of production unerringly bring on crises. And he locates the most basic of these processes is the mechanism of accumulation, a process that tends to restrain the growth of the rate of profit.

While it is good to see a rebirth of interest in and advocacy of Marx's law of the tendency for the rate of profit to fall, most of its worthy supporters remain needlessly confined to Marx's expository formulae that serve well in revealing the anatomy of capitalism, but less so in exposing its disorders.

Yet the intuition behind Marx's law is easily grasped. When unmediated by the encroachment of working class forces, the capitalists' accumulation of surplus results in the extreme concentration of wealth, a concentration that reduces the opportunities to gather the expected return in the next and each successive cycle. Whether restrained by the physical limitations of workers, the potential length of the work day, diminished return on physical investment, rapacious competition, super-inflated investment reserves, or the myriad other possible forces or factors, the rate of profit is under constant and persistent duress.

Leading up to the 2007 economic slowdown that presaged the 2008 collapse, the enormous pool of capital available for profitable investment was acknowledged by all reporters. Its sheer volume alone depressed interest and profit rates in the face of limited productive investment opportunities. The desperate search for a rate of return drove investors toward riskier and riskier ventures that generated the financial collapse which has been well documented. It was the pressure on profits - an expression of the tendency - that drove the investor class to a lemming-like indulgence in arcane financial wizardry.

The neglect of Marx's tendential law since the popularity of Keynes and underconsumption/overproduction crisis theories has retarded Marxist and Communist understanding of capitalist crises while bolstering reformist policies within the Communist movement.

Happily, there is a renewed interest in Marx's law, though a full and satisfactory understanding of its application and operation within contemporary capitalism is yet to be given.

At any rate, the decline of earnings now emerging in the latest financial news indicates that counter-crisis and counter-tendency measures are now exhausted in the US. Despite the euphoria of rising consumption spending and housing sales, the profit-driven engine of US capitalism is slowing, likely allowing the US economy to drift closer to the whirlpool already drowning the European economies.

Tough times are ahead, but a fertile period to plant the seeds of socialism. ●

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released its World Economic Report. While raising fears of a global downturn, the report cut the probability of a US recession by nearly a quarter from its April forecast!

Taken together, the sentiments of the last two weeks demonstrate widespread confusion and uncertainty.

Most of the conversation about the global economy, about capitalism, is shaped by ideological bias, academic dogma, distorted history and wishful thinking.

advantages are there for all to see. Yet few see.

Distorted history begets foolish theory. The two ideological poles that dominate economic discussion - classical liberalism and Keynesianism - both owe their claimed legitimacy to favoured, but mistaken views of the source and solution to the Great Depression. While expressions of these poles are found across the political policy spectrum, classical liberalism - often called neo-liberalism - is generally associated

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