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people's VOICE

**Canadian Boat to
Gaza campaign**

See page 12

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DANGER ON THE RIGHT

Rob Ford: phony "man of the people," favoured candidate of the corporate elite

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Economic changes planned in Cuba

"Cuba faces the urgent need to move forward economically, to better organise production, to enhance productivity and raise reserves, to improve discipline and efficiency. This will only be possible through the dignified and dedicated work of our people. Today, the duty of the Cuban people is to work and do it well, with seriousness and responsibility, to make better use of available resources to satisfy our needs." (The Cuban Federation of Workers)

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Anti-war students

When Bayside Secondary School in Ontario announced its annual celebration of the Canadian military, some students refused to participate in a compulsory pro-war propaganda exercise.

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Labour leadership

Britain's Labour Party has elected a new leader. Will this open the way for change, or will the "New Labour" right wing forces keep control?

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Dangerous sands

The rapid expansion of tar sands development in northern Alberta is taking a deadly toll on Aboriginal peoples, wildlife, and the entire natural environment. It's time to put the brakes on this deadly industry.

Behind Rob Ford: Another right-wing revolution

Ontario voters go to the polls on Oct. 25 to elect city council and school boards across the province. As PV goes to press, right-wing candidate Rob Ford is leading the polls for mayor in Toronto.

Rob Ford and the wealthy and reactionary forces backing him are working hard to secure a right-wing majority on Toronto City Council, and especially on the city's powerful Executive Committee. Their not-so-hidden agenda is to slash and privatize municipal services, attack city workers and their unions, reduce local democracy, and open up the city to the developers and profiteers.

Ford claims to speak for "the little guy" by promising to repeal unpopular new taxes and roll-back "big spenders" and "big government". He knows that six out of ten families in Toronto would be in trouble if a paycheque didn't come in next week. He knows Torontonians are over their heads in debt. Can't afford to keep their homes if mortgage rates rise. Can't afford to send their kids to college and university. Can't stretch a

pension cheque to the end of the month. Are just barely keeping afloat.

The new taxes symbolize everything that's wrong in Toronto. And they symbolize the great injustice of working hard, and sinking anyway.

That's what Ford has tapped into, just like Mike Harris did in 1995 with the "Common Sense Revolution": a right-wing

A Message from the Communist Party of Canada (Ontario), 290 Danforth Ave., Toronto, M4K 1N6, 416-469-2446, www.comunist-party.ca

revolution that ripped apart health, education, and social programs, slashed social assistance by 22%, and brought us twelve dead and hundreds hospitalized in Walkerton, and Dudley George dead at the hands of the OPP in Stony Point.

What working people don't yet know is that Ford - like Harris - speaks for some of the richest people and corporations in the GTA. His platform will do serious damage to the city and the people of Toronto, and to working people, the poor and the unemployed in the first place.

Elect a Progressive Majority to Toronto City Hall and School Board

A progressive majority will fight to strengthen local democracy, not weaken it by reducing the number of Council seats and ensuring that only the wealthy can hold office.

A progressive majority will fight to improve and expand services, not reduce them or make them private for-profit.

A progressive majority will fight for affordable housing and transit, quality child care and accessible parks, recreation and culture; clean air and water and sustainable waste and environmental policies.

And a progressive majority will fight for a new financial deal for cities that will provide urgently needed tax relief for homeowners and tenants, and adequate and stable funding for cities and the municipal services they must provide.

A progressive reform movement, uniting all those who agree with a progressive vision for Toronto's future and who are willing to work together during and between elections for people-

centered policies, could defeat the right and ensure the election of a progressive majority in this election, and in the future.

A New Financial Deal: Better Services and Lower Taxes

Declining services and rising taxes have become endemic in Toronto because of the regressive property tax base which can't possibly provide for the range of services necessary in the city today. Furthermore, the Harris government's download of the costs of services has exacerbated the financial crisis in Toronto. And finally, corporations and the wealthy have demanded and received huge tax breaks and deferrals from every level of government, including the City of Toronto. These policies must be reversed, or the city will inevitably become bankrupt and completely stripped of its services.

Progressive tax reform based on ability to pay, would shift taxes off the backs of homeowners and tenants, and put the load on those most able to pay: the corporations and the wealthy.

By 2015 Ontario will have the lowest corporate tax rate in the industrialized world. Corporations can pay much higher taxes, and

still pay much less than they would in the US. What's missing is the political will, and the mass movement to force the issue.

Progressive tax reform and a new Financial Deal for Cities would significantly improve revenues:

- * remove education from the property tax, and cut property taxes in half
- * fund education and services from provincial general revenues and transfer to cities and school boards through statutory grants
- * return 50% of gas and road user taxes to cities
- * fund 100% of operating and capital expenses for transit; reduce and eliminate fares
- * upload the downloaded costs of health, housing and welfare
- * collect unpaid corporate taxes, end deferrals, and close tax loopholes

This election can become a province-wide referendum demanding a new financial deal for cities and progressive tax reform to put the load on corporations and the wealthy - those most able to pay.

Slashing municipal services is the right-wing solution to unfair taxes.

Funding city services through fair and progressive taxation that shifts the load off homeowners and tenants is the workable and democratic solution. ●

Young Communist League convention a big success

PV Ontario Bureau

The 25th Central Convention of the Young Communist League of Canada met Sept. 24-26 at the University of Toronto.

"I think the overwhelming sentiment of delegates was that this convention was a tremendous success," said Johan Boyden, re-elected General Secretary. "Our meeting sent a bold demand for a stronger, more united and more militant youth and student movement in Canada, fighting for peace, jobs, accessible education, the environment, and a charter of youth rights."

According to Boyden, the convention had many tasks - to make an evaluation of the main dangers facing the youth and student's forces today and chart a course forward; to identify the strengths and challenges facing the League now; and to make constitutional amendments.

"It was a heavy agenda and delegates showed great discipline,

I think," said Boyden. "They worked hard to keep a high standard of political debate up at all points, discussing the general situation of the young people's struggles, solving the necessary problems in resolutions, and keeping at it until 11 pm on Sunday night."

The major orientation of the convention discussion documents were towards reinforcing, broadening and developing YCL analysis and policy in the context of the Harper Conservative attack on the youth in Canada.

The first section dealt with the international crisis of capitalism and the offensive of imperialism. It emphasized that imperialism's attack on the youth was all-sided - ideological, political, economic, and military - but that brave resistance movements from Palestine to Cuba were confronting this agenda and demanding peace and sovereignty.

The economic crisis, now entering 'round two' has had a

particularly tough impact on the youth, the convention noted. More and more, youth are facing a choice of which side of the barricades they stand - with the working class and its allies or the boss.

The majority of the convention dealt with issues in Canada, including young workers, peace, students, the environment, and other struggles of youth for equality, people's culture and a democratic solution to the national question, and a proposal for a Charter of Youth Rights.

"The idea of a Charter of Youth Rights brings together all these areas of struggle in a way the YCL can now debate and dialogue with the youth and students about winning urgent demands from the perspective of the need for broad social transformation. That transformation is, we think, really a revolutionary process of uniting the youth with the working class and people's forces towards an anti-monopoly, anti-imperialist and a pro-socialist agenda," Boyden said.

Convention discussions paid particular focus to the fightback of youth and what holds it back: barriers to youth participation in trade unions, the importance of connecting with labour councils, the need for unity of the students against the right-wing attack on campuses, unity between English-speaking students and Quebec, and the importance of building the peace movement, blocking military recruitment.

Special convention greetings were given by Dave McKee, President of the Canadian Peace Congress, as the delegates marched out onto the streets to

participate in the cross-Canada day of Action against extending Canada's involvement in the war in Afghanistan.

Rejecting the original proposal that the YCL focus on the issue of



Johan Boyden

climate change, the convention decided that the League will turn its energies to the environmental crisis overall, with special attention on climate change. Discussion and argument sharpened the YCL's understanding of environmental problems like capitalist agro-industry.

"This means the League will be speaking about another issue concerning millions of Canadian youth," Boyden said, "and is also a very urgent question: nature or profits?"

The convention demanded the YCL pay closer attention to the struggles of young women, which are also important struggles for young men. This includes the need to defend and expand victories made by the pro-choice movement, violence against women, and sexism. A special fraction of women delegates brought forward

a serious discussion about recruiting more young women to the League.

"This convention shows the YCL has made a qualitative step forward in all-rounded way since our last convention in 2007," Boyden said. "I think it said: we're not giving up. We're here to fight. We put socialism back on the table within our movement. We're not afraid!"

There are objective reasons for optimism amongst the youth today, he added, pointing to resurgent calls for socialism, especially in Latin America.

In his greetings on behalf of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Canada, party leader Miguel Figueroa urged the delegates to foster communist principles and values and to continue their efforts to grow the future of the revolutionary movement. Figueroa urged the YCL to continue its focus on the 17th World Festival of Youth and Students in South Africa this December.

At the end of the convention the delegates elected a new nine-person Central Committee, (with seven regionally-based alternates) and representation from British Columbia to Nova Scotia. Five are young women; four are active trade unionists; six are student activists. The CC elected an executive of four people including Drew Garvie, YCL Ontario organizer, as at-large; Marianne Breton Fontaine, leader of the LJC-Quebec and editor of *Jeunesse Militante* as treasurer; Stephen Von Sychowski as Central Organizer, and Johan Boyden as General Secretary. ●



Some of the delegates at the YCL convention. (Photos: Ed Bil)

COPE gearing up for 2011 civic campaign

By Kimball Cariou

A year from now, Vancouver will be into a hotly contended civic election. Without spending limits or other democratic reforms, voters here will likely suffer through yet another campaign marked by bloated advertising budgets and little serious discussion on policies.

But as always, the Coalition of Progressive Electors will present a platform geared to the needs of working people, and a slate of candidates with deep experience in the movements for municipal reform and better public schools.

COPE members gathered for their annual general meeting on Sept. 19, at the historic Japanese Language School hall on Alexander Street. Built in 1906, the hall survived an arson attempt during the anti-Asian riots of 1907, and the racist internment of Japanese-Canadians during the early years of World War Two.

This year's AGM was preceded by an in-depth discussion on the crucial and complex issues around housing. A draft document that focuses on creative solutions to tackle the city's housing and homelessness crisis will be online at www.cope.bc.ca.

The afternoon session elected a new 12-member executive to guide the organization into the next campaign. The executive includes a number of COPE veterans, familiar with the rough and tumble of campaigns, and a wide range of new faces.

COPE's new External Chair - the public face of the executive - is cultural activist Marcus Youssef, a progressive writer, playwright, director and teacher whose works are performed across the globe. The new Internal Chair is Serena Talbot, who headed COPE's successful Outreach Committee last year. Involved in social justice, solidarity and peace issues, Talbot is one of many young people who have helped renew the organization in recent years.

In keeping with COPE's 41-year history as an alliance of labour and

social justice movements, the new executive includes several members with strong trade union credentials, such as fundraiser David Chudnovsky, recording secretary Donalda Greenwell-Baker, and membership secretary Mike Dumler. Nathan Allen returns as treasurer, and the correspondence secretary will be Vivian Pan, with experience at Check Your Head and the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

Rounding out the executive are five members at large: Brent Granby, president of the West End Residents Association; public education campaigner Helesia Luke; Filipino youth worker R.J. Aquino; housing and community activist Rachel Gold; and housing advocate Emily-Anne Paul.

"I'm thrilled to be returning to the COPE Executive in my new role," said Marcus Youssef. "This new team is a progressive group of committed organizers, and we're going to start right away getting ready for the elections in 2011."

The tricky question of COPE's relations with the governing civic party, the centrist Vision group led by Mayor Gregor Robertson, will be crucial to those preparations. Vision, with seven councillors plus the mayor, took over City Hall in the November 2008 elections.

In that campaign, the two parties agreed to divide nominations for council, school board and parks board, to avoid vote-splitting which could only benefit the right-wing Non-Partisan Alliance. Both of COPE's council candidates (Ellen Woodsworth and David Cadman) were elected, as well as three school trustees and a parks commissioner. The outcome allowed COPE to remain a strong force in Vancouver politics. As Vancouver and District Labour Council president Bill Saunders recently told a local paper, COPE's base of 20,000 supporters makes the organization a key player in the city.

But it may be more difficult to reach an electoral alliance in 2011. While COPE and Vision school trustees have cooperated



Some of the COPE executive, staff and elected officials at the AGM. Back row from left: Helesia Luke, Councillor David Cadman, Recording Secretary Donalda Greenwell-Baker, Councillor Ellen Woodsworth, Emily-Anne Paul, Parks Commissioner Loretta Woodcock, Trustee Jane Bouey, Trustee Al Blakey, R.J. Aquino. Front row: COPE's new executive director Alvin Singh, Internal Chair Serena Talbot, Brent Granby, outgoing executive director Rachel Marcuse. (Photo: K. Cariou)

positively, the situation has been more problematic at City Hall.

On many issues, the two parties have voted along the same lines, such as on transportation and expanded cycling routes. But there have also been sharp differences.

One of the most contentious has been taxation. Vision has reduced

municipal taxes on businesses, transferring more of the burden onto homeowners, a move which Cadman and Woodsworth strongly opposed. This struggle reflected a general trend over the past two years, with Vision looking for ways to stimulate business and development, while COPE focuses

on defending the interests of renters, homeowners, working people and the poor.

On the matter of civil liberties, Vision had originally moved to adopt bylaws to allow a blanket police crackdown against protests during the Olympics last February. Under pressure from civil liberties groups and COPE, those measures were scaled back or eliminated. But this episode also pointed to an alarming pro-business slant by the Mayor's party.

Neighbourhood opposition to "spot rezoning" has recently started to erode Vision's reputation as a grassroots party, a trend which could cut into their voter support next year. But at the moment, Vision still tops the polls. With the NPA still suffering from its devastating 2008 losses, Vision's inner circle may calculate that they could "go it alone", resisting another electoral agreement with COPE.

That could set the stage for a campaign marked by distinct political differences among the centre-left forces, with the NPA hoping to take advantage on the right. If COPE continues to rebuild and strengthen its membership base, the outcome could surprise Vision from both sides of the political spectrum. ●

Ontario students challenge "Support Our Troops" day

The Harper Tory government, with the active assistance of the Canadian Forces and the collusion of the mass media, has mounted a powerful campaign to compel Canadians to support to the military mission in Afghanistan. But despite this arm-twisting, a solid majority of Canadians continues to oppose the mission. Recently, a courageous group of secondary students in the Ontario community of Quinte West challenged their school's annual "Support Our Troops" day. We print here a letter sent to the local school board by Bayside student Mike Oosting, and signed by some two dozen of his fellow students.

Recently on September 10th at Bayside Secondary School it was decided to hold a "Support Our Troops" day on which students were encouraged to wear red in support of Canadian soldiers fighting in Afghanistan. Our school has been holding this event for several years now.

I am not against the event in itself, which is non-partisan in nature. However the way in which the event was managed has for the past two school years resulted in a huge infringement upon the rights that I as a Canadian take great pride in.

One of the most blatant violations was the forced participations which students were subjected to. The major event during "Support Our Troops Day" was a picture taken of the entire school in the bus loading area.

These photos were taken on break, between first and second period. Students were told, not encouraged, to go out and have

the photo taken. Those who objected on reasons of objection to the war in Afghanistan and/or the military were in several cases told to go out anyway. During the first year this happened to me personally. However this year I managed to abstain from standing in the crowd, though only after a lengthy and ardent refusal backed by my friends. During that day all teachers patrolling the halls became immediately defensive and irate once you refused to participate, even politely and with an explanation.

Such blatant indoctrination is an affront to the values of freedom of thought, belief and opinion as laid out in the Canadian Charter of Rights and freedoms, a document which as a free and democratic country is supposed to ensure that no higher authority can abuse us ideologically. This was also an affront to a student's right to refrain from participating in non-academic activities in the school community.

As if that wasn't enough, during that Friday and the days leading up to it the death statistics for 9/11 and slogans such as "support our troops, they're fighting for our freedom" were aired on the announcements every morning. These are indirect justifications for the war and an attempt not to imbue students with the ability to think for themselves and develop their own beliefs, but a deliberate attempt to foster pro-war sentiments among the student body. This is against several board policies, in particular those on Character Development (Procedure 225) and those that mention Responsible Citizenship (145).

I, the undersigned, would like to politely ask for the school board

intervention in this matter, as your receiving of this letter means that the local head of staff, the principal, has refused to take this matter seriously. If it would be at all within your powers I would like to suggest that this event be removed from future curriculum, or at the very least the more partisan aspects of it be removed. As someone who is personally involved in the anti-war movement I take this as a personal insult to my rights and freedoms. Below is a list of 25 members of the school community who agree with me on this matter (List of 25 signatures, with emails.)

We, the undersigned as well as the 25 above, would please like to ask that this matter be dealt with as it is an affront to the purpose of the education system.

Follow-up: On Sept. 20, Mike Oosting met with the principal at Bayside Secondary. As he reports, "At first he acted as if teachers were merely 'encouraging' participation in the photo shoot, but I handed him my letter along with the 25 signatures and explained five specific cases in which students had been forced to participate. After a lengthy discussion on the subject he gave his word that the problem would be dealt with and the photo shoot would be cancelled next year.... which probably means they won't even have Support Our Troops day. So, I'd say that's a victory."

We would certainly agree. People's Voice congratulates Mike and his fellow students, and we hope that their example will be followed by students, educators and parents wherever they face pro-militarist indoctrination attempts by the Canadian Forces and the Harper Tories. ●

Freedom to be parents without discrimination

(PSAC/CALM) - In a groundbreaking decision, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal has found that employers cannot discriminate against their workers should they choose to become parents.

Fiona Johnstone, a Canadian Border Services officer and a member of the Public Service Alliance of Canada, convinced the tribunal that she was a victim of discrimination based on family status.

The Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) refused to accommodate her request for more regular hours so she could arrange for proper child care. The CBSA told her that the only way that she could care for her kids was to work part-time. Johnstone was unable to obtain child care because she and her husband both worked rotating shift schedules at Pearson International Airport.

The tribunal found that the conduct of the CBSA was willful and reckless in depriving Johnstone of her employment opportunities. The tribunal ordered the CBSA to pay Johnstone for lost wages and pension benefits, as well as damages totalling \$35,000.

"This is a victory for all working Canadian parents who want to give their children the care they need and at the same time progress in their careers," said John Gordon, president of the Public Service Alliance of Canada. "Employers have the obligation to find workable solutions on a case-by-case basis so that workers like Fiona Johnstone can balance work and family."

The tribunal criticized the CBSA for maintaining systemic policies and practices that deprived Johnstone and others of employment opportunities due to their family status. As a result, the tribunal ordered the CBSA to develop a plan to prevent further incidents of discrimination based on family status and develop policies to address family status accommodation requests. ●

EDITORIALS

Crises, bubbles, anemic growth

More crises, asset bubbles and anemic growth. That was the forecast by "Dr. Doom" at the recent World Capital Markets Symposium in Kuala Lumpur. Nouriel Roubini, the economist who predicted the 2008 meltdown, fears a "couple of financial crises" over the next decade. The capitalist economy is "already in a situation which is going to feel like a recession," Roubini told CNBC, warning that the future holds more stock market "corrections," widening credit spreads, increased volatility and risk aversion, leading to "a shock for the real economy."

Millions of people across the U.S. and Canada are still in shock from the calamities of the past two years (check out the statistics on page 5). And the worst still lies ahead. One critical predictor is the ratio of household debt to incomes, now at 144% in Canada, at the top of the OECD countries. Canada's household debt total is \$1.41 trillion, an average of \$41,700 per person. One mainstream economist complains that "there are no signs the recession has altered consumers' willingness to borrow, creating warning signs for the economy". News flash: most working people use credit to survive.

More ominous news comes from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, which says that "for the first time in 30 years, a synchronized housing bubble has spread to six red-hot real estate markets in Canada" - Toronto, Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, Montreal and Ottawa. This steep rise in house prices "displays all the hallmarks of an accident waiting to happen." If (when) the bubble bursts, homeowners will lose a big chunk of net worth, with an immediate impact on the stock market, and of course pension plans.

Until then, the "recovery party" rolls on for the rich. Corporate profits for the second quarter of 2010 totalled \$61.7 billion, near historic highs. Boom and bust - that's the "never-ending story" of capitalism, until we replace it with a system based on human needs, not maximisation of profits.

No friends of rural Canada

A recent letter to the editor in a Saskatchewan weekly paper put it best: "Stephen Harper and the Tories are no friends of ours." Despite all their huffing and puffing about "defending the rural way of life", the Conservatives threaten the basic interests of most farmers and people who live in small towns and villages across the country.

Consider a few examples. The Harper Tories have done more to undermine the Canadian Wheat Board - the critical line of defense for most prairie producers against the big grain monopolies - than any government over the last century. The public and private sector off-farm jobs which help many farm families survive have continued to dry up during the economic crisis.

There's lots more. The Tories refuse to lift a finger to improve the abysmal living standards of Aboriginal peoples, who form a large part of the rural population in Canada. They keep sending the sons and daughters of rural Canadians off to the shameful, disastrous and deadly war of occupation in Afghanistan. Tory cuts to women's organizations have shut down many of the remaining shelters and crisis centres previously available to women outside major cities. Child care spaces are even fewer in rural Canada today than when Stephen Harper moved to Sussex Drive. Rural mail delivery, a crucial feature of daily life, is constantly threatened by Tory moves to privatize and cut back Canada Post.

Yes, Mr. Harper and his cabinet ministers will keep posing at local hockey rinks and Tim Hortons outlets, but these phony "cowboys" are all hat and no horse. None of them have the red necks that come from a hard day's work driving a tractor or picking fruit. Behind the bigoted rhetoric, the Tories speak for agribusiness and big oil, not the people of small town Canada.

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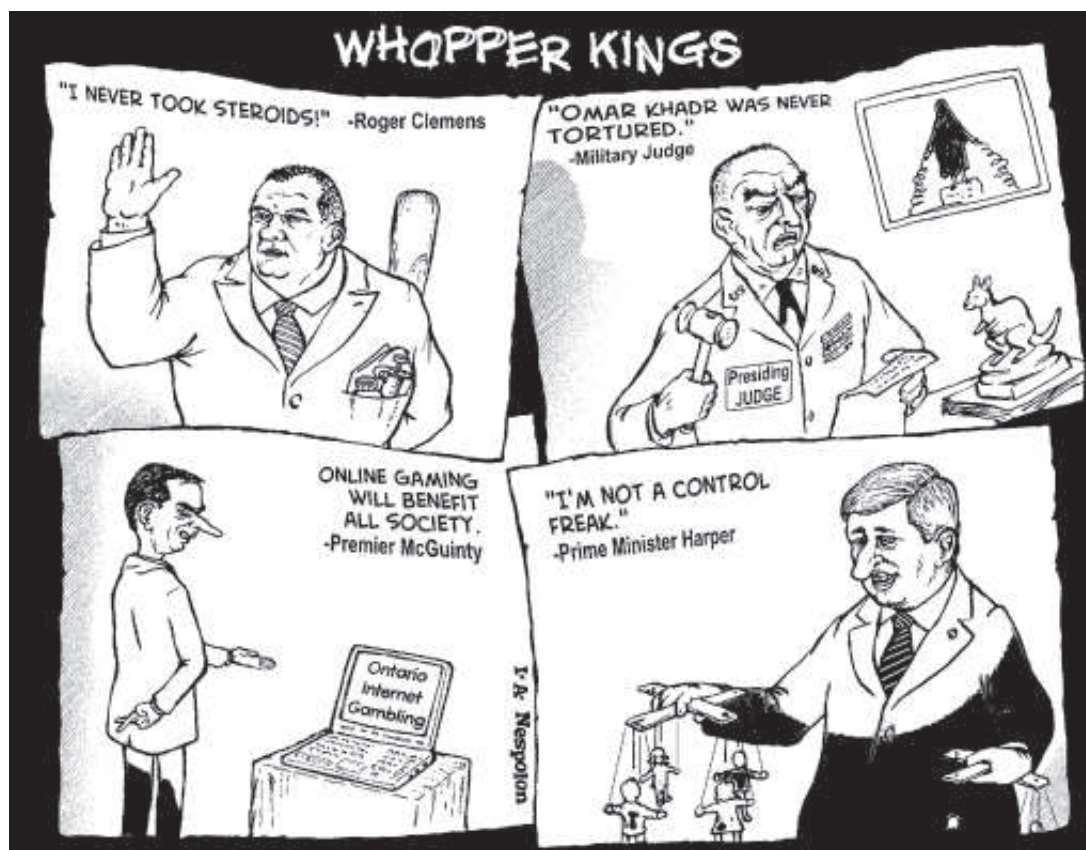
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LETTERS

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706 Clark Drive, Vancouver, BC, V5L 3J1 or
pvoice@telus.net

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Letters to the Editor

Canadian foreign policy should be made in Canada

The occurrence of planned homegrown terrorism in Canada is not so surprising. Particularly since the Gulf War of 1991, the Canadian government has been more closely associated with western nations that entered into a state of war with Iraq and Afghanistan.

Since the terrorist attack on the World Trade Centers in 2001 and the subsequent carpet bombing of Afghanistan and the invasion of Iraq in 2003, Canada has been militarily allied with NATO powers led by the U.S. that have had the intent to wipe out al-Qaida and the Taliban in the former nation.

In an historical context, it is significant that the foreign policies of the USA, the leader in the battle against terrorism, and Canada have been vastly different. Since the beginning of the 19th century, especially, the U.S. has been an imperialist nation that has colonized or occupied the lands of foreign nations on distant continents, for example, Hawaii (1898) and the Philippines (1898), Guam (1898) and Puerto Rico (1898). The U.S. has always maintained the military muscle to serve its own economic objectives, typically saying they have been acting in their national interest. Their fleet of twelve nuclear-powered aircraft carriers ensure that their might will not be effectively challenged. The enormous armaments spending in the U.S. is not so much for defence, as it is for global domination. Canada's foreign policy has been based largely on friendly foreign trade and offshore investments, but no motives to conquer and control militarily on other's soil. Until 2001, Canada's prime interest was in international peacekeeping, not being a warrior nation.

American foreign policy has been often immoral and irrational, that is, by invading or politically intervening in the affairs of other nations and, all too often, supporting corrupt dictators who oppressed their own

people. Examples of that international stance are legendary: the invasion of Panama and the capture of dictator, Manuel Noriega (1980); the financial support for the opposition to the democratically elected Chilean president, Salvador Allende (1973); overthrow of the democratically elected government of Guatemala (1954); in violation of international law, organizing the infamous Iran-contra strategy to thwart the Sandinista government in Nicaragua (c. 1984).

In the Middle East, the U.S. provided arms support for Iraq in their ten-year-long war with Iran. The Americans also provided Iraq with the poisonous gas that led to the killing of 5,500 Kurds in the North. At the time, it did not matter to the U.S. that Iraq was governed by the dictator, Saddam Hussein. What mattered was revenge against Iran. At a time when the Soviet government had stationed thousands of troops in Afghanistan at the request of the duly elected Afghan government, the U.S. had a bold strategy to drive the Soviets out by training and arming militant insurgents, al-Qaida, within the nation. After the Afghan government collapsed, chaos resulted.

American influence in the Middle East has often raised the skepticism and ire of Arab nations. Saudi Arabia, with a long history of joint American-Saudi petroleum exploration and production, was conveniently an ally of the U.S. However, as Saudi culture gradually became more westernized, critical citizens expressed resentment. Osama bin Laden was a Saudi who deplored the militarization of his nation by the U.S., who provided a fleet of high tech jet fighters. In the case of Israel, it is an established fact that the nation has successfully survived as a result of several billion dollars of annual military and economic assistance from the U.S. Israel also had the "gift" of the

atomic bomb from the U.S. Arab states that have felt the Palestinians were indirectly being suppressed and marginalized by U.S. aid to Israel, held antagonistic views of the Americans.

Canada, until the time of the Afghan War, was not the object of Arab/Muslim venom, until it joined sides with the U.S. and other NATO nations. The terrorist bombings in Spain and the U.K. should have served as warnings that military interventions in search of al-Qaida forces would only breed contempt and hostility. Arab states/Muslim leaders no longer regarded Canada as a neutral, harmless western power, whose prime interest was in peacekeeping. Arab/Muslim peoples domiciled in Canada are not in the dark when it comes to wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. They know how many thousands of Iraqi children have died due to exposure to depleted uranium weapons. They are capable of feeling the pain and suffering experienced by the war victims in the nations of their origin. The potential is there for violent extremism to erupt when the resentment of Canada's support for the U.S. and NATO becomes unbearable.

Foreign policy for our nation has to be made in Canada by Canadians. Now!

Roy L. Piepenburg, World Citizen
- Free Spirit, Edmonton, AB

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Correction

A sharp-eyed Toronto reader spotted an error in the article *Israel lobby suffers first major setback*, (People's Voice, Sept. 16-30, 2010). As he writes, "An otherwise good expose of the Israel lobby's attack on Pride Toronto misidentifies Bernie Farber as Executive Director of B'nai Brith. Mr. Farber is in fact CEO of that other bastion of the Israel lobby, the Canadian Jewish Congress." Quite so; we apologize for not catching this mistake in the editing process.

One step forward for UK Labour...

On Sept. 25, the British Labour Party conference announced that Ed Miliband will be the party's new leader. This commentary from the *Morning Star* by Robert Griffiths, leader of the Communist Party of Britain

The Labour leadership election result represents a defeat for the arch-new Labourites. Whether Ed Miliband's victory is a split in the new Labour camp or the beginning of a break from new Labour remains to be determined.

Miliband can either peddle a softer version of new Labour's neoliberal agenda of privatisation, public service cuts and pandering to the City and big business or he can support public ownership of essential services, progressive taxation and controls on market anarchy.

He can persist with an expensive, unwinnable and unjust war in Afghanistan or he can withdraw British troops and encourage a genuine peace process that allows the people of Afghanistan to decide the future

of their own country.

He can continue new Labour's support for a new post-Trident generation of British nuclear weapons under US control or he can oppose the project and challenge the Lib Dems and Tories to do the same.

other voices...

He can either capitulate to the lying, bullying, big business tabloid press with its hysterical drivel about Red Ed who stands to the left of Castro or he can take on the billionaires and pornographers who pollute political debate in Britain.

In each case, Miliband should be helped by socialists and the trade unions to take the second option - and put Labour on the road to social democracy.

Labour's new leader will quickly realise, if he doesn't already, that

the new Labourites like Jack Straw and Alan Johnson will fight to maintain the new Labour stance which has so alienated millions of ex-Labour voters and hundreds of thousands of ex-Labour Party members.

Miliband needs a shadow cabinet which will support social democratic policies, not a nest of new Labour vipers. He would do the Labour Party and the labour movement a favour by clearing the failed, discredited and unpopular new Labourites out of the Shadow Cabinet altogether.

The right-wing tabloids are already trying to paint him as a captive of union "barons" - namely, trade union leaders who have been elected by many more people than voted for press barons David English, Rupert Murdoch and Richard Desmond. The real danger is that he remains a captive of new Labour and the right-wing mass media. Only the most determined pressure from trade unions can liberate him from this death grip.

The Labour leadership election showed that the social democratic and socialist trends in the party are still very weak, while the openly pro-business, pro-war new Labour trend still predominates. These voting statistics should puncture any illusion that there is no need for the labour movement to fight to reclaim the Labour Party in the interests of workers and their families.

The notion that the movement already controls the party because the affiliated trade unions still account for X per cent of the votes at the annual conference, Y per cent of the seats on the national executive, or Z per cent of the places at the national policy forum stands exposed as the mechanistic twaddle that it is.

Politically, the new Labour

turned the annual conference into a corporate-sponsored jamboree with no impact on the leadership's policies.



Labour Party leader Ed Miliband: which way will he move?

Miliband, his supporters and the trade unions can either strive to restore democracy and accountability in the Labour Party or keep the rotten, corrupt and failed apparatus bequeathed by new Labour. But whether he will lead Labour to victory in the next general election will be decided much more by the level of popular resistance to the Con-Dem coalition's economic and social policies. It is in that struggle that real politics will develop as millions of people join the fight for a better

life and a better society. They would be naive indeed to expect much support from the new Labour clones and drones.

The key question is whether the affiliated unions are prepared not only to help build a mass movement against the Con-Dems and for policies such as those in the People's Charter but also to take the fight for this approach into the Labour Party itself.

If they try and succeed, Labour can be reclaimed and then supported with enthusiasm. If they try and fail, then alternatives will have to be considered including re-establishing a mass party based on the labour movement.

A 10-point programme for Ed Miliband's shadow cabinet:

1. Oppose cuts to vital public services and demand higher taxes on the super-rich and big business monopoly profits.
2. Close all tax havens under British jurisdiction.
3. Take the energy utilities and railways back into public ownership and use surpluses and subsidies for investment not private profit.
4. End land and property speculation and give local authorities the resources to build one million council houses.
5. Strengthen the equal pay laws.
6. Introduce a second state pension financed by employers, employees and the state.
7. Replace the anti-trade union laws with new rights for trade unions and working people.
8. Invest in non-nuclear renewable energy such as wind and tidal power and clean-coal technology.
9. Withdraw British troops from Afghanistan.
10. Scrap the commitment to a new generation of British nuclear weapons. ●

20 signs that the economic collapse has already begun for one out of every seven Americans

Excerpt from commentary on the *Economic Collapse Blog*, originally reprinted by *Information Clearing House*

The economy is falling apart, and somebody better wake up and do something before even more Americans find themselves drowning in poverty. The following are 20 signs that the economic collapse has already begun for one out of every seven Americans.

- #1. The Census Bureau says that 43.6 million Americans are now living in poverty - the highest number of poor Americans in 51 years of record-keeping.
- #2. In the year 2000, 11.3 percent of Americans were living in poverty. In 2008, 13.2 percent of Americans were living in poverty. In 2009, 14.3 percent of Americans were living in poverty. Needless to say the trend is moving in the wrong direction.
- #3. In 2009 alone, approximately 4 million more Americans joined the ranks of the poor.
- #4. According to the Associated Press, experts believe that 2009 saw the largest single year increase in the U.S. poverty rate since the U.S. government began calculating poverty figures back in 1959.
- #5. The U.S. poverty rate is now the third worst among the developed nations tracked by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.
- #6. Today the United States has approximately 4 million fewer wage earners than it did in 2007.
- #7. Nearly 10 million Americans now receive unemployment insurance, almost four times as many as in 2007.
- #8. U.S. banks repossessed 25 percent more homes in August 2010 than they did in August 2009.
- #9. One out of every seven mortgages in the United States was either delinquent or in foreclosure during the first quarter of 2010.
- #10. There are now 50.7 million Americans who do not have health insurance. One trip to the emergency room would be all it would take to bankrupt a significant percentage of them.
- #11. More than 50 million Americans are now on Medicaid, the U.S. government health care program designed principally to help the poor.
- #12. There are now over 41 million Americans on food stamps.
- #13. The number of Americans enrolled in the food stamp program increased a whopping 55 percent from December 2007 to June 2010.
- #14. One out of every six Americans is now being served by at least one government anti-poverty program.
- #15. California's poverty rate soared to 15.3 percent in 2009, the highest in 11 years.
- #16. According to an analysis by Isabel Sawhill and Emily Monea of the Brookings Institution, 10 million more Americans (including 6 million more children) will slip into poverty over the next decade.
- #17. According to a recently released Federal Reserve report, Americans experienced a \$1.5 trillion loss in combined household net worth in the second quarter of 2010.
- #18. Manufacturing employment in the U.S. computer industry is actually lower in 2010 than it was in 1975.
- #19. Median U.S. household income is down 5 percent from its peak of more than \$52,000 in 1999.
- #20. A study recently released by the Center for Retirement Research at Boston College University found that Americans are \$6.6 trillion short of what they need for retirement.

Report proves no action on housing in B.C.

A new report from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives uses data from the B.C. government to put together a realistic picture of concrete actions on the housing front, and where such action has been in short supply.

The report, *Unpacking the Housing Numbers in B.C.*, points out that "Most of the increased



government support in recent years has been focused in three areas: rental assistance supplements, new emergency shelter beds, and the purchase of existing SRO (single room occupancy) hotels. While these initiatives are helpful and laudable, they do not create actual new low-income housing units."

The number of households assisted by provincial housing programs increased by approximately 11,530 over the last five years. However, 63% of this increase (7,270 households) can be attributed to the Rental Assistance Program, while another 1,010 are individuals assisted through the Homeless Rent Supplement. Housing activists argue that recent rent increases faced by many poor people are linked to these programs, which effectively allow landlords to charge higher rents.

Another 1,420 of the total increase are new emergency shelter beds (not housing units), and 1,550 of the "new" supportive housing units for homeless people with mental health and addiction problems are in the purchased SRO hotels (rather than actual new low-income housing supply).

The CCPA found that there has been a growth of housing supply

in some areas, such as about 1,500 units of new supportive housing for the homeless, and housing for frail seniors. But against these increases, the province has seen a loss of 2,820 independent social housing units.

"Taken together," the report says, "the government's own data indicate an overall net increase of only 280 actual social housing units over the past five years, a sobering and concerning finding. In contrast, between the mid-1970s and early 1990s, with the help of the federal government, B.C. created between 1,000 and 1,500 new units of social housing per year."

The Fourth Annual Women's Housing March will take place in Vancouver starting at 2 pm, on Sat., Oct. 2. In response to the housing and homelessness crisis in British Columbia, the march will demand social housing, childcare and health care for all, no more evictions, and an end to criminalizing the poor.

Organized by the Power of Women Group, the March will start the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre, 302 Columbia St., located in the heart of the poorest off-reserve postal code in Canada. ●

The infinite hypocrisy of the West:

The plight of the Roma people

Reflections by Fidel Castro Ruz

The absence of truth is the biggest tragedy in our dangerous nuclear age.

Although several articles on this subject were published before and after Sept. 1, 2010, on that day the Mexican daily *La Jornada* published one of great impact entitled *El holocausto gitano: ayer y hoy (The gypsies' holocaust: yesterday and today)* which reminds us of a truly tragic history. Without adding or deleting a single word from the information contained in the article, I will quote some lines referring to some events that are really touching. Neither

the West nor - most of all - its colossal media apparatus have said a single word about them.

"Thousands of gypsies were deported from Belgium, the Netherlands and France to the Polish concentration camp of Auschwitz.

"1496: boom of humanist thinking. The Roma peoples (gypsies) from Germany are declared traitors to the Christian nations, spies paid by the Turkish, carriers of the plague, witches and warlocks, bandits and child kidnappers.

"1710: century of enlightenment and rationale. An edict ordered that adult gypsies from Prague be hanged without any previous trial. Young persons and women were mutilated. In Bohemia their left ear was cut off; in Moravia, their right ear.

"1899: climax of modernity and progress. The police of Bavaria founded the Special Section for Gypsies' Affairs. In 1929, the section was promoted to the category of National Central Section and was moved to Munich. In 1937 it was based in Berlin. Four years later, half a million gypsies died in the concentration camps of Central and Eastern Europe.

"In her PhD thesis, Eva Justin (assistant of Dr. Robert Ritter of the Racial Research Section of the Ministry of Health of Germany), asserted that gypsies' blood was extremely harmful to the purity of the German race. Someone called Dr. Portschy sent a memorandum to Hitler suggesting that gypsies should be submitted to forced labour and mass sterilisation because they jeopardised the pure blood of the German peasantry.

"The gypsies, were labelled as inveterate criminals, arrests started en masse and as from 1938 they were put into special blocks at the Buchenwald, Mauthausen, Gusen, Dautmergen, Natzweiler and Flossenburg camps.

"In a concentration camp he owned in Ravensbruck, Heinrich Himmler, chief of the Gestapo (SS), created a space to sacrifice gypsy women who were submitted to medical experiments. One hundred and twenty Zingari girls were sterilised. Gypsy women married to non-gypsy men were sterilised at the Dusseldorf-Lierenfeld hospital.

"Thousands of gypsies were deported from Belgium, the Netherlands and France to the Polish concentration camp of Auschwitz. In his memoirs, Rudolf Hoess (commander of Auschwitz) wrote that among the gypsies deported there were old people almost 100 years of age, pregnant women and a large number of children. At the ghetto of Lodz (Poland) none of the 5,000 gypsies survived.

"In Yugoslavia, gypsies and Jews were equally killed in the forest of Jajnice. Farmers still remember the cries of the gypsy children who were taken to the places of execution...

"At the extermination camps, only the love of gypsies for music was at times a source of comfort. In Auschwitz, starving and infested with lice, they gathered together to play music and encouraged children to dance. But the courage of gypsy guerrillas who fought alongside the Polish resistance in the region of Nieswiez was also legendary."

Music was the factor that kept them together and helped them to survive, just as much as religion was for Christians, Jews and Muslims.

The successive articles published by *La Jornada* have reminded us of events that were almost forgotten about what happened to the gypsies in Europe. After having been affected by Nazism, they were consigned to

oblivion after the Nuremberg trials in the years 1945 and 1946.

The German government headed by Konrad Adenauer declared that the extermination of the gypsies before 1943 was a result of the state's legal policies. Those who had been affected that same year did not receive any compensation. Robert Ritter, a Nazi expert in the extermination of gypsies, was set free. Thirty-nine years later in 1982, when most of the affected persons had already passed away, the government recognised their right to compensation.

More than 75 per cent of the gypsies, whose total number is estimated to be between 12 and 14 million, live in Central and Eastern Europe. Only in Tito's socialist Yugoslavia, gypsies were recognised with the same rights as the Croatian, Albanian and Macedonian minorities.

The Mexican newspaper described as "particularly perverse" the mass deportation of gypsies to Romania and Bulgaria ordered by the government of Sarkozy - "a Jew of Hungarian descent". These are the exact words used by the newspaper. Please do not take this as an act of irreverence on my part.

In Romania, the number of gypsies is estimated to be two

advisors to the Minister of Immigration Eric Besson.

"It was a dialogue of the deaf, but it is good that this took place, for it showed that most of the population was enraged at that nauseating policy", said a spokesperson of the network Education Without Borders."

Other news about this thorny issue comes from Europe: "Yesterday the European Parliament put France and Nicholas Sarkozy on the spot for having deported thousands of Romanian and Bulgarian gypsies during a tense debate in which the attitudes of Jose Manuel Durao Barroso and the Commission were described as scandalous and ridiculous for their apparent pusillanimity and for failing to condemn Paris' decisions as illegal and contrary to community rights", according to an article by Ricardo Martinez de Rituerto published by *El Pais.com*.

La Jornada published in another article impressive social data. Neonatal mortality among the gypsy population is nine times as much the European average and the life expectancy rate is hardly above 50 years of age...

"It is difficult to believe that in the year 2010," concludes *La Jornada*. "after the terrible past Europe had with racism and intolerance, it is still possible to



French police remove Roma families from a so-called "illegal" camp near Lille, northern France, August 26, 2010.

Jason Kenney's anti-Roma roots

From *Dawg's Blawg*, <http://drdawsblawg.blogspot.com>

On Foreign Affairs Minister Jason Kenney's desk is a picture of a convicted pro-Nazi war criminal, Cardinal Aloisius Stepinac, whom he considers one of his heroes.

During World War II, Stepinac collaborated with Ante Pavelic, the head of a pro-Nazi puppet state called the "Independent State of Croatia," run by a murderous gang called the Ustasha. They set up the notorious Jasenovac concentration camp, where an estimated 13,000 Jews, 48,000 Serbs, and 10-20,000 Roma were slaughtered.

"Hitler is an envoy of God," declared Stepinac, in a letter to the *Croatian Sentinel* on Jan. 1, 1942. The good Cardinal, then a mere Archbishop, was promoted by Pope Pius XII and beatified by Pope John Paul II.

Kenney, it seems, has learned well from his hero. He has now instituted visa requirements for Czech nationals, with the explicit aim of keeping Roma, persecuted in the Czech Republic, from seeking refuge here. As weaselly as ever, Kenney has relied on a recent report prepared by the Immigration Review Board to state that Roma do not suffer state-sponsored discrimination in the Czech Republic.

What he somehow failed to mention is that the state is doing little or nothing to prevent discrimination on the ground - at the hands of police, the school system, and neo-Nazi mobs. And the President of the Czech Republic, Vaclav Klaus, has blocked anti-discrimination legislation. Amnesty International has been all over this. So has Human Rights Watch.

But none of this cuts any ice, perhaps not surprisingly, with Minister Kenney. So we've shut our doors to the Roma, as we shut our doors to the Jews during World War II - another black eye for Canada on the international stage. And, once again, the agenda of the Conservative government has become a little clearer - and a little scarier. ●



Aloisius Stepinac, far right



From U.S. Holocaust Memorial Archive, this photo shows Roma prisoners near the fence in the Belzec concentration camp.

million. The president of that country, Traian Basescu, a US ally and an illustrious member of NATO, called a woman journalist a "filthy gypsy". As can be observed, this is an extremely delicate person who speaks in a polite language.

The website univision.com posted some comments about the demonstrations against the deportation of gypsies and the "xenophobia" in France. According to AFP, around "130 demonstrations should take place in France as well as in front of the French embassies in several European Union countries, with the support of tens of human rights organisations, trade unions and left-wing and ecologist parties". The extensive report refers to the participation of well known cultural personalities such as Jane Birkin and the film-maker Agnes Jaoui and reminded readers that Jane "together with Stephane Hessel, a former member of the Resistance against the Nazi occupation of France (1940-1944), was part of the group that later on met with the

criminalise an entire ethnic group by labelling it as a social problem."

Suddenly, while I was writing this Reflection, I remembered that France is the third nuclear power in the planet, and that Sarkozy also has a briefcase with the keys required to launch one of the more than 300 bombs he has. Is there any moral or ethical rationale in launching an attack against Iran, a country condemned for its alleged intention of manufacturing this kind of weapon? Where are the good sense and the logic of that policy?

Let us assume that Sarkozy all of a sudden goes crazy, as it seems to be the case. What would the UN Security Council do with Sarkozy and his briefcase? What will happen if the French extreme Right decides to force Sarkozy to maintain a racist policy, opposite to the norms that prevail within the European Community?

Could the UN Security Council respond to those two questions? The absence of truth and the prevalence of deception is the biggest tragedy in our dangerous nuclear age. ●

The deadly toll of the tar sands

From Canadian Aboriginal Concerns With Oil Sands, a compilation of key issues, resolutions and legal activities, by Danielle Droitsch and Terra Simieritsch, for the Pembina Institute

For decades, Aboriginal people in northern Alberta have raised concerns about ongoing and escalating impacts of oil sands development on a wide range of issues including potential health effects, water quality, water diversions, impacts to wildlife populations and air quality. More recently the concerns of these people have focused on constitutionally protected rights.

In September 2010, these concerns were elevated to the national level by the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), representing over 630 First Nation communities across Canada and more than 700,000 First Nations people. The AFN national Chief Shawn A-in-chut Atleo raised concerns about the impact of oil sands development, high rates of cancer in the community of Fort Chipewyan, and the need for the U.S. government to take into consideration the concerns of First Nations peoples regarding oil sands development.

Aboriginal communities are both surrounded and affected by oil sands development in northern Alberta. In this region, these communities rely on the land, water and wildlife for hunting, fishing, trapping, gathering, harvesting, navigation and ceremonial, recreational and domestic uses such as bathing, cooking and drinking. Communities, especially those living downstream, have

expressed interest in effective and strong watershed protection.

The pace and scale of oil sands development has prompted these communities to question whether negative impacts outweigh positive economic benefits.

Treaty 6, 7 and 8 First Nations representing 44 First Nations communities from Alberta have asked for a moratorium to oil sands approvals until comprehensive land management planning occurs.

More recently, First Nations have also strongly asserted that their constitutionally protected rights (such as rights to waters, lands, hunting, fishing and trapping) be protected from the

impacts of oil sands development. First Nations are increasingly asserting that the Governments of Canada and Alberta have violated these rights.

In 2009 hearings before a federal Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, representatives from seven First Nations testified they had significant concerns about deteriorating water quality or river flows in the Athabasca watershed. For example, the Mikisew Cree First Nation has long argued that water pollution from oil sands development may be linked to an increased incidence of cancers found in the population of Fort Chipewyan located directly downstream from the most intensive oil sands development. In 2006, these concerns were brought into the public eye when Dr. John O'Connor reported a high number of cases of unusual



Rally in Vancouver against plans by Enbridge Corp. to build a oil pipeline from the tar sands in Alberta to the west coast. (Photo: K. Cariou)

"The extinction of caribou would mean the extinction of our people. The caribou is our sacred animal; it is a measure of our way of life. When the caribou are dying, the land is dying." (Chief Janvier, Chipewyan Prairie Dene First Nation)

"First Nations across the country are concerned about the impacts of oil sands development on First Nations peoples, the environment, our traditional foods, our cultural and spiritual practices and our rights in our traditional territories. It is crucial that First Nations voices are heard as these meetings may influence U.S. energy policies and purchases of Canadian energy." (Chief Shawn A-in-chut, Assembly of First Nations)

"I really think it's time to cut down the [oil sands] expansion until some of those problems and how to reduce them are solved." (Dr. David Schindler, University of Alberta water scientist)

cancers, particularly a rare form of bile duct cancer - cholangiocarcinoma.

In February 2009, the Alberta Cancer Board released a study responding to community calls for further investigation. While the report determined that the number of cases of cholangiocarcinoma was within the expected range, the report did find the overall cancer rate was approximately 30% higher than expected.

Following a government investigation, Alberta Health Services issued a press release indicating there was no problem. However, the findings revealed: a 30% increase in cancers in Fort Chipewyan compared with expected rates over the last 12 years; a three-fold increase in leukemias and lymphomas; a seven-fold increase in bile duct cancers; other cancers, such as soft tissue sarcomas and lung cancers in women, were also elevated.

First Nations, such as the Athabasca Chipewyan and Mikisew Cree have asked for a full public inquiry into the impact of oil sands development, particularly with respect to health impacts.

First Nations have also stated they do not believe the water quality testing for certain chemicals such as heavy metals has been sufficient.

While the Alberta Cancer Board report recommended further monitoring and analysis to examine factors that could be causing increased occurrences of cancer in the community, there is currently an impasse on how to proceed. In recent months, the Government of Alberta has proposed a plan for a health study but community leaders believe industry should not sit on the committee overseeing the study because it involves health issues.

A recent study by the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences found elevated levels of pollution that are strongly linked to oil sands development both through airborne emissions and land use. Elevated pollutants include lead and mercury. The study contends that industry and government-sponsored research suggesting pollution levels are due to natural erosion of oil sands is inaccurate.

Currently, both government and industry rely on data from the Regional Aquatics Monitoring Program (RAMP) that has maintained water quality in the Athabasca River has not

deteriorated as a result of oil sands development. However, the independence and effectiveness of RAMP, largely funded by industry, was challenged in a peer-reviewed report that asserted it used inappropriate statistical analysis and unsupported conclusions. The study stated there "was a serious problem related to scientific leadership."

Currently, oil sands mining operations are licensed to divert 604 million cubic metres of water annually from the Athabasca River Basin, which is equivalent to the needs of a city of three million people. As production increases, oil sands companies have the ability to withdraw the licensed amount. Although water use is often presented as a percentage of average annual flows, the amount of water used during low flow periods is of most concern, especially since the water is not returned to the river system after use as it would be with municipal uses.

In July 2010, the Mikisew Cree and Athabasca Chipewyan First Nations said the proposed Government of Alberta framework to manage water withdrawals would not protect the interests of these communities during low flow periods. They also asserted they may have to resort to legal actions should the final water management plan be approved by the federal and provincial governments.

Caribou is an important species to many Aboriginal groups, for cultural and spiritual reasons. Many have a constitutionally protected right to hunt woodland caribou, and it is an important part of the traditional diet when herds are considered self-sustaining. In 2008, Canada's Environment Ministry released a report showing that due to cumulative development in caribou ranges, all caribou herds in northeastern Alberta are now considered non-self-sustaining.

The east side of the Athabasca River caribou herd, whose range includes much of the current in situ oil sands development in Alberta has declined 71% since 1996. Scientists predict that if management action such as land protection is not taken immediately, woodland caribou could disappear completely from the traditional territory of the Beaver Lake Cree Nation and across northeastern Alberta. Despite being designated as threatened under federal law, critical woodland caribou habitat has still not been protected in Alberta. ●

U.S. tar sands imports will impact First Nations

U.S. officials were told firsthand in September how their decisions about importing oil from the Canadian tar sands are affecting Aboriginal communities on both sides of the border.

A delegation of Canadian and U.S. Aboriginal leaders met with officials at the White House Council on Environmental Quality, the State Department, the Department of Interior and others. They also discussed their experiences and concerns with the staff of key congressional representatives and non-governmental organizations.

"What we wanted to bring is the big picture of how tar sands development is impacting a vast territory in the North - from climate change, to chemicals in our water, to the caribou herds that are becoming endangered," said Francois Paulette, a member of the Smith's Landing Treaty 8 Dene First Nation, and one of three Aboriginal leaders taking part in the meetings. "A lot of our people are really concerned."

The trip to Washington came as the Obama administration is considering a proposal to build a massive pipeline from Alberta to Texas, to pump up to 900,000 barrels of tar sands oil per day to the U.S. Gulf Coast. Communities

on both sides of the border have passed resolutions opposing the pipeline and have called on governments to hold off on future development out of respect for environmental limits and treaty rights.

"They listened to our concerns, and asked a lot of questions," said Paulette. "We just have to keep coming back and talking to the people who can make the changes we need to see."

Marty Cobenais knows personally what's at stake if the delegation's message doesn't get through. A member of the Red Lake Band of the Chippewa (Ojibwe), Cobenais grew up in a community in Northern Minnesota that's crisscrossed by pipelines. One sprung a leak years ago, but Cobenais says a large amount of the oil was never properly cleaned up and remains in the ground.

"I don't want to see that happen anywhere else," he said.

For George Poitras, former chief of the Mikisew Cree First Nation, the meetings in Washington offered a rare opportunity to bring his concerns about the health impacts of the tar sands directly to decision-makers who could choose to make a difference. Recent studies on the downstream impacts of tar sands operations have

revived concerns over high levels of toxins in the Athabasca River, elevated cancer rates among residents, and an increasing number of deformed fish harvested in the area.

"All of these things we're seeing make it hard to believe the government's assurances that the tar sands aren't affecting the health and wellbeing of our communities and our land," Poitras said. "It's extremely frustrating that we have to come to the U.S. to make our concerns heard at home, but we'll do what we have to until the situation changes."

The delegates delivered a clear and common message: the harm caused by tar sands development outweighs any economic benefits for their communities. If decision makers approve the Keystone XL pipeline, they will be locking the U.S. into future reliance on fossil fuels, increasing climate change emissions and allowing toxins from the tar sands to continue harming Aboriginal communities.

"We don't need this pipeline," Cobenais said. "It's time our politicians and lawmakers recognized that we have better alternatives."

(Source: *The Pembina Institute*) ●



GLOBAL CLASS STRUGGLE

Games workers exploited

As India struggled to prevent the Commonwealth Games from being cancelled, rights groups say that construction workers were paid half the country's minimum wage to toil on sites where accidents have killed dozens. While Prime Minister Manmohan Singh was holding emergency meetings in a bid to avoid a widespread boycott of the event, rights group Common Cause told msnbc.com that at least 47 workers died while working on sites linked to the Games, which are due to begin on October 3.

Many of the estimated 100,000 workers on Games' site were paid as little as 110 Rupees (US\$2.40) per day, close to half of the mandated minimum wage of 203 Rupees, said Kamal Jaswal, director and chief executive of Common Cause.

"This illustrates the dire lot of the construction worker," said Jaswal. "Particularly migrant workers - petty contractors exploit them to the hilt."

Common Cause, the People's Union for Democratic Rights and Nirmaan Mazdoor Panchayat Sangam have banded together to highlight what a variety of issues involving construction workers.

"We've been saying there have been accident upon accident which have gone unreported," activist Moushumi Basu told BBC News. Authorities denied there were any violations until this year, when an Indian court stood by the groups' findings.

Heldevery four years, the Games are estimated to have cost \$6 billion. India hopes to use them to display its growing global economic and political clout. Instead, they have snowballed into a major embarrassment for the government, facing criticism of shoddy construction, inadequate security and unfit accommodation.

"We're not surprised," Basu added. "It is these very officials who did not bat an eyelid when it came to organizing residential workers camps right next to drains, when water seeped into these camps for these workers ... this shows where their priorities lie."

French unions rally again over retirement

French workers took to the streets on Sept. 23 for the second time in a month in a massive protest against plans to raise the minimum retirement age from 60 to 62. In Paris, tens of thousands of demonstrators wound their way through the city center singing protest hymns and waving banners that bore slogans such as "Prisoners of work" and "Time to retire Sarkozy, racist," in a reference to the controversy over Roma expulsions. There were similar marches in towns and cities across France. About half of national and regional trains and flights at French airports were cancelled.

The turnout was even higher than demonstrations earlier in the month, when over a million people protested. Many workers say they're prepared to stay the course,

in spite of accusations that they are "too lazy" to accept a higher retirement age.

Annual studies for the European Commission looking at attitudes toward work show the French, along with the Italians and the Spanish, are among the unhappiest workers on the continent.

Henri Sterdyniak, an economist at the Paris-based Centre for Economic Research, blames a hierarchical work structure within French companies that rarely allows room for professional development or promotions. Performance reviews are rare and negotiations on working conditions or career paths practically are scarce.

"The French model dictates that if you have a certain diploma you will have a certain career, and if you don't you will never climb the ladder," he says. "Workers at the bottom feel constantly squeezed and never consulted. By the end of their careers they are exhausted and uninterested, so it's no wonder they want to leave."

Many workers are concerned they will be forced out of their jobs and unable to find new work before they turn 62. As one demonstrator said, "I'm afraid that if the retirement age goes up, I'll have two extra years on unemployment and in the end I won't have worked long enough to collect my full pension."

Unemployment among French workers over 55 rose dramatically when the retirement age was reduced to 60 from 65 in 1983 and is now among the highest in Europe. Although many want to work up to 60, French employees are on average forced out of their jobs at 58.

Strike to break the labour brokers

The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), which has nearly two million members, has vowed to press on with a nationwide strike to end the use of "labour brokers."

Addressing the national congress of the SA Clothing and Textile Workers' Union (Sactwu), COSATU general secretary Zelinzima Vavi said the union federation will take to the streets on October 7 to step up the campaign to get rid of labour brokers, casualisation and "super-exploitation" of workers.

Vavi said government's threat to introduce a wage subsidy to incentivise employers to employ young people will mean the creation of a third category of the "super-super exploited" workers. He said "super-exploitation and oppression" of workers remained widespread and was growing in the country's two-tier labour market system.

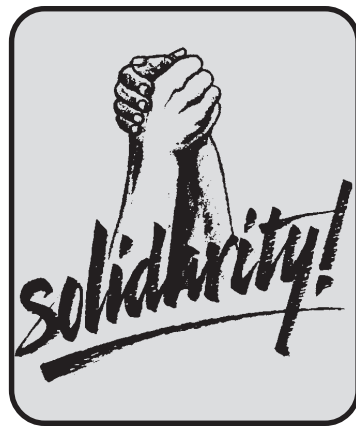
"Workers covered by the collective bargaining system through workplace, sectoral and industry bargaining councils are relatively better off, with better job security, pay and working conditions and are generally protected by the labour laws," Vavi said.

He said there was a second layer on workers, in all sectors of the economy, who were not protected by the labour laws and who faced the "brutality" of employers, who

"frequently and brazenly flout labour laws, sectoral determinations, bargaining agreements and health and safety laws and get away with it".

Czech unions hit pay cuts

Union organizers report that about 45,000 people took part in a Sept. 20 demonstration in Prague



against the planned 10-percent reduction of wages in the public sector. For about an hour and a half, leaders of the teachers, police, firefighters and public administration workers' unions addressed the crowd in the centre of Prague.

CMKOS umbrella union chair Jaroslav Zavadil asked the protesters to prepare for further clashes with the centre-right government.

"If they keep arrogant, they will have what they want. Everything began with the public finance reform in which Mirek Topolánek, Petr Necas and Miroslav Kalousek assisted. By the reform they deprived the state of 80 billion crowns (\$4.5 billion Cdn)," Zavadil said.

The three were the prime minister, labour minister and finance minister in Topolánek's Civic Democrats cabinet in 2007-2009. Necas heads the current cabinet in which Kalousek retains the post of finance minister.

Police union head Milan Stepanek said the union is against pay cuts, against the force's civilian employees being laid off, and the closure of police stations.

Firefighters' union head Zdenek Oberreiter called it unfair if only one group, public sector employees, is to help lower the state budget gap. "Such drastic cuts will threaten public safety," he said.

Alena Vondrova, on behalf of the public administration workers' union, said they are viewed as almost second class citizens. She said the cuts would bring the middle classes to poverty and devastation. The protest was attended by leaders of the opposition parties, including Communist (KSCM) chair Vojtech Filip, and Social Democrat acting head Bohuslav Sobotka.

The demonstration started outside the Interior Ministry, where protesting police and firefighters broke into the building and called on Interior Minister Radek John to resign. Afterwards the crowd moved outside the Government Office where it united with protesting health care workers and public administration clerks.

The unions plan further protests if their demands are not met. The health and social care workers' union has gone on strike alert and may stage a strike on October 15.

NATO arrests Al Jazeera journalists

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), which represents 600,000 journalists in 125 countries, has called for the release of two Al Jazeera cameramen, Mohammed Nader and Rahmatullah Nekzad, who were recently arrested in Afghanistan by the NATO-led forces on suspicion of working with the Taliban insurgents.

"The proper reporting of the Afghan war requires journalists to cover the story from all sides," said Aidan White, IFJ General Secretary. "Afghan and Coalition forces have the right to have their say and to rebut reports they do not like, but there is never a justification for arresting journalists for doing their job. This is an intolerable form of censorship."

The two journalists were arrested during raids to their homes in Kandahar and Ghazni provinces by soldiers from the International Security Assistance Forces. ISAF officials reportedly told Al Jazeera that "insurgents use propaganda, often delivered through news organisations, as a way to influence and, in many cases, intimidate the Afghan population. Coalition and Afghan forces have a responsibility to interdict the activities of these insurgent propaganda networks."

The Qatar based Al Jazeera Cable Television channel rejected the accusations against its staff and accused NATO-led forces of "attempting to suppress its

comprehensive coverage of the Afghan war".

The IFJ says journalists covering a war need to access information from all sides and accusations of propaganda against journalists should not be made lightly. The Federation says the ISAF may expose other journalists in Afghanistan to new threats including reprisals from militants for covering the government and NATO forces activities.

"It is inexcusable that NATO forces are opening the door to victimization and potential violence against journalists. It threatens impartial journalism and it puts media people in the firing line," added White. "This is a blatant interference in journalists' affairs and our colleagues must be released forthwith."

Egyptian workers demand reforms

Opponents of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak say they will continue pressuring for election reforms. Hundreds of protesters took to the streets of Cairo on Sept. 21, chanting anti-Mubarak slogans and carrying banners challenging the political rise of his son Gamal Mubarak.

Opposition lawmakers said they would stand against Gamal Mubarak's "lust" for power and unite until the government makes way for free and fair elections, the newspaper *al-Masry al-Youm* reported.

Kamal Fayoumi, a labour activist, told the newspaper that union supporters were against the idea of presidential inheritance. "In the name of Egypt's workers, I declare that we've seen poverty in Mubarak's time," he said. "We don't need more of this regime."

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

Send me information on the Communist Party of Canada

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

Central Committee CPC
290A Danforth Ave, Toronto, ON, M4K 1N6
416-469-2446 <info@cpc-pcc.ca> www.comunist-party.ca

Parti Communiste du Quebec (section du Parti communiste du Canada)
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Montreal, QC, H2V 4G9
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CTC speaks on "new economic measures in Cuba"

Statement by the Cuban Federation of Workers

The economic crisis has affected all economies around the world, including Cuba. Despite the seriousness of the crisis and the ongoing illegal US blockade, the socialist state protected workers better than their counterparts in capitalist economies. The Cuban government has announced measures to deal with the current situation and to deepen the construction of socialism on a more efficient basis. These have been misreported in the western mass media as signalling the abandonment of socialism by Communist Party leaders and the Cuban government. Nothing could be further from the truth. The following is a statement by the National Secretariat of the Cuban Federation of Workers (CTC) to Cuban workers explaining the new measures.



Symbol of the Cuban Federation of Workers

Cuba has demonstrated that socialism continues to be the way forward for workers and the environment. Today, more than ever, the support for the leadership of our people, the will and the determination to continue the construction of socialism are alive and implacable.

Workers:

The Cuban Revolution has 52 years of victorious existence, and today more than ever, the willingness and determination to continue the construction of socialism, to advance and update the economic model we must follow, continues to be alive and unshakeable in the direction of the

Nation and in our people, consolidating the gains achieved.

The leadership of the government has been working on a set of measures that guarantee and implement changes that are necessary and urgently need to be introduced into the economy and society, a means to transform and improve the efficiency of current productive and labour processes.

Cuba faces the urgent need to move forward economically, to better organise production, to

parallel increase in the non-state sector. The timetable for the implementation by government organisations and businesses is the first trimester of 2011.

For the union movement and workers it is an unavoidable task to pay the utmost attention to downsizing, to the process of labour and employment availability, and to ensure the adequate utilisation of human resources. It is known that the excess of places exceeds one million people in the budget and business sectors.

Our state cannot nor should it continue to maintain businesses, productive organisations and services with over inflated staff budgets, resulting in losses that weigh down the economy. They turn out to be counterproductive, generate bad habits and deform the conduct of workers. It is necessary to increase production and quality of services, reduce inflated social spending and eliminate bulky improper gratuities, excessive subsidies and study as a source of employment and early retirement.

The success of the process initiated now depends on the political assurance of the union movement under the leadership of the Party; union leaders prior to undertaking actions will obtain social consensus on the economic and political relevance of this step. These measures seek to identify labour availability and the places that are not necessary and to relocate this labour into jobs where it is necessary and possible or to reorientate those workers.

For those workers in an establishment or workplace that become surplus, the intention is to

expand and diversify the present horizon of options with new forms of non-state employment as an alternative; these include leasing, usufruct*, cooperatives and self-employment, where hundreds of thousands of workers will move in the coming years.

With the state sector it will only be possible to staff those places that are indispensable, in areas where historically there has been a deficit of labour such as agriculture, construction, teaching, police, industrial workers and others.

The country has been running major investment processes in a number of sectors; the petroleum, construction, biotechnology, pharmaceuticals and tourism and at the same time developing other areas of production of goods, and the expansion of services which will generate new sources of employment.

These changes in employment policy will be applied in a gradual and progressive form. They will be started immediately and due to their scale and incidence will span all sectors.

This whole process will be applied on new foundations and norms and will modify the current labour and wage system of those who are surplus and disrupted. It will not be possible to apply the current formula of protecting or subsidising the salary of the workers indefinitely. In the identification, relocation and deployment to other jobs, the activity and personal willingness of those affected will play a very important role. The selection of those who will occupy the available positions in each working collective will be carried out on the principle of demonstrated suitability.

A matter of singular importance is salary. It is necessary to revitalise the principle of socialist

distribution; to pay each according to the quantity and quality of work carried out. The system of remuneration for results, applied in workplaces with staff arranged more efficiently, will continue to be the way to lift productivity and, as a result of that, the income of the workers.

Facilitation of the trade union organisation at every level of leadership will contribute to the fulfilment of this policy to guarantee the continuity of the construction of Cuban socialism, applying the concept of Revolution and from the beginning of this historical moment changing all which needs to be changed.

The CTC and the trade unions are committed and will be vigilant with the most strict observance and application of the principle of demonstrated suitability in determining the right to occupy a particular job, as well as ensuring transparency in the way it is carried out.

It is the responsibility of the trade union to act in its sector with a high level of demand and maintain systematic control of the pace of this process, from beginning to end, adopting the necessary measures and keeping higher bodies of the CTC informed. The unity of the Cuban workers and our people has been the key to realising the gigantic task of building the Revolution and in these transformations that we are now undertaking it will continue to be our most important strategic weapon. ●

(*Typically the government makes available land, a building or means of production for use without charging rent. The person keeps all the benefits of his/her work. The government can take it back if it is not used or if the government needs it.)

Colombian political prisoner on hunger strike

On Sept. 17, Felix Roberto Sanabria completed one month of a hunger strike at La Tramacua, the first prison built under a US designed program to restructure Colombia's prison system and increase its capacity by 40 percent. The Alliance for Global Justice (<http://agfj.org>) has circulated an urgent alert saying Sanabria is in dangerously bad health, having lost over 28 pounds in a hunger strike that began under already harsh conditions. He has also received multiple death threats.

Sanabria has two demands: that La Tramacua's political prisoners be separated from the general population, where they are preyed upon by paramilitary prisoner

gangs that are armed by and allied with prison guards; and a transfer to a different prison because of the numerous death threats he has received.

The organization *Traspasa Los Muros (Beyond the Walls)* reports that there are over 7,500 political prisoners in Colombia. These include: Prisoners of Conscience; Prisoners arrested on the basis of frame-ups and paid testimony; and Prisoners of War who are members of groups involved in armed struggle. Prisoners of War are included among the political prisoners because at the root of this struggle is a political and economic cause that can only be adequately solved by a political,

not military, solution.

Some 6,500 to 7,000 of the political prisoners are unionists, students, members of opposition parties, journalists, citizens of rural, indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities, and other segments of nonviolent resistance. An estimated 500 prisoners are captured combatants from the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and an unknown number are from the Army of National Liberation (ELN) and other armed movements. Felix Roberto Sanabria is a Prisoner of War, jailed since his capture in 2000.

The following report from the political prisoners of La Tramacua's Tower Five gives some idea of the prison's conditions.

"The food service system is one of total indignity, as is publicly known in this graveyard of liberties called Tramacua... Only the basic minimum is permitted in order to survive and not die from physical hunger because, according to them, here there are only terrorists and the anti-social... For this they add the contamination of foods with fecal material, as was proven with laboratory studies recently realized by the Health Ministry of Valledupar, a situation that has been repeatedly denounced by the prisoners' Committee for Human



Inside the overcrowded La Tramacua prison.

Rights. Also, it is a constant that the food supplies may be in a state of decomposition - meat with worms, poorly cooked, raw or rotten, and including that on the tablecloth can be seen to swim larva and worms that are submerged in the receptacles the prisoner must use to drink and eat for physical hunger and thirst without having eaten and thus avoiding that he might protest...

"For such reasons, 70% of the population remains sick, with strong illnesses of the stomach - constant diarrhea and vomiting, gastric ulcers, headaches and all kinds of gastrointestinal diseases....

"When they punish us up to a week without water, the chaos is

total, since there are three toilets for 170 prisoners that in only a short while remain absolutely full of fecal material, obliging us to have to do our physical necessities in the drains of the patio, in the open air and in view of the population because in a site so narrow, there is nowhere and no way to avoid it. In order to try to remedy the problem we are obliged to collect the urine in a receptacle, with which one empties themselves or defecates in whatever element so he might empty it through the window when we are in the cells. In this way we are invaded by the flies and the putrefaction ferments in the sun. Meanwhile the jailers and directors turn deaf ears to the clamor of the prisoners." ●



An invitation to all who love Cuba

By **Silvio Rodriguez,**
Granma International

Born in 1946, Silvio Rodriguez Dominguez, a leader of the nueva trova movement, is considered Cuba's best known folk singer, and is also a deputy in the Cuban parliament. Many of his songs have become classics in Latin American music. His introspective lyrics combine romanticism, love, revolutionary politics, and idealism. This commentary first appeared in his personal blog, *Segunda Cita*.

I believe that the Cuban Revolution dignified our country and the Cuban people. And that the revolutionary government has been

street, they drove them out of there with sticks.

I saw that with my own eyes as a boy of 7 or 8 years old and I saw it until I turned 12, when the Revolution triumphed.

There were two bars on the corner of my street; sometimes, instead of having an evening meal, we would drink a milkshake there. From time to time, sailors would pass by, falling down drunk, looking for prostitutes and harassing women in the neighbourhood. They threw a young neighbour of ours to the ground when he went out to defend his sister, and when the police turned up, who do you think they took away? The abusers? No, they bore off with

who want the marines to come back to mistreat the head of Marti.

I am in agreement with correcting errors, with banishing authoritarianism and with building a solid, efficient, functioning, yet always perfectible socialist democracy that can ensure its own continuity. I refuse to renounce the fundamental rights that the Revolution won for the people. Before anything else: dignity and sovereignty, and also health, education, culture and an honourable old age for everybody. I prefer not to hear about what is going on in my country from the foreign press, whose focus contributes more than a little confusion. I should like many things that I have said to improve and others not.

But, above all, I do not want the return of that ignominy, that misery, the hypocrisy of political parties which, as soon as they assumed power, handed it over to the highest bidder. All of that happened in the half-hearted shelter of the Declaration of Human Rights and the 1940 Constitution. The Cuban pre-revolutionary experience and that of many other countries demonstrates the lack of importance given to human rights in representative "democracies."

Many of those now attacking the Revolution were educated by it.

Professional immigrants, who make a forced comparison between the ideal conditions of "educated Europe" and a harassed Cuba. Others, older, who perhaps once came to "be someone" thanks to the Revolution and are now strutting about like pro-capitalist ideologues, scholars of Law and History, disguised as modest workers. Personally, I cannot stand fervent political chameleons; those penitents with their little Marxism courses and all, who were more Papist than the Pope and are now the very reverse. I do not wish them any harm, I do not wish that for anybody, but so much inconsistency upsets me.

The Revolution, like Prometheus (I owe it a song of that name), illuminated the forgotten ones. Because, instead of saying to the people: believe, it said to them: read. For that reason, like the mythological hero, they want to make it pay for its daring, by tying it to a remote peak where a vulture (or an imperial eagle) eternally devours its liver. I am not denying the errors and the voluntarisms, but I cannot forget the desires of the people of the Revolution, in the face of aggressions that have used every weapon to wound and to kill, as well as the most powerful and sophisticated media to spread and (distort) ideas.

I have never said that the blockade is totally to blame for our misfortunes. But the existence of the blockade has never given us the opportunity to measure ourselves.

For myself, I would like to die with the responsibilities for our misfortunes made very clear.

For that reason I invite all those who love Cuba and desire dignity for Cubans to shout with me today, tomorrow, everywhere: Down with the blockade! •



Cuban folksinger Silvio Rodriguez in concert

the best government in our history.

Yes: before the Revolution, Havana was much more freshly painted, potholes were rare and you could walk through streets and streets of well-lit stores full of merchandise. But, who bought in those stores? Who could walk through those streets in real freedom? Of course, those who had the "wherewithal" in their pockets. The rest, looking in the store windows and dreaming, like my mother, like our family, like the majority of Cuban families. Only "respectable citizens" strolled along those fabulous avenues, well thought of, in the first place, because of their appearance. People in rags, beggars, almost all of them of African descent, had to make detours, because when the police saw them in some "decent"

kicks to his ass that young university student who, logically, stood out afterwards in student brawls.

There are the photos of a sailor peeing, sitting astride the head of the statue of Marti, in our capital's Central Park.

That was Cuba, before 1959. At least those were the streets of Central Havana that I experienced every day, those of barrio of San Leopoldo, adjoining Dragones and Cayo Hueso. Now they are destroyed, it breaks my heart to pass by there because it is like seeing the ruins of my own childhood. I sing about it in *Trovador antiguo*. How could we reach such deterioration? For many reasons. A lot of it is our fault for not having seen the forest for the trees, but it is also the fault of those



MUSIC NOTES

By **Wally Brooker**

Symphony musicians lead Detroit Labor Day parade

Dressed in formal concert attire, musicians from the Detroit Symphony Orchestra marched at the head of 40,000 workers in the Motor City's annual Labor Day parade. The musicians voted in August to reject the outrageous demands of the DSO management, authorizing a strike that could begin as early as Sept. 23. Management proposals include cutting salaries by 33%, drastic cuts in health insurance, and the elimination of contributions to pension plans. Since the 2008 economic crisis other North American orchestras have experienced serious deficits, and symphony musicians everywhere are concerned that the DSO management's model of deep cuts to salaries and benefits and refusal to negotiate will spread to other cities.

Israel cultural boycott update

Legendary Jewish singer, actor and civil rights activist Theodore Bikel, who gave a record 2000-plus performances as lead character Tevye in the musical *Fiddler on the Roof*, has spoken out in support of Israeli theatre artists who refuse to perform in the occupied territories. Bikel, now 86, was co-founder of Tel Aviv's Cameri Theatre in 1944. In another positive development, the Irish Palestine Solidarity Campaign announced that more than 150 Irish artists and musicians have pledged not to perform or exhibit in Israel or accept any funding from Israeli-connected institutions. Meanwhile, folksinger Pete Seeger is being urged to abandon his announced Nov. 10 performance in an online rally "for a better Middle East" being organized by Israel's Arava Institute and the Jewish National Fund. For more info visit <http://adalahny.org/>.

U.S. artists call to release Cuban 5

On the 12th anniversary of their arrest the Cuban Five have received a big boost from "Actors and Artists United for the Freedom of the Cuban Five". Co-chaired by actors Danny Glover and Ed Asner, the group is calling upon artists to endorse a letter to President Obama urging him to issue an executive clemency order on behalf of the Five. The list of artists includes filmmaker Oliver Stone, actors Elliott Gould, Susan Sarandon and Martin Sheen, and musicians Jackson Browne, Ry Cooder, Chrissie Hynde, Graham Nash, Bonnie Raitt and Pete Seeger. This marks the first time that well-known U.S. personalities have come together on behalf of the unjustly imprisoned Cubans. For more info visit <http://www.thecuban5.org/>.

U.K. artists force Blair to cancel

Composer and electronic music pioneer Brian Eno was among a group of celebrated artists, including Tracey Emin and Vivienne Westwood, who signed a letter to the *Guardian* newspaper on Sept. 8, protesting the planned launch party of Tony Blair's memoir *A Journey* at the publicly-owned Tate Modern art gallery. Their letter called the book launch "disgraceful" and reminded readers that Blair had lied to Parliament over the Iraq invasion and was incriminated in war crimes. The publicity and the threat of a demonstration by the Stop the War Coalition was enough to force Blair to cancel. Eno is a strong supporter of the anti-war movement. Speaking at a rally earlier this year he called Blair "a weak, arrogant, cowardly man."

Folk Against Fascism confronts BNP

The right of performers to have a say in how their work is used is being raised by two musicians' organizations in the U.K. Folk Against Fascism was founded in 2009 in response to the co-opting of traditional folk music by the neofascist British National Party. The BNP has been able to exploit weaknesses in the law to sell CDs of folk musicians against their wishes. The British Musicians' Union is calling for the Trades Union Congress to endorse a campaign to enact "moral rights" for performers. In a related case in the USA, Peter Dinklage and Paul Stookey, surviving members of Peter, Paul & Mary, are calling upon the anti-gay National Organization for Marriage to stop using their version of Woody Guthrie's *This Land is Your Land* at their rallies. They're threatening legal action, but NOM apparently continues to use the song. For more info visit www.folkagainstfascism.com.

Abbey Lincoln: 1930-2010

The great jazz singer Abbey Lincoln passed away on August 14. Born Anna Marie Woodridge in Chicago in 1930, she was originally marketed as a sexualized supper club singer, but was awakened by the civil rights struggles in the mid-fifties. Changing her name to Abbey Lincoln in 1956, she subsequently dedicated herself to jazz singing. Her collaborations with drummer-composer Max Roach (1924-2007) were important cultural events in the civil rights movement, particularly their 1960 album *We Insist! Freedom Now Suite*. Lincoln went on to become an iconic figure in jazz. As she grew older her parched contralto never lost its expressive capacity. Check out the many tributes on YouTube, and don't miss the clip of Lincoln the actress in the landmark 1964 film *Nothing But a Man*. •

HALLOWEEN DANCE PARTY

A benefit to celebrate the 65th anniversary of People's Co-op Bookstore... Come as your favourite literary character!

Sat., October 30
doors open 7:30 pm

Russian Hall, 600 Campbell Ave., Vancouver

Watch for more details next issue. Advance tickets \$10 at the store, 1391 Commercial Drive, 604-253-6442.

Buy books online at www.peoplescoopbookstore.com

Venezuela: Socialists advance, opposition loses ground compared to 2000 elections

By James Suggett,
Venezuelanalysis.com

In Venezuela's National Assembly elections on Sept. 26, opponents of President Hugo Chavez won approximately 20 fewer seats than they held during the 2000-2005 legislative term, while the pro-Chavez camp grew by several seats.

Deputy-Elect Roy Chaderton said on Sept. 27 the opposition was setting up a "media farce" by comparing the results only to those of the 2005 election, which the opposition boycotted, and thus reporting that opposition drastically increased its presence in the National Assembly.

During the 2000-2005 legislative term, marked by an array of party splits and shifting alliances, pro-Chavez parties held between 83 and 92 seats at any given time, while opposition parties held between 73 and 82 seats, out of a total of 165.

According to the official results released by the National Electoral Council, Chavez's United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) won 95 seats, while the opposition coalition Democratic Unity Roundtable (MUD) won 62 seats. The center-left Fatherland for All (PPT) party, a former Chavez ally that split with the PSUV, won two seats. Three went to indigenous people's representatives unaligned with either the PSUV or the MUD. The CNE has not yet announced the results in the contests for three other seats.

Officially, the PSUV won the majority of seats in 16 of Venezuela's 23 states. This included sweeping victories in the rural states of Apure, Barinas, Guarico, Cojedes, Lara, Portuguesa, Vargas, and Yaracuy; and strong victories in the major industrial states of Bolivar and Carabobo. The PSUV also won seven seats in the Capital District, compared to three for the MUD.

In Miranda state, where the capital city is located, the PSUV and the MUD each won three seats, with the MUD edging out the PSUV by a mere 741 votes out of a total of 968,947. The two were also tied with three seats each in Sucre state.

In the sparsely populated and heavily forested Amazonas state, the PSUV won one seat, while the PPT won two seats. The MUD swept the border states of Tachira and Zulia, as well as Anzoategui and the island state of Nueva Esparta.

According to an unofficial Venezuelanalysis calculation, approximately 10% of the 110 deputies who were elected as individuals were women.

Having won a majority of the National Assembly, the PSUV will be able to control the passage of ordinary laws and most other functions of the legislative body. However, the PSUV did not reach its goal of winning a two-thirds



President Hugo Chavez

majority, which means the opposition will have the power to block organic laws, enabling laws that give decree power to the president, and some appointments to other branches of the government.

MUD officials claimed victory in the elections, based mainly on their claim to have won the majority of the total votes cast. Maria Corina Machado, MUD deputy of Miranda state, said the vote showed disapproval of President Hugo Chavez's presidency and its project of 21st Century Socialism, which the opposition says is emulating Cuba's political system.

"Here it is very clear, Venezuela said no to Cuban-style communism, Venezuela said yes to the path of democratic construction and now we have the legitimacy of vote of

the citizenry, we are the representatives of the people," said Machado.

The PSUV also celebrated what it considered to be a victory. Vice President Elias Jaua, who is a PSUV official, said, "The revolution can count on a comfortable majority in the National Assembly... Few governments on our continent can count on such a comfortable majority of just one party."

"The opposition does not have any possibility, with this number of deputies, of reversing the legislative processes that have been completed or activating destabilizing mechanisms such as revoking public powers or impeaching the president," said Jaua.

PSUV Campaign Chief Aristabulo Isturiz expressed disappointment that the goal of 110 seats was not reached. However, he said this should not distract from the "truly decisive victory" won by the PSUV, which "reaffirms us as the primary political force in our country."

"We achieved our objective in the sense of being able to guarantee the defense of President Hugo Chavez and the policies of the revolutionary government, and having won sufficient forces to propel structural changes in this era of the construction of socialism," said Isturiz.

Isturiz, who was elected deputy in the Capital District, called on the PSUV "to unite more than ever, to strengthen ourselves, because this is a long struggle, it is a daily struggle, it is a never ending battle and these legislators will be an important force in the construction of socialism."

President Chavez, through his Twitter account, called the election "a solid victory, sufficient to continue deepening democratic and Bolivarian socialism." He added, "We must continue strengthening the revolution!"

In a press conference on Sept. 27, Chavez said the next phase of his government will include "the acceleration of programs of the new historical, political, social, and technological project."

Chavez said the results reflected what was predicted by recent polls and analysis, and as such, "nothing extraordinary happened. Something extraordinary would have been if we won 130 deputies, extraordinary would have been if we lost the majority."

Polls over the past year consistently showed the PSUV's popularity as a political party hovering in the mid-30th percentile, with opposition parties much weaker, and a large undecided population.

Meanwhile, the approval rating for Chavez's presidency remained high at around 55% or 60%. This appears to have impacted the PSUV's electoral campaign, which de-emphasized individual candidacies and framed the election as a vote of approval or disapproval of Chavez's presidency. MUD candidates also focused on weaknesses of the Chavez government, such as rising crime and corruption, and made few if any policy proposals of their own. ●

What's Left

Surrey, BC

Dig In For Climate Justice, a mass action to end freeway expansion and free up billions for public transit. Sat., Oct. 10, meet 2 pm at Scott Road Skytrain (East side). Rain or shine, bring work gloves. Organized by Council of Canadians and by GatewaySucks.org, 604-877-1223.

Vancouver, BC

Women's Housing March, Sat. Oct. 2, starts 2 pm outside Downtown Eastside Women Centre, 302 Columbia. Organized by Power of Women Group, 604-681-8480 x234.

Real Aid, True Solidarity, with Afghan MP Malalai Joya, Tue., Oct. 12, 7 pm, at W2 Storeum, 151 W. Cordova (between Columbia & Abbott). Fundraiser organized by StopWar peace coalition, proceeds to grassroots relief in Afghanistan and the Canadian Boat for Gaza campaign. Advance tickets from People's Co-op Bookstore, 1391 Commercial Drive.

Halloween Benefit Dance, for People's Co-op Books, Sat., Oct. 30, doors open 7:30, Russian Hall, 600 Campbell Ave. Tickets \$10 advance/\$15 door, from the bookstore, 1391 Commercial, 604-253-6442.

Left Film Night, Sunday, Oct. 24, 7:30 pm, Centre for Socialist Education, 706 Clark Drive. For details, call 604-255-2041.

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

Toronto, ON

Howard Kaplan Campaign Celebration Social, Mon., Oct. 25, 8 pm, 209 Oakwood Ave. Appreciation to campaign volunteers. Info: 416-654-7105

Montreal, QC

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

FBI raids anti-war activists' homes

Federal agents searched homes of anti-war activists in Chicago and Minneapolis on Sept. 24, claiming to be looking for links with terrorist organizations in the Middle East and South America. About 20 FBI agents searched the residence of Stephanie Weiner and Joseph Iosbaker, and FBI agents carried boxes from the apartment of community activist Hatem Abudayyeh, executive director of the Arab American Action Network. Chicago activist Thomas Burke was served a grand jury subpoena that requested records of any payments to Abudayyeh or his group.

Melinda Power, an attorney for Weiner and Iosbaker and a longtime friend, said agents took about 30 boxes of papers dating to the 1970s. "They said they would determine what was evidence later," Power said.

Weiner, a teacher at Wilbur Wright College, and Iosbaker, a staff member at the University of Illinois at Chicago and a union steward for Service Employees International Union Local 73, have been active for years in labour

causes and the anti-war movement. They say the search was an attempt to intimidate political activists.

"We aren't doing anything differently than we have in 20 years," said Weiner.

Burke received a grand jury subpoena requesting records of payments to Abudayyeh's organization as well as two groups among the State Department's list of foreign terrorist organizations, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). The subpoena also requested "items relating to trips to Colombia, Jordan, Syria, the Palestinian territories of Israel." Burke toured Colombia eight years ago with members of an oil workers union. He belongs to the Freedom Road Socialist Organization, a group mentioned in subpoenas and search warrants issued to activists in Minneapolis.

Most of the people whose homes were searched or who were issued subpoenas attended anti-war rallies at the 2008 Republican National Convention in Minnesota. ●

Zella Taylor (1915-2010)

Zella Taylor, a life-long supporter of peace and socialism, died peacefully in Prince George on Sept. 5, at the age of 95. Zella was born in Oyen, Alberta, in 1915. Her family moved to Burns Lake in 1919, where she spent her childhood. She later moved to Prince George and immediately became involved in the life of this northern BC town. Zella will be remembered by many in Prince George for her generous and kind nature, her love of dance, drama and music and her community work, such as her prominent role in the Elder Citizens Recreation Association. A plaque commemorating Zella's work and support of senior's initiatives resides in Prince George city hall. Zella once wrote, "I always wanted to make a difference in this world." For her, the most important such contribution was made together with her comrades in the Communist Party of Canada. Remaining loyal to the party during the difficult period of the early 1990s, Zella went on to work with young people joining the CPC in the Prince George area in recent years, including several who have become prominent leaders of the Young Communist League. She was also a consistent and generous supporter of the communist press, from the era of the Pacific Tribune through to People's Voice. A celebration of Zella's life was held on Sept. 18. The Editorial Board of People's Voice extends condolences to Zella's loving partner, George Fedyk, and to all her family, friends and comrades. ●

People's Voice deadlines:

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Send submissions to PV Editorial Office,
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UN report condemns Israeli attack on flotilla

PV Vancouver Bureau

A United Nations investigation has substantiated the atrocities reported by *Mavi Marmara* survivor Kevin Neish, a resident of Victoria, BC, upon his release from an Israeli prison last June. They include torture, kidnapping and executions by Israeli commandos aboard the *Mavi Marmara* and five other ships, part of an unarmed humanitarian aid flotilla bound for Gaza earlier this year.

The 56 page UN Human Rights Council report, compiled by a panel of international judges and lawyers, documents violations of the Geneva Convention and war crimes perpetrated against the flotilla by Israeli forces.

"This report validates everything I stated I had witnessed, and sadly, much much more," Neish said. "Not only were the crimes against the flotilla confirmed, but also the complete illegality of Israel's occupation of Gaza. This gives me new hope for justice for Gaza and Palestine and eventual peace with Israel."

"I'm shocked that the Israeli government has chosen to ignore and cover up these horrific events," Neish continued. "First it was the Goldstone report of Israeli war crimes in Gaza, and now this UN report, documenting still more crimes."

"Mr. Harper's government is virtually alone in the world in not condemning Israel's crimes. I have yet to hear a single word of concern or inquiry from my own government about the Israeli torture and brutal abuse I personally endured."

The fact-finding mission interviewed more than 100 witnesses in Geneva, London, Istanbul and Amman. On the basis of this testimony and other information, the Mission was able to reconstruct the circumstances surrounding the interception on May 31, 2010, and its aftermath, including the deaths of nine passengers, the wounding of many others and the detention of passengers in Israel.

The report concludes that "a series of violations of international law, including international humanitarian and human rights law, were committed by the Israeli forces during the interception of the flotilla and during the detention

of passengers in Israel prior to deportation."

Among the conclusions are the following paragraphs:

"The Mission has come to the firm conclusion that a humanitarian crisis existed on the 31 May 2010 in Gaza. The preponderance of evidence from impeccable sources is far too overwhelming to come to a contrary opinion. Any denial that this is so cannot be supported on any rational grounds. One of the consequences flowing from this is that for this reason alone the



For more information on the Canadian Boat to Gaza campaign, see below, or visit <http://www.canadaboatgaza.org>

blockade is unlawful and cannot be sustained in law. This is so regardless of the grounds on which it is sought to justify the legality of the blockade.

"Certain results flow from this conclusion. Principally, the action of the IDF in intercepting the *Mavi Marmara* in the circumstances and for the reasons given on the high sea was clearly unlawful. Specifically, the action cannot be justified in the circumstances even under Article 51 of the United Nations Charter.

"Israel seeks to justify the blockade on security grounds. The State of Israel is entitled to peace and security like any other. The firing of rockets and other munitions of war into Israeli territory from Gaza constitutes serious violations of international and international humanitarian law. But action in response which constitutes collective punishment of the civilian population in Gaza is not lawful in the present or any circumstances.

"The conduct of the Israeli

military and other personnel towards the flotilla passengers was not only disproportionate to the occasion but demonstrated levels of totally unnecessary and incredible violence. It betrayed an unacceptable level of brutality. Such conduct cannot be justified or condoned on security or any other grounds. It constituted grave violations of human rights law and international humanitarian law.

"The Mission considers that several violations and offences have been committed. It is not satisfied that, in the time available, it can say that it has been able to compile a comprehensive list of all offences. However, there is clear evidence to support prosecutions of the following crimes within the terms of article 147 of the Fourth Geneva Convention: wilful killing; torture or inhuman treatment; wilfully causing great suffering or serious injury to body or health.

"The Mission also considers that a series of violations of Israel's obligations under international human rights law have taken place, including: right to life; torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; right to liberty and security of the person and freedom from arbitrary arrest or detention; right of detainees to be treated with humanity and respect for the inherent dignity of the human person; freedom of expression.

"...The Mission notes that the retention by the Israeli authorities of unlawfully seized property remains a continuing offence and Israel is called upon to return such property forthwith.

"The perpetrators of the more serious crimes being masked cannot be identified without the assistance of the Israeli authorities. They reacted in a violent manner whenever they thought that anyone was attempting to identify them. The mission sincerely hopes that there will be cooperation from the Israeli government to assist in their identification with a view to prosecuting the culpable and bring closure to the situation.

"... It is regrettable that, on yet another occasion of an enquiry into events involving loss of life at the hands of the Israeli military, the Government of Israel has declined to cooperate in an enquiry not

appointed by it or on which it was significantly represented...

"All the passengers on board the ships comprising the flotilla who appeared before the Mission impressed the members as persons genuinely committed to the spirit of humanitarianism and imbued with a deep and genuine concern for the welfare of the inhabitants of Gaza. The Mission can only express the hope that differences will be resolved in the short rather than the long term so that peace and harmony may exist in the area.

"Nine human beings lost their lives and several others suffered serious injuries. From the observations of the Mission deep psychological scars have been inflicted by what must have been a very traumatic experience not only for the passengers but also the soldiers who received injuries. The members of the Mission sympathise with all concerned and particular with the families of the deceased.

"The Mission is not alone in finding that a deplorable situation exists in Gaza. It has been characterized as 'unsustainable'. This is totally intolerable and unacceptable in the 21st Century. It is amazing that anyone could

characterise the condition of the people there as satisfying the most basic of acceptable standards. The parties and the international community are urged to find the solution that will address all legitimate security concern of both Israel and the people of Palestine both of whom are equally entitled to 'their place under the heavens'. The apparent dichotomy in this case between the competing right of security and the right to a decent living can only be resolved if old antagonisms are subordinated to a sense of justice and fair play. One has to find the strength to pluck from the memory rooted sorrows and to move on....

"The Mission sincerely hopes that no impediment will be put in the way of those who suffered loss as a result of the unlawful actions of the Israeli military to be compensated adequately and promptly. It is hoped that there will be swift action by the Government of Israel. This will go a long way to reversing the regrettable reputation which that country has for impunity and intransigence in international affairs. It will also assist those who genuinely sympathise with their situation to support them without being stigmatised." ●



Mavi Marmara survivor Kevin Neish (right) at a June 2010 public forum in Vancouver. (Photo: K. Cariou)

Canadian Boat to Gaza

By Kevin Neish, Victoria, BC

Sometimes in history a small individual effort can be a catalyst in creating an enormous positive result. The Free Gaza Flotilla last May is a prime example of this. Thousands of donations and individual volunteers from around the world supported a small handful of boats in an effort to non-violently challenge Israel's illegal occupation and blockade of Gaza. Needless to say the results were massively positive, unmasking to the world the brutality of the Israeli occupiers and hopefully permanently improving the situation in Gaza and perhaps the Middle East as a whole.

I was in that flotilla, on board the *Mavi Marmara*, and witnessed the bravery of the unarmed aid workers using broom handles, chains, pipes and sling shots to resist the Israeli helicopter gunships, assault boats and machine gun toting commandos. Sadly nine aid workers were murdered and dozens wounded.

Amazingly though, after we had been arrested, kidnapped, brutalized and thrown in an Israeli prison, every single aid worker was adamant that they were all going in the next flotilla to Gaza to try to break the blockade forever. And with enough help we will succeed.

Later this year 20 or more ships full of aid and volunteers from around the world are going to once again attempt to get to Gaza, and hopefully one of those ships will be from Canada. A coalition of Canadian unions, student groups, Jewish and Arab organizations, churches, Québécois associations and numerous peace and justice groups, are joining forces to raise \$300,000 to purchase and crew a ship and fill it with aid and activists and sail it to Gaza.

For me personally, this project is reminiscent of the stories my Marxist parents told me of the cross country support that our Mackenzie-Papineau brigade volunteers in civil war Spain received from Canadian socialists. Just as in 1936 Spain, small individual efforts by many Canadians at a crucial moment in history could make a huge positive impact. And this time we are going to win.

If you want to join or donate to our Canadian boat to Gaza please visit our website at www.canadaboatgaza.org or send a cheque made out to "Alternatives International" and mail it to: Canadian Boat to Gaza, CP92087, Portobello, Brossard, Quebec, J4W 3K8.

From each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs... words to live by. ●

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