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# people's VOICE

**Labour  
Day 2013**  
*See page 6*

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## A new union is born...

**Unifor brings  
together 300,000  
members across  
Canada: page 3**



## Stop the killings: put police under civilian control



The July 27 killing of young Sammy Yatim with 9 police bullets followed by a Taser, is the latest in at least 20 police killings in Toronto where the first and only response was shoot to kill. Numerous coroners' inquests since 1994 have unanimously recommended that police be trained in, and apply de-escalation in situations such as the confrontation with Sammy Yatim. After a series of major public protests, murder charges have now been laid against a Toronto police officer.

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### Enbridge job lies

Enbridge - the same energy corporation which uses fake maps of the west coast - has been caught lying again, this time by wildly exaggerating job creation figures for its Northern Gateway pipeline.

## INSIDE

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### Update from Gaza

PV supporter Kevin Neish is back in Gaza, using his skills to help rebuild the Palestinian infrastructure shattered by Israeli attacks.

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### Jobless rates

Why do governments and corporations prefer to keep official unemployment rates at around six percent? A B.C. labour activist shares his thoughts on the so-called "ideal" jobless levels.

# Tory bill threatens to outlaw UK union congress

*From the Morning Star and The Guardian, August 19, 2013*

Plans for a new lobbying Bill introduced by Britain's Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government drew fierce fire after it emerged they would effectively criminalise next year's TUC Congress.

The Trades Union Congress (TUC) said that certain clauses in the government's Transparency of Lobbying, non-Party Campaigning, and Trade Union Administration Bill would outlaw many of its activities - particularly organising its 2014 annual conference or a national demonstration in the 12 months before the 2015 general election. It said the Bill makes three changes to the regulation of campaigning by non-party organisations in the year prior to a general election.

First it would change the definition of what counts as campaigning. At present only activities which intend to influence an election result are regulated, but the Bill would instead regulate activity that may affect the result of an election, which would severely limit an organisation's ability to criticise government policies in the run-up to an election.

The proposed legislation would also reduce the spending limit for third-party campaigners to 390,000 pounds (\$630,000 Cdn) - including staff time and office costs. Currently only the costs of election-directed materials and

activities such as leaflets and advertisements are regulated.

Under the proposed rules the TUC's 2014 Congress, or a national demonstration, would not just take the organisation over the annual limit but each member union too, it said.

TUC general secretary Frances O'Grady said: "It's an open secret at Westminster that this rushed Bill has nothing to do with cleaning up lobbying or getting big money out of politics. Instead it is a crude and politically partisan attack on trade unions, particularly those which affiliate to the Labour Party. But it has been drawn so widely that its chilling effect will be to shut down dissent for the year before an election. No organisation that criticises a government policy will be able to overdraw its limited ration of dissent without fearing a visit from the police."

Government officials disputed the claims and insisted there was no risk of any campaigning being banned under the Bill.

But writing in The Guardian newspaper, O'Grady said, "It is an open secret around Westminster that the proposals in this bill are a highly partisan attack on trade union relations with the Labour party. But as leaders of charities, churches and faith groups return from their holidays, they are starting to realise it could redefine activities they have always regarded as being far above party politics as election campaigning - and that if they fail to comply with

the spending limits, they will be committing a criminal offence...

"Even informal local groups will be caught up in the new rules. Concerned about fracking in your village? Worried about proposals to close a hospital or build a road? Be very careful, you only have a limited ration of dissent in each constituency, and if you get overdrawn or even lose some receipts then you could face a police investigation. Are you a community group that organises a series of hustings but chooses to exclude extremist party candidates? Sorry, you are now considered to be

election campaigners.

"The bill, then, redefines what counts as electioneering. At present only materials and activities obviously targeted at shifting votes are capped. But anything that might change the mind of a voter will count as election campaigning in future. If you are critical of a government policy in the year before an election, that will count as election campaigning. If you are active against racism then you could be campaigning against far-right parties. Staff time will be included, so the wages of anyone who works

on writing a critique of a policy or sends it to the media will count...

"Our democracy is too important to be closed down for everyone other than political parties for a year before an election. The government should withdraw part two of this bill. And if it thinks there is a problem that needs a legislative solution then it should at least make the effort to consult with others and build a cross-party, cross-civil society consensus. That would be the best way to guarantee freedom of speech while stopping those with the biggest wallets buying elections." •

## Steelworkers turn up heat on Toronto Plaza Hotel

*From www.usw.ca*

The United Steelworkers (USW) is taking a bold new approach in an effort to resolve a lengthy strike at the Toronto Plaza Hotel. On August 14, the union representing 40 striking workers launched a new internet campaign in conjunction with LabourStart Canada urging consumers to avoid Burnbrae Eggs until the workers get a fair deal.

"Anybody who has bought eggs lately will recognize the Burnbrae name or some of their brands like Omega 3 and NatureEgg. But what they may not know is that Burnbrae buys eggs from egg operations all over Canada and then packages them for sale under the Burnbrae brands," said USW National Director Ken Neumann.

"Chaudary Poultry, owned by Akhtar Chaudary, is an important supplier of eggs to Burnbrae.

Akhtar Chaudary is the father of Toronto Plaza Hotel boss Rehan Chaudary, and has a significant financial interest in the hotel," Neumann said. "Akhtar Chaudary could act to end these workers' struggle but he has done nothing so far. Until he does, and until these workers get a fair deal, we're asking the public to stop supporting Chaudary's poultry operation by not buying Burnbrae eggs."

The Steelworkers recently organized an online petition asking the public to appeal directly to hotel boss Rehan Chaudary to end the strike.

"We got over 1,700 signatures, but still Rehan Chaudary won't negotiate a fair deal," said USW Staff Representative Mohammed Baksh. "This new petition to Burnbrae President Margaret Hudson takes a different approach that we think will make the difference. We urge Margaret

Hudson to put pressure on Akhtar Chaudary to bring a respectful settlement to this dispute."

Since Rehan Chaudary acquired the hotel in 2009, workers have reported deteriorating conditions. Almost half of the hotel now serves as lodging to persons on public assistance. In March of this year, a person was found dead in one of the rooms, approximately two weeks after the time of death. On May 27 of this year, a fire broke out at the hotel after a bed bug extermination machine caught fire.

Workers at the Toronto Plaza Hotel, predominantly visible minority women, many of whom have worked for the hotel for over 20 years, have been on strike since May 30 in an attempt to protect their modest wages and conditions.

The internet email campaign can be accessed at [http://www.labourstartcampaigns.net/show\\_campaign.cgi?c=1938](http://www.labourstartcampaigns.net/show_campaign.cgi?c=1938) •

## PV Walk-A-Thon raises over \$3000

The annual press fund drive for People's Voice came to a rousing conclusion on August 18, with the annual PV Walk-A-Thon organized by our supporters in the Lower Fraser Club. Held at Surrey's Bear Creek Park for the last eleven years, the event has raised a total of nearly \$40,000 during that time. This year's Walk-A-Thon raised over \$3000, largely through the efforts of Harjit Daudharia, Krishna Syal, and Nazir Rizvi, who collected donations from dozens of friends of the working class press. As well as the usual delicious buffet lunch, the event featured revolutionary and traditional music performed by several talented local musicians. The Editorial Board of PV expresses our thanks to all those who organized summer fundraising events for the fund drive, including the Davenport Club's successful annual BBQ in Toronto, and our friends who held their Moncada Day picnic in Nanaimo, BC.



Above, Walk-A-Thon organizers Harjit Daudharia, Gurcharan Telewalia, and Krishna Syal, and below, one of the performances with traditional instruments. Photos by K. Cariou.



## Harper government energy rules face court challenge

ForestEthics Advocacy and Donna Sinclair, represented by civil rights and constitutional lawyer Clayton Ruby, are suing the federal government over new rules that restrict citizen participation in decisions about the energy industry.

The application calls for the Federal Court of Canada to strike down provisions of the National Energy Board Act that unreasonably restrict public comment on project proposals. Also being challenged are new rules created by the National Energy Board (NEB), which prevent any discussion of the wisdom of tar sands development at the upcoming Enbridge Line 9B hearings.

The NEB regulates the oil, gas, and electricity industries and approves pipeline construction, coal and uranium mining, liquified natural gas projects, and tar sands development in Canada. Its decisions have massive environmental and health implications.

"Through legislative changes snuck into last year's Omnibus Budget Bill C-38, the Conservative government has

undermined the democratic rights of all Canadians to speak to the issues that impact them," explained Ruby. "Right now, they cannot question the development of the tar sands itself! We're challenging



the legislation and the NEB's new rules because they violate fundamental free speech guarantees enshrined in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms."

Recent legislative changes mean that many Canadians with something to say about these projects will not have their chance to be heard. The NEB now requires that anyone wanting to submit a letter of comment to the NEB must complete a nine-page application

for a chance to speak at hearings. The NEB then decides who can and cannot provide testimony. The NEB reserves for itself the right to exclude anyone except for those that it considers to be "directly affected" by the proposed project.

Under the new rules enacted by the Harper government, Donna Sinclair's request to submit a letter of comment at upcoming hearings for the Enbridge Line 9b hearings in Toronto was denied. Sinclair is an author, long-time member of the United Church of Canada and a feature writer for the *United Church Observer*.

"Tightening the rules around public participation to the extent that any citizen of this country - regardless of expertise or geographical location - cannot express their concerns is an extraordinary and profoundly dangerous affront to our democracy. I love my country and my beliefs call on me to respect our environment. That is why I chose to join this lawsuit," says Sinclair.

For more information: [www.forestethics.org/lawsuit-background](http://www.forestethics.org/lawsuit-background) •

# Thousands to meet for first Unifor convention

## PV Commentary

In one of the biggest labour gatherings in Canadian history, thousands of elected CAW and CEP delegates will meet in Toronto over the Labour Day weekend for the founding convention of Unifor. Canada's newest union brings together over 300,000 members in workplaces across the country, to create what is described as "a force championing the rights of all working people."

Unifor's founding convention will be attended by a huge number of observers and media, reflecting the massive interest generated by this unique event. The proceedings will be livestreamed at [www.newunionconvention.ca](http://www.newunionconvention.ca), allowing working people and activists from across Canada to watch the debates and discussions as they unfold in Toronto.

The trend in recent years for labour organizations to include a wide range of guest speakers will continue at the Unifor founding. The practise continues to generate controversy, with many delegates pointing out that such big-name invited guests use up time which could otherwise be devoted to more extensive floor debates over resolutions and strategy documents. This time around, guest speakers will include best-selling author/activist Naomi Klein, comedian Mary Walsh and many others.

Earlier this summer, CAW President Ken Lewenza announced that he will not seek a nomination for president of the new union. Achieving the goals and ambitions of Unifor is a long-term effort and requires a new generation of leadership to carry it through, said Lewenza, who recalled his own experiences as a union activist.

"I went from earning a minimum wage to a middle class wage when I got a job at Chrysler," said Lewenza. "For my family, that meant we could consider buying our own house, buying a car, having independence. For too many families then, and now, that's still only a dream. And that's unfair."

CEP President Dave Coles will also retire with the formation of Unifor, after expressing "full confidence" in what he described as a "dream team" of leadership candidates being put forward to lead Unifor.

Coles and Lewenza both endorsed CAW Assistant to the President Jerry Dias as the "Unity Team" nominee for President of Unifor. The plan is to nominate Dias and 24 other candidates as a slate to fill the 25 positions on the new union's National Executive Board. According to the outgoing leaders, this is the only time that the complete National Executive Board will be presented at a Unifor Convention as a slate.

CAW Secretary-Treasurer Peter Kennedy will be the "Unity Team" candidate for Unifor Secretary-Treasurer. Michel Ouimet, current CEP Executive Vice President for Quebec, is the nominee for Quebec Director of Unifor, and CEP Secretary-Treasurer Gaetan Menard will assume the role of Transition Officer, overseeing the integration of the two unions.

Also nominated will be CAW Health Care Director Katha Fortier, for Ontario Director; Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour President Lana Payne, as Atlantic Director; and CEP National Representative Scott Doherty as Western Director.

The new NEB will include a total of five Quebec and Regional Council Chairpersons, eleven Industry Council Representatives, and three other designated NEB positions, representing Skilled Trades, Retired Workers, and Racialized and Indigenous Workers.

To celebrate the launch of Unifor, the union is hosting a free public concert at Nathan Philips Square. Starting at 6:30 pm, Sunday, Sept. 1, the concert will feature musical acts from across Canada, including Stars, Les Colocs, Blackie and the Rodeo Kings, Sister Says and DJ Hedspin.

In our Sept. 16-30 issue, People's Voice will report on the

reprint the principles contained in the Preamble to the Constitution of the new union, since these principles reflect many of the issues facing the entire working class movement:

1. We form Unifor at a time that is both troubling and critical; a time when the power of corporations and bankers has no limits; when progress has been replaced by a relentless race to the bottom.

2. We form Unifor at a time when our economy is being hollowed, our democracy eroded and when governments have abandoned social progress in the name of austerity.

3. We form Unifor at a time when too many workers are struggling to hang on to the hard-won gains of the past, when the aspirations of too many young people have been battered; when the future for too many of our neighbours is one of growing insecurity and declining quality of life.

4. We form Unifor at a time when the wealth we create is captured by a small and over-privileged elite; when our jobs are outsourced and threatened; when work has become precarious and when our rights and well-being at work are in jeopardy.

5. We form Unifor at a time when our world is rocked by social upheaval and our very planet is threatened by environment degradation and climate change.

6. We form Unifor as an act of hope that good jobs and economic progress will still be won: that our workplaces will become safer, our jobs more secure, our wages and benefits more rewarding and our lives at work defined by dignity and respect.

7. We form Unifor in the determination that equality and social justice will be achieved, that our young will have a brighter future and that through our actions, our world will be made a different and better place.

8. We form Unifor in the commitment to fight for all of that, and more. And we form our union in the determination to succeed.

9. It is through Unifor that we come together and become more than employees. It is through our union that we find our strength and build our power. It is through Unifor that we express our common goals, support each other, and develop lasting bonds of friendship and solidarity. It is through Unifor that we protect and advance our interests and build our capacity to act for ourselves and with others. ●



## Manitoba NDP imposing unfair sales tax hike

WINNIPEG - Manitoba Tory MLAs are forcing the legislature to stay in session well into the summer, hoping to inscribe on everyone's mind that the NDP is responsible for an unpopular sales tax hike, from 7 to 8 per cent. The Tories don't really oppose the hike, so they are complaining that the NDP changed a law requiring a public referendum on the issue.

Nearly 200 people and groups, including the Communist Party, made presentations at the Legislature on the budget bill in July. Many pointed out that workers, the poor and small business will bear the main burden of the tax. So far, the labour movement and the NDP are not budging from the tax hike, which may lead many NDP supporters to stay away from the polls in the next election, expected in one or two years.

The Manitoba Committee of the Communist Party has issued the following statement, demanding that the NDP cancel

the sales tax hike.

The Manitoba NDP government needs to cancel the sales tax hike or withdraw its budget bill. Working families deserve better.

The law requiring a vote on the sales tax hike which amounts to about 0.4% of Manitoba's economy should be kept. It is wrong and immoral to promise voters the right to an opinion and then yank the rug out when elected. It is an important principle to have democratic control over Manitoba's economy.

The NDP's idea that taxes "create" a fair society is fundamentally flawed. Working people only gained social programs like medicare through struggle. Secondly, it is a failure of principle to not consider if a tax is fair or unfair. A progressive tax is always based on the ability to pay. A sales tax is always unfair to the poor, workers and small business.

In fact, the sales tax hike is an

attack on working people. Because it is a regressive tax, many workers and the poor will be forced to join the tens of thousands already using food banks to feed their families every month. They will be unable to provide other necessities and comforts to their families.

The Selinger NDP budget reinforces inequality, poverty and economic decline, not fairness. It is a budget that helps big business, not people.

Representing big corporate interests, the Business Council of Manitoba campaigned for a sales tax hike since 2011. The only thing business wants to share with workers is the provincial debt and the cost of inadequate social, education and jobs programs.

The sales tax hike also deals a blow to small business and farmers, accelerating their demise.

The Manitoba Federation of Labour endorsed the Business Council's idea for a sales tax hike at its convention last year, but this only shows that the labour movement continues to grow closer to business interests on key economic issues.

The labour movement today, like the NDP itself, has changed from the fighting movement that created medicare, a fairer society and the creation of much of the public sector itself, into something nearly indistinguishable from big business.

It is an important reason why union density in the private sector has plummeted by around half to 17% in 30 years. It also means that public sector workers are sitting targets unless the private sector unions find their old fighting spirit and new ways to create a fair society.

If the NDP breaks the law on a tax referendum, then it will be easier for a Tory government to wreak havoc.

Instead of bowing down to big business, the Selinger NDP still has a choice. It can continue to prove its loyalty to the system of big business domination that is more unfair every year. Or it can side with the large majority who will suffer from the unfair tax hike.

The first path creates setbacks for workers; the second path leads to a fair society. ●



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

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

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

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

Phone 1-202-456-1111 Fax 1-202-456-2461

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

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

## Do not patronize IKEA in Richmond or Coquitlam

On May 13, management at the Richmond IKEA locked out nearly 350 members of Teamsters 213. IKEA has shown a willingness to break labour law, having been found in violation of Labour Code provisions preventing the use of replacement workers.

IKEA is not a franchised company. The Richmond and Coquitlam IKEAs are both owned by the parent company, whose owners are among the wealthiest 100 families in the world.

The issue is the imposition of a tiered wage structure. Despite the Richmond location being highly profitable, management is seeking to impose significant wage cuts on the majority of its work force. Five years ago, the Teamsters fought the tiered wage structure and won.

Tiered wage structures poison work sites, creating resentment between co-workers. They contribute to the part-timing of work, as management seeks to take advantage of the new, lower wage categories.

Do not patronize either BC IKEA location until the dispute is resolved to the satisfaction of the Teamsters and its IKEA members.

# EDITORIALS

## Greetings to Unifor delegates

One of the most significant trade union gatherings in recent years takes place in Toronto over the Labour Day weekend - the inaugural convention of Unifor, bringing together some 300,000 members of CAW and CEP into a new organization.

Free advice, according to a popular adage, is worth what you pay. That's certainly true for the counsel provided by Globe and Mail columnist Konrad Yakabuski, who recently urged Unifor members - especially those in the public sector - to keep wage demands modest and refrain from strike action. That "constructive" approach is the best way to show real solidarity with low-wage workers, he glibly claims.

We hope that Unifor will reject such right-wing arguments. The preamble to the Unifor constitution correctly points out that the unlimited power of corporations and bankers leads to a relentless race to the bottom. The preamble hits the mark by stressing that "the wealth we create is captured by a small and over-privileged elite", and that "our rights and well-being at work are in jeopardy."

These problems will not be solved by building "partnerships" with the big corporations. Genuine economic and social progress for working people does require partnership and cooperation - between public and private sector workers, the organized and unorganized, those with full-time jobs and the growing numbers who face daily economic insecurity. Unity of all workers is needed to turn back the corporate attack, and the success of Unifor will be measured by its ability to build such unity.

On this historic occasion, we send our warmest greetings to all Unifor delegates, and express our confidence that the new union will advance the interests of the working class across Canada!

## Yes to public ownership

One of the last actions of the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada was to urge Ottawa to establish a Crown Corporation in the telecommunications sector.

Congratulations are in order to the CEP for raising this proposal. As outgoing CEP president Dave Coles asks, rather than giving benefits to Verizon, a giant US corporation that will take jobs, expertise and profits out of the country, why not set up a Crown telecommunications company that will hire Canadians and return the surplus to the public?

It's a sad commentary on the Official Opposition that this concept is seen as "thinking outside the box." Instead of encouraging wide debate on the benefits of public ownership, the NDP leadership stifles any such discussion, even though (to give just one example) a higher percentage of Canadians support public ownership of the energy industry than those who voted NDP in the most recent federal election.

The "Canada Wireless" proposal raised by CEP deserves strong support from the labour and people's movements, as an important measure to help end the relentless gouging of consumers by the telecom monopolies.

It's also time to demand public ownership in other key sectors, such as oil and gas, pharmaceuticals, banking and insurance, etc. Such highly profitable industries could become the material basis for a radical transformation of the economy, away from corporate profiteering, and towards jobs, housing, social programs, and environmental sustainability.

This is not a utopian idea; it's an urgent necessity of our times. The private profit economy known as capitalism poses a dire threat to the living standards of working people, but also to the very future of our planet. Simply put, human survival is too important to leave in the hands of the ultra-rich. Kudos to the CEP for helping to stimulate debate on this important topic.

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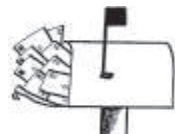
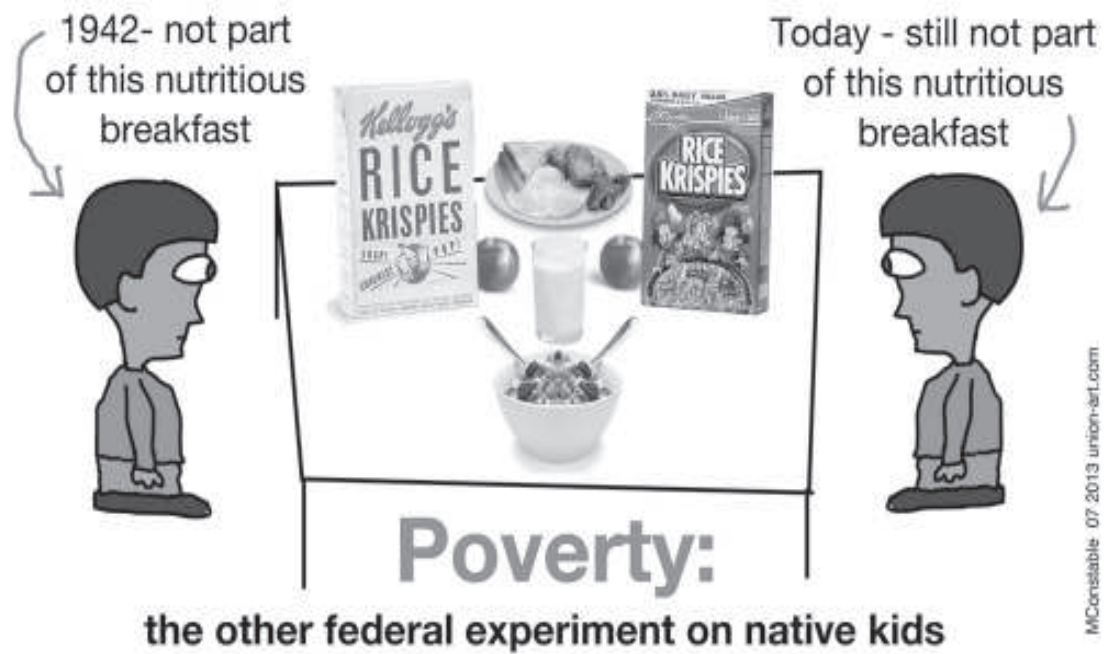
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## LETTERS

People's Voice welcomes your letters. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity, and to refuse to print letters which may be libellous or which contain personal attacks. Send your views to: "Letters to the Editor" 706 Clark Drive, Vancouver, BC, V5L 3J1 or pvoice@telus.net

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## Letters to the Editor

### The Forgotten People in War-torn Afghanistan

It took the National Geographic Magazine's interest and expertise to expose the difficult situation of the Kyrgyz nomads, who live precariously at above 14,000 feet in the Wakhan, a narrow panhandle in northeastern Afghanistan. Their headman is a 32-year-old khan. Their habitat is also known as the Little Pamir Valley. In the language of these Sunni Muslims, who number about 1,300, the place name is Bam-e-Dunya (roof of the world). Their restrictive domain resulted partly from action taken during the Communist revolution in Russia, that of China in 1949, and treaties of 1873 and 1895 between the British and Russian Empires, to prevent tsarist Russia

from touching British India.

They live in an unforgiving environment that challenges the people and their various kinds of livestock. The temperature can drop below freezing 340 days of the year. Grass is slow to renew. The closest town is a four-day journey by their four-footed friends. While having difficult survival problems, they are not poor. Their sheep, yaks, goats and camels are traded in order to secure commodities like flour from a trader who visits them periodically. They depend mainly on horses and donkeys for transportation.

Their leaders have lobbied several generations to get a road leading to the outside world, so

doctors with medicines and teachers would have access to their villages. Nothing happened. In the spring of 2012, the khan pleaded to President Hamid Karzai and some of his ministers for funds to build a medical clinic, a couple schools and a road. Still no decision to go ahead.

Now consider the tragic health conditions that these people have been enduring. The mortality rate for women during childbirth is 500 times that for the developed world. The death rate for children is the highest in the world; less than half live to their fifth birthday. Due to the impact of conditions such as these, that must cause depression, the opium addiction rate runs up to 50%.

Consider the astronomical amount of money spent on the Afghan War since 2003, and one has to wonder very seriously, why no one in the NATO combined forces or the Afghan government has reacted to this humanitarian crisis and acted to assist the Kyrgyz people.

They have debated the possibility of moving to a more hospitable place in the former Soviet republic of Kyrgyzstan, where the same language is spoken and there are ethnic ties, but they do not move. It's a case of "home is where you make it."

Roy L. Piepenburg, Recipient of the Salvos Prelorenzos Peace Award (1999), Edmonton, AB

## Establish "Canada Wireless" crown corporation, says CEP

The Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada is calling on the Harper government to rescind advantages offered to Verizon Communications to set up as a fourth major carrier and to instead establish a Crown Corporation to fulfill this objective.

"When wireless 'spectrum' is a hot topic at summer barbecues you know the government's telecommunications policy is a mess," says CEP President Dave Coles, who is stepping down when his union and the CAW meet on the Labour Day weekend in Toronto to launch the 300,000-member Unifor. "To get out of a crisis it's important for a government to be able to think 'outside the box' and setting up a public Telco company would be a smart way to do just that."

"Instead of giving a slew of benefits to a gigantic US-based corporation that will take the jobs, expertise and profits out of the country, why not set up a Crown telecommunications company that will hire Canadians, build on this country's impressive history in the sector and return the surplus to the public?" asks Coles.

"If the government is intent on providing consumers with a fourth major carrier in each market it should acquire one of the struggling small telcos, reserve some of the available 700 MHz spectrum for public use and establish 'Canada Wireless' as a Crown Corporation," says Coles.

Such a move would not be as innovative as it may seem. In 2007 the government of New Zealand bought a small Internet provider in a bid to strengthen the country's telecommunications sector. Similarly, SaskTel is the leading communications provider in that province and it has led the way on many technological and service advancements.

"If Industry Canada Minister James Moore doesn't trust a union leader's opinion on setting up a Crown Corporation he can call conservative Saskatchewan Premier Brad Wall to ask him about the many benefits of a public telecommunications operator," says Coles.

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# Stop the killings! Legislate police to de-escalate conflict! Put police under strict civilian control!

The killing of young Sammy Yatim with 9 police bullets followed by a Taser, is the latest in at least 20 police killings in Toronto where the first and only response was shoot to kill.

Numerous coroners' inquests since 1994 have unanimously recommended that police be trained in, and apply de-escalation in situations such as the confrontation with Sammy Yatim on July 27th. This could be done at the Ontario Police College, operated by the Ontario government.

But police services and governments at all levels have ignored these inquest recommendations, and as a result 20 people have died - many of them young, most suffering from mental health issues, a majority from racialized communities.

Now that the Ontario Ombudsman has announced a systemic investigation into the direction provided to police by the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services for de-escalating conflict, police have reacted with open hostility, and in at least one case, threats. A Durham police officer was caught comparing the Ombudsman to Al-Qaeda on twitter, while Toronto Police Association President Mike McCormack (son of a former Toronto Police Chief) has led the way with public attacks on both the Ombudsman and the Ontario Federation of Labour which supports the investigation.

This hostility begs the question: Are police above the law? Who are police accountable to? And who should hold them to account?

July also marked the 3rd anniversary of the largest mass arrest in Canadian history, with the arrest, detention, kettling and "caging" of 1,100 demonstrators at the G20 protests in Toronto, during three days of martial law in the city.

The common thread is that

police appear to be above the law, or outside of it, while the provincial government stands by, willfully oblivious. This is a threat to our civil and democratic rights, and to the well-being of each and all of us.

The Communist Party of Canada (Ontario) extends its sympathy to the family of Sammy Yatim, whose young life was tragically cut so short by lethal police action, and government inaction.

We call on all those concerned about police killings and violence to demand that governments and civilian boards must hold police accountable, individually and collectively, for their actions; and must regulate police services to uniformly and consistently de-escalate conflict situations

We demand the Toronto Police Services Board:

- \* hold police to account for the killing of Sammy Yatim by demanding that Constable James Forcillo be charged in his death

- \* demand implementation of the recommendations of the "Saving Lives: Alternatives to the Use of Lethal Force by Police" report published in 2000 by the Urban Alliance on Race Relations, which Toronto Police Services declared it would implement more than 10 years ago.

We further demand the Provincial Government:

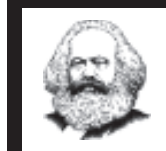
- \* introduce a consistent and standardized set of regulations governing police forces across the province, to de-escalate conflict situations using the recommendations of the "Saving Lives: Alternatives to the Use of Lethal Force by Police" Report

- \* enact legislation to put police under public civilian control in every Ontario jurisdiction, and provide these bodies with the teeth to enforce real civilian controls in Ontario. ●

- Issued by the Ontario Executive, Communist Party of Canada (Ontario), August 2013



Several major demonstrations have been held in Toronto to protest police violence, including this Aug. 12 rally. On Aug. 19, Const. James Forcillo was charged with second-degree murder in the killing of Sammy Yatim. (PV photos by Ed Bil)



## Marxist Theory

## Planet can't afford capitalism

**A federal election will take place on Sept. 7 in Australia. One of the big issues in the campaign is climate change, which is having a serious impact on the country. The following commentary is by Bob Briton, leader of the Communist Party of Australia.**

A new study has demonstrated that the rapid thawing of permafrost in the East Siberian Ice Shelf has already led to the release of huge volumes of methane - a particularly troublesome greenhouse gas. Warming seas are also giving off the gas from previously frozen reserves estimated to contain 50 million tonnes. The journal *Nature* used the method deployed in the British Stern review several years ago to calculate that the pivotal temperature rise of 2 degrees above pre-industrial levels will be with us by 2035, not 2040. The damage bill from rising sea levels, storms and heat is estimated to reach \$65 trillion or about 80 percent of the entire global economy last year.

The North Pole is now a temporary lake. Temperatures in the region are between one and three degrees above normal this month. Permafrost in areas of Antarctica is melting at ten times the historical average. Given the immensity of these challenges, you would think the corporate media would be talking about little else. Election campaigns should logically be dominated by discussion of programs for how to tackle this threat to the very future of life on Earth. You could think that but you would be wrong.

Kevin Rudd gave the first indication of Labor's post-Gillard trajectory on climate change. The Coalition [the alliance of right-wing Liberal and National parties] and the media hounded the former PM about her carbon tax deal with the Greens in the wake of her pre-election pledge not to introduce one. Rudd's announcement that

the tax would be replaced by an Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) in mid-2014 is not the fulfilment of an ambitious program to tackle emissions. It's a piece of political opportunism that will appeal to the corporate sector.

Europe's carbon price - the market to which Australia's would be linked - is currently about \$6 per tonne. Rudd hopes to neutralise criticism that Australia's carbon price of \$24 per tonne is too onerous on local business. The fact that the worst polluters in the country were given exemptions and compensation did not blunt the attacks from big business, determined to squeeze every cent of profit from their Australian operations. They won the "debate" carried on above the heads of the public.

Having tasted blood, corporate interests are keen to press on to further "victories". Energy Australia and Origin Energy want reductions to the Renewable Energy Target of 20 percent of energy from renewable sources by 2020. They say the move to the ETS will make investment in wind power, for example, unattractive. Wind power firms smell a rat.

Richard Farrell of Infigen was quoted in *The Australian Financial Review* that profits are behind the latest "concerns" by the traditional energy companies. "The increase of renewable energy with its free fuel drags down the average wholesale cost of energy, and reduces the profits for owners of coal-fired plants and gas turbines," he said.

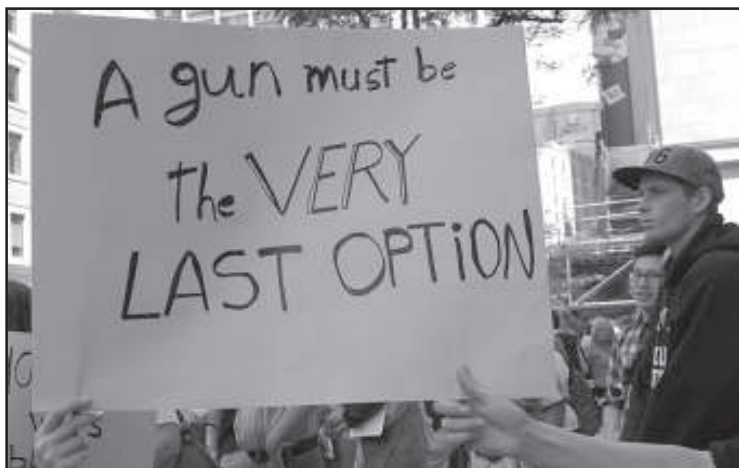
The performance of Australian governments in response to the climate emergency has been woeful. The "alternative" on offer by the Coalition would be worse. Opposition leader Tony Abbott is a climate change denier despite his recent squirming on the matter. He recently referred to Rudd's ETS as "a so-called market in the non-delivery of an invisible substance to no one." The scepticism about market mechanisms to cure

problems thrown up by monopoly-dominated markets is warranted but that's not what he was complaining about. The one-liner contains the disturbingly ignorant thought that "what you can't see can't hurt you".

Abbott's Direct Action Plan is a return to the largely voluntary gestures trotted out under Howard. None of the authorities on the issue believe it will deliver even the very weak current carbon emissions reduction target of 5 percent of 2000 levels by 2020. He is trying to keep hip-pocket voters onside with promises to maintain the carbon tax compensation established under Gillard while axing the tax and scuttling the ETS. He says he is so committed to this that if the Coalition doesn't gain control of the Senate and his measures are thwarted in the Upper House, that he will call a double dissolution election on the question. We'll see, but the determination to fiddle while the environment is burning should be well and truly noted.

Solutions are too slow in coming. Heedless, profit-driven capitalism is at the core of the climate change crisis but none of the major parliamentary players are going to address that monster. A strong vote for the Greens at the September 7 poll, particularly in the Senate, could place a bit of a handbrake on the worst of the damaging legislation already being foreshadowed by Labor and the Coalition.

But that's not enough. Technology is not the problem. It is a problem of political will and leadership. Until a strong alliance of left and progressive forces is built with powerful support in the community, the people of Australia will continue to be bystanders on the issue of climate change and many other questions vital to their present and future well being. We won't get an anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, pro-people government at the federal election but it has got to be our goal. ●



## Charges just first step, says OFL

The Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL) has responded to news that Constable James Forcillo will be charged with second degree murder in the death of Sammy Yatim.

"Laying murder charges against Constable Forcillo is only the beginning of the justice process, it isn't the end," said OFL President Sid Ryan. "Sammy Yatim was not just killed when Constable Forcillo opened fire, he was killed by a police response that failed him at every level. Real justice requires full accountability and substantial reform of Ontario's entire policing system."

OFL Executive Vice-President Irwin Nanda asked, "Who was in charge of the scene on that fatal night? Why didn't officers try to de-escalate the situation before responding with deadly force? Why wasn't the Mobile Crisis Unit called in? Why isn't the officer who tasered Sammy after he was shot being investigated? What charges will be laid against the officers seen on video tampering with the crime scene by kicking away bullet cartridges?"

# LABOUR DAY 2013

## Support struggles that advance the rights of working people!

We are living in the Canadian and global environment where the main corporate thrust is the destruction of the welfare state and the achievements of generations. First in the cross-hairs are the trade unions, collective bargaining, social programs, equity and environmental protection.

The main features of labour relations in Canada today are intimidation, legislated agreements, lock-outs and removal of the right to strike. Harper's conservatives have used back-to-work legislation five times in two years. A new feature is the legislated imposition of the terms of arbitrated "agreements". Unions are also being bludgeoned by onerous and undemocratic financial accounting requirements designed to fuel a media attack, to paint unions as expropriators of workers' wages for non-worker campaigns. Cuts to public services, healthcare, immigrants' rights and Employment Insurance impact working people from coast to coast.

The Ontario Federation of Labour has published important documents and program that seeks a COMMON FRONT with an inclusive fightback program. The CLC "Worker to Worker" campaign, while not as pro-active as the OFL, still provides potential for those who wish to develop more. The Quebec students impressed the country and the world with their strength, and the 175,000 Quebec construction workers flexed muscle in their recent strike. Working people are not passive pawns, and their as yet uncoordinated struggles are crying out for form and leadership.

This Labour Day weekend will witness an event that has been over a year in construction and that has the potential to significantly influence the course of Canadian Labour.

Of course this is the product of the CAW-CEP merger negotiations, the founding

convention of the "new union", UNIFOR.

This is not only the largest merger in at least several decades but could prove to be the most

### Labour Day 2013 message, Central Executive Committee, Communist Party of Canada

unique and significant. It has been certainly the most transparent, the most vertically inclusive and the most talked about outside the membership of the two parent unions. It is not assimilation or a shelter for a battered smaller union finding safety within a larger one. It is not a McCarthyite raid like the Steel-Mine Mill of the past and neither is it an offshore spin-off of relations or decisions made in U.S.-based international headquarters.

Both parent unions, CAW and CEP, are Canadian unions born into diversity and struggle and shaped by these conditions. Both have been on the cutting edge of social unionism and militant struggle, both have experienced retreat and concessionary bargaining, usually concurrent with each other in the thrust and parry of class struggle. It is absolutely logical that these two private sector unions mirror every strength and weakness, every hope and challenge, every potential and every danger that faces Canadian workers in this period of neo-liberal offensive, super exploitation, ecological disaster and imperialist war. Both of these unions have had to contend with the global mobility of capital, free trade agreements, de-industrialization, and the general crisis of capitalism and the cyclical recessions of the last decade.

In the publications of the Communist Party over the years there have been both compliments and criticisms of labour as

Canadian workers wrestle with the double-backed demons of compliance and concession, and as they also resist and struggle heroically. If social consciousness

is a reflection of social being, why would not, in a collective sense, the realities of reformism and class struggle be bound together in the consciousness of our class and its institutions? After all is this not the proving ground?

The Preamble of the draft Unifor Constitution reflects determination and the anger of the oppressed. Some on the left may mourn the lack of a socialist agenda but the Preamble identifies the enemy, recognizes the global nature of the struggle and includes

the struggle for peace and ecology. In this world where every foothold has to be fought for, the Communist Party recognizes the potential for militant struggle, the possibility for a new quality and an elevation of class consciousness. This is infinitely better than the "conversation" Ken Georgetti wants to have at the cocktail level with the Harper Tories.

The very security of unions and union membership is under attack as provincial and federal governments prepare to destroy the Rand Formula, dues check-off and the closed shop. In the face of this onslaught, labour has not closed ranks. There have been too many defeats.

The tendency to bend under pressure, like CAW's recent acceptance of a permanent two-tier wage agreement at GM Oshawa, must and can be checked and reversed. Ford and Chrysler

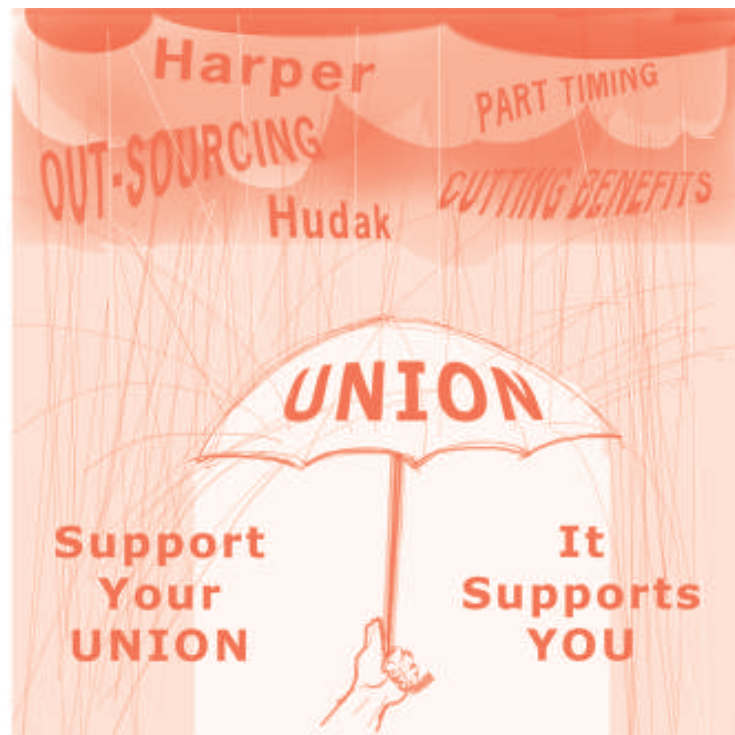
will definitely want parity and they probably won't wait until the next round of negotiations. Of course the CAW is not alone and unfortunately concessionary bargaining has become common in the private sector since the late 1970s. Pattern bargaining is no use when the pattern is concessionary. The strength of labour is in unity not stratification, in universal rules not anarchy, in unity not competition.

Unifor, for the first time since the struggles of the Workers Unity League in the 1930s, seeks to find the way to organize the unemployed, the youth, precarious workers, indigenous people and immigrants. Skeptics may dismiss this as public relations or media hype for another self-serving business union merger. Skepticism is not what is needed on Labour Day 2013.

Unions and social advances were not built by skeptics. They were built through resolute struggle, by determined optimists, hard headed perhaps, but optimists. Left activists, Communists and militants. Workers and farmers.

Our objective cannot be simply to regain what we've lost. The struggle now is for what we dreamt about but never achieved, for what the welfare state was supposed to introduce, the next step we didn't manage to take. The present corporate offensive is the result of not defending the socialist alternative hard enough. The value of Unifor is the fact that major labour forces have declared their unwillingness to fold up and take orders, to refuse the role of labour-brokers.

The Communist Party salutes working people and their institutions, and pledges our support to any new working class formations that advance the rights of working people, and struggles against capitalist domination. We have no other reason to exist. ●



kempkes union-art.com '13

## Enbridge lies about pipeline jobs

By Kimball Cariou

A leading British Columbia economist has demolished the myth that the Enbridge Northern Gateway pipeline project would bring massive economic benefits, including thousands of desperately needed jobs.

Robyn Allan is the former CEO of the publicly-owned Insurance Corporation of BC, which provides auto insurance for most drivers in the province. A well-known skeptic regarding the project, she has spent two years assessing the economic and financial case for the pipeline presented to the National Energy Board by Enbridge. Her August 13 commentary in the Vancouver Sun focuses on basic facts about the project.

Allan's findings should be carefully studied by trade unionists. Last November, delegates at the BC Federation of Labour convention were sharply divided over the Northern Gateway proposal. A clear majority appeared to oppose the project,

but some opponents argued that a composite resolution on the issue was too weak. Building trades unions and some others argued that the pipeline will create important jobs and economic growth, and that steps can be taken to prevent environmental damage from potential spills. In the end, some of the strongest opponents of the project joined with the building trades to vote down the composite resolution - for entirely different motives. These differences within the labour movement became a factor in the victory of the BC Liberals in the May provincial election.

A clear presentation of Robyn Allan's research could well have resulted in a very different outcome at the BC Fed.

Her Sun article came in response to recent claims by Enbridge executive Janet Holder that the Northern Gateway pipeline would bring a \$6.5-billion investment in the provincial economy, creating 3,000 jobs during construction and 650 permanent jobs.

However, Allan notes that "a significant portion of the project's

capital cost relates to the condensate import line. Condensate is used to mix with oilsands bitumen to move the heavy, tar-like product down a pipeline."

In fact, Canada imports condensate, then exports it back out mixed with tar sands bitumen, at considerable economic cost, rather than upgrading bitumen to synthetic crude oil in Alberta.

As for the "3,000 jobs" claimed by Holder, Allan points out that this figure comes from Enbridge's

project application, which actually specifies that 3,029 person years of construction employment are expected only during a three month period in the third year of a four-year project.

As she stresses, "person-years of employment are not jobs. If you work for a company for five years as a carpenter or an electrician: that is a job. Enbridge would call it five."

In fact, Enbridge calculates that construction jobs from Northern Gateway are actually just over 1,000,

and these are not guaranteed jobs for British Columbians or Albertans; many could be offshore temporary workers.

Wrapping up her expose of Enbridge's inflated figures, Allan goes on to explain that most of the so-called "650 permanent jobs" are actually spin-offs: "Only 78 jobs are related to the actual project. The rest are estimates of employment from direct input purchases, indirect and induced impacts over 30 years... Only 12 per cent of the projected 650 jobs in B.C. come from operating the pipeline and marine facilities."

Allan's article does not go into the economic costs of bitumen spills. But such an environmental catastrophe along the coast would devastate B.C.'s tourism industry, which provides many thousands of full-time and seasonal jobs. This helps explain why many trade unions stand with First Nations and environmental groups in the struggle against the Northern Gateway pipeline.

(Cariou is the editor of People's Voice.) ●



October 2012: union flags at anti-pipeline rally in Victoria.

# Kevin Neish reports from Gaza

*Solidarity activist and PV supporter Kevin Neish has spent the summer in Gaza, using his skills to help improve the lives of Palestinians. Here are some excerpts from his blog, which can be found along with his photos at [www.kevinneish.ca](http://www.kevinneish.ca)*

## June 19

I finally got back into Gaza yesterday afternoon. It took the Egyptian Intelligence Branch two weeks to issue a permission letter for me to travel to Gaza. I was told the letter would have arrived sooner but that the Egyptians were very busy dealing with the upcoming anti-Morsi demonstrations. It was a good time to leave Cairo. There are certainly worse places to be stuck, as I saw some amazing museums and of course the Nile, Pyramids, Sphinx, etc., but it's good to now be with these fine, friendly folks in Gaza...

The Israelis have made a few recent armed incursions with bulldozers to destroy farmers' fields, they're kidnapping fishers and confiscating their boats, and F16s are making regular noisy passes over the City. So nothing much has changed from when I was here in February.



*Flechettes from Israeli shell*

## July 1

The other day, the ISM [International Solidarity Movement] folks here, went to see a farmer friend named Nasser, who lives near Johr Al Deak in Eastern Gaza. Unfortunately his farm house is only 200 meters from the Israeli border and so is within Israel's, self-declared, high danger buffer zone. He has been here for many years and has never had any problems, even during the various wars and invasions.

The Israeli military seemed to accept that he was no threat to them, and left him alone, until three years ago. One quiet afternoon, without warning, the Israeli military started attacking his farm. They were so surprised and unprepared that one of Nasser's six children, a 2-year old, was left sleeping in the field beside the house. The mother ran out the door to rescue him, and an Israeli tank immediately fired a shell at her. But not just any shell, it was an anti-personnel "flechette" shell. Deemed illegal by the Geneva Convention and certainly not something to be used on a poor rural farm family. She died in front of her family from dozens of terrible wounds. Attached below

is a series of photos about Nasser present situation, and evidence of what a "flechette" shell does and why it is a war crime to use such a weapon at anytime...

Here is Nasser's original home, which they are now afraid to live in. All the marks on the concrete stucco wall are from the hardened steel, flechette anti-personnel darts, from just one tank shell fired at Mrs. Nasser. She died at the lower right, in front of her children and husband. Mr. Nasser said that the Israelis would not allow an ambulance to approach for 4-and-a-half hours. The darts are driven up to two inches deep into the concrete stucco. You can see that these flechette darts easily penetrated these heavy steel panels. Imagine what they do to humans.

After a lot of digging and prying with my pocket knife and pliers, I managed to pull two of these 1.5 inch long (4 cm) flechette darts out of the Nasser's farm house wall. Evidence of a war crime. Thousands of these darts came from that one tank shell fired at Mrs. Nasser. What possible purpose does such a horrendous and illegal weapon have to play in a rural farm yard in Palestine, or anywhere. This madness has to stop. The Israeli blockade and occupation of Gaza and all of Palestine has to end.

## July 4

I'm quite a well trained mechanic. I hold four journeyman mechanical certificates, as well as a College diploma to teach them all. But I'm also a fisherman's son, so I'm pretty darned good at fixing something with little more than a pocket knife and some string and wire. It's this last "qualification" that is now holding me in good stead in Gaza. I'm volunteering at

the Gaza fire department's repair shop. I retired some years ago, but here I'm working on some equipment that even predates my long career. Due to the blockade, the fire department has an oddball collection of old trucks from all over the world. Japanese, Italian, German and Russian trucks, that would have been retired many years ago anywhere else in the world, even if you had a proper supply of parts. But the Palestinians somehow keep them running, in spite of the Israeli blockade.

And as if that was not bad enough, during the 2008 "Cast Lead" assault on Gaza, the Israelis targeted all the fire halls in Gaza. One of the trucks damaged in that assault is still going through the rebuilding process in this repair shop, using equipment adapted from unrelated vehicles, home made parts, haywire and a lot of ingenuity. But many of the fire trucks were beyond even the Palestinians' ability to repair them...

Of course this begs the question, why did the Israelis attack fire trucks? For that matter why did they attack ambulances, sewer plants, electrical power plants, water treatment plants, sports stadiums, Universities and various United Nations schools. And why are they still attacking Palestine today?

So here's a shout out to these grand fellows of the Gaza fire department and some humble praise to the many fire fighters who have died under Israeli fire, while trying to protect the people of Gaza, Palestine.

## July 9

I've finished my work on the Fisheries Department research ship, and now it waits for people with deeper pockets than me to make the needed repairs I've documented. I am still volunteering at the Gaza fire department repair shop, pitching in here and there doing apprentice level work, as well as offering technical assistance when asked.

I was in the compressor shed sorting out a wiring problem, when



*Neish has been working to repair this ship.*

I realized there were numerous broken, bent and twisted metal shears and bolt cutters lying about.

This seemed strange to me, as I well know what it takes to bend or break such heavy duty bolt cutters. And then I realized that these dozen bolt cutters and such were likely broken by rescuers trying to save people from rocketed and collapsed buildings. Every bent and broken handle must have a gruesome, sad, desperate story to tell...

## July 24

...So it is Ramadan. Everyone is fasting, nor drinking or smoking, dawn to dusk, for a month (until Aug. 8). Out of respect, this includes non-Muslims while in public. The idea is that all Muslims do this in order to appreciate the situation of the poor, who have no option but to fast at times.

But with the daily fast, comes the wonderful fast breaking meal at sundown, the "Iftar meal". Everyone gathers in front of a table or floor mat, covered with food and drink. They patiently wait until we all hear the Imam's announcement of the setting of the Sun, at which point we all partake in this huge meal. I have been privileged to have been invited to several Iftars. At some, with poorer folks, we bring a big gift of food, which is the basis of the meal. At Iftars with better off families, everything that is available in besieged Gaza is offered to us. Though at the very "best" Iftar meal so far, they only offered a basic box lunch of chicken and rice, but it was with about 100 kids from the Maghazi refugee camp North of Gaza City. These are kids of refugees from the Israeli ethnic cleansings of 1948, who are still waiting for the various UN resolutions to be enforced to let them go home...

## August 11

The main purpose for my being in Gaza, is to work for the International Solidarity Movement as a human shield, with farmers, fishers or in Red Crescent ambulances if the Israelis attack. While we wait for assignments, I fill my days by working at the fire department, teaching English at a school and visiting friends.

Here's how yesterday worked out.

With the end of Ramadan comes the 4-day Eid celebration. Gaza City center is full of people walking and talking, eating and drinking. Outdoor eateries like this one are open late into the early morning,

as too are my favourite rustic outdoor beach cafes, with their cats, rats and cockroaches (it's Gaza, so one overlooks the small stuff). Young couples and families, drink coffee and tea and smoke sheesha through water pipes. I'm told that sheesha is as bad or worse than cigarettes, but I guess Gazans have more immediate and dangerous things to worry about.

In the morning a homemade ferris wheel has magically appeared on our street. Like so many things in Gaza, it doesn't count on the intermittent electricity to work, just the strong arms of a local volunteer. The same goes for this swing. Gaza's population is young, with little spare space or resources for playgrounds, especially in the inner city areas. So the government has built these homemade mobile playgrounds, which rotate around the communities. The kids seem to like the plan.

Next stop is Gaza's seemingly endless beaches. An amazing resource for the future.

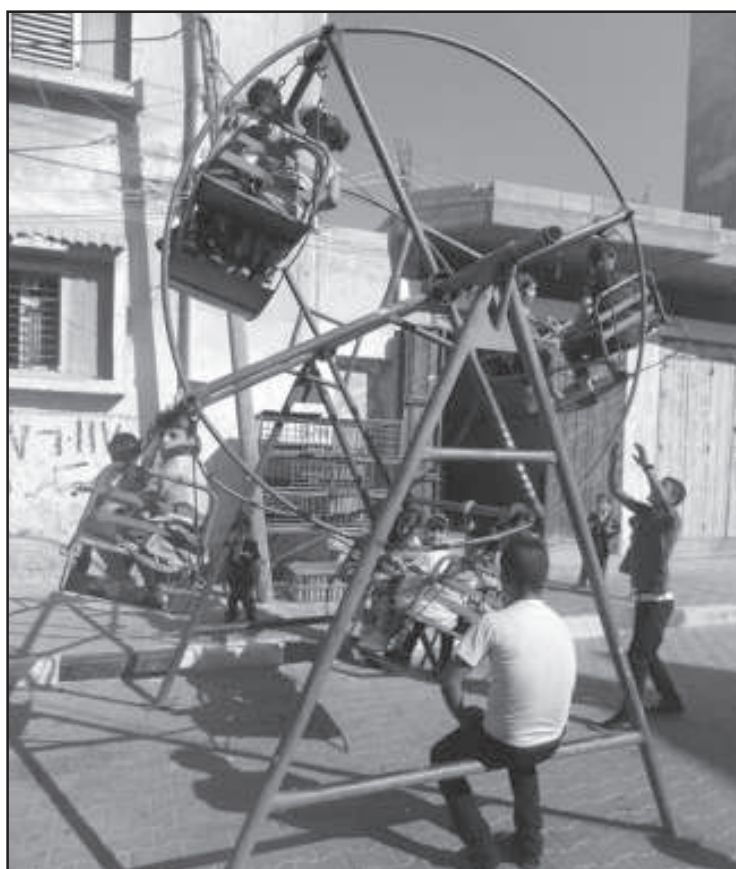
A waterfront beach cabin is prepared for us. Our evening meal of chicken and veggies are wrapped in tin foil and buried in the sand on a bed of hot coals.

Now that all the illegal Zionist colonies have been chased out of Gaza, the Palestinians have full access to their beaches. The kids make the best of it during these hot days of summer...

And there's always fishing, but you won't find me eating any of their catch or joining them in the water here. A few hundred meters to the north of us, just past the headland, is the main "river" in Gaza, Wadi Gaza, which flows out of the hills of the West Bank near Hebron. All the Israeli towns and farms along Wadi Gaza, dump their mostly untreated sewage and chemical waste into it, such that, by the time it reaches the sea, the stench is enough, as they say, to "gag a maggot".

Due to the Israeli bombing of Gaza's sewer plants and lack of blockaded parts for them, the Palestinians too have to dump raw sewage into Wadi Gaza. New sewer plants are being planned and retention ponds are being built, to try to control the illegal Israeli discharges, but for now Gazan beaches are heavily polluted and would be closed and fenced off, if they were anywhere else in the world. But the Gazans have no choice but to make the best of a bad situation, and use their "less"

**see GAZA, page 11**



*Palestinian children enjoy "ferris wheel" rides.*



# GLOBAL CLASS STRUGGLE

## Unions slam Tunisia government

Tunisia's ruling Islamist party Ennahda has agreed to meet Houcine Abassi, leader of the powerful UGTT trade union federation, to discuss the crisis sparked by the killing of an opposition politician. Nearly 500,000 Tunisians are members of the UGTT, which can paralyse the country with strike action.

The planned meeting comes after Ennahda announced the suspension of the constituent assembly's work drawing up a new constitution, to allow the Islamist-led government and the opposition to hold talks on ending the political crisis. But the opposition coalition, made up of parties from across the political spectrum, has refused to meet Ennahda until a new government is formed.

The union has called for the resignation of the Islamist-dominated cabinet and its replacement by a government of technocrats. The Tunisian employers' organisation Utica, has made a similar call, but Ennahda has so far rejected the proposal.

Meanwhile Tunisia's Tamarod, a movement modelled on the one in Egypt that led to the army ousting the elected Islamist president, said five of its activists were on hunger strike in front of the constituent assembly to demand its dissolution and the resignation of the government. Tamarod Tunisia says on its Facebook page that it has collected 1.6 million signatures in support of both measures. The figure would amount to some 15 percent of the country's population. Opposition supporters have protested every night in front of the assembly, accusing the Islamist government of seeking to roll back the political and human rights adopted in 1956 under Tunisia's first president, Habib Bourguiba.

Radical Salafists were blamed for the assassination of opposition MP Mohamed Brahmî at the end of July, the second opposition politician to be killed this year.

With one million members in a country of eleven million people, the UGTT has already flexed its muscles several times in Tunisia's new politics. Its regional strikes in early 2011 helped bring down autocrat Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali.

The UGTT called a one-day strike in July to protest the neoliberal economic policies of the government, causing the stock market to plunge.

The federation wants to keep the country's political and economic interests foremost while trying to steer through the crisis. "We helped build this into a modern country, to struggle against colonialism and contribute to the revolution of 2011 and we will continue our role," Abassi said recently.

## Surprise copper strikes in Chile

Amid increasing labor unrest throughout the country, workers at Chile's Escondida copper mine ended a surprise 24-hour strike on August 16, but warned

they could stop work again if their demands are not met.

Located in the northern Antofagasta Region, Escondida is the world's largest copper mine, controlled by Australian corporation BHP Billiton. Workers at two other Chilean mines controlled by BHP



Billiton - Spencer and Cerro Colorado - also joined the stoppage.

The 2,500 unionized workers walked off the job to demand better conditions, a pay increase, and an annual bonus that has not been distributed this year.

Chile produces a third of the world's copper, a metal widely used in alloys and electric cables. The Escondida mine, in the Atacama desert, produces more than a million tonnes of copper per year, about 20% of the Chilean output. The last strike at Escondida, in July 2011, lasted two weeks and pushed up international copper prices.

Mining plays a key role in the Chilean economy. The country goes to the polls in November to choose a new president, and miners will be keen to put their demands across.

## Working poverty rising in Finland

Poverty in Finland has been increasing steadily since 1993, though in 2011 there was a slight downward trend, according to a report from the country's trade unions. In Finland, poverty is defined as a situation where the net income of a family falls below 60 per cent of the median household income. According to Statistics Finland poverty affects 13 per cent of the population, or some 700,000 people. This includes 63,000 wage and salary earners, 38,000 entrepreneurs, 121,000 students and 191,000 pensioners.

The emerging problem is in-work poverty, when a wage or salary is not enough to meet the necessary costs of living, a relatively new situation.

In 2011, 3.9 per cent of the working population in Finland was at risk of poverty, 1.5 times more than in 1995. The figure is low in comparison with the European Union average. But the in-work poverty risk is on the rise, especially for part time workers. The number of non-voluntary part-time workers is 80,000, out of a total 300,000 part-time workers in the country. According to Statistics

Finland, 161,711 women and 59,289 men earned below 1,800 euros a month during 2011.

The Finnish trade unions have been very critical of recent proposals to create more low paid jobs, and attempts to cut the salaries of young workers. "By creating consciously a situation where one cannot rise above a marginalised position in terms of salaried work is like jumping into a time machine moving back in time," stresses Antti Veirto from the PAM union.

The SAK trade union confederation calls to raise the minimum full time salary in collective agreements to 1,800 euros per month by 2016, to cut the risk of in-work poverty.

## Dockers strike in French Polynesia

A port strike in French Polynesia began in late July, with no resolution in sight by mid-August. Over 2,000 containers are now stacked in Papeete, waiting to be cleared amid estimates that the stoppage has caused more than \$2 million a day in losses to the local economy. The Commerce Federation is comparing the work stoppage to economic sabotage. The dockworkers union says there is no more room for additional containers and new ships arriving cannot be offloaded.

The dispute is centered on workers' demands for more safety. Some containers with perishable goods and medicines have been released, prompting the President to accuse a union leader, Patrick Galenon, of being self-serving because some merchandise was for his son's business. Galenon rejected the statement as ridiculous. The union says it will toughen its action unless there is movement on its demands.

## Private port dispute in Israel

The Israeli government has petitioned the High Court of Justice to overturn a Labor Court decision to withdraw port tenders while it conducts negotiations with the Histadrut Labor Federation. The Labor Court ruled on July 29 that state-issued tenders to build private ports in Ashdod and Haifa, intended to provide competition to the existing ports, should be suspended, but it also ruled that the Histadrut could not strike over the matter until September 1.

Before the deadline, the two sides would reconvene to present the court with the status of their negotiations, and it would decide the next course of action. The government says that the court decision forcing it to pull tenders that have already been released will have negative repercussions for Israel's reputation, and cause economic damage in the future. In its petition, it argued that its sovereignty and authority gives it the right to introduce competition into the market in order to lower the cost of living. The Histadrut maintains that the introduction of new private ports, despite leaving current collective agreements, wages, and labor conditions intact, would adversely affect the workers.

## Hyundai, Kia unions vote to strike

Members of labor unions at Hyundai Motor and its affiliate Kia Motors have voted to strike after talks with management for increased pay and benefits collapsed. Hyundai union spokesperson Kwon Oh-il said that management refused all demands by the union during three months of annual talks.

The union wants the 76,000 workers to get improved benefits, including 10 million won (\$8,900) support to help children of unionized workers seek jobs instead of entering college, a 130,000 won (\$116) increase in monthly base income, bigger bonuses and full reimbursement of medical expenses if workers are diagnosed with cancer.

"We regret that the union has begun preparations to strike despite the company's proposal to outline its offers in the next round of talks. There are also many aspects of the union's demands that are hard to accept from the company's point of view," Hyundai said in a statement. But Kwon said Hyundai's proposal was insincere and short of a full response to the union's demands.

Hyundai and Kia, which together form the world's fifth largest automaker, have been in disputes with their unions for the past two years.

Hyundai's latest earnings were hit by employees' refusal to work overtime for three weeks earlier this year, and by the rising popularity of foreign cars in South Korea. European and U.S. carmakers lowered prices after free trade deals took effect. The maker

of the Elantra said the industrial action resulted in lost output of 83,000 vehicles worth \$1.5 billion.

With labor strife at home and waning demand from Korean consumers, South Korea's largest automaker has increasingly looked abroad to ramp up production. Hyundai is considering increased production in China, its chief financial officer said last month.

## Strike ends at Mexico mine

Workers at the El Coronel mine in the central Mexican state of Zacatecas ended a two-month-old strike in mid-August after reaching an agreement with mining firm Frisco. The company, owned by magnate Carlos Slim - one of the richest men in the world - confirmed that the so-called "illegal strike" had been brought to a close.

Under the agreement, Frisco "will not proceed with or initiate plans to dismiss or sue the striking workers." The company also pledged to pay 100 percent of wages that went unpaid during the job action, half "at the time of the lifting of the strike and the other half when those workers complete a specific training program."

The workers at the open-pit gold and silver mine agreed to allow the Labor Secretariat to determine whether the company's profit-sharing payments to them were in accordance with the law. The secretariat said both the federal government and the Zacatecas administration "participated as mediators to ensure the negotiation process ended with a restart of activities," noting the importance of mining for the state economy. ●

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

## Send me information on the Communist Party of Canada



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

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# Communist peasant organisers murdered in Mexico

By Emile Schepers, *People's World*

On August 5 an important peasant leader in Mexico's southern state of Guerrero, Raymundo Velazquez Flores, was murdered along with two companions. Velazquez had been an important leader of peasant struggles for justice since the early 1960s. At the time of his death he headed the Emiliano Zapata Revolutionary Agrarian League of the South (Liga Agraria Revolucionaria del Sur Emiliano

Zapata or LARSEZ) and was also an important figure in the Communist Party of Mexico (PCM), one of several Marxist-Leninist groups in the country. He was, in addition, an announcer in the Mixtec Indigenous language for the radio station "Voice of the Mountains" (Voz de la Montana). In this case "Montana" refers to the mountainous region of northeast Guerrero which borders on Oaxaca.

In addition, another PCM and LARSEZ activist, Samuel Vargas Ramirez, was found murdered,

along with a third person whose full name has not been released. The three were travelling together from Cuernavaca in the state of Morelos toward the town of Coyuca de Benitez. It seems they were to stop off in Guerrero's capital, Chilpancingo, for a meeting, but were intercepted, tied up and murdered by shots to the head on the way, on a riverbank near Coyuca. They had been tortured. The act seems clearly political; had they been kidnapped by ordinary bandits or drug gangs, they would have been held for ransom.

Velazquez, who was 57 years old, came from the village of Tilapa, Guerrero, from a poor peasant family. Tilapa is located in the "Municipio" (approximately, county) of Malinaltepec, in Guerrero's Montana region. After having moved to the more inland city of Iguala for a while, he returned to his native town and region and became involved, from the early 1980s, in various political and social activist organisations on the left, including peasant organisations and the old Mexican Communist Party (Partido Comunista Mexicano), which dissolved itself in the 1980s, many of its leading cadres ending up in the Revolutionary Democratic Party, PRD.

His efforts enraged the political and economic elites of that time, the more so because he managed to do them without subordinating himself or his organisation to the official government-recognised peasant organisation, the National Peasant Confederation.

Demands coming out of the activities of Velazquez and his comrades took concrete form in the Declaration of Acapulco in 1995, which responded to the abuses of repressive governor Ruben Figueroa (PRI). The declaration called for Figueroa to be deposed and punished along with the people who carried out the Aguas Blancas massacre,



Assassinated activist Raymundo Velazquez Flores, seen here showing a copy of the Mexican Communist newspaper.

and for democratic and political reform with full participation of the people of Guerrero, as well as economic justice.

Guerrero is a poor state and home to many indigenous ethnic groups as well as a large proportion of the Afro-Mexican population. Peasants and workers are in almost constant conflict with landowners, mine operators (often foreign), "caciques" (rural political bosses who maintain power, often, by violence), and government authorities at the federal, state and local level. Armed struggle has broken out periodically, for example in Genaro Vazquez's rebellion in the late 1960s, another led by Lucio Cabanas in the beginning of the 1970s, and again after the Aguas Blancas massacre of June 28, 1995, when 17 farmers on their way to a protest were ambushed and murdered by police.

The Communist Party of Mexico

issued a statement denouncing the murders, pointing out that they are nothing new but part of a long series of such atrocities:

"The Communist Party of Mexico, via its Political Bureau, holds responsible the federal government of Enrique Pena Nieto, state governor Angel Aguirre Rivero of the PRD, and the municipal government of Ramiro Avila Morales for the murder of our comrades. As we know, in Guerrero there are no [legal] protections for the political actions of communists, revolutionaries and social [justice] fighters. This is a direct attack by all three levels of government against the Communist Party of Mexico ...

"Our comrades, simple communists, without pretensions, always had in mind the idea of socialist revolution... The struggle goes on and with their example, gets stronger." ●

## Violence mars local elections in West Bengal

As widely feared, the right-wing Trinamool Congress (TMC) government of West Bengal used recent local elections to tighten its grip on power, unleashing a wave of violence and vote-rigging to tilt the results in its favour. The Communist Party of India (Marxist), which was the leading force in West Bengal's Left Front state government from 1977 until 2011, reports that the three-tier panchayat elections were "marred by widespread attacks, intimidation and rigging." (Bengal's unique electoral system, implemented by the Left Front many years ago to expand popular democratic participation, includes the Zilla Parishad, Panchayat Samiti and Gram Panchayat levels.)

As the CPI(M) points out, thousands of candidates were prevented from filing nominations, and many others were blocked from campaigning. Government supporters kept many Left Front and Congress voters from casting a ballot, and 24 CPI(M) workers and supporters were killed during the campaign.

"The run-up to the panchayat election saw determined efforts by the Trinamool Congress government to subvert the polling process itself," says the CPI(M). Bengal's State Election Commission had to go to the Supreme Court to win a decision to conduct "five-phase polling" and to deploy central police forces along with the state police. The TMC resisted these decisions, which were intended to protect the integrity of the electoral process.

Despite the court rulings, the TMC's Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and her cabinet ministers publicly threatened the State Election Commissioner, and the central police were not deployed with a few exceptions.

Around six thousand CPI(M) and Left Front candidates were physically prevented from filing nominations. In the Zilla Parishads in Hooghly, for example, the Left Front was not allowed to nominate in 10 out of 50 seats. As a result, in 6191 seats in the three-tier panchayats, TMC candidates were unopposed on the ballot.

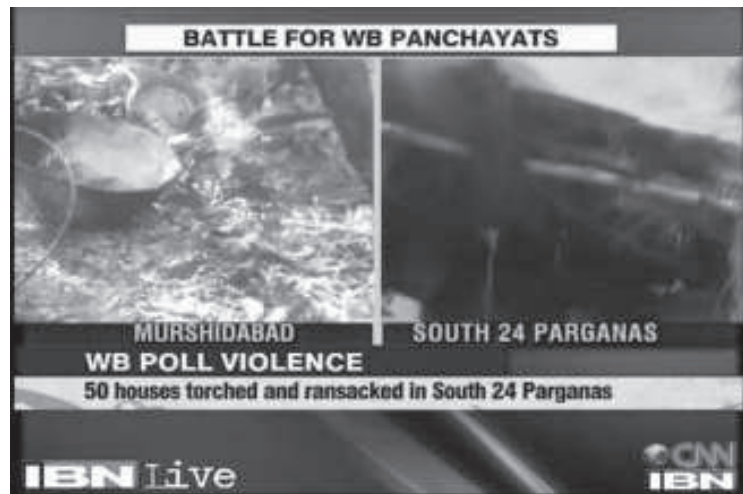
During the voting, which took place in five phases between July 11 and July 25, the CPI(M) reports that 4470 polling booths were completely or partially captured by TMC forces, including 909 in Burdwan district, 750 in West Midnapur, 429 in South 24 Parganas, and 400 in Coochbehar. After polling agents of the CPI(M) and the Left Front were driven out, ballot papers were illegally stamped.

In some areas, people were not allowed to leave their homes to vote. Hundreds of Left Front supporters and workers of other opposition parties were attacked when they tried to vote, suffering serious injuries. Even two members of Bengal's Parliament, Mahendra Roy in Jalpaiguri and Nripen Roy in Coochbehar, were prevented from voting.

Loyal to the TMC government, the state police refused to intervene. In many instances, the police arrested Left Front supporters or attacked them with lathis (bamboo sticks).

Despite the orders of the State Election Commission and the courts, TMC motorcycle gangs were allowed to move freely to terrorise the opposition, and to threaten people from going to vote.

As the CPI(M) concludes, "at no time has such a brazen attack and perversion of the democratic process of elections taken place in West Bengal or in the entire country. The results of such a rigged election can only be a distorted one."



This televised report covered an attack on a pro-Left Front village, during which TMC goons burnt fifty homes.

## Colombian health workers to strike

From <http://colombiareports.com>

Organizers expect at least 15,000 workers throughout Colombia's public hospital system to join a national strike, according to the president of the health workers union (ANTHOP). In an interview with *Colombia Reports*, Hector Alviz Gaviria said the number would be much higher, if not for measures by the union to ensure that emergency care runs at full capacity and basic services continue to function at a responsible level.

"This is not an isolated problem," he said, "it's not that a few hundred nurses have some minor complaint. Right now we have a crisis facing up to 90% of all health employees in this country, from the hospital administrators to the sanitation staff."

The problems facing the health sector are various and interconnected, including issues as straightforward as owed backpay of salaries, which has caused "thousands of workers

and their families to go months without a full paycheck," and issues as complicated as inadequate and ineffective channels for public funding and restricted access to alternative sources of credit, the combination of which has put 500 public hospitals across the country in immediate risk of bankruptcy.

Health workers have been vocal opponents of President Santos' health reform policy, which they claim "privatizes health care and puts more and more public money in the hand of wasteful, corrupt private intermediaries," like the private intermediary payment services (called EPS services) that owe Colombian hospitals an estimated \$2.5 billion in unpaid treatment compensation. But the underlying motivation for the upcoming work stoppage is a "fundamental lack of job security."

According to Alviz, as many as 300,000 public health workers are currently contracted under what is legally referred to as "provisional employment." The provisional status exists as part of the statutes governing the "constitutional right to work" afforded to all

Colombians. "Provisionality," as it is referred to, allows the government to hire workers on a temporary basis, outside of the protections outlined in the public labor code. In theory, it exists to help the government put people to work faster, and was considered an important measure in a country with traditionally high unemployment levels.

But in practice, at least in the health sector, provisionality is a tool to "rob workers of their dignity and their families of their financial security," according to Alviz.

"Right now, you have people, lots of people, who have been working for 10, 15, even 20 years as provisional workers. Yes or no: if you've been working somewhere for 10 years, it's because you're doing a good job? Am I wrong? If not, [you] would be fired, because provisionality let's [the government] do that. So what you have are thousands and thousands of workers that have been supposedly filling a

see COLOMBIA, p. 11

# Strike launches U.S. fast food union drive

In late July, fast food workers across the US held strikes to demand a living wage, from New York to Chicago, Washington, St. Louis, Kansas City, Detroit, Flint, Seattle and many other cities. Workers have picketed McDonald's, Taco Bell, Popeye's and Long John Silver's restaurants with an ambitious agenda: pay of \$15 an hour, twice what many now earn.

While the stereotype of a fast food worker tends to be a teenager, two-thirds of these workers are adult women, and disproportionately women of colour, many of whom have children and other family to support.

This is the largest fast food worker mobilization in history. Fast food chains are big employers in low-income areas, but employees lack many basic protections and benefits. While the average yearly salary for a fast food worker in New York City is \$11,000 a year, the average daily salary for a fast-food CEO is over twice that, and about \$200 billion is grossed by the fast food industry annually.

The full version of the following abridged article by Peter Rugh was originally published in [wagingnonviolence.org](http://wagingnonviolence.org).

While the emblems of Wendy's, McDonald's, KFC, Domino's and other greasy dynasties are hard to escape in the American landscape, those who cook, clean, ring up orders and otherwise serve as the fulcrum of these franchises often go unnoticed. These workers, however, were hard to miss as they stepped off burger assembly lines across New York City and into the street, picketing in front of their workplaces. The strike, which took place at numerous restaurants across the city, is the start of the largest effort to unionize fast food workers in American history.

Organizers are calling the campaign Fast Food Forward. Revenues in the fast food industry are expected to near \$200 billion this year. Yet the demands of their workers are modest: \$15 an hour and the right to unionize with the Fast Food Workers Committee.

"We're out here for better wages, better working conditions, and union protection," said Michael, an 18-year-old employee of a Burger King located not far from Wall Street. Michael says



that growing up he was encouraged to "go the right way and get a job," but now that he has a job he's having trouble getting by. "There's people my age that try to let this stabilize them. We got bills, we got rent. We're living from check to check, hoping the next one will be better and it's not. We can't live on this."

Gregory, an East Harlem KFC worker several years older than Michael, said he and his coworkers earn minimum wage (\$7.25 an hour), receive food stamps and still don't have enough to get by and provide for their kids. Gregory lives in Rockaway, Queens, an area that was inundated with floodwaters from Superstorm Sandy. When he sought back pay from his employer for time lost during the storm, his request was denied. He was given a meal on the house instead.

Working conditions at fast food franchises tend to be about the same across the board: highly exploitive. The fast food industry provides cheap, warm meals to those pressed for time, who often cannot afford more nutritious forms of nourishment.

Simultaneously, these corporations take advantage of economic desperation in the black and brown, immigrant and working-class communities where they can get away with paying starvation wages and reaping gargantuan profits. Wendy's, for instance, took in \$615 million in 2011, an increase of 6 percent. But workers say checks from their employer often bounce, and some check cashing outlets won't accept them.

Organizers with New York Communities for Change (NYCC), which has been working behind the scenes for months to build the strike, say that McDonald's

recruits in homeless shelters. Nearly every "benefit" listed on the company's website, including free uniforms, appears with an asterisk beside it, indicating that the supposed perks are "subject to availability and certain eligibility requirements and restrictions." Profits at McDonald's have ballooned 130 percent in the past four years.

The largest of the fast food behemoths, McDonald's was also the swiftest to shift into damage control mode, issuing a statement informing the public that the company is committed to a dialogue with their employees "so we can continue to be an even better employer."

Asantewwa Ricks with NYCC said that before she began working on the strike drive, she thought fast food employees were "18-, 19-year-old kids who wanted cash for Beats headphones and True Religion jeans." She has since learned that is not the case. Often, workers remain in the industry for years and see little to no bump in their salary. The minimum wage they receive often forces tough choices on them, such as whether to work late, or to make it back before the shelter where they reside locks its doors. At an organizing meeting early on in the campaign, Ricks asked a room full of fast food workers if they had ever suffered on-the-job injuries. Just about everyone present lifted up scars from grease on their arms.

"...The goal of this strike is for workers to be able to put food on their table and buy their children presents for Christmas," [NYCC lead organizer] Justin Westin said, though he admits this is a long term battle and likely won't be resolved by the holidays.

There are 50,000 fast food workers in New York City, and while those who walked off were few in number by comparison, the strike could galvanize workers elsewhere to take a stand as well. If the push for a union is successful, it will be an illustrative example to those both in the industry and in other low wage professions that standing up to the boss can pay off.

For Michael and his fellow Burger King employees, walking off the job was about more than a wage hike or forming a union. These demands are a means to a higher end. "We work hard, as if we were slaves," he said. "It's not only the wages. It's also about how we get treated. We deserve respect." ●



## MUSIC NOTES

By Wally Brooker

### Faith Nolan's prison music project

Popular singer-songwriter Faith Nolan is fundraising for an important new project. She's asking us to help produce a recording and songbook called "I am a Prisoner." It will give voice to (in her words) "the silenced, the neglected, the abused, the not seen." She's talking about the women who languish in Canada's prisons. For the past six years Faith has listened to their stories and collected their songs while coordinating music programs in two Ontario penitentiaries. Proceeds from sales of "I am a Prisoner" will go towards housing to women who have been released from jail. Faith Nolan has been an outstanding figure in Canadian people's music over the past 30 years, on the front lines wherever people are struggling for justice. To donate (and to hear a sample track from the album) visit [www.faithnolan.org](http://www.faithnolan.org).

### Stevie Wonder starts Florida boycott

Motown legend Stevie Wonder led the way and other stars followed suit after the July 13 acquittal of George Zimmerman, the vigilante who murdered unarmed black teenager Trayvon Martin in Florida. Speaking the day after the verdict at a concert in Quebec, Wonder vowed not to perform in Florida until its "stand your ground law" has been abolished. The 63-year old R&B artist was joined by a host of musical celebrities including Alicia Keys, Jay Z, Madonna, Rihanna, the Rolling Stones, Rod Stewart, Justin Timberlake and Kanye West, all of whom pledged to boycott the state. Wonder has promised to boycott more than 20 states that have "stand your ground laws" in place. Stevie Wonder played a prominent role in the campaign to establish the Martin Luther King holiday in the USA, most notably with his mammoth 1980 hit song "Happy Birthday." Check it out on YouTube.

### North Carolina musicians rising

North Carolina has long been a wellspring of American people's music, from bluegrass to the blues. Today a new generation of musicians is emerging from a popular struggle against a reactionary state government. A diverse collective of 40 musicians calling itself "NC Music Love Army" performed regularly at weekly "Moral Monday" protests inside the state assembly building in Raleigh from April 29 to the end of July. Now, with the assembly in summer recess, the protests (and the musicians) plan to visit all 13 state congressional districts. NC Music Love Army played most recently at a rally in Asheville, attended by 10,000 North Carolinians, and later headlined a fundraising concert for the local NAACP legal defence fund. The Republican administration's agenda includes vicious cuts to unemployment benefits and education, attacks on women's reproductive rights, and racist electoral reforms. More than 1000 non-violent resisters have already been arrested. For info visit the "NC Music Love Army" Facebook page.

### Manic Street Preachers sue EDL

Left-wing Welsh rock band the Manic Street Preachers are suing the neo-fascist English Defence League (EDL) for using, in a campaign video, their song "If You Tolerate This Then Your Children Will Be Next." The 1998 song was a homage to Welsh farmers who joined the International Brigades during the Spanish Civil War. It features an anti-fascist slogan used during the conflict: "If I can shoot rabbits/Then I can shoot fascists." The EDL used the song in a video promoting a Birmingham march in July against "radical Islam." "It's ironic that the EDL are using an anti-fascist song to actually encourage fascism," said Weyman Bennett, spokesperson for the UK group Unite Against Fascism. "They are taking what is a struggle for equality and trying to turn it into something about division." Incidentally, the Manic Street Preachers were the first British rock band to tour Cuba. Check them out at [www.manicstreetpreachers.com/](http://www.manicstreetpreachers.com/).

### Toshi Ohta Seeger RIP

Toshi Ohta Seeger, wife of folk musician Pete Seeger, died at their home in Beacon, NY on July 9. She was 91. Toshi was an environmental activist, a filmmaker and a key figure in her husband's remarkable career. She was born in Germany to an American mother and a Japanese father banished from Japan for his leftist activity. Toshi was brought to the U.S. at the age of six months and grew up in New York City in a progressive household. She met Seeger at a square dance in 1943, and they married soon afterwards. In 1949 the two built a log cabin home in Beacon and spent their lives there. Toshi managed Pete's finances and produced thousands of his concerts. She was a co-founder of the Newport Folk Festival, and later of the Clearwater campaign to clean up the Hudson River. She produced Pete's mid-sixties TV show "Rainbow Quest" as well as the award-winning 2007 documentary "Pete Seeger: The Power of Song." A good obituary can be found at [www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com).

For more information, visit  
[www.fastfoodforward.org](http://www.fastfoodforward.org)



## Winnipeg, Toronto mark 40th anniversary of Chilean coup

September 11 marks the 40th anniversary of the 1973 military coup in Chile. During the coup and the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet, thousands were illegally detained, tortured, executed and disappeared. Now, 40 years later, the Winnipeg Chilean community has come together to reflect upon this history.

The coup evoked an outpouring of global solidarity with Chile's democrats, many of whom were forced into exile. The Soviet Union gave its full solidarity. In other countries like Canada, labour, communist and broad, democratic forces compelled governments to grant refuge and isolate the fascist Pinochet junta.

The activities organized by Winnipeg's Chilean community will bring important memories to many, especially the struggles and solidarity of Canadians to support democracy in Chile in

later years.

The activities will strengthen ideas about solidarity and democracy for new generations. Canadians have benefited greatly from this community's presence in Canada.

**The Armed Forces and the Coup d'Etat in Chile**, Sat., Sept. 7, 11 am - 2 pm, Legislative Building.

**Main event: Never Again: 40th Anniversary of the Coup d'Etat in Chile**, Wed., September 11, 7 pm, Winnipeg Chilean Association, 892 Burrows Ave.

**Film festival:** Sept. 12-15. See [www.chile40winnipeg.ca](http://www.chile40winnipeg.ca) about these not-to-miss films!

**Music festival:** Sept. 14, The music of Victor Jara, 8 pm at the West End Cultural Centre

**International solidarity with the Chilean people** - by invitation only: Wed., Sept. 25, 6 pm, University of Manitoba

Smartpark Event Centre, 100 - One Research Road. Panel discussion with Paul Graham, Howard Pawley, Darrell Rankin and Judy Wasylycia-Leis.

Other dates and activities listed at [www.chile40winnipeg.ca](http://www.chile40winnipeg.ca), email [info@chile40winnipeg.ca](mailto:info@chile40winnipeg.ca).

**The 40th anniversary of the tragic fascist coup in Chile will also be marked in Toronto with a series of events sponsored by Casa Salvador Allende.**

The commemorations begin on Thursday, Sept. 5, 6 pm, at Quaker House, 60 Lowther Ave. (St. George Metro, Bedford exit) with a screening of the documentaries "El Juez & el General" and "El Edificio de los Chilenos". On Friday, Sept. 6, 6 pm, the documentary "El Juicio del Lonko Pascual Pichun" will be shown at the same location.

A special commemorative event will be held on Sat., Sept. 7, 6 pm, Central Commerce Collegiate Institute, 570 Shaw St. (Ossington TTC), including a tribute to Canadians in solidarity with Chile, the "Salvador Allende" scholarships, and a concert honouring 40 years of artistic commitment, with Avekan, Proyecto Altiplano, Edgardo Moreno & guests, Generaciones.

"Day of the Mother," stories and art of five years in prison, by Hector Aviles, music by Alvaro Oyarce, will take place at Lula Lounge, Wed., Sept. 11, 8 pm. For tickets and reservations, call 416-316-0384. To contact Casa Salvador Allende, ph. 416-456-6603 or send an email to:

<publicrelations@casasalvadorallende.com>.

## Euro banks close 20,000 retail branches

The European Central Bank says that banks hit by the global financial crisis have cut 20,000 branches across the European Union, including 7,200 in 2011 and another 5,500 in 2012, in a bid to cut operating costs and improve their bottom lines.

Branches account for around 60 per cent of retail banking costs, including property and refurbishment spending plus staff pay. The rapid growth of online and telephone banking services has accelerated the trend.

EU banks cut 8 per cent of their branches in aggregate in the four years to the end of 2012, leaving 218,687.

Last year's sharpest cuts were mainly in countries beset by

financial problems. Greece saw one of the biggest culls in 2012, shedding nearly 6 per cent of branches, and Spain lost nearly 5 per cent of its branches.

The bloc's largest bank HSBC indicated in May that it intended to cut an additional 2 billion euros in employment costs across the EU to boost profits. HSBC has more than doubled the number of planned job cuts, which could reach 14,000 overall.

Major banks have announced 160,000 job cuts since early 2012. Investment banking took the brunt of cutbacks earlier in the crisis but retail banking is now increasingly being hit, with far more jobs being cut.

(From the Morning Star) ●

## Colombia health workers....

continued from page 9

vacancy for a decade now, some of them having their contracts extended every few months, with few guarantees on their benefits or even their pay, no collective bargaining rights and no guarantee that they won't be fired whenever the government feels like it ... and some of them aren't even getting the money they're owed for what they've done ... and if they protest, the government says they will be fired, because [the workers] do not have that right [to protest]."

"It's reprehensible for the government of what is supposedly the oldest democracy in Latin America to threaten such a basic human right [to protest]," said Alviz, who insisted that the stipulations of Colombia's recent free trade agreement calling for the formalization of public labor and the protection of protest rights have not been adhered to, and added that, "we are not asking anyone to take action against the physical structures [of the hospitals], or encouraging them to damage the equipment. We have told our members to stay onsite and, in a peaceful manner, reclaim their rights to protest and their rights to labor stability. What's more, we have guaranteed the continuing function of urgent and emergency services so as not to effect our responsibility to good

service and ... the workers will be onsite if and when they are needed.

"There are workers who are owed up to 60 months of backpay ... when [the government] isn't paying the salaries it owes, when the government has refused to negotiate or to review the labor statute. They haven't left us any option. We've met with the Minister of Labour, with the Minister of Health, with representatives in the Senate of the Republic, the Congress of the Republic ... we've manifested our intention and our desire to avoid it having to get to this situation in which we find ourselves now. How then, can they tell us now we can't protest?"

The situation has become "desperate" recently, as Alviz described it, because of laws passed over the course of the last year that potentially shift an estimated 95% of administrative staff from "official" to "provisional status" and a similar proportion of provisional employees to fixed three or four month contracts, as opposed to the undefined running contracts they currently have.

Despite four key Constitutional Court rulings over the past 15 years that strike down or strengthen existing provisions to benefit provisional workers, Alviz says the government has delayed implementing court mandates favourable to its health sector

employees, passed laws that circumvent or contradict judicial rulings and blatantly ignored court orders in some cases, as was this case when a recent 2012 ruling obligating hospitals to maintain a minimum percentage of "official" employees was dismissed by the Minister of Health, who said the decision would lead to the worst financial disaster in Colombian history.

What reforms the government has made to the public health system, moreover, have been costly for organized labour. According to internal union data collection, the health sector now has 20% of the "official" employees it did in 1999. Over the same time period, there has been a roughly 2,000% increase in the dependence on provisional labour. The average tenure of the more than 300,000 provisional employees working in hospitals across the country is close to eight years. In a process that has "sped up" since President Santos began implementing his health care reforms, the health sector has lost 81,000 jobs through closings or restructurings, and 360 union organizations because of it. Union enrollment is down 62%, and collective bargaining has diminished by 85%. Workers make 25% of what they once did, and are owed, on average, \$9,000 a year by the government. ●

# What's Left

### Vancouver, BC

**Labour Day Picnic**, Monday, Sept. 2, Trout Lake Park, 11-3, drop by the People's Voice display. Organized by Vancouver & District Labour Council and BC Federation of Labour.

**John Graham Defense Fund**, fundraising dinner, Saturday, Sept. 7, Centre for Socialist Education. For info, call CSE, 604-255-2041.

**La Trova Nuestra**, evening of Latin American music and socialising, admission \$10, 8 pm, Friday, Sept. 27, Centre for Socialist Education, 706 Clark Drive.

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

**Left Film Night**, 7 pm, Sunday, Sept. 29, at the CSE, 706 Clark Drive, Vancouver. Call 604-255-2041 for details, or see listing in next issue of PV.

### Winnipeg, MB

**Events marking 40th Anniversary of the Coup in Chile**, for details see article on this page.

### Toronto, ON

**Never again in Chile**, events marking 40th anniversary of the 1973 coup. Cycle of Documentaries, Thurs., Sept. 5, 6-9 pm, Quaker House, 60 Lowther Ave. (St. George Metro). Commemorative event, Sat., Sept. 7, 6 pm, Central Commerce Collegiate, 570 Shaw St. (Ossington TTC), including tribute to Canadians in solidarity with Chile. Day of the Mother: stories and art of five years in prison, by Hector Aviles, music by Alvaro Oyarce, Lula Lounge, Wed., Sept. 11, 8 pm. For tickets and reservations, call 416-316-0384. Sponsor: Casa Salvador Allende, 416-456-6603.

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

### Montreal, QC

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

## News for people, not for profits!



## People's Voice deadlines

September 16-30 issue: Thursday, Sept. 5

October 1-15 issue: Thursday, Sept. 19

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

## REDS ON THE WEB

[www.comunist-party.ca](http://www.comunist-party.ca)  
[www.peoplesvoice.ca](http://www.peoplesvoice.ca)  
[www.ycl-ljc.ca](http://www.ycl-ljc.ca)  
[rebelyouth-magazine.blogspot.com](http://rebelyouth-magazine.blogspot.com)  
<http://solidnet.org>

## Gaza solidarity...

continued from page 7

polluted beaches, like this one. Even though we were within sight of Wadi Gaza's fetid, stinking outlet, we were told that the prevailing winds and current "generally" took the sewage to the North, away from us, towards Gaza City, and its crowded beaches.

The first step to making this beach safe for the kids, is to end the illegal Israeli blockade of Gaza and their occupation of all of Palestine. Please tell that to Israel's "best friend in the world", Prime Minister Harper and his Canadian government.

If you want to help perhaps check out our *International Solidarity Movement (ISM)* website at [www.palsolidarity.org](http://www.palsolidarity.org). Please do remember our ISM martyrs Rachel Corrie, Tom Hurdall and Vittorio Aragoni. ●

# Unemployment rates: why is 6% "just about right"?

By Peter Kerek, Editor, *The Interior Worker (Kamloops, British Columbia)*

Have you ever wondered why economic advisors to Canadian governments suggest that 8 or 9 percent unemployment in Canada is quite high, 20% is beyond belief, but 6% is just about perfect?

Here are a few numbers to help put that 6% goal in perspective for British Columbians. We've got a population of 4.4 million, and according to Statistics Canada for the year 2011, 60% of all British Columbians, for a total of 2.64 million, meet the definition of "working". Roughly 40% of British Columbians were not considered to be part of the work force, so their state of unemployment was not included in the official unemployment rate.

So the part of the workforce that was considered unemployed is around 200,000 (for a rate of 7.5%). If we had achieved the ideal rate of 6% unemployment, then there would have been about 160,000 people unemployed. This is just about the perfect number of unemployed workers in this province (according to most mainstream economic/political advisors), give or take 1%. If the unemployment rate were to drop to 5% that would still leave about 132,000 unemployed in BC.

But, who exactly is this "perfect" for? Answer: employers seeking to maximize profits via lowering wage costs.

There are many ways to maximize profits in our capitalist system; the simplest ways include skirting environmental and safety regulations, reducing costs of labour, and using creative accounting to exploit tax loopholes. The more costly ways of maximizing profits include innovation and investment in practices and products that allow you to make a product more efficiently and thereby increase profits because you can reduce the costs of production, or, you can increase profits by creating a better product that can out-sell more inferior products, or that allow you to charge more for your product because people are willing to pay more for that

superior product.

But since this is a discussion on unemployment rates, let's focus on labour costs, since the two are directly related.

One of the best ways to bring wages down is to ensure that workers are given the impression that they are easily replaced and

## LABOUR VOICES

that there's always a pool of workers who will do the same work for less money. With this so-called "reserve pool of the unemployed" workers are less inclined to demand a fair share of the profits, or unionize, or even report employers who are breaking labour laws and safety regulations.

Workers in the non-union sector, and increasingly amongst unionized worksites, are receiving the message that they are expendable - not only because of the number of already available unemployed workers - but also because of the increasing numbers of "temporary" foreign workers being brought over to work for less than Canadians. And, in the worst case scenario, Canadian workers are told they need to compete with wages paid to workers who survive on just a few dollars a day in third-world countries who can do the same work for much less.

That's primarily why we no longer manufacture anything in Canada. The only reason we still have mining, lumber, oil, gas and agricultural work is because these things are literally attached to the soil, otherwise they too would have all been sent to China, India or Mexico. With the elimination of most trade barriers and controls that once protected the Canadian manufacturing industries there was no need for the industrialists/capitalists to keep making things here.

The Kamloops and District Labour Council sent questionnaires to all provincial candidates (that belonged to a party) in the two Kamloops ridings

during the recent election. The Liberal and Conservative candidates chose not to participate. Responses were received for both NDP candidates, and although the Green Party did not have any candidates here, their campaign headquarters did reply to the questionnaire.

One of the 33 questions was: "Which of the following three options do you feel is the most desirable unemployment rate for British Columbians, and why: 1%, 10%, or 20%?"

Neither the Greens nor the NDP actually answered the question. Each party (the response from each NDP candidate was identical) indicated that they had plans to address unemployment but refused to indicate what they thought was a good unemployment rate. The Greens' response was, however, somewhat more lengthy and they did suggest that there will always be a certain number of people

desirable work or even attaining the basic necessities of life. And the alternative goal of 1% would have chased away every last corporate donation while seeing the corporate media begin a furious campaign to discredit a party that sought a near-full employment rate. Thus neither party gave a straight answer.

As for the Liberal and Conservative candidates this question was likely a deal-breaker for their participation in the questionnaire; ideally the neo-liberal and conservative approach to the labour market relies on an unnecessarily high rate of unemployment in order to keep the cost of production down, so, their reply, if they were honest, would be either 10% or 20%.

As mentioned earlier, the biggest corporations are financiers of neo-liberal and conservative parties. Part of maximizing profits is driving down wages; this is

that some group of people in the world makes enough to purchase your goods. However, it would be a political nightmare to defend such unemployment rates with talk of how their idea of a so-called "functioning labour market" requires a certain number of unemployed to ensure the cost of things doesn't keep creeping up. They would excuse increasing unemployment rates on things that were out of their control: free trade agreements, foreign markets, lack of corporate/foreign investment, red tape, etc.

The harsh reality is that there is no desire by any of the four major parties in BC to end unemployment, or at least bring it to the point where ordinary working people can start demanding the wages that ensure they are getting their fair share of the profit pie. With the existence of the "reserve pool of the unemployed" working folks will seldom be in a position to do much more than fight for the few pennies that might help them keep up with inflation. And let there be no mistake, every decent thing that working people have today came by fighting and demanding these things from the entities that control the purse-strings.

For folks who want to challenge the idea that there must always be hundreds of thousands of British Columbians unemployed in order to have a functioning economy, I suggest your first question to the next politician who comes knocking on your door should be: "Do you think it's fair that tens, or hundreds, of thousands of British Columbians must remain unemployed in order to ensure corporations can maximize profits?" or, "When you say 'functioning economy', who is it supposed to be functioning for?" ●



unemployed because their jobs were no longer needed and they are in the midst of finding new work, and that some of this unemployment is simply "a function of the business cycle."

This really wasn't a difficult question - we even made it multiple choice with three very distinct suggestions. Yet an admission that both these parties are comfortable with anywhere between 100,000 and 200,000 British Columbians being unemployed on any given day is not a philosophically appealing prospect for people who are concerned about things like being able to find suitable and

especially true when their products are not for domestic consumption anyway, so there's no real concern about whether people in your manufacturing area can afford to purchase what you're manufacturing, all that matters is

## Tories prolong PAFSO dispute

Rotating strikes and pickets initiated by the Professional Association of Foreign Service Officers (PAFSO) could cost the Canadian economy \$1 billion by the end of the year, if the government fails to come to an agreement with the union. The strikes have caused visa delays, making it impossible for many students, family visitors, tourists and conference goers to come to Canada. The union says its demands - \$4.2 million to eliminate serious wage discrepancies with other public service workers - represents about 1.5 per cent of the short-term cost of the strike to the Canadian tourism sector alone. Critics argue the Conservatives are using the PAFSO dispute to practice how they will bargain with all public sector employees next year.

## Ikea union rejects latest offer

Workers at an IKEA store in Richmond, BC, have unanimously rejected management's most recent offer. Their contract expired in 2012 and the dispute started in May when IKEA locked out the 350 workers. The most recent offer would have changed the workers' pay structure, forcing employees to work longer to make the maximum rate of pay. It also included a clause that their pay would be contingent, in part, on the store's performance. Workers argued that management can control the store's performance, and so their salaries would be at the whim of management's business decisions.

## Professor urges "retail revolution"

Brock University Professor of Labour Studies Kendra Coulter argues that Canada's retail scene is rapidly changing. The polarization between high-end stores and low-cost department stores is having dramatic changes on the workers. Retail workers represent the largest sector of workers in Canada, with jobs that are low paid and insecure. Coulter calls for a retail revolution, and points to recent unionization drives of workers in Brampton, Ontario, at the clothing store Sirens, as an example of what's needed.

- with files from Canadian Association of Labour Media

## NEWS FOR PEOPLE, NOT FOR PROFITS!

Every issue of PEOPLE'S VOICE gives you the latest on the fightback from coast to coast. Whether it's the struggle to defeat the Harper Tories, resistance to social cuts, solidarity with Cuba or workers' struggles around the world, we've got the news the corporate media won't print.

And we do more than that—we report and analyze events from a revolutionary perspective, helping to build the movements for justice and equality, and eventually for a socialist Canada. Read the paper that fights for working people—on every page—in every issue!

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