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# people's VOICE

Canada's own  
Guantanamo

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## Harper's EI cuts



*Resistance  
growing in  
Quebec and  
Atlantic Canada*

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## Walk for Reconciliation



*Drummers greet marchers  
on East Pender (photo:  
Georgia Straigh)*



*Many residential  
schools were run by the  
Catholic Church.*

*Tens of thousands marched on Sept. 22 in Vancouver to remember the past, and to reach out for a better future: see page 3*

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### Quebec "values"

The Parti Quebecois government of Pauline Marois may gain some electoral advantage with their new "Charter of Values"... but maybe not. It is certain that the Charter will divide working people.

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### Internet alternative?

Tired of the National Security Agency monitoring your phone and email? So is the government of Brazil, and it's taking action.

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### Mexican miners

Faced with brutal levels of exploitation and abysmal working conditions, Mexico's "mineros" are in a desperate fight to save their jobs, their labour rights, and the communities where they live.



# No to divisions! Yes to working class unity!

## Statement of the Parti communiste du Québec on the Charter of Québec Values

Debates are raging in Québec over the "Charter of Québec Values" which the Parti Québécois government officially made public on Sept. 10, but whose content had been published for the most part by the media several days previously.

In all likelihood, the government itself orchestrated these leaks in the media, to evaluate the impact that the project would have with the electorate. Last May, the Government conducted a survey which showed the support of a majority of citizens for a framework of "reasonable accommodations." "On that occasion, the minister responsible, Bernard Drainville, announced that the "secular charter" promised during the previous election campaign would instead become one of "Québec values."

Essentially, the project contains five propositions revolving around two principal aspects: the establishment of tags to manage requests for religious accommodations and, secondly, the declaration of neutrality of the State, in particular prohibiting all public employees from wearing "ostentatious" religious symbols.

In the latter case, it is proposed to allow CEGEPS, universities, health and social service establishments and municipalities to be exempt from this ban, during a transitional period of two five-year terms. However, this aspect remains by far the most controversial because it violates fundamental rights.

Moreover, while the project intends to ensure the religious neutrality of the State, it allows a multitude of Catholic symbols, considered part of the patrimony of Québec. So, the crucifix that pro-fascist Premier Maurice Duplessis placed in 1936 in the National Assembly to illustrate the close relationship between the State and the Catholic Church, would paradoxically remain.

## A petty electoral calculation

The PQ minority government is desperately looking for a parliamentary majority. During the last election campaign, in the context of student protests over tuition hikes, the PQ was forced to focus more on the left of the political spectrum, making many promises along the lines of popular demands: abolition of Bill 78, cancellation of the tuition increases, abolition of the health tax and electricity rate increases, higher taxes on the rich and increased royalties on natural resources, etc.

The PQ went in this direction only because the space on the political right which it had tried to occupy was already too crowded, on the one hand by the Liberal Party and secondly, by the Coalition for the future of Québec (CAQ), which had delighted its nationalist right supporters.

However, once in power, citing their minority status, the PQ was quick to betray almost all promises one after another, and to show their true colours by adopting a very austere budgetary policy. Far

from worrying about women's rights as the PQ claims with this Charter, it has instead attacked public health and education services, penalizing mainly women. The PQ has also attacked the most deprived by decreasing the social assistance benefits of persons aged 55 to 57, as well as families with children under five years. Of course, many of those who had elected the PQ are disappointed.

On the other hand, led by Philippe Couillard, the Liberal Party had largely recovered in the polls, while the CAQ declined, creating a situation which is very threatening for the PQ.

The PQ made the opportunistic calculation that the launch of its Charter of Values would allow it to gain support from voters on the right, particularly those who previously voted for the CAQ and the ADQ, and who fear for their national identity. Without openly admitting this, the PQ expects to benefit from the latent feelings of intolerance, xenophobia and islamophobia which exist in some segments of the population.

Currently, there is no real problem in connection with religious accommodations that is urgent to resolve, or any concrete threat to the Québec identity from religious symbols worn by people from cultural communities. It is clear to the majority of the people that the PQ is electioneering.

Initially, after the first leaks in the media, the PQ appeared to have won this bet. Opinion polls were largely favourable to its project. Once launched by the Government, the debate unfortunately allowed, in a way, certain manifestations of racism, sometimes in the street, but more often in social media.

But, there is also a mobilization of those who oppose this Charter, including many intellectuals, professors and famous artists, such as Richard Desjardins, Dan Bigras or Michel Rivard; the ex-student leader, Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois; organizations such as the Federation of Women of Québec, the League of Rights and Freedoms, or the Fédération autonome de l'enseignement, a teachers union.

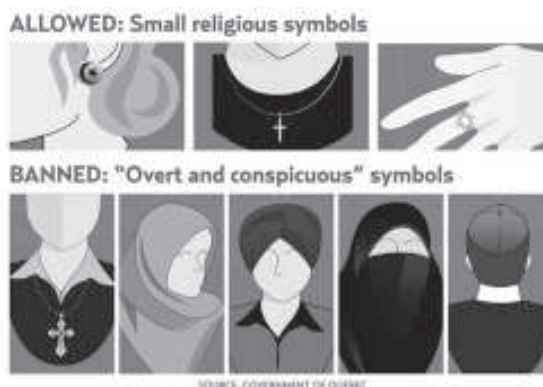
While supporting the principle of secularism, Québec Solidaire opposes the prohibition on the wearing of religious symbols by public employees: "We do differentiate between the religious neutrality of the institutions and individuals" said QS co-leader Francoise David.

Other opponents are people very well-known in the sovereignist movement, such as Bloc Québécois MP Maria Mourani, Francois Leblanc and Patrick Marais (former top advisors to Gilles Duceppe), former Bloc Québécois MP Jean Dorion, writer Yves Beauchemin, the well known author and former PQ candidate, Robin Philpot, and philosophy professor Michel Seymour, the former president of Intellectuals for Sovereignty, etc.

Another organization opposing the Charter is Amnesty International Canada-franco-

phone. General Director Béatrice Vaugrante, fearing stigmatization and isolation of some women, questioned the necessity to "substitute for a supposed constraint to wear a religious symbol, the State constraint not to wear it".

All this democratic opposition



has begun to seriously reduce support for the project, considered repressive and divisive. According to the latest survey, there would be as many opponents as supporters.

The expulsion of Maria Mourani from the Bloc Québécois because of her opposition to the Charter has sent a serious shock wave through sovereigntist ranks. The PQ pretensions to carry out "an open debate" were exposed, but in doing so, the PQ may have permanently alienated much of cultural communities, as well as their eventual support for the project of Québec sovereignty.

On the other hand, support which a xenophobic and racist right could bring to the draft Charter does not necessarily or automatically translate to votes for the PQ. A part of this right is federalist and opposes Québec sovereignty (for example, supporters of Stephen Harper's Conservative Party).

According to some statements by representatives of the government, it would be willing to consider trade-offs on the prohibition of ostentatious religious symbols by public sector employees.

But at the same time, the government seems to manoeuvre for the electoral battle. It has appointed four ardent partisans of the Charter of Values to the Board of Directors of the Council of the Status of Women on the eve of that body taking a position. However, opinions were divided on this Council, and these appointments were publicly denounced by its President Julie Miville-Dechêne as a downright takeover by the Government of the body, which is supposed to enjoy a degree of independence to be able to fulfil its advisory mission. In addition, there are some indications that logistical preparations for elections this fall have been ordered by the authorities.

## Québec bashing in the Canadian media

As soon as leaks about the PQ project came out in the Québec media, there was an outcry in the media in the rest of Canada to denounce it. Accusations of intolerance, racism, or even of fascism have been launched, conveying chauvinistic prejudice against Québec.

This is not new. During the 1940s, the Communist intellectual

Stanley Ryerson in his book *French Canada* denounced "the calumny to the effect that French Canadians as a people are indifferent or inimical to democracy is refuted by the historic record. The democratic tradition is deep-rooted in the consciousness of the Québec people."

Shortly before, on July 26, in a court case involving the language rights of francophones in British Columbia, the Supreme Court of Canada issued a decision confirming the position of the lower courts, to the effect that it is not allowed to file documents only in French in the courts of this province; they must also be translated into English. The Court also ruled that using only English in those courts is not contrary to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Nevertheless, in the Canadian media, this decision passed virtually under the radar. One can imagine the fury triggered by a similar decision in Québec against the English language. This double standard perfectly illustrates the great injustice that reigns in this country against Québec. Unequal Union, as Ryerson called it.

It is precisely this unjust and unequal treatment within Canada which causes the Québécois to fear for their identity. The dominant status of English Canada at the expense of the other nations in Canada is the starting point of the national discords which weaken the struggle of working people against the domination of monopoly capital.

## Yes to secularism, no to the prohibition against wearing of religious symbols!

The PQ practices essentially the same strategy: divide and rule. If its attempt to win a parliamentary majority on the basis of this Charter of Values turns people against each other, it will be able to strengthen its attacks against the working class, and accelerate the implementation of its social cuts and austerity programme.

The Communist Party instead seeks to unite the working class so that it can withstand the attacks of the bourgeoisie, and to struggle against capitalism and for socialism. It is through the development of the class struggle, under the conditions of capitalist society, that workers manage best to overcome their religious beliefs and join the fight for socialism.

The Communist Party is of the opinion that religion and the churches of all kinds are fundamentally reactionary, and serve to defend the exploitation of the working class. We are unequivocally in favour of state secularism. Public institutions must display neutrality towards religions. So, it is important that the crucifix be removed from the National Assembly if it wants to qualify for the secularism of the State.

However, the Communist Party supports the freedom of conscience and the democratic right of individuals to practice their

religions or to have none. We oppose coercion and advocate an approach relying on persuasion and education. In this sense, the Communist party categorically opposes the prohibition on wearing religious symbols by public employees as proposed by the PQ, which really does nothing, since, as Frederick Engels said, "persecution is the best way to strengthen adverse convictions," to heighten interest in religion, and to make its actual decline more difficult.

"New immigrants form a considerable portion of Canada's labour force. Immigrant workers continue to suffer from acute discrimination, arising in the main from capitalist exploitation and attitudes of national chauvinism. From its foundation the Communist Party has struggled to end discrimination against immigrant workers, working to expose how capitalism generates racism and national chauvinism, profits from low wage areas, and divides the working class to hold back the overall struggle."\*

The Communist Party calls for the adoption of a new constitution which would "prohibit the violation of the civil liberties of immigrants. It would outlaw racism and discrimination. It would assure the democratic, cultural and language rights of the non-French, non-English ethnic groups in Canada. A new constitution must embody a Bill of Rights, and a Bill of Rights for Labour, to provide guarantees of trade union and democratic rights which apply to the people of all nations within the Canadian state. These guarantees must ensure economic, social, cultural and linguistic equality, the right of assembly, the right to organize and strike, the habeas corpus right not to be arbitrarily deprived of one's liberty, the right to a job, to freedom of movement, to health, to education, to housing. The rights of women, youth and children must be guaranteed."\*

"A new constitution should unify social legislation to provide equal opportunity and high standards in all of Canada while respecting the sovereignty of Québec, and the right to self-government of the Aboriginal peoples."\*

The Communist Party also proposes a voluntary and equal partnership of Québec and English Canada, including the right to secede, guaranteeing the full participation of Aboriginal peoples to protect and develop their inherent national rights, including the right to genuine "self-government", a right of veto against any change that would affect their constitutional status, and the right to accelerated economic, social and national development.

"This fight for constitutional change is crucial to the overall struggle for democracy, social advance and for socialism. Uniting the working class across the country will not be possible without combating national oppression and fighting to achieve a new, equal and voluntary partnership of Canada's nations."\*

(\* Excerpts from the program of the Communist Party of Canada and the Communist Party of Québec, Canada's Future is Socialism!) •



# Walk for Reconciliation draws tens of thousands

By Kimball Cariou

Tens of thousands of people walked four kilometers in chilly autumn rain through Vancouver on Sept. 22, the culmination of a "Week of Reconciliation" marking the tragedy of residential schools in Canada. The events coincided with the Vancouver leg of hearings conducted by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), giving survivors of the schools an opportunity to speak about their experiences.

Estimated by the mass media at up to 70,000 people, the Sept. 22 Walk was likely the single largest demonstration in solidarity with Aboriginal peoples in the history of Canada. Led by First Nations drummers, elders and school survivors, the huge march was underway for over half an hour before participants at the back could even begin walking across the Georgia Viaduct from the downtown core.

The Walk was the concept of Chief Robert Joseph, Hereditary Chief of the Gwawaenuk First Nation and founder of Reconciliation Canada. The Vancouver events were organized by Reconciliation Canada, a collaboration between the Indian Residential School Survivors Society and Tides Canada.

"Over time, it's going to pave a new way forward," Chief Joseph told The Tyee news site. "That's

the emphasis, not to forget about the sad and tragic history of residential schools. We'll always, for a long time, continue to struggle for equality and justice, and move away from the harm... We have to begin with courage [and] work on it every day, step by step. It's better than staying where we are: broken."

Starting with no logistical support or funds, Chief Joseph's idea gathered wide backing over the last year, from First Nations, churches, and other sectors of society. This included support from the city of Vancouver and other government bodies, but more controversially, from several corporations such as the Royal Bank and BC Hydro.

In the end, local indigenous organizer Kat Norris reflected the views of many grassroots activists about the Reconciliation Walk. Norris shared concerns about involvement by corporations which profit from the theft of indigenous territories. But in a YouTube video, she concluded that the event was enormously significant for the survivors of the residential schools. That perspective was visible during the Walk, as deeply-moved participants cheered and wept at the sight of the kilometer-long crowd of First Nations people and community allies.

An estimated 150,000 Aboriginal children were taken forcibly into the residential schools from the 1870s to 1996, usually kept



The Walk for Reconciliation heads east on the Georgia Viaduct.

from using their own languages and rarely seeing their families. Many suffered physical, emotional and sexual abuse, and it has been estimated that several thousand died in these institutions. Federal apologies and some monetary reparations have been won, but this assimilationist policy inflicted terrible suffering on Aboriginal nations across the country.

The keynote speaker to kick off the Walk was Bernice King, the daughter of U.S. civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr.

"My father said something very powerful about progress," King

told the crowd. "He said, human progress is neither automatic, nor inevitable. Even a superficial look at history reveals that no social advance rolls in on the wheels of inevitability. Every step towards the goal of justice requires sacrifice, suffering and struggle."

A Baptist minister herself, King was among the speakers recently in Washington DC, where thousands gathered to mark the

50th anniversary of her father's famous "I have a dream" speech.

The federal Truth and Reconciliation Commission was set up in 2008 as part of a settlement between the Canadian government, victims, and churches which operated residential schools. The final TRC hearings will be held in Edmonton, and the Commission is scheduled to issue a final report at the end of 2014. ●

## Busy time for Youth Festival and YCL organizing campaigns

PV Youth Bureau

Summer and fall have been busy for the Young Communist League of Canada, which is working to build the 18th World Festival of Youth and Students in cooperation with a growing number of progressive youth and student organizations.

The festival, to be held in Quito, Ecuador this December is expected to bring together over 15,000 young people under the slogan "Youth unite against imperialism, for a world of peace, solidarity and social transformation!"

Taking place once every three to five years since 1948, the festival is the largest gathering of progressive, anti-imperialist youth in the world. Cost of participation, including air travel, food and accommodation to this year's week-long festival is expected to be just under \$1000.

In July and August, two teams of YCLers headed out across Canada, the first travelling through Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick to Nova Scotia, and the second outreaching to British Columbia, and Alberta.

The promotional tours visited about fifteen cities across Canada from Victoria to Halifax where organizers met with a number of organizations. In total, between ten to twelve city committees have either formed, or are in the process of forming.

Endorsing groups of the festival now include CUPE Toronto District, the Canadian Federation of Students-Ontario, several

Quebec student unions, the BC Federation of Labour, the Vancouver District Labour Council, the Kamloops Socialist Club, Occupy Edmonton, and others. Organizers say that the All-Canada delegation could be between 50 and 100 participants. More information can be found at 18wfys.tumblr.com.

The YCL has also been busy organizing a series of educational, schools, and other campaigns.

The tour out West was an occasion to re-start YCL organizing across BC, after a period of inactivity, focusing on Vancouver, Victoria, Kamloops, and Edmonton. YCLers are beginning to discuss organize a school in winter 2014, potentially in Kelowna.

In June the YCL held a one-day school in Ottawa focusing on campus politics, followed by a weekend educational retreat in July at Camp Naivelt, a left-wing secular Jewish camp in Brampton, focused on the women's

movement.

Following the camp, the YCL released a new t-shirt featuring militants like Dolores Ibarruri, Angela Davis and Vilma Espin featuring the slogan "A women's place is in the struggle."

Later in July the YCL helped organize a school in Nova Scotia, featuring discussion about a range of political issues, including the women's movement, as well as local and international politics. More recently, the YCL brought together over 30 people from across Ontario for a school in Guelph. The League is also planning a school in Shawinigan, Quebec.

While summer is always a good time for educational work, fall marks the back to school rush, and the YCL has been getting active with tables on campuses and club registrations. The League also helped launch a campaign in Hamilton to raise the minimum wage, with actions spreading now to other cities like Guelph. ●



Students at the recent YCL school in Ontario.

## "Reconciliation movement must defend Mother Earth"

Interview by the Georgia Straight with Grand Chief Stewart Phillip of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs, September 22, 2013

Today's historic Walk for Reconciliation in Vancouver was billed as a means "to transform and renew the very essence of relationships among Aboriginal peoples and all Canadians".

But according to Grand Chief Stewart Phillip of the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs, reconciliation must also be about protecting the environment for future generations.

"Those that understand that we need to defend Mother Earth and embrace sustainable development need to step up and embrace the challenges of the future," Phillip told the Georgia Straight while walking along West Pender Street. "It's not merely a warm, fuzzy social movement. Reconciliation will have purpose - and that purpose will be to defend Mother Earth for future generations."

Thousands turned up for the walk, which featured keynote speaker Bernice King, daughter of slain civil-rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. King spoke about human dignity, self-respect, historical oppression, and the importance of nonviolence, but never once commented on environmental issues.

Phillip, on the other hand, spoke bluntly about "this insane path that we're currently on with respect to fossil fuels and development that has actually no consideration or respect for the adverse impacts it will have on the environment [and] on water".

"I think this country and the province of British Columbia are quickly heading for the watershed moment where we're all being challenged with taking a stand on what the future will hold for our children, our grandchildren, and our grandchildren's grandchildren," he said.

Phillip claimed that the Harper government is "obsessed with ramming through \$650 billion worth of large-scale resource development projects, again with no consideration for the environment".

He spoke specifically about the proposed Enbridge and Kinder Morgan pipelines, alleging that the federal government has embarked on an "offensive" that is designed to lay the groundwork for declaring these projects in the national interest.

"They're making an effort to establish a consultation record that they will rely on when these matters shift to the courts," Phillip said. "They're going to mislead the general public - deliberately mislead the general public - and suggest that after this intense period of consultation the vast majority of Canadians and British Columbians and First Nations are supporting these pipeline projects, which is clearly not the case. So we're heading for serious conflict in the province of British Columbia. There is no question about that."

When asked if this could lead to direct action, Phillip replied: "If necessary, I don't think there will be any hesitation on the part of First Nations and our allies to get involved and protect the land." ●



# EDITORIALS

## Canada's immigration Guantanamo

On Sept. 18, over 180 immigration detainees in Lindsay, Ontario's Central East Correctional Centre began protests against their detention conditions. The detainees were recently moved from other prisons in the Greater Toronto Area, further from families and legal support. Some began a hunger strike which has since ended, but other actions continue.

Their demands are simple: better access to medical care, social workers and legal services, cheaper phone calls, better food, an end to constant lockdowns, transfers nearer to families and resources. Some are designated as "high security" based on flimsy grounds, such as an arrest that has not led to conviction. Some have been in jail for over seven years because Canada has no limit on how long someone can be held prior to deportation.

Here are some further facts, from the group No One Is Illegal. Between 2004 and 2011, 82,000 people were locked up in immigration detention in Canada, plus at least another 25,000 since then. In 2012, 289 of these detainees were children, some under the age of ten. About one-third of immigration detainees are held in maximum security provincial prisons, some unable to leave their cells for 18 hours a day. It costs taxpayers over \$50,000 annually to hold such prisoners. Immigration detention centres are a \$50 million business, run in partnership with private companies like G4S, Garda and Corbel Management. In Toronto alone, G4S and Corbel were paid \$19 million between 2004 and 2008.

In the last ten years, the number of people without full status (refugee claimants, temporary workers, etc.) has increased by 60% but permanent residency visas have stayed constant. Refugee acceptance rates are less than 25%. Migrants denied full status have to live without papers, services, justice or dignity, in daily fear of detention. Those arrested are locked up in brutish conditions awaiting forced deportations.

There is nothing humane about this racist system - Canada's own shameful mass Guantanamo must be ended now!

## US & Israel must also disarm

The contradictions, hypocrisy and outright lies of the U.S. push for war against Syria just keep piling up. But so far, it appears that the world isn't buying Uncle Sam's snake oil. One of the most appalling aspects of this situation is that the country beating the drums about "red lines" is responsible, directly or indirectly, for many of the deadliest attacks on civilians of the last century. A partial list includes the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the use of depleted uranium weapons in Iraq, the "agent orange" defoliation campaign which is still poisoning Vietnam, and much more.

Today, the U.S. is still threatening to bomb Syria if that country isn't quick enough to destroy its stockpile of chemical weapons. Yet the United States keeps foot-dragging on moves to eliminate its own deadly arsenal. The Pentagon still has about 2,611 tons of mustard gas in a facility in Colorado, and 524 tons of a spectrum of chemical weapons - including deadly nerve agent Sarin - in Kentucky.

As a ratifier of the Chemical Weapons Convention treaty, overseen by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons at the Hague, the U.S. agreed in 1997 to destroy its chemical weapons stocks within 10 years. Now, U.S. officials say they need another decade. International weapons inspectors have been stymied several times in their efforts to speed things up. Just as ominous, the U.S. remains silent on Israel's refusal to ratify the Convention, even though Israel has also used such weapons against civilians.

Every rational person wants to see these weapons permanently destroyed. But to be effective, universal disarmament must be truly universal. The U.S. and its closest allies cannot be allowed a free pass, especially given their track record as global bullies.



## "Quebec bans symbols but all of Canada bans migrants"

Excerpts from a commentary by Syed Hussan, <http://rabble.ca>, Sept. 18, 2013

Thousands are outraged at the Parti Quebecois charter of values - a charter that proposes to prohibit the wearing of religious symbols by public employees. As these symbols are disproportionately worn by racialized immigrants in particular Muslims and Sikhs, critics insist that Marois is playing the "race card." Many insist that the Charter of Values will create a "second class of citizens."

... Though many condemn Quebec for its Charter of Values, provinces across Canada have similarly created two-tiered legal systems to deny rights to temporary migrants. Quebec is banning some migrants from wearing religious symbols and working for the government, but for the large part, no temporary or non-status migrant can get a decent job anywhere in this country. Here in Ontario, many temporary and non-status migrants are being paid under minimum wage. Some like agricultural workers, most of whom are racialized migrants, are "exempted" from minimum wage, holiday pay or overtime altogether. Others like domestic workers, factory workers, etc. who are theoretically included within minimum wage laws cannot actually reclaim monetary losses, as they only have six months to apply to get back stolen wages, and there is a cap on the amount they can get. Migrant workers are often charged exorbitant sums of money for the "privilege" in "user fees" to work in Canada - these "recruitment fees" are largely legalized and where they are not, those restrictions aren't enforced.

When temporary or non-status migrants get injured on the job, provincial laws ban them from accessing decent health care. Few, if any, get injured workers compensation. Those that do are "deemed" fit for a job in Ontario after they have been deported to countries where no such jobs exist and the compensation is then cut

off. Many temporary and non-status migrant workers are forced to live in employers homes as a result of restrictive work permits or because of the nature of their jobs, yet that housing is excluded from housing and tenancy act regulations so that rights cannot be accessed. When migrants complain, bosses fire them, or report them to immigration enforcement, forcing many to

its doors to "family reunification" in the hopes that white immigrants would sponsor their families.

NIEAP worked, bringing in Caribbean and later Filipino women as in live-in domestic work, and Caribbean and Latin American in to agricultural work. However, the inverse happened in the family reunification streams as newly arriving permanent immigrants of colour sponsored far more family members than white settlers did. Undeterred, the federal government is now shutting down the family reunification system and the humanitarian pathways.

This latest wave of expansion of the Temporary Foreign Work Program and the shift to temporariness in the entire immigration system is part of a long history of trying to keep poor migrants of colour out of full status and rights. No government, federal or provincial, has wavered from this work of keeping poor and racialized bodies away from full rights in this country. Reading in this light, Marois's attempt to shut religious symbols from public service is just the tip of the iceberg, not an aberration but a continuation. Naming it as such, across the country, is imperative if we are to actually defeat racisms. ●

## Other voices...

leave the country, with no mechanism for appeal. The list goes on and on, education, pensions, all basic services are denied to migrants by law.

Lest all this be pegged on to the Conservatives and Pauline Marois, a little history on legalized exclusion of migrants is in order. For the first hundred years after confederation Canadian immigration policy banned people of colour from immigrating to the country altogether. It officially became "colour-blind" and open to racialized immigrants in 1967. While many see this as a historic win against racism in Canada, new laws were quickly formed to continue the exploitation and exclusion of racialized immigrants.

In 1973, Canada instituted a new immigration system where migrants could come and work in the country for a few short years, with limited rights, and then be forced to leave. The program was named the Non-Immigrant Employment Authorization Program (NIEAP) and essentially maintained the previous immigration policy - it excluded racialized immigrants, particularly poor ones, from permanent status in Canada. It also created a new workforce that kept temporary workers in sex-segregated, low-paying, difficult jobs. Afraid of too many people of colour arriving in the country, Canada threw open

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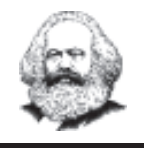
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## Marxist Theory

# Class against Class: a one-sided war

from Zoltan Zigedy, <http://zszs-blg.blogspot.com/>

Every commentator of every stripe concedes that US workers have been battered over the last five years since the onset of the global economic crisis. What most fail to concede is that the battering was the direct result of a one-sided class war.

From every perspective, measured by every economic indicator, all US workers - those organized into trade unions and those not - have been hammered relentlessly. Unemployment, measured by the government's least telling index, remains unconscionably high. Labour force participation, a better measure of the job picture, continues to decline. And the jobs that do become available are unprecedentedly part-time, low-paying, or temporary.

Wages are stagnant or declining in every sector and labour's share of national wealth continues to atrophy. Benefits are under attack with workers' contributions to existing benefits growing and employers' share shrinking.

The oft-cited road to success for working class youth - a college education - has proven fool's gold. The average student is saddled with \$25,000 in student debt and a marginal job that retards getting out of debt and capturing meaningful savings.

At the same time, a "recovery" has occurred: production and national wealth have rebounded to and surpassed their pre-crisis levels. Profits and profit growth are well above historic levels and trends. And the stock market has revived energetically.

The widely heralded "recovery" has only been a recovery for the very wealthiest. A recent study by the formidable economic research team of Saez and Piketty shows that 95% of the income benefits of this one-sided recovery have accrued to the top 1% of income recipients. The other 99% must settle for a tiny share of the meager remaining 5% gain in income!

That US workers' fate and the fate of their employers and their minions are on two separate, divergent tracks is undeniable. That these two tracks are sustainable is entirely a different matter, a matter to be settled when workers embrace a fight back in the struggle between classes.

While pundits from across the political spectrum acknowledge the huge and growing chasm between the rich and working people (see, for example, Paul Krugman's Rich Man's Recovery, *The New York Times*), they offer little by way of explanation and even less toward addressing and correcting the condition.

Instead, they deplore and regret, condemn and rue the sorry plight of working people in the face of burgeoning wealth channeled to the privileged. They trot out a host of tired, ineffective nostrums that consistently evade changing the dynamics that invariably generate growing inequality. Slogans like "tax the rich" warm the blood, but get no political traction. And on the rare occasion when tax increases and the like survive political mine fields, the rich find ways to evade them. Given the political power that inequality confers to the wealthy, it should be no wonder that even modest reformist proposals are

decisively aborted by the best "public servants" that monopoly corporations and their wealthy owners can buy.

What, then, are the dynamics that generate inequality? What really accounts for the ever widening income and wealth game between a tiny minority and the vast majority of US citizens?

No understanding of economic inequality in a global capitalist

driven relentlessly to achieve greater and greater rates of profit and sums of profit.

It is the logic of capitalism to reduce the costs of economic activity and command a greater share of that activity for the owners, investors, and shareholders. From the perspective of the worker, "reducing costs" translates into a relentless attack on the wages and benefits of the working class. The less that must

efforts by Jesse Jackson in subsequent years. While establishment Democrats mocked Reagan's lame "trickle down" economics, a decade later they celebrated the same idea with their absurd slogan that "a rising tide lifts all boats."

Obama, the latest political "friend" of labour, has so far failed to deliver anything of significance to workers in the five years of his administration, nothing that might have reversed the grinding, painful decline of working class standards of living.

Certainly the top leaders of the trade union movement have served workers no better. Accordingly, they have been punished for their failure by a sharp decline in union membership, a decline that has led them to panic before their own fate.

Of course their concerns, born of self-preservation, are nothing compared to the devastation of the working class inflicted over the last four decades. Their failure to use the available tools of class struggle, their reliance on cozy arrangements with bosses, and their identification with the health and flourishing of corporations are policies that have proven severely injurious to the working class.

Collaboration that links the fate of the working class to the fate of the corporations has paid off handsomely... for the corporations. A recent study summarized in *The Wall Street Journal* submits that by the end of this decade, "Adjusted for productivity, average labour costs will beat Japan by 18%, Germany 34%, and France 35%." The study doesn't bother to mention what this will mean for US workers, of course. Their losses to the gods of competitiveness are capitalists' gains!

To take an example, US auto sales have soared to levels unseen since before the economic crisis first struck. Corporate profits are growing

at a record pace.

How do they do it?

First, the US auto industry received massive tax-payer bailouts from the Obama administration, but only on the condition that they close plants and lay off workers! So much for the Democratic Party friends of labour.

Secondly, the industry produces the same amount of vehicles with less than 80% of the former workers, a forced-march increase in productivity.

And thirdly, at United Auto Worker unionized plants, the union submitted to deep concessions. Entry level UAW workers now make \$15.78 an hour, a rate commensurate with an annual wage a mere 12% above the level defined by the Federal government as "living in or near poverty." Once, the UAW wage and benefit package was the gold star of industrial unionism!

Because of their total capitulation to the auto industry bosses, the leaders of the once proud UAW have resorted to pursuing the organization of the Chattanooga, Tennessee Volkswagen plant by sneaking through the back door. They hope to use a European Union regulation and their cozy relation with the company to secure recognition. How else to "win" a non-union shop when union and non-union wages are virtually equal? (Actually, when relative costs-of-living are factored, they are sometimes better in non-union plants).

Indeed, there is no class war when one side is always in retreat. The rout can only be reversed if workers shed their blind support for the Democratic Party and vigorously exercise their independence. The rout can only be reversed when workers transform their unions into class-struggle weapons and launch a counter-offensive.

The future doesn't have to continue with the past. ●



economy can begin without an acknowledgment of class. The existence of social classes is the unwelcome analytic tool that capitalist apologists devote careers to denying. Media savants and academic authorities choke on the word "class." To them, class division is a distant memory of hereditary aristocrats and down-trodden peasants. Surely, they affirm, the rise of representative government has eradicated class distinctions.

To avoid the obvious, liberals and so-called "progressives" have created a class that simply hangs in the air, absent any supporting structures: the middle class! A favoured idea embraced by politicians, top labour leaders, and social workers, the middle class is said to shrink, decline, or disappear; yet no one tells us where the lost members go!

This slick trick hopes to mask the simple fact that the US is not a classless society.

Contrary to popular mythology, social life in the US is not all harmony and bliss. Instead, it is one of conflicting and incompatible interests. Moreover, the sharpest differences, the differences that determine material well-being, are differences of social class. The great contribution of Marxism is to reveal exactly how class is best understood - not as social position, profession, or subjective perception, but as a material relation between employer and employee. That is, the most useful discrete divide is between those who engage the labour of others and those who provide that labour. The former constitutes a class of employers and their minions; the latter - a much larger group - constitutes the working class.

Even a casual reflection on the relation between the two classes in capitalist society exposes a sharp and irreconcilable difference of interest. Those who employ labour share no other goal than maximizing the profit of their enterprises. Put simply, from the Mom and Pop store to the largest monopoly corporation, owners are in business to make money. While small enterprises are limited in scope and intensity, larger enterprises, especially those with investors and shareholders, are

to be shared with the worker, the more that can go toward profit.

Since the dawn of capitalism, workers have recognized the divergence of interest between profit maximization and realizing their desire to improve their economic standing. They have understood the necessity of fighting to both maintain and expand their share of the fruits of economic activity. The history of labour is a history of the development of the instruments (unions, political parties), techniques (unity, strikes, demonstrations), and ideology (class, class consciousness, class struggle) necessary to secure a greater share of the surplus generated by the labour process. And among the most advanced, visionary workers, a world entirely free of the employer/employee relationship, a world without exploitation, a world of common, social ownership, is the goal.

Thus, we can and should measure the success or failure of the working class movement by how well it has fared in the battle with employers for a greater share of that surplus.

And by that measure, or any other, not only the last five years have been a disaster, but the previous three decades as well. Income and wealth distribution has shifted dramatically in favour of the employer class and its attendants. The rich are winning a class war for the lion's share of socially produced wealth. The working class is losing even the gains of the past.

How does this happen?

While the employers have mounted an aggressive assault on workers' wages and benefits, ostensible workers' organizations have failed workers.

The Democratic Party enjoyed the support of the working class thanks to both real and imagined gains won through the New Deal of the 1930s. In the ensuing years, that high point of labour-friendliness dissipated, with its last echoes embodied in the 1978 Democratic Party platform. Of course that platform was betrayed by the Democrat President-elect, James Carter. Never again did the Democratic Party embrace labour's cause, despite Don Quixote-like

## Economic winners and losers

\* **Operating profits** reported by corporations in Canada have edged down slightly this year, but remain at historic levels. Statistics Canada reported in August that corporations earned \$72.2 billion in operating profits in the second quarter of 2013. That marked a decline of 0.8% from the previous quarter, which was a drop of 2.8% from the final three months of 2012. These figures point to a total of some \$290 billion for this calendar year, the highest in Canadian history. Just as significant, the 2013 numbers are a huge jump over just four years ago; in 2009, total corporate operating profits were in the \$200 billion range, following the fiscal meltdown of September 2008. ●

\* In the winner-take-all world of corporate capitalism, on Sept. 20 **BlackBerry** stock closed down \$1.74, a drop of 16%, to \$9.08 on the TSE. The company expects to post a loss of US\$950 million when it reports second-quarter earnings. But the real victims are BlackBerry employees, 4,500 of whom will be laid off as the company tries to cut operating costs by 50% by next June. ●

\* **Canadians who lose their jobs** are less likely to get EI benefits than at any other time on record. StatsCan says the number of EI recipients fell by 2.1% in July, to just under 504,000, similar to the numbers before the labour-market downturn in 2008. Unfortunately, the total number of jobless is still 300,000 higher. There are nearly 1.4 million unemployed people in Canada today, versus 1.1 million in September 2008, when the collapse of Lehman Brothers triggered the global financial crisis. According to Erin Weir, an economist for the United Steelworkers, the proportion of unemployed Canadians receiving regular EI benefits was 36.5% in July, the lowest on record. As recently as 2007, 45% of unemployed qualified for EI benefits. Weir also noted that the number of Canadians applying for the first time for EI, or renewing their EI benefits, jumped by 3.4%, suggesting the job market weakened even as EI benefits rolled out to fewer people. The Harper government toughened EI rules earlier this year, creating more complex standards to keep benefits and a new requirement that beneficiaries who have used EI frequently have to take any job available to them and accept as much as a 30-per-cent pay cut. ●



# The fightback against EI cuts continues

From <http://rebelyouth-magazine.blogspot.ca>

Public pressure against the Harper Conservative government's recent Employment Insurance (EI) reforms will continue this fall, as labour and community activists move forward with one of the more dynamic and united union-led fightbacks Québec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia have seen in recent years.

While the protest movement developed over the past year in response to a "double round" of EI cuts effecting the whole country, they've spread like wild-fire especially across French-speaking Acadian and Québécois cities and towns, and even villages.

This is because the double round of attacks to EI by the Harper Tories after the 2012 federal budget is disproportionately impacting workers in seasonal industries. It is a reality linked with long-standing questions of the economic underdevelopment across Canada and social inequalities faced by the French-speaking national communities.

## Three tiers

The first round of cuts were implemented in January, when Service Canada divided the unemployed into three "tiers" or categories of "users" - based no longer just on paid experience in the workforce (not "under the table" work), but also experience with collecting EI.

Workers with no history of collecting EI make tier one, "repeat occasional users" fit into tier two, while "regular users" are tier three. Workers' ability to launch appeals was also effectively scaled-back, and special measures for seasonal economies have been unilaterally cancelled.

## EI harder to get

The cuts push those who have needed EI before, or remain unemployed for longer than a few months, to accept any work they can find - even if it is 70% lower than their previous pay and an almost an hour drive (one-way) from the worker's home.

The second round, implemented in April, drastically reduces eligibility for EI. As *Toronto Star* columnist Carol Gore wrote (April 10), "the essence of this change is that the government has pushed the threshold to qualify for the most generous form of EI treatment out of reach for most Canadians."

Even before the cuts, maximum weekly benefits had shrunk from \$604 in 1996 to an average of just \$335 per week in 2012. Less than 40 per cent of unemployed workers, and even fewer women, actually qualify for EI.

## National Question

While the cuts to the Employment Insurance system hit all workers across Canada, they are designed to have a particular punch in areas where workers can only find seasonal employment.

As Guillaume Bourgault-Coté writing in the newspaper *Le Devoir* (May 30) showed, while only 27.3% of EI claimants were considered "tier three" or "frequent users" according to the new



Le Mouvement Autonome et Solidaire des Sans-emploi (MASS), the Independent and United Movement of the Unemployed) at the May Day march by 50,000 in Montréal.

definitions, 72% of frequent users across Canada were in Québec and the four Atlantic provinces.

"Québec alone provides 160,000 of the total 387,000 providers of this group (which is a little over a third of all the unemployed people in Québec)," Bourgault-Coté wrote, drawing from a 2012 report on EI Monitoring and Assessment. While Atlantic frequent users represent between 42.8% (Nova Scotia) and 61.4% (Newfoundland) of all claimants, Alberta has just 8.9% of frequent claimants, the lowest rate in the country.

The statistics show the overlap between regions with a high Acadian and Québécois population, where there is long-standing economic underdevelopment, and those impacted by EI. Perhaps it is not surprising that these are the communities where the fightback has been the strongest.

## East Coast protest movement

A wave of actions took place across New Brunswick and Nova Scotia last winter and into the spring. Quiet towns and tiny villages across New Brunswick's Acadian peninsula, including Campbellton, Inkerman, Tracadie-Sheila, and Miramichi saw large crowds of angry residents up in arms against the EI reforms. Up to six hundred workers and families blocked traffic and, in some cases, occupied Service Canada offices.

Larger centers such as Shediac, Moncton, Fredericton, and Saint-Quentin also saw protests as did a number of communities across Nova Scotia including Sydney, Antigonish, Truro, Bridgewater, and Halifax.

"What Ottawa seems to disregard is that rural communities are almost devoid of year-long employment industries," Michel Richard, an organizer with the Maritime Fishermen's Union and spokesperson for a New Brunswick coalition against the EI reforms, told CBC News.

## Work seasonal, not workers

Last year, EI usage in New Brunswick averaged 35,019 workers. Some months as many as 45,830 workers were reported to be collecting.

"We have to demystify this myth that there are seasonal workers; it is a derogatory way of speaking because these workers actually

depend on seasonal work because so many activities in the Atlantic rural areas, the fisheries, agriculture, etc. are seasonal. It is the work that is seasonal," Richard told another news source.

"The government has never shown any interest in building infrastructure in rural and coastal areas so that there can be work all year long" he said, noting that depletion of fishing stocks had led to a reduced fishing season.

## Petition strikes a chord

When Acadian Guy Lanteigne started an online petition from his New Brunswick home, he hardly expected it to reach 34,000 Canadians coast to coast.

But Lanteigne's petition quickly earned the support of a wide range of community groups in New Brunswick including the Association of Francophone Seniors, the Association of Francophone Municipalities, the Union of Municipalities, the Francophone Literacy Association, and the Acadian Society, as well as labour support including the New Brunswick Federation of Labour.

All four provincial governments in the Atlantic, including two Conservative ones, have gone on record with some form of opposition to the federal Conservative EI reforms. The Atlantic Episcopal Assembly of Catholic Bishops also issued an open letter in May expressing "our understanding, our support and our solidarity in this struggle for a more compassionate, equitable and fair system of [EI] assistance."

## Major fightback in Québec

Even larger demonstrations have taken place in Québec. Every city in that province has seen some form of action opposing the EI reforms. Almost a hundred citizens' assemblies on EI have taken place drawing over 10,000 participants.

The biggest anti-EI reform mobilization was held in Montréal to mark May Day. The march drew over 50,000 people into the streets. Although relatively under-reported by the corporate media outside of Québec, the demo was likely the largest mass protest in Canada since the Québec student strike.

Organizing continued this past summer. The education group Mouvement Action-Chomage de Montréal (Montreal Unemployment Action Movement) recently convened an early-September

planning meeting to strategize for the days ahead, when the impact of the reforms will begin to be felt, with plans for continued action including occupations of government buildings and political offices.

## The whistle blower

When Sylvie Therrien took her job at Service Canada, she never intended to be a whistle blower. Now she is suspended without pay and subject to a witch-hunt by the government, all because she leaked documents that put wind in the sails of the Employment Insurance fightback.

Therrien's leak, coming after months of actions in these communities, exploded like a small bomb by scandalizing the public that Service Canada had placed quotas to find \$485,000 in "savings" by denying EI claims.

Pressure tactics included checking addresses, bank accounts, medical documents, physical appearances, and even banging on the door of claimant's homes demanding an interrogation-style interview with twenty-three questions.

## More scandals

Québec organizers have exposed other scandals involving EI, including the case of a man whose active claim was terminated after Service Canada unsuccessfully called his house several times, to see if he was working. The problem is, each time Service Canada called, he was at a



"Whistle-blower" Sylvie Therrien

local job-search workshop organized by the government.

Now the worker is weaving his way through the new appeals process, trying to win back his claim. But as part of the EI reforms the Tories have abolished the old Employment Insurance Boards of Referees, which included a representative from business and labour, as well as a chairperson.

Already, as the *Canadian Press* (May 21st) found recently, "as many as one of every five chairpersons on the Employment Insurance Boards of Referees gave money to political parties, riding associations and election candidates while they served on the tribunal," breaking the rules of impartiality and bringing in \$37,000 in donations in total to the Conservative Party.

It seems like the patronage story has been repeated with the new one-person Social Security Tribunal.

Out of the 46 full-time members, "Six are failed Conservative candidates, one is a failed federal Progressive Conservative

candidate, some have unsuccessfully run for Conservative nominations, some have been on the executive of Conservative riding associations, some have run for conservative parties at the provincial level, and others have donated to the federal party," the *Globe and Mail* (May 26th) reported.

Critics point out that these are the people, mostly Conservative men, who now make the decision whether workers receive Employment Insurance - or are "thrown to the lions" without any social support.

## Broad coalition grows

All these scandals are helping fuel public anger in Québec against the EI reforms. The broad coalition Le Mouvement Autonome et Solidaire des Sans-emploi (the Independent and United Movement of the Unemployed or MASS) held its general assembly this past July.

"The addition of two new member groups [into the coalition] reflects the desire of working people and the unemployed to fight together against these unfair reforms, which will have negative consequences on the entire world of work," Marie-Hélène Arruda, spokesperson of the MASS coalition told the general assembly. "The unemployed groups, trade unions and civil society organizations have closed ranks to express their opposition and speak with a united voice against the [Harper Conservative] government which instead, opts for division of 'the good' and 'the bad' unemployed."

## Class impact

The comments by the MASS underscore the wide-ranging class impact the Tories "slash-and-burn" cuts have beyond just those who are unemployed, either regularly or occasionally, or just those in Québec and Atlantic Canada.

"In the current economy, we are told, it is unlikely that you will make it through your life without being laid-off and have to search for a new job. In fact, we are told that this will [actually be] rather regular," Graham Cox wrote on the news site *rabble.ca* recently.

"The reason for this is not that we are all bad workers, but rather because that is the nature of capitalism. The economic system imposed on us has brought with it a reduction in secure employment and a massive increase in precarious work," wrote Cox, a research director with the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE).

## Women also hit hard

Earlier this year, CUPE released a brief stating the EI reforms will have a greater impact on women. The CUPE study used Statistics Canada's economic dependency profile estimating the economic impact of social welfare, pensions, and unemployment benefits.

Women collect unemployment benefits for considerably longer periods of time than men across the country (for example 30 weeks in Manitoba and Saskatchewan

see EI, page 11



# Environment crisis: can capitalism cope?

By Johan Boyden

*Oil spill creates toxic legacy. Government accused of muzzling scientists on climate change. Invasive species threaten wildlife. High cancer in Natives linked with tar sands: study. Global warming causing storms, freak weather. Park privatization bad for environment, union says.*

These kinds of headlines are all too common in the media today. Both in Canada and around the world, society is facing increasingly dangerous environmental crises.

It seems almost everyone agrees, at least in words, that not enough is being done to really turn the problem around. If anything, matters are getting worse.

Much of what scientists predicted and modeled about climate change ten or fifteen years ago is not only beginning to come true, but in some cases is proving to be an under-estimate.

Many more people die in Canada today of illness related to air pollution are murdered. Yet while violent crime rates drop, governments expand funding for police and prisons while dismantling many environmental regulations.

And while there still seems to be money for fighter jets, bombs and war, under "austerity" budgets no funds are available for children's playgrounds, parks for camping and nature - or even water filtration plants for over a hundred Aboriginal Reserve communities across the country.

Has it become too much just to ask that we live in a safe and healthy environment? Why are we always being told we must choose between the environment and jobs?

Despite expensive "smoke and mirrors" corporate campaigns to change public opinion, millions of people in Canada are correctly blaming big business as the major culprit for environmental disasters.

The destructive policies of the Harper Conservative government have in many ways put a face to the attack against the environment. Readers of People's Voice share the very real concern of Canadians about these issues.

Positively, growing numbers of labour activists, environmentalists, and other progressive-minded people are also calling for a new direction, to put Canada back to work while taking comprehensive action on the environment.

As the so-called "economic recovery" drags on, ideas about

creating new jobs, such as building tens of thousands of units of green affordable housing, and developing alternative energy industries, have growing traction.

Even the big corporate political parties pay lip service to such ideas. What is lacking is the political vehicle of a broad people's coalition to bring about such an alternative, democratic and pro-environmental agenda.

Is such a movement possible? Yes. Most of the major new social protest movements in Canada covered in our pages make a strong connection with environmental struggles (Occupy, the Quebec Student Strike, and Idle No More), or put the environment centre-stage (like the anti-pipeline movement).

The noise coming from the streets today, especially from young people yelling at the top of their voices, is that enough is enough. This is the sound of a brave call linking the rights of people and nature - not poverty, war and capitalist greed.

We need to make that call much louder and more powerful, resonating through the land, urging

united mass action for a democratic, pro-environmental and pro-peace agenda.

This article is the first in a series presenting an extended discussion about building mass action for an alternative agenda that puts nature before profits.

The article series grew out of a presentation I made to a week-long training camp of labour, youth, student, peace and environmental activists about building a united fight back against austerity, the Harper Conservatives, and corporate rule organized by the Communist

Party of Canada.

We made the case why labour should be at the core of the environmental fight back, the toxic relationship between capitalism and the environment, and the need for a socialist alternative.

"Reds" have a long and relatively proud history struggling on "green" issues. It is, we think, only "natural" that these voices have long been part of the chorus of calls concerned about the world environmental crisis.

Sustainability, to draw from the UN definition, is about "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future." Life itself has shown that capitalism is a highly destructive system which in many ways even threatens the existence of many animal species including our own. Capitalism cannot meet the needs of today, let alone tomorrow.

In reality, therefore, capitalism has no future. Could it be that real sustainability means ending oppression and exploitation, winning real democracy, peace and a socialist future for Canada? These are questions we hope to discuss in coming issues. ●



## Scientists warn about pace of climate change

By Bjorn Carey, Stanford Report 2013, <http://news.stanford.edu/news>

The planet is undergoing one of the largest changes in climate since the dinosaurs went extinct. But what might be even more troubling for humans, plants and animals, is the speed of the change. Stanford climate scientists warn that the likely rate of change over the next century will be at least 10 times quicker than any climate shift in the past 65 million years.

If the trend continues at its current rapid pace, it will place significant stress on terrestrial ecosystems around the world, and many species will need to make behavioural, evolutionary or geographic adaptations to survive.

Although some of the changes the planet will experience in the next few decades are already "baked into the system", how different the climate looks at the end of the 21st century will depend largely on how humans respond.

The findings come from a review of climate research by Noah Diffenbaugh, an associate professor of environmental Earth system science, and Chris Field, a professor of biology and the director of the Department of Global Ecology at the Carnegie Institution. The work is part of a special report on climate change in the current issue of *Science*.

Diffenbaugh and Field, both senior fellows at the Stanford Woods Institute for the Environment, conducted the targeted but broad review of scientific literature on aspects of climate change that can affect ecosystems, and investigated how recent observations and projections for the next century compare to past events in Earth's history.

For instance, the planet

experienced a five degree Celsius hike in temperature 20,000 years ago, as Earth emerged from the last ice age. This is a change comparable to the high-end of the projections for warming over the 20th and 21st centuries.

The geologic record shows that, 20,000 years ago, as the ice sheet

**Stanford University scientists report that climate change is on pace to lead to a 5-6 degree Celsius spike in annual temperatures by the end of the 21st century.**

that covered much of North America receded northward, plants and animals recolonised areas that had been under ice. As the climate continued to warm, those plants and animals moved northward, to cooler climes.

"We know from past changes that ecosystems have responded to a few degrees of global temperature change over thousands of years," said Diffenbaugh. "But the unprecedented trajectory that we're on now is forcing that change to occur over decades. That's orders of magnitude faster, and we're already seeing that some species

are challenged by that rate of change."

Some of the strongest evidence for how the global climate system responds to high levels of carbon dioxide comes from paleoclimate studies. Fifty-five million years ago, carbon dioxide in the atmosphere was elevated to a level

comparable to today. The Arctic Ocean did not have ice in the summer, and nearby land was warm enough to support alligators and palm trees.

"There are two key differences for ecosystems in the coming decades compared with the geologic past," Diffenbaugh said. "One is the rapid pace of modern climate change. The other is that today there are multiple human stressors that were not present 55 million years ago, such as urbanisation and air and water pollution."

Diffenbaugh and Field also

reviewed results from two-dozen climate models to describe possible climate outcomes from present day to the end of the century. In general, extreme weather events, such as heat waves and heavy rainfall, are expected to become more severe and more frequent.

For example, the researchers note that, with continued emissions of greenhouse gases at the high end of the scenarios, annual temperatures over North America, Europe and East Asia will increase 2-4 degrees C by 2046-2065. With that amount of warming, the hottest summer of the last 20 years is expected to occur every other year, or even more frequently.

By the end of the century, should the current emissions of greenhouse gases remain unchecked, temperatures over the northern hemisphere will tip 5-6 degrees C warmer than today's averages. In this case, the hottest summer of the last 20 years becomes the new annual norm.

"It's not easy to intuit the exact impact from annual temperatures warming by 6 C," Diffenbaugh said. "But this would present a novel climate for most land areas. Given the impacts those kinds of seasons currently have on terrestrial forests, agriculture and human health, we'll likely see substantial stress from severely hot conditions."

The scientists also projected the velocity of climate change, defined as the distance per year that species of plants and animals would need to migrate to live in annual temperatures similar to current conditions. Around the world, including much of the United States, species face needing to move toward the poles or higher in the mountains by at least one kilometre per year. Many parts of

the world face much larger changes.

Some climate changes will be unavoidable, because humans have already emitted greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, and the atmosphere and oceans have already been heated.

"There is already some inertia in place," Diffenbaugh said. "If every new power plant or factory in the world produced zero emissions, we'd still see impact from the existing infrastructure, and from gases already released."

The more dramatic changes that could occur by the end of the century, however, are not written in stone. There are many human variables at play that could slow the pace and magnitude of change - or accelerate it.

Consider the 2.5 billion people who lack access to modern energy resources. This energy poverty means they lack fundamental benefits for illumination, cooking and transportation, and they're more susceptible to extreme weather disasters. Increased energy access will improve their quality of life - and in some cases their chances of survival - but will increase global energy consumption and possibly hasten warming.

Diffenbaugh said that the range of climate projections offered in the report can inform decision-makers about the risks that different levels of climate change pose for ecosystems.

"There's no question that a climate in which every summer is hotter than the hottest of the last 20 years poses real risks for ecosystems across the globe," Diffenbaugh said. "However, there are opportunities to decrease those risks, while also ensuring access to the benefits of energy consumption." ●







# GLOBAL CLASS STRUGGLE

## Uganda teachers demand increase

Ugandan school teachers went on strike on Sept. 16 after their demands for a 20% pay increase were rejected. The government has long promised to raise teachers' salaries, but has struggled to meet spending commitments since Western donors cut aid last year over corruption allegations. In July, it emerged that tens of thousands of public workers including teachers and police officers had not received their pay for months.

James Tweheyo, secretary general of Uganda National Teachers Union (UNATU), said the union's 159,000 members would not go back to the classrooms when schools reopened for their final term this year, until their demands are met. In the past, the government has been accused of using security personnel to intimidate striking teachers into resuming work.

Uganda's teachers are among the worst paid public workers in the east African country. Primary school teachers earn an average 250,000 shillings (\$97) a month and their secondary school counterparts take home 450,000 shillings (\$177).

Embezzlement, the extravagance of government officials, and the rising cost of political patronage have exacerbated Uganda's budgetary strain, observers say. President Yoweri Museveni, who has faced protests against his rule, is accused of failing to punish officials who steal public funds and presiding over a bloated bureaucracy.

## Tunisia unions mediate deal

Tunisia's governing Islamists agreed in principle on Sept. 19 to make way for a transitional government and new elections. The coalition's approval of the plan mediated by the country's UGTT labour federation may open up a dialogue with its secular opponents and end the unrest that erupted after the assassination of an opposition figure in July.

Tunisia, where the overthrow of President Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali in 2011 was the first "Arab Spring" revolt, has been in crisis for weeks. Stepping in to mediate, the UGTT proposed a timetable for the government to step down in three weeks and make way for a caretaker administration to oversee elections.

"We have some reservations, but we are ready to discuss these points within the dialogue," a leader of the Islamist Ennahda party told Reuters. The CPR party, one of Ennahda's junior coalition partners, also expressed support for the plan. The opposition alliance, which includes some Ben Ali-era figures, was still studying the proposal a day later.

Angered by the assassination of two of its leaders in less than a year and emboldened by Egypt's army-backed ousting of an Islamist president, Tunisia's opposition held protests to try to topple Ennahda. The government now

wants guarantees about the handover before it steps down. Any new talks would still be fragile, but unlike Egypt, Tunisia's armed forces have stayed out of the political fray.



## Coal mine collapse in Afghanistan

A coal mine collapse on Sept. 14 killed at least 27 miners and injured 20 more in northern Afghanistan. Another 12 workers were trapped underground. Emergency teams rushed to the scene in a remote area of Samangan province, and bodies were being brought out of the accident site. Four rescue workers were also reported badly injured.

"We have 27 miners who died while they were working in an underground coal mine in Abkhorak coal mine in Ruyi Du Ab district," said Mohammad Sediq Azizi, the Samangan governor's spokesman. "They were working in a coal mine when part of the mine collapsed on them. We are heading to the scene for further investigation."

The US conducted an aerial mining survey of Afghanistan in 2006, building on data collected by the Soviet allies of the left-wing government of the 1980s. The surveys have found evidence of \$1 trillion of mineral deposits, a huge potential wealth for the country ravaged by decades of war and poverty.

But the latest tragedy is a reminder that children as young as ten are part of the workforce in Afghan mines. Earlier this year, the *Wall Street Journal* reported on a video showing child labour at unlicensed coal mines in Bamiyan province. With the backing of the nonprofit school in Kabul where he works, 18-year-old Fardeen Barakzai travelled through Taliban territory to document the conditions at mines. His film shows young boys coated in coal dust, labouring in the claustrophobic passages of a tunnel.

By Afghan government estimates, as many as a third of children between the ages of 6 and 15 - more than 4 million - take part in some sort of work, from picking fruit to mining coal.

## Strikes in Brazil's banks, post service

Employees of Brazil's banking sector stopped work on Sept. 19 throughout most of the country to demand a wage settlement and

better working conditions.

President of the Bank Workers Union of Sao Paulo, Juvandia Moreira, blamed banking executives for not paying attention to union demands. "Our objective is to affect technological areas and transaction tables, to put pressure on bankers and make them negotiate as quickly as possible with employees," she said.

Among other demands, the union is asking for an 11.9% wage settlement, a minimum wage increase, an end to cuts, better working conditions, more security and more job offers for Afro-Brazilians who continue to face racist discrimination.

Earlier in September, workers at the Brazilian postal service (ECT) also went on strike. The Union of Workers at the Post and Telegraph Company (Sintect) is pressing the ECT for a minimum wage increase, adjusting wages to meet rising inflation, food stamps, and protection of their medical insurance. The strikers also want increased postal deliveries, the hiring of more workers, and better customer service.

Representatives from Sintect and the Interstate Federation of Union of Postal Workers (Fentec) were meeting with postal service officials in the capital to try to reach an agreement. According to Sintec, a total of 55,000 workers remained on strike in several states by mid-September, about half of the labour force of the public company. The strike has caused delays in the delivery of packages and letters and suspended the shipment of goods to the territories where ECT workers remain on strike.

## Egypt raises minimum wage

Egypt's Cabinet has set the monthly minimum wage for government employees at 1,200 LE (Egyptian pounds), or \$175. Announcing that the increase will take effect in January, Prime Minister Hazem el-Beblawi said the decision is meant to "ensure decent life for citizens." The government is considering setting a minimum wage for private sector employees but has yet to decide the amount, according to the MENA official news agency.

Last year, the government adjusted minimum wages to \$100 per month. A higher minimum wage has been a longtime demand of Egypt's workers, who participated in the 2011 revolt that ousted longtime president Hosni Mubarak. The military-backed government, appointed after the July overthrow of Islamist President Mohammed Morsi, has promised new measures to boost the economy.

Earlier in September, leaders of leftist parties criticized PM al-Beblawi for saying that the government would not raise the minimum wage at this stage because the budget could not allow it. They said the government had promised to rationalize spending and lay off high-paid advisers to raise the minimum wage.

"This is a breach of the revolution's call for social justice," said Abdel Ghaffar Shokr, leader of the Socialist Alliance Party,

warning of a wave of protests if the minimum wage was not raised. "The government can raise taxes, rationalize spending or set a maximum wage," he added. "This would contribute significantly to social justice."

Majdi Sharabeya, secretary general of the Tagammu Party, said the government should get rid of the advisers. "If we set a maximum wage of 50,000 LE we would save billions for the low-income brackets," he said.

## Amazon hit by strike in Germany

Workers at two Amazon.com distribution centers in Germany have walked off the job in an ongoing dispute over wages with the online retailer. The workers union said Sept. 19 that a combined 600 workers stayed off the job at Amazon centers in Leipzig and Bad Hersfeld. The short-term strikes were to last for three days.

The Ver.di union is pushing Amazon to adopt wage agreements similar to those governing retail and mail-order workers. Amazon says its distribution warehouses in Germany are logistics centers, and claims the employees are already well paid. Ver.di represents some 2,000 workers in Leipzig and 3,300 employees at Amazon's Bad Hersfeld center.

## Honduran union leader attacked

The ITF (International Transport Workers' Federation, the global umbrella group for dockworkers and related unions) is defending a Honduran dockers'

union leader after armed assailants tried to batter their way into his home and kill him.

The attack was at the house in Puerto Cortes of Victor Crespo, general secretary of the Sindicato Gremial de Trabajadores del Muelle (SGTM), early on Sept. 14. The attackers left when they became aware that witnesses had awakened in neighbouring premises. They shouted through the door that if Crespo didn't disappear they'd be back in eight hours to finish the job, and that he should "stop making noise organising stevedores". The incident follows anonymous death threats telling Crespo to stop seeking a collective contract at the town's port.

The SGTM, in accordance with Honduran labour legislation, has requested a collective bargaining agreement with the stevedoring companies of Puerto Cortes. ICTSI (International Container Terminal Services, Inc.) won a concession to operate the port last February.

Following the attack the ITF moved Crespo to a safe place, and the Honduran police, president, the International Labour Organization, and ICTSI were all alerted. The ITF has told the Honduran president that Crespo has made two formal complaints to the police but has been offered no protection.

ITF Americas regional secretary Antonio Fritz commented: "This was a shameful and cowardly attack that we believe is linked to the union's legitimate and lawful request for a collective bargaining contract which, despite being repeatedly refused by the employers, it is certain to secure. We have no doubt that Victor is in danger of his life."

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

## Send me information on the Communist Party of Canada



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

**Central Committee CPC**  
290A Danforth Ave, Toronto, ON, M4K 1N6

416-469-2446 <info@cpc-pcc.ca> [www.comunist-party.ca](http://www.comunist-party.ca)

**Parti Communiste du Quebec** (section du Parti communiste du Canada)  
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Montreal, QC, H2V 4G9  
Email: pcq@cpc-pcc.ca Tél: 438-338-8890

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**Edmonton CPC**  
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Tel: 780-465-7893 Fax: 780-463-0209

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Calgary, AB, T2A 4L7 Tel: 403-248-6489

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Tel: 416-469-2446

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**Atlantic Region CPC**  
Box 70, Grand Pré, NS, B0P 1M0  
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# BRICS Cable to provide global internet alternative

## PV Vancouver Bureau

The President of Brazil, Dilma Rousseff, has announced the creation of a world internet system independent from the US-based internet founded in the 1980s.

The announcement follows the news of U.S. National Security Agency (NSA) spying on an enormous scale, including monitoring communications among Brazilian and Mexican government officials. Rousseff has demanded an apology, and cancelled plans for an Oct. 21 summit in Washington with President Barack Obama. The scandal will likely strengthen the determination of many other countries to challenge the economic, political and military hegemony of "Uncle Sam" and the NATO alliance.

President Rousseff has ordered a series of measures aimed at greater Brazilian online independence and security following revelations that the NSA intercepted her communications, hacked into the state-owned Petrobras oil company's network and spied on Brazilians who entrusted their personal data to U.S. tech companies such as Facebook and Google.

Even before these stunning

developments, the alternative infrastructure for a new global internet was under construction. The BRICS cable will link Vladivostok (Russia) to Shantou (China), Chennai (India), Cape Town (South Africa) and Fortaleza (Brazil), and from there to Miami, Florida. Brazil is also said to be preparing for an undersea fibre optic cable to Europe.

According to the [www.bricscable.com](http://www.bricscable.com) website, the project is a 34,000 km, 2 fibre pair, 12.8 Tbit/s capacity, fibre optic cable system. The estimated "ready for service date" is mid-to-late 2015.

The BRICS countries comprise 45% of the world's population and 25% of global GDP. With faster growth rates than the U.S. and other major capitalist powers, the BRICS group together create an economy the size of Italy every year, generating "profound new opportunities in global geopolitics and commerce."

The BRICS Cable will interconnect with regional and other continental cable systems in Asia, Africa and South America for improved global coverage. For example, it will provide internet access to 21 African countries, giving them greater access to the



BRICS economies.

Currently most of Brazil's global internet traffic passes through the United States. Brazil is not proposing to bar its citizens from US-based Web services, but wants their data to be stored locally to protect them from NSA

snooping. Rousseff is pushing for the United Nations to adopt new international rules on privacy and security in hardware and software.

Ironically, some U.S. observers have expressed fears that the new internet could be a "potentially dangerous first step" toward

fracturing a global network built with "minimal interference by governments."

That outlook is based on the argument that U.S. spying on electronic communications is not "government interference." It's a convenient assumption, but hardly likely to convince the countries which are being spied upon by Washington.

Still, there are questions about whether the BRICS Cable can prevent U.S. and other international spies from monitoring communications. The NSA has reportedly tapped into undersea telecoms cables for decades, leading some observers to warn that without significant changes to U.S. policies, such activities will probably continue. ●

## Appeal launched for Omar Khadr defence

*September 29, 2013 marks the first anniversary of Omar Khadr's incarceration in Canada. Concerned individuals are raising funds for Khadr's legal defence, a burden which has been assumed so far by his pro bono lawyer Dennis Edney.*

*The following information has been circulated in the form of an appeal from Gary Caroline (Caroline + Gislason Lawyers LLP), Kathy Copps, Peter Golden (Golden and Golden Law), Ruth Herman, Heather Marsh, Dr. Margaret McGregor, Aaf Post and Paul Tetrault.*

Omar Khadr has been held in custody for the past 11 years (largely in solitary confinement). He was captured, at the age of 15, in Afghanistan by the U.S. Army and held at Bagram Air Force base before being transferred to Guantanamo Bay.

Rather than identifying Omar as a child soldier and offering protection guaranteed by the Convention on Rights of the Child, the U.S. detained Omar Khadr without charges until 2007. Despite counter evidence, the U.S. military then charged him with "war crimes" (murder, attempted murder, conspiracy, spying and providing material support for the enemy) because "as an unlawful enemy combatant" he was "without combat immunity". These crimes (which do not exist under Canadian or international law) were created by the U.S. Government under its Military Commission Act of 2006. Without any legal foundation these charges were then applied retroactively to offenses alleged to have been committed in 2002.

In August 2013, Dennis Edney Q.C. filed an application of *habeas corpus* with the Alberta Court of Queen's Bench for an order that Corrections Canada release Omar Khadr from the maximum security penitentiary in Edmonton, where he is currently confined. The basis of the application is that Omar Khadr was sentenced as a young offender and therefore cannot be lawfully detained in a maximum security prison.

In exchange for Omar Khadr's confession to these charges, in October 2011, a U.S. military tribunal sentenced him to an additional eight years with the proviso that he could apply to return to Canada to serve out his sentence.

Omar Khadr is the first child in modern history to be convicted of war crimes.

Dennis Edney, an Alberta lawyer, has taken the lead to ensure Omar Khadr's freedom and has been representing him, at no charge, for the past 10 years.

His current legal strategy has four components: a *habeas corpus* application filed in August, 2013; an upcoming request to the National Parole Board for Omar Khadr's parole; an appeal to a U.S. federal appeals court to withdraw the convictions on the grounds that Omar Khadr's "crimes" were not recognized as such at the time of his capture; and a civil lawsuit to be filed against the Canadian government for violation of Omar's Constitutional and other rights while he was imprisoned in Guantanamo.

Besides this free legal work, Dennis Edney has contributed tens of thousands of dollars for expert witnesses, professional fees, disbursements, and he continues to travel across Canada and the U.S. to speak on behalf of Omar.

While Edney has received a

number of awards for his defence of Omar Khadr and despite great personal and economic costs, he has never (with the exception of a few small donations) received any public or private financial support for his work.

We believe it is time for fair-minded people everywhere to help Dennis Edney in this important fight for fundamental justice. Our goal is to raise \$20,000 and although that amount will not cover all upcoming legal expenses, it will indicate concrete public support for his fight for Omar Khadr's freedom.

Dennis Edney did not initiate this request. He supports it because Omar needs the help. Please forward this message to anyone else who might be interested. All funds collected will be forwarded to Dennis Edney, and donors will receive an account of funds raised.

To donate:

1. Send a cheque to: Free Omar Khadr Now Committee, 2497 East Kent Ave., Vancouver, BC, V5S 2H7 (Enclose email address.)
2. Donate online: <http://freeomarkhadr.com/2013/08/30/helpfreeomar/>
3. Bank Deposit/Interac e-transfer: Free Omar Khadr Now Committee, VanCity Credit Union, Branch 13, Account number 531590, [freeomarkhadrnow@gmail.com](mailto:freeomarkhadrnow@gmail.com)

**For more information:** [www.freeomarkhadr.com](http://www.freeomarkhadr.com)  
<http://freeomarkhadr.com/2013/07/07/backgrounder/>  
[www.cbc.ca/documentaries/doczone/2008/omarkadr/index.html](http://www.cbc.ca/documentaries/doczone/2008/omarkadr/index.html)

**To hear Dennis Edney speak about the case:**  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=1XYUjTT0i6U](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1XYUjTT0i6U)  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=WHHr-ro1gV4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WHHr-ro1gV4)



Omar Khadr at the age of 15, and today at 27.

## WHO refuses to publish report on cancers and birth defects in Iraq

By Denis Halliday, [www.globalresearch.ca](http://www.globalresearch.ca), Sept. 13, 2013

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has categorically refused in defiance of its own mandate to share evidence uncovered in Iraq that US military use of Depleted Uranium and other weapons have not only killed many civilians, but continue to result in the birth of deformed babies.

This issue was first brought to light in 2004 in a WHO expert report "on the long-term health of Iraq's civilian population resulting from depleted uranium (DU) weapons". This earlier report was "held secret", namely suppressed by the WHO:

The study by three leading radiation scientists cautioned that children and adults could contract cancer after breathing in dust containing DU, which is radioactive and chemically toxic. But it was blocked from publication by the World Health Organization (WHO), which employed the main author, Dr. Keith Baverstock, as a senior radiation advisor. He alleges that it was deliberately suppressed, though this is denied by WHO. (See Rob Edwards, *WHO 'Suppressed' Scientific Study Into Depleted Uranium Cancer Fears in Iraq*, *The Sunday Herald*, February 24, 2004)

Almost nine years later, a joint WHO-Iraqi Ministry of Health Report on cancers and birth defect in Iraq was to be released in November 2012. "It has been delayed repeatedly and now has no release date whatsoever."

To this date the WHO study remains "classified".

According to Hans von Sponeck, former Assistant Secretary General of the United Nations, "The US government sought to prevent the WHO from surveying areas in southern Iraq where depleted uranium had been used and caused serious health and environmental dangers." (quoted in *Mozhgan Savabieasfahani, Rise of Cancers and Birth Defects in Iraq: World Health Organization Refuses to Release Data*, *Global Research*, July 31, 2013)

This tragedy in Iraq reminds one of US Chemical Weapons used in Vietnam. And that the US has failed to acknowledge or pay compensation or provide medical assistance to thousands of deformed children born and still being born due to American military use of Agent Orange throughout the country.

The millions of gallons of this chemical dumped on rural Vietnam were eagerly manufactured and sold to the Pentagon by companies Dupont, Monsanto and others greedy for huge profits.

Given the US record of failing to acknowledge its atrocities in warfare, I fear those mothers in Najaf and other Iraqi cities and towns advised not to attempt the birth of more children will never receive solace or help.

A United Nations that is no longer corrupted by the five Permanent Members of the Security Council is what is needed.

(Denis Halliday was the United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator in Iraq during 1997-1998. After a 34-year career at the United Nations, where he had reached Assistant Secretary-General level, Halliday resigned over the economic sanctions imposed on Iraq, characterizing them as "genocide".)



# TIFF2013 Overview: ten days of amazing cinema

*Progressive Cinema by Bill Meyer, September 14, 2013*

The Toronto International Film Festival kicked off another 10 day run of amazing cinema Sept 5-15th. Long acclaimed the greatest film festival in the Western Hemisphere, second only to Cannes in the world, TIFF offers over 350 films of such breadth and variety that a diehard progressive could easily find dozens of films worthy of attention. Although 93% are world premieres from over 70 countries, sadly many will never hit the big screen in North America except at film festivals, cable TV or maybe Netflix.

Biopics were abundant this year with an atypical opening night featuring a non-Canadian film, *The Fifth Estate* by US director Bill Condon (*Kinsey, Dreamgirls*). Attempting to capitalize on the success of *The Social Network*, the story covers the beginning days of WikiLeaks and the eventual fallout between Julian Assange and his short-lived co-partner, Daniel Berg. With the script based on Berg's tell-all book, *Inside WikiLeaks*, it's not surprising who looks good and who is treated as an egotistical dictator, even though well-played by Benedict Cumberbatch, an uncanny look-alike for Assange.

The film sides with Berg, and Bradley Manning surprisingly, but fails to praise the courageous whistleblower who started as a young hacker in Australia and has gone on to become a hero for activists around the world. This film follows on the heels of another anti-Assange diatribe, Alex Gibney's *We Steal Secrets*, both denounced by WikiLeaks and its founder Julian Assange, and challenged on this website. A much better film about his early years in Australia, *Underground: The Julian Assange Story*, was released last year featuring Alex Williams in a wonderful performance as the young hacker. Also, Assange has been hosting a TV series on RT called *The World Tomorrow*, and you can get an upfront sense of his style and personality as he



Chiwetel Ejiofor stars as Solomon Northup in Fox Searchlight Pictures' *12 Years a Slave* (2013)

interviews world leaders - the real personality that does not match the maniacal portrayal in *Fifth Estate*.

A powerful film that also includes a great performance by the same British actor Cumberbatch, is Steve McQueen's (*Hunger, Shame*) brilliant

to return to freedom some day despite some of most cruel and inhuman treatment ever depicted on screen. It might be that it takes a non-American, in this case a British director who can help shed new light on our own sordid past. *12 Years a Slave* won top honours earning the prestigious Peoples Choice Award as Best Film of the Festival. This film will be talked about for a long time, and ranks up there with the great TV series, *Roots*.

Also at TIFF and similar in many ways - from the UK and based on a true story about slavery - is the magnificently acted period piece, *Belle*. A young mulatto girl is adopted into a family of class and wealth during the slave trade in the 1700s and issues of race, class and gender are addressed in the household of the highest judge in the country. A powerful story that eventually forced the British to change their laws on slavery.

An epic treatment of the life of the great Latin American hero, the Venezuelan General Simon Bolivar, premiered in the Special Presentation section of TIFF. *The Liberator* is reportedly the most massive and expensive film in Latin American history, with a cast of thousands, and many years in the making.

It covers the period from Bolivar's first marriage to his death in 1830 and features a rising star, the Venezuelan actor Edgar Ramirez, who starred recently in *Carlos* and Soderbergh's *Che*. This time he gets to play his country's national hero. It's unfortunate that the late President Hugo Chavez died before seeing this monumental depiction of the great fighter for Latin American unity that shaped his entire political career. ●



Edgar Ramirez as Simon Bolivar in *The Liberator*



recreation of American slavery, *12 Years a Slave*. A free Black musician in 1841 New York, is kidnapped while on a business trip to Washington DC, and finds himself chained and sold into slavery in Georgia.

Based on a true story, the film will easily be compared to Tarantino's *Django Unchained*, primarily because there are just too few films dealing with the realities of Americans shameful past. But this film is much more accurate and serious, and the unbelievable portrayal of musician/slave Solomon Northrup by sure-to-be Academy Award nominee, Chiwetel Ejiofor, is focussed and committed. Without blinking an eye, he is determined



## MUSIC NOTES

By Wally Brooker

### Victor Jara family sues alleged killer

On the 40th anniversary of the military coup that overthrew the socialist government of Salvador Allende, Joan Jara, widow of folk singer Victor Jara, launched a civil suit in the U.S. against a former Chilean army officer who she claims tortured and murdered her husband. The lawsuit, which will be heard in a federal courtroom in Jacksonville, Florida, accuses former army lieutenant Pedro Barrientos Nunez of ordering soldiers to torture Jara, and then personally executing him with a bullet to the back of the head. Barrientos is one of a group of officers who face criminal charges in Chile for the singer's murder. He left Chile in 1989 and now lives as a U.S. citizen in Deltona, Florida. Barrientos is charged with torture, extrajudicial killing, and crimes against humanity. For information see journalist Amy Goodman's interview with Joan Jara on the Sept. 9 episode of the daily online news show Democracy Now! ([www.democracy.org](http://www.democracy.org)).

### Portuguese soprano protests austerity

Opera singer Ana Maria Pinto has become a prominent figure in Portugal's anti-austerity movement, lending her soaring voice to numerous protests. It began last year, when the singer was in Lisbon to attend President Anibal Cavaco Silva's Republic Day address to the nation. At the 18th-century courtyard where the ceremony was held, Pinto found herself among a crowd of locked-out protesters. The President had broken with protocol, allowing only invited dignitaries inside the courtyard. Towards the end of his speech the gates were opened and the protesters (Pinto included) rushed in. As the singer describes it, she immediately filled her lungs and burst into song, drowning out the President and confusing dignitaries who thought that an opera singer must be a part of the ceremony. Pinto has become a regular at anti-austerity protests, singing solo and leading sing-along's of songs of struggle, including two classic anti-fascist songs by the Portuguese communist composer Fernando Lopes-Graca: "Acordai (Wake Up)" and "Firmeza (Firm)". For more info: [www.npr.org](http://www.npr.org).

### Yellow Ribbons for the Cuban 5


Several prominent Cuban musicians, including singer-songwriter Silvio Rodriguez, have recorded a music video of the 1973 Tony Orlando hit "Tie a Yellow Ribbon 'Round the Old Oak Tree". It's part of a world-wide solidarity campaign to mobilize support for the release of Gerardo Hernandez, Ramon Labanino, Antonio Guerrero, and Fernando Gonzalez, the remaining imprisoned members of the Cuban Five. September 12 was the 15th anniversary of their arrest in Florida on trumped-up espionage charges. The fifth member, René Gonzalez, who was released earlier this year, launched the campaign in Havana with a televised appeal to the nation. Gonzalez urged Cubans to fill the country with yellow ribbons, describing the action as "a message from the Cuban people to the American people, via a symbol which, in the U.S. environment, is a symbol of love". The campaign continues until Oct. 6. To watch the video (sung in English with Spanish sub-titles) visit [www.thecuban5.org](http://www.thecuban5.org).

### Rovics returns to Toronto and Ottawa

The outstanding progressive singer-songwriter David Rovics returns to Ontario this month for two concerts. On Oct. 11 he'll be in Toronto at the United Jewish People's Order's Winchevsky Centre. Next day he'll be in Ottawa, headlining a benefit for the Marvin Glass Memorial Solidarity Fund at the Melkite Catholic Church. The globetrotting activist has recently been in Hawaii, Japan, Australia and New Zealand. His keen observations on local culture and politics can be found in his "Songwriter's Notebook" blog. Check out his Aug. 25 entry "Travels in the Occupied North Pacific" at [www.songwritersnotebook.blogspot.ca/](http://www.songwritersnotebook.blogspot.ca/). As with most of his recordings, Rovics' two new albums, *Into a Prism* and *Everything Can Change* can be downloaded from his website on a pay-what-you-can basis (<http://davidrovics.com>). For concert details see the "What's Left" listings in this paper.

### Sweet Honey celebrates 40 years

Sweet Honey in the Rock, the internationally-acclaimed African-American women's acapella group, is celebrating 40 years of music making. The group was founded in 1973 by noted civil rights activist and singer Bernice Johnson Reagon (who retired in 2004). While experiencing various personnel changes over the years, Sweet Honey in the Rock has maintained its high artistic standards and its commitment to women's rights, racial equality, peace and social justice. Despite many awards it has remained an "indy" group, so it's no surprise that it has launched a crowd funding campaign to raise \$35,000 to help offset production costs for the upcoming anniversary "Forty and Fierce" tour. A career retrospective double CD is also in the works. After 40 years, Sweet Honey in the Rock remains artistically vital and relevant. Visit YouTube for a brilliant 2008 performance of Bernice Johnson Reagon's "Ella's Song" (a tribute to African-American activist Ella Baker). For more info: <http://sweethoneyintherock.org/>.



## La Trova Nuestra

**Fridays, Sept. 26 & Oct. 25, 8 pm**

### "La Peña Nuestra"

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

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



## Demonstrators demand public auto insurance

### PV Ontario Bureau

BRAMPTON - Over 60 demonstrators came out to Liberal MPP Linda Jeffrey's office Sept. 22 to demand the Ontario government bring in public auto insurance.

Organized by the GTA West Club of the Communist Party, the demonstration heard from Surjit Sahota, Secretary of the Indo Canadian Workers Association and Liz Rowley, Leader of the CPC (Ontario). Sahota pointed out that Brampton had the highest car insurance rates in Canada. No fault insurance, introduced in 2010, did not lower rates. But it did dramatically lower coverage for injured drivers, many of whom have been forced to sue their insurance companies to get the benefits they need, and paid for.

Liz Rowley said the sky-high premiums and low coverage are all about profits.

"In 2012, insurance company profits were \$4.4 billion, up 24% over 2011. Those profits came from the high premiums and slashed benefits that the McGuinty Liberals brought in with no fault insurance," she said. "Ontario's rates are higher than all other provinces because the insurance companies are allowed to build in a 12% profit on every single policy they write. Eliminate the greedy insurance companies, and Ontarians can have affordable public auto insurance - which has been in place in BC, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Quebec for more

than 40 years. It's time the government got out of bed with the insurance companies and delivered public auto insurance. They're 40 years late and the public's paying the price."

GTA West Club spokesperson Harinder Pal Singh Hundal told Punjabi media that the club wanted to build a broad ad hoc committee for public auto insurance, involving everyone in Brampton who was fed up with being fleeced.

"We need to take united action now", he said, as demonstrators chanted "What do we want? Public insurance! When do we want it? NOW!"

In last spring's budget, in exchange for NDP support, the Liberals agreed to an NDP demand for a 15% reduction in auto insurance rates within 12 months. The Liberal minority government depends on NDP support to stay alive.

In the interim, the Insurance Bureau of Canada unleashed a massive campaign to block the reduction, arguing that extensive insurance fraud by drivers, not profits, is driving sky-high rates. The Tories are leading the attack in the Legislature.

But it's not just Brampton. Ontario drivers pay the highest insurance rates in Canada. What's so special about Brampton, except that it's home to one of the largest South Asian communities in Canada - a population the Tories recently attacked as job-stealers?

"The biggest fraudsters are the insurance companies", said Rowley, "aided and abetted by the

Tories and the government."

Premier Kathleen Wynne said in August that this "complex" problem can't be done in a year. In fact, estimates are that average rates, not all rates, will fall by 3% to 5% by January 2014. As Rowley said, "This could take five years, or maybe never".

The Premier says she does not want to create a situation where people can't get insurance because the industry says "You're pushing us too hard, we just won't write insurance for certain parts of the population."

"That's extortion" said Rowley, "and for that reason alone the government should move over to public insurance."

Rowley praised Brampton NDP MPP Jagmeet Singh for his diligent work exposing the insurance companies' profiteering.

"But the solution isn't a rate cut that will have to be fought and re-fought every year," she argued. "The solution is public auto insurance - a policy the NDP used to advocate, but has abandoned."

Citing the right-wing Fraser Institute which states the average cost of private auto insurance is \$1,281 in Ontario, and \$642 in Quebec with public insurance, Rowley said the choice is clear.

"We'll be back" she said, "and next time we'll be headed for Queen's Park. There's an election coming and a minority government that's flailing. The Liberals and NDP can help themselves by helping Ontario's nine million drivers." ●

## What's Left

### Vancouver, BC

**7th Annual Women's Housing March**, Sat. Sept. 28, 1:30 pm, starts at Cordova and Columbia (east of Main). Organized by Downtown Eastside Women Centre Power of Women Group.

**Left Film Night**, 7 pm, Sunday, Sept. 29 (screening of "Salvador Allende" and Sunday, Oct. 20, ph. 604-255-2041 for details.

**La Trova Nuestra**, evening of Latin American music and socialising, admission \$10, 8 pm, Friday, Oct. 25, Centre for Socialist Education, 706 Clark Drive.

### Winnipeg, MB

**6th annual Winnipeg Radical Bookfair**, Nov. 8-10, in the A-Zone Building at 91 Albert. Info: [wpgbookfaircityfest.wordpress.com](http://wpgbookfaircityfest.wordpress.com).

## News for people, not for profits!

### Toronto, ON

**"Songs of Social Significance"** David Rovics concert, Friday, Oct. 11, 8 pm, Winchevsky Centre, 585 Cranbrooke Ave., tickets \$15 advance/\$20 door, contact UJPO Toronto.

### Ottawa, ON

**Marvin Glass Memorial Solidarity Fund Benefit Concert**, featuring David Rovics, 6 pm, Sat., Oct. 12, Melkite Catholic Church 1161 North River Road (Vanier). Proceeds to assist students to participate in Ernesto Che Guevara Work Brigade, tickets \$20. Sponsored by: Ottawa-Cuba Connections, Solidarity Syria, CUPE 4600, Independent Jewish Voices, Communist Party of Canada (Rosa Luxemburg Club). Info: [www.ottawacuba.org](http://www.ottawacuba.org).

### Montreal, QC

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

## EI fightback continues in eastern Canada....

### continued from page 6

compared to 19 weeks for men). Thus for the EI reforms for frequent users of the unemployment insurance system, the so-called "third tier" workers, women will be most impacted.

### Underdevelopment

The CUPE research briefing note from March 2013 shows that lowest number of insurable hours for both men and women EI recipients is in Atlantic Canada and Québec. This indicates the degree of precarious and seasonal work in these regions.

For generations, families have put food on the table from work in fishing, agriculture and forestry in these regions which are seasonal employers. But other jobs like construction, tourism, public administration, and even education have seasonal lay-offs.

"The government has never shown any interest in building infrastructure in rural and coastal areas so that there can be work all year long. Still these seasonal sectors are economic engines in our rural areas," Michel Richard told news media.

### Punished by EI

This underdevelopment of the economy in the Atlantic and large parts of Québec is, of course, no fault of the local workers. Nevertheless, government EI has become an essential subsidy to big capital in these regions to keep their work force afloat on "the pogy".

Québec and Atlantic male

workers, as well as BC and Atlantic women workers, have just over 1650 insurable hours on average, and Québec women rank lowest in the country, at 1600 insurable hours according to CUPE.

This compares to just under 1700 hours for BC male workers, just over 1800 hours for both men and women in Ontario, and well over 1800 for men and women workers in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta.

Now, with the limitations imposed through the "three-tier" system, these so-called "repeat users" will have to accept any work they can find - even if it is 70% lower than their previous pay and an almost an hour drive (one-way) from home.

### Social future of crisis

The "punishment" is made all the harder by comments like those of the current Minister of Finance, Jim Flaherty.

Speaking in Parliament, Flaherty said in May of last year that there were no bad jobs. "I drove a taxi, I refereed hockey, you do what you have to do to make a living." As the editor of a Langley, BC, newspaper

said "If we could burn stupid like oil, we could run every car in Canada for a month on his latest remarks."

Flaherty's parliamentary biography also states he went to a private boys high school before graduating from the Ivy League Princeton University and then Osgoode Law school. His first career in politics was as a cabinet minister in the notorious Mike Harris Ontario Conservative government when, the news archives show, he proposed to solve the homelessness crisis in Ontario by making homelessness illegal.

The *Star's* Carol Goar wrote last April, "No doubt these measures will sharpen the private sector's competitive edge. [However] Over time, they will erode Canada's standard of living and reduce the resilience of its workforce."

In these times of capitalist economic crisis, it is becoming clearer that the destruction of programs like EI and the impoverishment of working people who create all the wealth in society, is in fact exactly what makes "the sharp competitive edge" of the private sector. ●

## REDS ON THE WEB

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

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

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

[rebelyouth-magazine.blogspot.com](http://rebelyouth-magazine.blogspot.com)

<http://solidnet.org>

## People's Voice deadlines

October 16-31 issue: Thursday, Oct. 3

November 1-15 issue: Thursday, Oct. 17

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

## Jules Paivio, 1917-2013

Jules Paivio, the last surviving Canadian who fought in the Spanish Civil War of 1936-39, died on Sept. 4 at the age of 96. Born near Port Arthur (now Thunder Bay) in April 1917 and raised in Sudbury's working-class Finnish community, Paivio was among more than 1,600 Canadians who joined the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion. In all, some 36,000 International Brigade volunteers went to defend Spain's democratically elected government. For over two years, they fought shoulder to shoulder with the people of Spain against a fascist revolt led by Generalissimo Franco, who had the support of planes, tanks, and soldiers supplied by Hitler Germany and Mussolini's Italy.

In the spring of 1938, Paivio was captured by Italian troops in the hills west of Gandesa and lined up with his comrades to be shot. He was saved by a passing Italian officer looking for prisoners to exchange, and spent the rest of the war in a state of semi-starvation in a fascist concentration camp. Upon their return, the Mac-Paps were widely regarded as heroes for their sacrifices to stop fascism in Europe, but shunned by successive Canadian governments, and targeted by RCMP Cold War tactics. Even though Canada fought on the Allied side against fascism in World War II, the contribution of the Mac-Paps has never been formally recognized. The Canadians who died in the Spanish Civil War are not included in the Books of Remembrance in the Peace Tower, and they are not commemorated in Remembrance Day services. Those who survived the war in Spain were never entitled to veterans' benefits.

Paivio himself served in the Canadian Army in the Second World War, training soldiers in map-reading. He graduated from the University of Toronto in architecture in 1952, and later became a professor and administrator at Ryerson University. Upon retirement he continued his dedication to progressive causes, including Veterans Against Nuclear Arms (VANA).

Paivio and other Mac-Pap veterans remained in contact with each other, helping to organize campaigns to erect monuments in Ottawa and Victoria to honour the Canadians who fought in Spain. Last year, he was awarded Spanish citizenship. Eudaldo Mirapeix, Spain's ambassador to Canada when the citizenship process began, said that through Jules, Spain was honouring all the Canadians who came to help his country during its darkest days.

As the Brigades prepared to leave Spain in 1938, they were addressed by the famous Spanish Communist leader Dolores Ibarruri, known as La Pasionaria, who said, "They gave up everything - their loves, their countries, home and fortune, fathers, mothers, wives, brothers, sisters and children." La Pasionaria called the volunteers a heroic example of democracy's universal solidarity. "You can go proudly," she said. "You are history. You are legend."

Jules Paivio was truly such a legend. He and his comrades will never be forgotten!



# Mexican miners: fighting to stay home

By David Bacon, September 9, 2013, In These Times

When Mexican unions assert the right of their members to continue living in the towns and cities where they've resided for generations, even indirectly, they quickly come into conflict with the federal government, as they have in Sonora close to the U.S. border and in Mexico City itself. Nowhere is this result - displacement produced by the suppression of labour rights - as evident as it is in Cananea, a mining town just south of the border.

In 2010, Manny Armenta, a representative of the U.S. union for metal miners, the United Steelworkers, led strikers' wives and children to safety in the middle of an armed assault by federal police on the miners' strike there. He'd just arrived from Arizona on one of his many trips bringing food and money to the strike. On the evening of June 7, the federal government sent two thousand police and soldiers into this small mining town - more than two for every striker. As darkness fell and helicopters clattered overhead, they charged the mine gate in riot shields and batons, filling the streets with tear gas. Miners retreated to the union hall with their families, and the police followed, barricading the doors and lobbing more tear gas inside. The union's leaders were already in hiding - the police had arrest warrants for them all. Armenta helped lead women and children down fire escapes and up through



Mineros leader Napoleon Gomez Urrutia.

the basement to safety in the darkness.

Two months earlier the Arizona legislature had passed the notorious anti-immigrant law, SB 1070. Armenta, who's spent more time in Cananea than at home in Arizona over the last five years, was upset by what he viewed as the hypocrisy and cruelty in routing

Both the Cananea strike and the widows' protests highlight extremely unsafe conditions in Mexican mines. At Cananea, silicosis-causing dust from crushed copper ore rises to miners' knees inside the buildings. Grupo Mexico disconnected the dust extractors several years before the strike, in retaliation for earlier

Canada to avoid arrest, where he's lived since, given sanctuary by the United Steel Workers. A government-backed effort to install a pro-company leader to head the union was twice rejected by workers, who reelected Gomez even while in exile. All the legal actions against him led instead to his exoneration, but the government still threatened to jail him if he returned to Mexico.

In June 2007, Section 65 of the Mineros went on strike at the Cananea mine over safety conditions. The following January, after police beat dozens of strikers in an attempt to break the strike, twenty-five thousand Mineros members struck in protest in ten mines and at the huge steel mill in Lazaro Cardenas, Michoacan, where two workers were shot and killed. In 2010, dozens more were beaten when they shut the mill down again and marched in the streets.

The government-dominated labour board (Junta Nacional de Conciliacion y Arbitraje, or JNCA) repeatedly declared the strike at Cananea legally "nonexistent," a decision allowing Grupo Mexico to fire the strikers and install a company union. The family of German Larrea, which owns Grupo Mexico, was a major contributor to the campaign of former president Felipe Calderon, and the president and his party control the labour board. After Calderon's election in 2006, the secretary of labour recognized a new, company-dominated union for miners. A rump election and the firing of fifteen hundred workers at another giant copper mine in nearby Nacozari allowed Grupo Mexico to sign a labour contract with this company union. This was followed by similar moves at several other mines.

Strikers at Cananea were trying to prevent a similar fate in their mine. "The government and the Larreas are making history, but backwards," the Mineros responded after the federal assault on Cananea, "trying to return to an era when we had no right to strike or right to industrial safety."

According to the Mineros, Calderon's labour secretary, Javier Lozano, held meetings with mine owners before bringing the police

into Cananea. He offered them government recognition of the pro-company union as a way for them to get out of contracts with the Mineros. The Chamber of Mines, in turn, hosted a banquet in Calderon's honour.

In May 2010, just before the assault in Cananea, Calderon was also feted at a state dinner at the White House. Steel union leaders met with Obama administration officials, asking them to tell Calderon that the United States wouldn't tolerate an attack on the miners. AFL-CIO president Richard Trumka and Canadian Labour Congress president Ken Georgetti wrote to Washington and Ottawa with the same demand. According to Armenta, officials "assured us they were not turning their heads away. That was totally false." Seventeen days after the banquet, police attacked the copper strikers.

Armenta believes the assault on Cananea miners was the consequence, not just of Calderon's anti-labour policies but also of tacit U.S. support for them. "Our government continues to give the Mexican government millions and millions of dollars, saying it will be used to fight drugs. But we see here clearly that this money is going to fight workers and progressive people. Our own government is creating this problem," Armenta says. "I condemn the Mexican government and Grupo Mexico. But I also condemn the US government for allowing this to happen, for not taking any action."

Smashing the strike led to the same massive firings that followed an earlier lost strike in 1998, and the destruction of the union in Nacozari in 2006. Waves of desperate miners, unable to find other work in their tiny mining communities, crossed the border into the United States as undocumented workers. In both Nacozari and Cananea, displaced people from southern Mexico were used as a new migrant workforce to replace fired union members, while the miners who'd lived in those border communities for decades became displaced themselves. ●

(David Bacon is a writer, photographer and former union organizer. His website is at [dbacon.igc.org](http://dbacon.igc.org).)



miners' families on one side of the border, and then criminalizing those who cross it on the other. "Especially in Arizona with the new law, all we hear about is illegal immigrants," he charged bitterly. "What do they think will happen here? Where do they think all the miners will have to go?"

That same day, police moved on the widows of 65 miners who died in an explosion on February 19, 2006, at the Pasta de Conchos coal mine in Coahuila. Five days after the explosion, Grupo Mexico, the mining and railroad giant that owns both the Pasta de Conchos and Cananea mines, abandoned rescue efforts. The company closed the coal mine for good, with the trapped miners still inside. Grupo Mexico and then Mexican labour secretary Francisco Salazar refused to make any further attempts to recover their bodies. Nevertheless, miners' widows camped at the gates for years afterward, asking for their husbands' remains. The same day that police fought copper miners in Cananea, other cops drove the women away from the closed coal-mine entrance in Nueva Rosita.

protests. At Pasta de Conchos, dozens of uncorrected violations for dangerous methane buildup preceded the 2006 explosion.

The Cananea strike involves issues beyond health and safety, however. The Mexican Union of Mine, Metal, and Allied Workers, or Mineros, used to be a loyal ally of the old Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), which governed Mexico for seventy years.

But Napoleon Gomez Urrutia, the Mineros' general secretary, took over the union in 2001 from his father, a PRI stalwart. Gomez Urrutia had much more militant and democratic ideas than his predecessor. He quickly forced employers, including Grupo Mexico, to concede much higher wage increases than those mandated by then-president Vicente Fox. Gomez helped defeat Fox's reform of Mexico's labour laws, a proposal recommended by the World Bank. After the Pasta de Conchos explosion, he accused Grupo Mexico of "industrial homicide."

The government reacted violently. It accused Gomez of corruption, forcing him to flee to

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16/13

### Links between economy and suicides

The links between the economy and mental health have led organizations like the World Health Organization to call for increased attention and intervention during times of economic crisis, since past recessions have been strongly linked to sharp rises in suicide. The International Labour Organization projected that 212 million people were unemployed in 2009, an increase of 34 million from 2007.

A new study in BMJ (*British Medical Journal*), tracking suicide rates across the globe since 2009, when the world was feeling the greatest effects of the 2008 economic downturn, found exactly this. Researchers looked at data from 54 countries, stratifying by age, sex, and employment status to see who was most at risk. Across the globe, the unemployment rate rose by 37%, and GDP fell by 3%. The suicide rate rose by 3.3% globally, which represented about 5,000 additional deaths. The U.S. and Canada had 8.8% more suicides than expected, and the European Union member countries had a 13.3% increase. Men were at much greater risk than women, particularly younger men in Europe and middle-aged men in the U.S. The researchers say that the true numbers may be even higher, since some countries, like Italy and Australia, weren't included in the analysis.

"The rise in the number of suicides is only a small part of the emotional distress caused by the economic downturn," said the authors. "Non-fatal suicide attempts could be 40 times more common than completed suicides, and for every suicide attempt about 10 people experience suicidal thought."

From [www.forbes.com](http://www.forbes.com), Sept. 18, 2013 ●