

SEPT.
16-30,
2015
VOL. 23
#15
\$1.50

people's VOICE

Close the gap,
demands AFN
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Printed in Canada by union labour
on recycled paper  118-M
Publications Mail Agreement #40011632

Protests slam Tory racist policies



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Rallies across Canada have called to welcome refugees (above left, Vancouver), and to defeat the racist Harper Tories (above right in Surrey)



"An economy to serve working people, not the banks and corporations"

In a statement on Canada's deepening economic problems, the Communist Party calls for a major turn in public policy to address the crisis, a program for fundamental change serving the needs of working people, not the big banks and corporations:

- * A "Jobs First" strategy to rebuild manufacturing and value-added industries.
- * Increase the minimum wage to \$20/hr.
- * A Guaranteed Annual Income to raise everyone out of poverty.
- * Massive investments in affordable social housing and public infrastructure.
- * Improved public pensions, including substantially higher CPP benefits.
- * Expand Medicare to include universal pharmacare, dental and eye care, and long-term care.
- * A universal, affordable and publicly-administrated childcare program.
- * Reduce and eliminate post-secondary tuition.
- * Emergency legislation to slash greenhouse gas emissions.
- * Major investments in renewable energy and conservation.
- * A substantial expansion of urban mass transit.



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Anti-worker agenda

Something to remember when we go to the polls on Oct. 19: it's time to end almost a decade of anti-working class legislation, back to work orders and union bashing by the Harper Conservative government.

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Detention horrors

Australia's viciously anti-immigrant policies include off-shore private detention centres where refugees are regularly tortured and raped.

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U.E. endorses BDS

The United Electrical Workers have become the first national union in the United States to endorse the campaign for Boycott, Disinvestment and Sanctions against Israel's apartheid policies.

Refugee crisis: the root cause is imperialism

By T.J. Petrowski

The widely circulated photo of Alan Kurdi, a three-year-old Syrian boy whose body was found on a beach in Turkey and whose family was making a desperate attempt to flee to relatives in Canada even though their asylum application had been rejected by the Harper government, has caused widespread outrage and helped put the "refugee crisis" onto the political map.

In Canada, the leaders of the Liberal and New Democratic parties have used the news of Kurdi's tragic death, along with his five-year-old brother and his mother, to criticize the government's response. Trudeau and Mulcair have called on Canada to accept more Syrian refugees, while the Harper government insists on more illegal bombing raids in Syria and Iraq as the "solution" to the surge of Syrian refugees.

The real tragedy is the refusal of Western leaders to acknowledge the cause of the refugee crisis: imperialism's genocidal wars on the people of the Middle East, Central Asia, and Africa.

There are now more refugees than at any time since World War 2, and the numbers have increased markedly since the start of the "Global War on Terror". Wherever the U.S. and its imperialist allies have intervened, whether through direct military action or indirect proxy wars, economic sabotage, and coups, in the name of "democracy", the "War on Terror", or the "responsibility to protect", death and despair have been forced upon millions of innocent people, who have been left no choice but to abandon their native lands to embark on a dangerous future.

In Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria, Yemen, Pakistan, Somalia, Mali, Korea, East Timor, Sudan, Ukraine, and elsewhere the livelihoods of millions have been destroyed by the forces of U.S. and Western imperialism.

In the 1980s, Afghanistan had a "genuinely popular government", according to John Ryan, retired professor from the University of Winnipeg, that was implementing widespread reforms. Labour unions were legalized, a minimum wage was established, hundreds of thousands of Afghans were enrolled in educational facilities, and women were freed from age-old tribal bondage and able to earn an independent income. U.S. and western imperialism, fearful of that kind of equitable distribution of wealth, supported the feudal landlords and fundamentalist mullahs to sow chaos across the country, bringing rise to elements that later formed al-Qaeda and the Taliban. The Afghan people were once more dealt a severe punishment by the forces of Western imperialism following 9/11, despite a lack of conclusive evidence linking their country to the attacks. Thirty years of U.S. intervention have left the people of Afghanistan impoverished, traumatized, and desperate.

The conflicts in Libya and Syria are eerily similar to the destabilization of Afghanistan. In 2011, when the Arab Spring protests swept across the Middle East and North Africa, western imperialism hijacked legitimate

grievances of the masses as a pretext for intervention in the name of the "responsibility to protect" and "democracy promotion".

Prior to the 2011 U.S./NATO intervention, Libya was among the wealthiest and most stable countries in Africa, with the



"Welcome Refugees" rally on Sept. 6 in Vancouver, organized by No One Is Illegal and other allies. Photo by K. Cariou.

continent's highest standard of living. Housing was enshrined as a human right, education and healthcare services were free for all citizens, and the country was pushing to establish an African currency linked to gold to help end the endless cycle of debt and impoverishment. Under the cloak of the United Nations, and using the pretext of protecting the people from Gaddafi's murderous rule, western imperialism launched airstrikes on Libya and allied themselves with al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and other extremists. NATO airstrikes killed hundreds of civilians and forced Libya back into the stone age. Gaddafi was mercilessly tortured and murdered by the rebels. Thousands have been killed as rival tribal and extremist factions, some now allied with ISIS, battle for control of the country.

The conflict in Syria has been referred to as "Libya 2.0". U.S. imperialism with the support of Israel, Turkey, and the Persian Gulf States, trained and financed "moderate" rebels to overthrow the secular, elected government of Bashar al-Assad.

The "Free Syrian Army", i.e., the "moderate" rebels, has been virtually eliminated in the conflict despite millions of dollars in aid from the U.S. and its regional allies. FSA fighters have deserted *en masse* to the ranks of ISIS, itself a product of the illegal U.S. occupation of Iraq that killed one million Iraqis. There is overwhelming evidence that the U.S. and its allies have been actively training and supporting ISIS elements since the start of the proxy war in Syria. It wasn't until ISIS invaded Iraq with its new Toyota technicals, courtesy of U.S. imperialism, that ISIS was declared a threat to the world. Western imperialism changed its tactic from supporting ISIS to airstrikes on Iraq and Syria, with the support of Turkey (which is also conveniently bombing anti-ISIS Kurdish fighters), Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf States, but without consultation with the Syrian government, Iran, or Hezbollah, which have been fighting ISIS and al-Qaeda elements since the start of the conflict. Hundreds of thousands

have died in the West's proxy war against the Syrian government.

From Libya to Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Pakistan and Somalia, U.S. and western imperialist interventions, coups, and sanctions have displaced and killed millions of

travelling huge distances overland and on water, refugees find themselves abused, discriminated against, held in detention, or rejected from Europe, Canada, the U.S., and Australia.

More than 2,500 have died this year trying to cross the Mediterranean Sea into Europe. The International Organization for Migration estimates that 30,000 could die by the end of 2015.

Refugees attempting to enter Europe, even if they are granted asylum in a country such as Germany, have been met with police violence in Greece, Italy, and other countries on the Mediterranean that are the first landing points for boats sailing from North Africa and Turkey.

Greek riot police have beaten refugees protesting the failure of local governments to process their applications, and newborn babies have died while waiting for processing.

On the Macedonia-Greece border, where more than a thousand refugees are crossing daily, refugees who broke through barbed wire fences were shot at with stun grenades, and the Macedonian police have treated refugees as rioters, according to Amnesty International.

Italian police forcibly removed African refugees camping out at

the border after France refused to let them into the country. Hungary is building a fortified wall, similar to the barbaric wall that divides the U.S.-Mexico border, to stop refugees from crossing the border.

Thousands seeking asylum in Australia are held in detention facilities in Papua New Guinea and the small island nation of Nauru, dubbed the "Guantanamo of the Pacific." Refugees can be detained for more than five years in these facilities, where social workers have observed "profound damage" to those detained through "prolonged deprivation of freedom, abuse of power, confinement in an extremely harsh environment, uncertainty of future, disempowerment, loss of privacy and autonomy and inadequate health and protection services." The unannounced policy of the authorities is to make life too unbearable for refugees to seek asylum in Australia.

Imperialism is the root cause of the "refugee crisis". Until the genocidal aims of the U.S., with the support of Canada, Australia, the European Union, and regional allies, are defeated, the "War on Terror" will continue to make life too unbearable for millions of people in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East to remain in their home countries. ●

Deaths in the Mediterranean

Statement issued by Committee of Progressive Pakistani Canadians, Sept. 6, 2015

The picture of the body of the little Syrian child lying dead face down in the Water after a boat carrying refugees sank in the Mediterranean while trying to reach Europe, has seared the consciousness of people across the globe.

Thousands of others from Syria, Libya, Iraq, Afghanistan—and other African countries—making the same journey have perished in the same way.

Who is responsible?

Mainly the government of the United States and its western allies, including Canada.

How so?

For unleashing war, directly or indirectly, in Afghanistan, Libya, Iraq and Syria, causing indescribable damage to human life, government and social infrastructure, agriculture, houses, hospitals and schools, employment in town and countryside—not in the interests of democracy or protecting human rights, but to gain back full control of the area for its oil and natural resources, a market for their goods and services, and for its strategic value.

The Saudi and the Gulf monarchies, long hating the republican, secular and non-capitalist oriented governments of Libya, Iraq and Syria, have assisted in this destruction by, among other things, financing and arming fundamentalist terrorist groups in these

countries.

A popular international tribunal should be set up to see if Western and Arab leaders who have caused this death and destruction are guilty of violating international law and of crimes against humanity.

More generally, while poverty has been the lot of the masses in Africa and much of Asia for long,



it has become exacerbated in recent decades due to increased globalization on terms greatly favourable to the west.

The absence of genuinely democratic governments in large parts of Asia and Africa has compounded the problem.

The wars, increased exploitation by western corporations, corrupt governments, fundamentalist violence, have made the lives of hundreds of millions wretched beyond measure. Hundreds of millions suffer from joblessness, hunger, homelessness; tens of millions are refugees or seek a better life in the west. While refugees seeking asylum in the west must be treated humanely and given asylum, it is the reasons for their mass exodus that must be addressed.

The Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper, while professing great pain at seeing the picture of the dead child, is calling for more

war in the region – the chief cause of the tragedy. All outside interference in Syria must stop forthwith and the Syrian government and opposition allowed to settle their differences themselves by negotiations.

The struggle against ISIS must be conducted in cooperation with the governments of Syria, Iraq and Libya.

Two other steps can be taken relatively speedily to provide relief to the people of the less developed world. World expenditure on armaments was over \$1.5 trillion dollars in 2014 – a stupendous amount, which should be halved quickly, and the funds thus saved spent on social needs and development.

Total foreign aid from the richer to the poorer countries is a little short of \$150 billion. It should be doubled – without any strings, at zero or nominal interest rates and for genuinely developmental projects – by increasing the taxes on multinationals and large corporations that, as is commonly known, pay hardly any or none at all.

Ending the unfair and unequal relations between the 'north' and the 'south', for fair trade that benefits all parties must be struggled for.

Last, but very importantly, genuinely democratic government representing the interests of the people, not the 1%, are urgently needed in the south as well as in the north! ●

Workers must remember Harper's attacks when they go to the polls

Harper has been Prime Minister for almost a decade. In that time, the Conservative government's war on workers has touched nearly every sector and industry. Through a combination of policy and propaganda, the Conservatives have started to dismantle the system of protections that have been put in place by decades of advocacy by labour organizations and unions. Their right-wing agenda has generated policies that hurt the environment, social services and all workers, especially People of Colour, Indigenous communities, women, the poor and other marginalized groups.

"This government has been clear in its dislike of unions and collective bargaining," said Angella MacEwan, Senior Economist with the CLC. "There has been no respect for the important role unions play in the workplace and in civil society."

Legislative attacks

Nine years is a long time in politics, and Harper has been extremely strategic in how his government has waged this war. The Conservatives have pushed pieces of union-busting legislation attacking labour organizations, attacking Canadian workers' rights to unionize, and threatening access to pensions, employment insurance and healthcare.

Ground Zero for these attacks has been the House of Commons, where piece after piece of legislation has taken aim at unions and collective bargaining.

Bill C-60 is the omnibus budget bill that passed in 2013. Buried in this bill is a provision that allows for the Treasury Board to direct collective bargaining for 48 Crown corporations including the CBC, Canada Post, Via Rail as well as Canadian arts organizations like the Canada Council for the Arts and the National Arts Centre in Ottawa. This amendment requires that the Treasury board approve collective agreements and the terms and contracts for non-unionized employees. It also mandates that a government employee should observe negotiations.

"Bill 60 ... essentially gives [the] Treasury Board unfettered authority to interfere in bargaining with Crown Corporations, removing effective control from the parties most directly affected," said Chris Aylward, Public Service Alliance of Canada National Executive Vice President in a statement. "This is not a recipe for healthy labour relations."

This will allow employees to be used as political pinballs if governments seek to impose management-friendly contracts as a way to cut costs.

Bill C-377: An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act, was a private member's bill that was pushed by government forces to eventually pass this past July. To pass C-377, Senators had to suspend their own rules of debate and extend their session into the summer.

C-377 requires unions to publicly account for every dime spent in a given year. This means that the financial information of unions, union federations and labour organizations – including the personal information of union

members – would be publicly available. Of course, keeping track of such an enormous amount of information is going to cost millions, both for unions but also

Commentary by Haseena Manek, Canadian Association of Labour Media

for Canada Revenue Agency.

Bill C-525, the Employee Voting Rights Act, a private member's bill subtitled "An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code, the Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act and the Public Service Labour Relations Act," passed this past April and fundamentally changes the process of forming unions in the federally-regulated industries. C-525 eliminated card check certification. In order to form a union, a secret-ballot vote must be held in which the majority of the bargaining unit – not the majority of voters – must vote yes to certify a union. Any worker who does not participate in this vote is counted as a "no" ballot.

"The Bill would make changes to laws that had been painstakingly negotiated by previous governments working together with both unions and employers to achieve balanced and respected workplace regulations," said former CLC President Ken Georgetti in an editorial for the Huffington Post.

The attacks don't stop there. Harper's government has made Employment Insurance less accessible, implemented tax cuts that decrease funding to public services, prevented the expansion of the Canadian Pension Plan, failed to enforce the Canada Health Accord, delayed access to Old Age Security pension, changed the defined benefit pension plans for many workers in Crown corporations and started to eliminate door to door mail delivery. His government has also made "economic deals that protect corporations' rights over workers rights or environmental concerns," added Angella MacEwan.

"Most of what they're doing has not been good for workers," she continued. "If you need something from Employment Insurance or if you need something from Veterans Affairs, it becomes harder to access those services. We've seen this erosion of public services, and as a worker that affects you, because workers are citizens."

Relying on Back to Work legislation became a preferred negotiation tactic under Harper's tenure. Former Labour Minister and MP for Halton Lisa Raitt justified back-to-work legislation by arguing that workers for Canada Post and Air Canada perform nearly essential services. She went so far as to suggest that the economy itself is an essential service, a concept that plainly prioritizes profit over workers' rights and that could put labour negotiations in those industries at risk.

Attacking the most vulnerable

Unionized workers are hardly the only community targeted by Harper's attacks. Workers who work through the Temporary Foreign Worker Program have

been placed at the mercy of an oppressive and exploitative migrant labour initiative.

The program leaves workers vulnerable to abuse from employers and without access to the support and benefits of labour organizations or public services.

"The government and the employer organizations will always argue and say that migrant workers have the same rights on paper as Canadian workers. This is not true," said Chris Ramsaroop, of Justice for Migrant Workers, "because migrant workers can be deported or they can lose their temporary work status on a whim or at a moment's notice, it denies them basic benefits."

"Immigration laws are being used to pit working class people against one another," continued Ramsaroop. "We should not consider migrant workers threats to our jobs. Our challenge as working people is to be against federal laws that divide us."

Anti-union air war

In order to obscure their poor economic track record and fuel Harper's war on unions, the Conservatives have employed a media strategy where the message is tightly controlled and journalists are rarely able to challenge Harper in press conferences. This has allowed extreme right-wing rhetoric to become the norm, making labour organizations vulnerable.

Also, despite having prioritized the economy over the people, Conservative financial strategies have not actually managed to aid economic growth in Canada.

This past July, Unifor released: *Rhetoric and Reality: Evaluating Canada's Economic Record Under the Harper Government* which explains in detail the state of Canada's economy under Harper in comparison to the record of each major government since WWII. The data of the report is organized into three categories: Work, Production and Distribution and Debt. The report says that in the post-war period, Canada's economy has never been worse.

Harper's government has the lowest numbers in job-creation, second lowest in employment rates and has averaged an unemployment rate of 10 per cent; the highest since William Lyon Mackenzie King's last term as Prime Minister.

Election time

After nine years of attacks, the labour movement will soon have the opportunity to vote Harper out of office and end the Conservative war on workers. There is hope that Canadian labour organizations will begin the new term with renewed strength and organization, ready to bring workers rights back to the table in Ottawa.

"I'd say right now we're under attack, both federally and in some provinces and have been for the last couple of years," said Mark Hennessy, Director of Political Action for the United Food and Commercial Workers. "I wouldn't say we're in our strongest position, but I think we're becoming stronger because of these attacks. I think we're becoming more coordinated and strategic as a

labour movement and we're finding ourselves working together quite a bit more."

What is needed now is leadership that will work with labour to reverse the changes Harper has made to break down the labour movement, and build it back up – taller and stronger than ever. That's why the 2015 election is such a vital moment for workers.

This election will be characterized by two important firsts: the first time that the NDP has a reasonable chance at forming government, and the first time that election third-party spending rules threaten union-led elections campaigns.

The potential of an NDP government is enormous. But as many provincial governments have demonstrated, an NDP win isn't an instant guarantee that workers' rights will drastically improve. Instead, unions need to anticipate mounting pressure on government, whatever the stripe, post-October 19. And, in the lead up, union members must be engaged on-the-ground during the election.

This is where the second "first" becomes critical: among Harper's other attacks on Canadians, includes the changes that his government has made through the "Fair Elections Act". These changes make it harder for students and people with addresses that change frequently to prove residence when they go to the polls. On top of this, Elections Canada is no longer allowed to advertise the basic details around how to vote.

But for unions, stricter penalties

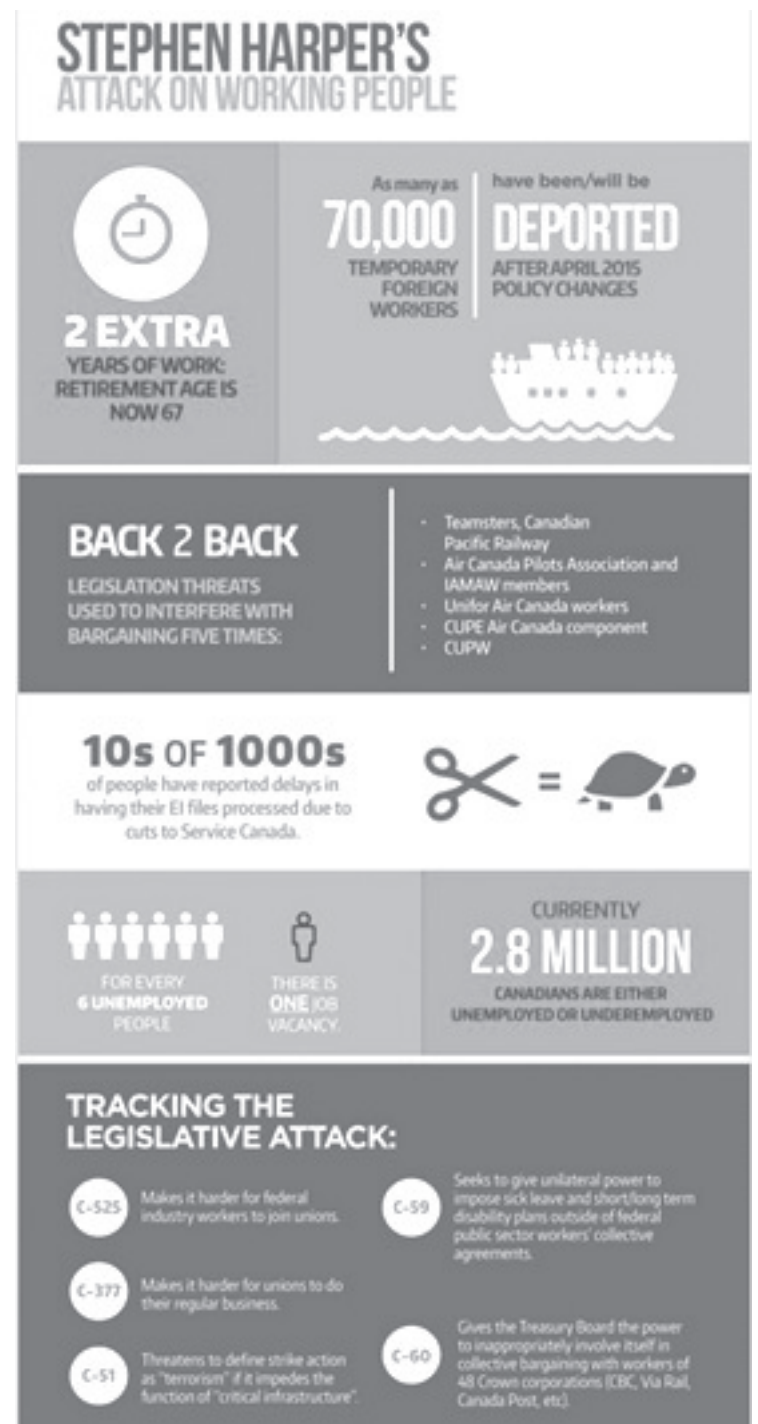
and stronger definitions for third-party campaigns threaten to slow the advocacy that is needed on their behalf. With higher spending penalties, and language that seems to prohibit campaigns that target a particular party or group, many unions are shying away from campaigns to protect workers by voting out Harper.

Despite this, it is well within the rights of labour organizations to campaign openly in support of – or against – a particular candidate or party. Beyond this, it is necessary for labour organizations to identify and support a candidate that will be an ally to Canadian labour.

In 1991 the Supreme Court ruled in favour of "the idea that unions need to be able to participate in politics and culture beyond the workplace," explained Jacob Saltiel, Human Rights and Social Justice Intern for Raven Law, based in Ottawa. Saltiel is working on a report tentatively titled "Unusual Practices, Unnecessary Acts: Federal Labour Rights in Canada Under the Conservatives".

"There are some arguments out there that unions should be restricted to the workplace and workers, but as the Supreme Court commented in that case, they recognize that unions have to be able to speak to the wider public on issues that affect them, since otherwise it's very difficult for them to do the things they need to do.

"I do think unions have a very important public role in that they should be allowed to support whichever party they think will work with them as partners." ●



EDITORIALS

Open the doors to Canada's victims

Few things are quite as terrifying as disasters which unfold in slow motion, while those who could avert catastrophe insist on staying the course towards destruction. The so-called "refugee crisis" in Europe is a prime example. One of the first to warn about the dangers faced by humanity today was the former Cuban President, Fidel Castro (see below on this page), at the Rio Summit in 1993. Twenty-two years later, Fidel's brief analysis shines a brilliant light on the root causes of today's events.

These causes include the capitalist consumerism which is fundamentally responsible for the brutal destruction of the environment, such as the disappearance of forests and the loss of soil fertility; the exploitation and pillaging committed by transnational capital and an unjust imperialist international economic order; the continuation of enormously profitable arms races. Fidel's speech was given before the NATO war against Yugoslavia in 1999 launched a new era of imperialist wars and occupations, invariably justified as "humanitarian" exercises or as actions necessary to combat terrorism.

We all know the true consequences of these military debacles, usually carried out with Canada as a reliable ally of US imperialism. Millions have died, from Iraq to Afghanistan to Libya and now Syria. Homes, cities and economic infrastructure have been demolished across huge areas, and now over 50 million people have been displaced worldwide. All of this was predicted in great detail by the anti-war movements, but governments, doing the bidding of the energy industry and the military-industrial complex, have stubbornly refused to change their disastrous policies.

Now, the chickens are coming home to roost, as the victims of our government's warmongering seek a better life inside the borders of Canada. Our only humanitarian option is to open Canada's doors to the refugees of 21st century wars and environment catastrophe.

Secret report on gender inequality

For those watching closely, the misogynist policies of the Harper Conservative government are well known. But now, according to a "secret" internal report by Status of Women Canada, the pay gap between men and women is among the highest in the major capitalist countries; support for child care and parental leave is well below average; Canada registers 57th for gender equality in Parliament's elected members; and there is no pan-Canadian strategy to halt violence against women.

Dated last February 10, shortly before International Women's Day, the 35-page report was ordered by the Privy Council Office to alert deputy ministers across many government departments about issues facing women and girls in Canada. A copy was obtained by CBC News under the Access to Information Act. Yet this "candid assessment" was never intended for public release, even though it was paid for by public funds.

Why the secrecy? Apparently because the information in the report was starkly accurate, and potentially highly damaging for the Conservatives. Hoping to minimize the fallout, a spokesperson for Kellie Leitch, the minister responsible for Status of Women, said Leitch "doesn't comment on draft slideshows."

What are some of the facts the minister dismisses so casually? Rural, immigrant and indigenous women are particularly vulnerable to violence. Poverty rates rose between 2009 and 2011 for one-parent families headed by women, and for unattached elderly females. Only three OECD countries have a wider gender pay gap than Canada (South Korea, Germany and Japan).

Perhaps this helps to explain why the women's issues debate in the current election campaign fell through after PM Harper refused to participate (NDP leader Tom Mulcair chose not to participate without Harper's attendance). And perhaps these realities shed light on why most women will not vote Conservative next month!



"Let selfishness end" - Fidel's prophetic warning

On June 12, 1993, Cuban President Fidel Castro gave the following speech at the UN Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro. This historic speech sounded a clear warning about the impending dangers to humanity; the current "refugee crisis" in Europe is a perfect example of the consequences of the policies condemned by the Cuban leader.

An important biological species is in danger of disappearing due to the fast and progressive destruction of its natural living conditions: mankind. We have now become aware of this problem when it is almost too late to stop it.

It is necessary to point out that consumer societies are fundamentally responsible for the brutal destruction of the environment. They arose from the old colonial powers and from imperialist policies which in turn engendered the backwardness and poverty which today afflicts the vast majority of mankind. With only 20 percent of the world's population, these societies consume two-thirds of the metals and three-fourths of the energy produced in the world.

They have poisoned the seas and rivers, polluted the air, weakened and punctured the ozone layer, saturated the atmosphere with gases which are changing weather conditions with a catastrophic effect we are already beginning to experience.

The forests are disappearing. The deserts are expanding. Every year thousands of millions of tons of fertile soil end up in the sea. Numerous species are becoming extinct. Population pressures and poverty trigger frenzied efforts to survive even when it is at the expense of the environment. It is not possible to

blame the Third World countries for this.

Yesterday, they were colonies; today, they are nations

exploited and pillaged by an unjust international economic order. The solution cannot be to prevent the development of those who need it most. The reality is that anything that nowadays contributes to underdevelopment and poverty constitutes a flagrant violation of ecology. Tens of millions of men, women, and children die every year in the Third World as a result of this, more than in each of the two world wars.

Unequal terms of trade, protectionism, and the foreign debt assault the ecology and promote the destruction of the environment. If we want to save

mankind from this self-destruction, we have to better distribute the wealth and technologies available in the world. Less luxury and less waste by a few countries is needed so there is less poverty and less hunger on a large part of the Earth. We do not need any more transferring to the Third World of lifestyles and consumption habits that ruin the environment. Let human life become more rational. Let us implement a just international economic order. Let us use all the science necessary for pollution-free, sustained development. Let us pay the ecological debt, and not the foreign debt. Let hunger disappear, and not mankind.

Now that the alleged threat of communism has disappeared and there are no longer any more excuses for cold wars, arms races, and military spending, what is blocking the immediate use of these resources to promote the development of the Third World and fight the threat of the ecological destruction of the planet?

Let selfishness end. Let hegemonies end. Let insensitivity, irresponsibility, and deceit end. Tomorrow it will be too late to do what we should have done a long time ago. Thank you.

Pages from our history

PEOPLE'S VOICE

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

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

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Big parties have no answers to economy's plummet

In a Sept. 1 news release, the Communist Party reacted angrily to the abject failure of the main political parties to address to deepening economic crisis in Canada with any meaningful policies promote growth and create permanent, well-paying jobs for working people across the country.

Statistics Canada has confirmed that the Canadian economy is now officially in recession, marked by two consecutive quarters of GDP decline.

"PM Harper is in complete denial over the depth of the crisis. He is in fantasyland if he thinks that Canadians really believe 'all is well' with the Tories' stewardship of the economy," Communist Party leader Miguel Figueroa said.

"But the other 'pretenders to the throne' – Trudeau and Mulcair – while eager to cast blame, offer no substantial alternatives of their own to stimulate growth, to narrow the widening disparities between the super-rich and the vast majority of working people, or to boost job creation," Figueroa added. "They all race about, claiming to be the best managers of this crisis-ridden system of capitalism. And they all cling to the same neo-liberal dogma of 'fiscal restraint', 'balancing the books', tax cuts and incentives for business, and pro-corporate trade pacts like NAFTA, the TPP and CETA.

"But none are prepared to

support measures to improve the living conditions of working people forced to pay for this crisis through austerity policies shoved down their throats by every level of government.

"And none of them are prepared to admit the obvious truth – that global capitalism is in a profound and worsening economic, social and environmental crisis ever since



2008, and that all the so-called remedies employed by capitalist governments everywhere – including here in Canada – have only served to make the crisis deeper and more intractable.

"Meanwhile, employment becomes ever more precarious for millions of workers, the quality and universality of basic public services like healthcare and education continue to decline, militarism grows along with Canada's involvement in foreign wars of aggression, and the global environment deteriorates under the

impact of climate change."

The Communist Party calls for a major turn in public policy to address the crisis, a program for fundamental change serving the needs of working people, not the big banks and corporations:

* a "Jobs First" strategy to rebuild manufacturing and value-added industries; an increase in the minimum wage to \$20/hr.;

* the introduction of a Guaranteed Annual Income to raise everyone out of poverty;

* massive investments in affordable social housing and

public infrastructure;

* improved public pensions, including substantially higher CPP benefits;

* the expansion of Medicare to include universal pharmacare, dental and eye care, and long-term care, the introduction of a universal, affordable and publicly-administrated childcare program, and the reduction and elimination of tuition for post-secondary education; and

* emergency legislation to slash greenhouse gas emissions, major investments in renewable energy

and conservation programs, and a substantial expansion of urban mass transit."

"These and other measures we call for in our 'people's alternative' platform would create millions of permanent, well-paying jobs, and raise the real living standards of all working people across the country," Figueroa said. "And we can pay for these measures by doubling the corporate tax rate, nationalizing oil and other natural resources, and cutting the military budget by 75%." •

The true state of the Canadian economy

In the current federal election campaign, Stephen Harper's Conservatives are posing as the party best able to deal with turbulence in the global economy. But the recession, wildly fluctuating stock prices, the sharp decline in the value of the dollar, increased living costs, and more mass layoffs, have all undermined this argument. The following excerpts from the June 2015 Political Report adopted by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Canada present a very different analysis of the true state of the Canadian economy.

The capitalist offensive has resulted in ever-widening social disparity between rich and poor. Recent figures from the OECD show that Canada is among the worst of the advanced capitalist countries in terms of the widening income gap between top earners and others in society. The top 1% of Canadian pre-tax income earners now capture 37% of the overall income growth, and swallow up 12.2 per cent of the country's income pie, ranking Canada only behind the U.S., Great Britain, and Germany in terms of income disparity among the 18 relatively rich countries compared. On the other hand, *real incomes* for working people have been declining steadily for decades, but particularly since the onset of the current crisis.

While the official unemployment figures remain steady (at 6.8%), these statistics belie the fact that the pattern of job loss/job creation is shifting dramatically. Part-time jobs accounted for 80% of net job creation over the past year and the share of workers in part-time positions now stands at 19.3%. By comparison, in 1976 that figure stood at only 12.5 per cent. Furthermore, temporary contract positions have increased the most, and now stand at 1.1 million workers, up 83% since 1997. Temp workers tend to have lower pay, fewer benefits and less on-the-job training than permanent, full-time workers.

The other side of the equation is of course the loss of full-time and well-paying jobs. In March 2015 alone, some 28,000 full-time positions disappeared, mostly in manufacturing (e.g., Bombardier, Blackberry, Kelloggs), construction, mining (Iron Ore Co. in Labrador City) and in the tar sands development (owing to the collapse of world oil prices, but also because of growing mobilizations by Aboriginal peoples and environmental activists opposing this expansion). In B.C., some 17,000 full-time jobs were lost this spring. There has also been a raft of layoffs in the

service and retail sector. In addition to the 17,500 jobs lost at Target, there have been large layoffs announced at CIBC, Future Shop, Tim Hortons, Black's Photography, Mexx and Jacob stores, among others. Job losses in these sectors, combined with the lack of job creation (especially for



new entrants in the labour market) in the economy in general has driven youth unemployment through the roof, often two to three times higher than the general rate of unemployment.

Wage reductions, and the loss of full-time work, have cut into the incomes and purchasing power of working people across the country. The drop in the Canadian dollar has also driven prices for food and other imported goods up dramatically, further reducing purchasing power. Because of the gradual decimation of the secondary manufacturing sector of the Canadian economy over the past two decades or more, there is little countervailing benefit derived from the weaker national currency (compared to the U.S. dollar), except perhaps in the tourism industry. Not surprisingly, millions of working people and those on fixed incomes are finding themselves in an increasingly precarious financial position, often a pay cheque or two away from homelessness. Savings rates are at an historic low, and by the end of the last quarter of 2014, the ratio of household debt to 'disposable' income hit an all-time high of 163.3%!

Dwindling real incomes are driving more and more Canadians into poverty. 4.8 million are now below the poverty line (i.e., 1 in

every 7 people). More than 200,000 experience homelessness each year, and almost 1 in every 5 households have serious 'housing affordability issues' (spending over 50% of their income on rent). The housing crisis in the largest cities is growing ever more acute, especially in Toronto and Vancouver) where rents and housing prices have been artificially inflated by rampant real estate speculation. Housing in Vancouver, for instance, is now rated as the second-most unaffordable in the entire world!

Further, the pay gap between men and women for work of equal value is again widening, forcing more women into the ranks of the working poor. While the scourge of growing poverty affects every major urban centre (as well as in the countryside) and cuts across every community and demographic group, indigenous peoples, working women, seniors on modest pensions, racialized and immigrant communities, and youth and students are hardest hit. But nowhere is the scourge of poverty more entrenched and institutionalized than among Aboriginal peoples. The abysmal social conditions in First Nations are reflected in the fact that out of the poorest 100 communities in Canada, 96 are indigenous.

Shrinking pay cheques and higher prices on food, housing and other essentials only tell part of the story. Add to this the impact of increased user fees and diminished public services, ravaged by government austerity, dwindling access to Employment Insurance (now denied to more than 60% of the unemployed), and the corporate attack on defined-benefit pension plans, and the socio-economic reality for millions of working people becomes ever more precarious and stark.

This decline in living standards for the vast majority of working people is coupled with a corresponding spike in profits, especially for the banks, oil & resource monopolies, and other large corporations. For instance, Rogers Communications, Bell and Telus averaged profit margins of 45.9% in the last fiscal year, well above the international average. In the manufacturing sector, an average of four percent of jobs have disappeared every year since the recession hit, but during that same period, manufacturing profits soared a stunning 24.3%. •

Communist Party of Canada federal election candidates and ridings

British Columbia

BURNABY NORTH-SEYMOUR - Brent Jantzen
CARIBOO-PRINCE GEORGE - Darcy Robinson
ESQUIMALT-SAANICH-SOOKE - Tyson Strandlund
SURREY CENTRE - Iqbal Kahlon
VANCOUVER EAST - Peter Marcus
VANCOUVER KINGSWAY - Kimball Cariou

Alberta

CALGARY FOREST LAWN - Jason Devine
EDMONTON-MILL WOODS - Naomi Rankin

Manitoba

WINNIPEG CENTRE - Darrell Rankin
WINNIPEG NORTH - Frank Komarniski

Ontario

BRAMPTON NORTH - Harinderpal Hundal
DAVENPORT - Miguel Figueroa
DON VALLEY WEST - Elizabeth Hill
GUELPH - Tristan Dineen
HAMILTON EAST-STONEY CREEK - Bob Mann
LONDON WEST - Michael Lewis
OTTAWA CENTRE - Stuart Ryan
OTTAWA SOUTH - Larry Wasslen
ST. CATHARINES - Saleh Waziruddin
SUDBURY - Elizabeth Rowley
TORONTO CENTRE - Mariam Ahmad
UNIVERSITY ROSEDALE - Drew Garvie

Quebec

HOCHELAGA - Marianne Breton Fontaine
LAURIER-SAINTE MARIE - Pierre Fontaine
OUTREMONT - Adrien Welsh
VILLE-MARIE-LE SUD-OUEST-ILE-DES-SOEURS - William Sloan

Nova Scotia

SOUTH SHORE-ST. MARGARETS - Barry Ryan

Newfoundland & Labrador

ST. JOHN'S EAST - Sean Burton

www.communist-party.ca

Federal election issues

How can we solve Canada's housing crisis?

An August 31 commentary by blogger Doreen Nicoll on the Rabble.ca website reports that Canada's housing crisis could be solved by spending \$2.04 per person per week. That figure comes from York University's Homeless Hub, which estimates that a total investment of \$44 billion over the next decade would end homelessness in Canada, and make more affordable housing available to more Canadians.

Nicoll points out that "spending more than 30 per cent of before tax household income on housing, municipal services, electricity, fuel and water, means there's little money left for basic expenditures like food, transportation, clothing, personal toiletries, laundry, and no money for perks like recreation. Almost 20% of all Canadian households are spending 50% or more of their before tax annual income on rent. For various reasons, over 235,000 Canadians find themselves homeless annually."

A 2012 report by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities found that housing costs have outpaced average incomes. Between 2006 and 2009, average income rose by 5.5 percent for the combination of

couple families, lone-parent families, and single persons in 24 major cities with over half of Canada's population, while the average cost of home ownership rose by 22 per cent.

A "healthy" housing price-to-income ratio is generally considered to be four to one. The most recent figures for these cities show this ratio was 5.3 to one in 2014; in Vancouver the ratio was 10 to one.

Nicoll's article continues, "One third of Canadians live in rental housing. Those most in need of affordable rental units include female-led lone-parent families, older individuals, Aboriginal households, and recent newcomers to Canada. Social housing waitlists continue to grow, yet federal subsidies are set to end when current operating agreements expire. That will put an estimated 365,000 low-income households at risk of homelessness."

And yet, the Conservative government claims that housing is exclusively a provincial and territorial matter.

In February 2012, NDP MPs Marie-Claude Morin, Andrew Cash and Michael Shapcott introduced draft legislation to create a national housing plan. Bill C-400, *An Act to*

Secure Adequate, Accessible and Affordable Housing for Canadians, urged the government to consult with provincial ministers responsible for municipal affairs and housing as well as with representatives of municipalities, Aboriginal communities, non-profit and private sector housing providers and civil society organizations in order to create a national housing strategy. But in February 2013, Conservative MPs voted to defeat Bill C-400.

Nicoll compares the housing strategies advanced by the opposition parties, starting with the NDP which uses Bill C-400 as a starting point. She calls the Green Party's National Housing Strategy "very comprehensive", bolstered by its call for a Guaranteed Livable Income to help low-income Canadians afford housing. Even the Liberals, she says, have an "Affordable National Housing Strategy" to eliminate waitlists for affordable housing; reduce the cost of housing for middle and lower income earners; and invest in housing infrastructure.

But the Harper government's "disappointing" housing policy relies solely on allocating nearly \$600 million over five years



Image from a poster used in 2013 by the Social Housing Coalition BC

towards the needs of individuals who are chronically homeless. Nicoll concludes that "Harper's housing plan helps one segment of Canadian society that is definitely in need, but overall, it is extremely myopic... Worse yet, Harper is set to cut housing funding to several programs that will leave more than one housing safety net torn totatters."

Nicoll's article does not analyze the platforms of the smaller political parties, but it's important to note that the Communist Party has 28 candidates on the ballot, most in major urban centres. The Communists propose to recognize housing as a basic human right, and to make full employment and full-

time jobs a top priority. One element of this approach is an emergency plan to build one million units of affordable social, cooperative and non-profit housing over the next four years, creating tens of thousands of direct and spin-off jobs. The Communist platform includes the establishment of federal-provincial-municipal land banks; a ban on evictions, mortgage foreclosures and utility cut offs due to unemployment; and support for meaningful rent controls. More widely, the Communists demand a liveable guaranteed, annual income, and many other measures to immediately improve the living standards of low-income and working class people. ●

Multi-media project documents Tory immigration changes

A ground-breaking new media project, "Never Home: Legislating Discrimination in Canadian Immigration", created by Vancouver-based advocacy groups No One Is Illegal and S**tHarperDid, aims to assess nearly a decade of "immigration reforms" under the Harper Conservative government.

"Never Home" reports that permanent residency for refugees, skilled workers and family members is restricted, and detentions, and deportations and secret trials are on the rise, while the migrant worker program expands. Claims of "bogus refugees", "terrorists", and "foreigners stealing jobs" are used to justify the exclusion and marginalization of migrants. Those who are allowed entry are often given only temporary, conditional or precarious status.

Here are some excerpts from the summary of this important project.

In 2009, the Conservative government oversaw the largest immigration raid in recent Canadian history, during which Canadian Border Services Agency officers stormed farms, factories and homes to detain over 100 non-status workers in Ontario. Two years later, the federal government announced the 'four in and four out' rule that now bars the renewal of work permits for foreign workers who have been working in Canada for four years. As a result of this policy, an estimated 70,000 low-waged migrant workers are facing the possibility of expulsion from 2015 onwards. This is one of the largest mass deportations in Canadian history.

... Immigrant exclusion has been

central to Canada since its inception. From the *Komagata Maru* to the Chinese Head Tax, from the internment of Japanese-Canadians to the de facto prohibition on Black immigration, "White Canada forever"—and its intersections with other forms of systemic oppression—has been a prevailing political and social force in Canada.

This history of exclusion is, of course, informed by the foundational violence of genocide against Indigenous nations. Settler-colonialism has sought to conquer and forcibly displace Indigenous peoples from their territories, and is an ongoing reality. Indigenous peoples in Canada still experience

disproportionate poverty and homelessness, child apprehension, the trauma and grief of having their loved ones go missing or be murdered, repressive policing, and dispossession from their lands.

Canada is also complicit in global displacement. Canada's imperial and capital interests in other parts of the world have displaced many migrants to Canada. For example, over 75 percent of the world's exploration and mining companies are headquartered in Canada, and Canadian mining corporations in the global South are implicated in four times as many violations as companies from other countries...

Canada currently accepts more

migrants under temporary permits than those who immigrate permanently. Permanent residency for refugees, skilled workers and family members is restricted, citizenship is becoming harder to get and easier to lose, but the migrant worker program is exploding. Migrant workers are brought in as cheap labourers, while family-class immigrants (read: 'economic burdens') and refugees (read: 'terrorists') are kept out. In reality, all migrants provide an immense subsidy to the Canadian economy; for example, grandparents who undertake childcare and domestic labour. Moreover, it is dehumanizing to propagate the idea that migrants are only desirable if they can contribute to the paid workforce. All human beings are worthy.

"Never Home" reports that "Canadian citizenship is now harder to get and easier to lose." The percentage of immigrants who became citizens dropped from 79 percent to 26 percent among people who arrived between 2000 and 2008. Muslim-Canadians have been particularly targeted as un-Canadian with, for example, the ban on niqabs at citizenship ceremonies. The new "Stealing Citizenship Act" (Bill C-24) legislates second-class citizenship.

TEMPORARY PERMITS: Canada currently accepts more migrants under temporary permits than those allowed to immigrate permanently. The federal government eliminated nearly 280,000 applications under the Federal Skilled Worker Program and removed the guaranteed right to permanent residency for care-

givers, while the number of temporary migrant workers tripled over the past decade. This is a revolving door system; while more workers are brought in under exploitative conditions, at the same time many are being swiftly removed. As a result of the federal government's recent 'four in and four out' rule, an estimated 70,000 low-wage migrant workers now face the possibility of expulsion. This is one of the largest mass deportations in Canadian history.

FAMILY CLASS IMMIGRANTS: The number of family-class immigrants dropped by 20 percent in the first five years of Conservative government. Most parents and grandparents can now only arrive on a temporary visitor Super Visa, which requires the purchase of private Canadian healthcare insurance. Many spouses have to come on a conditional sponsorship, and older children cannot be sponsored. Processing times for in-Canada spousal sponsorships have tripled and have been the subject of scathing criticism by the Office of the Auditor General. The income threshold for all family sponsorships has increased, making family reunification a privilege for the wealthy.

REFUGEES: Sweeping exclusions and inflammatory rhetoric about "bogus refugees" by the Conservative government resulted in a 50 percent decrease in the number of refugee claims and a 30 percent drop in the number of accepted refugees. Many refugees

see NEVER HOME, page 11



AFN issues historic call to "Close the Gap"

PV Vancouver Bureau

In an unprecedented move, Assembly of First Nations (AFN) National Chief Perry Bellegarde has presented a detailed list of election priorities to close the gap in quality of life between First Nations people and Canadians.

"First Nations priorities are Canada's priorities and must be part of the federal election campaign," said National Chief Bellegarde on Sept. 2. "We can close the gap and today we're putting forward specific commitments we want to see from all federal parties. This is about changing the relationship between First Nations and Canada to one of full collaboration. This is about investing in a better life for First Nations, our families and our children. This is about building a stronger country for all of us. When the gap closes, Canada wins."

"Our plan is practical, implementable and will set Canada on a course of reconciliation, progress and prosperity," he added. "Our plan points the way to real change."

Statistics show that half of First Nations children live in poverty, life expectancy for First Nations citizens is five to seven years less than other Canadians, more than 40,000 Aboriginal children and youth are in foster care, 132 First Nation communities under boil water advisories, and there are more than 1200 cases of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. While Canada has ranked between 6th and 8th on the UN Human Development Index, First Nations fall between 63rd and 78th. The federal government's Community Well-Being Index shows that the gap has not changed at all since 1981.

The AFN has released *Closing the Gap: 2015 Federal Election Priorities for First Nations and Canada*, as part of its work to stand up for First Nations collective rights and to ensure that all federal parties understand that First Nations priorities must be addressed.

The Assembly calls the Gap "a fundamental human rights issue, inclusive of First Nations' collective rights to land and self-determination," and a problem which "should not exist in a country as rich as Canada."

There is wide support for this view in Canada, the AFN stresses, including from a growing list of groups such as Amnesty International, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, the Canadian Labour Congress, Canadian Union of Public Employees, Council of Canadians, KAIROS, and Canadian Friends Service Committee (Quakers).

The AFN says it hopes to work with the next federal government towards "dedicated, strategic investments and concrete actions" in the following priority areas: Strengthening First Nations, Families and Communities; Sharing and Equitable Funding; Upholding Rights; Respecting the Environment; Revitalizing Indigenous Languages; Truth and Reconciliation.

The plan sets out two sets of goals for each of these six priority areas, including steps to be taken within the first 100 days in office

of the newly elected federal government, and another set of measures to be implemented within two years.

The 100-day goals include the following:

- Launch an honourable joint process to close the education gap



Assembly of First Nations National Chief Perry Bellegarde

through First Nations Control of First Nations Education. This includes immediate and continued new investments in classroom funding to catch up from years of underfunding and neglect and a guaranteed annual escalator which ensures equitable funding. Additionally, new investments are required for regional education organizations, systems development, new school construction, operations and maintenance.

- Engage in a collaborative process to develop, with First Nations, a National Action Plan to address the root causes of violence experienced by First Nations women and girls.

- Establish an inclusive and comprehensive National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls with full involvement of Indigenous organizations, communities and families.

- Lift the 2% cap on federal funding to First Nations and immediately eliminate the funding gap it created.

- Immediately establish a new fiscal relationship, inclusive of new fiscal transfer arrangements with equitable escalators for ongoing funding.

- Commit to convening a multi-party process (First Nations, provinces, territories and Canada) to develop revenue sharing frameworks.

- Restore funding for First Nations representative organizations at all levels – national, provincial/territorial and tribal councils.

- Establish a joint AFN-Cabinet Committee to set direction and monitor the implementation of First Nation-Crown priorities.

- Engage in a collaborative process with First Nations to ensure the federal government is organized in a way that demonstrates accountability to First Nations and is consistent with s. 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982 and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

- Repeal Bill C-51 and ensure that security and policing legislation and operations respect and uphold First Nations' rights to expression, assembly and association.

- Establish a multi-party dialogue with First Nations on environmental protection, stewardship and sustainability.

- Repeal changes to environmental

legislation and regulations enacted through Bill C-38 and Bill C-45 and work with First Nations to develop environmental and resource laws to protect the lands and waters and ensure First Nations' rights and responsibilities are respected.

- Apply the standard of free, prior and informed consent, consistent with First Nations' fundamental rights, in any decision-making that has the potential to impact First Nations' lands, territories or resources.

- Increase investments in existing efforts and initiatives to revitalize Indigenous languages, including immersion programs.

- Work with the AFN on a National Action Plan to revitalize and promote Indigenous languages.

- Work with the AFN on an Indigenous Languages Act consistent with the principles in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC).

- Fully adopt the Principles of

stantive investments in First Nations health services, prevention, promotion and Non-Insured Health Benefits.

- Work with the AFN to implement the First Nations Mental Wellness Continuum Framework to support greater individual and community wellness.

- Implement and uphold Jordan's Principle to ensure that First Nations children will not face delays or disruptions in health services.

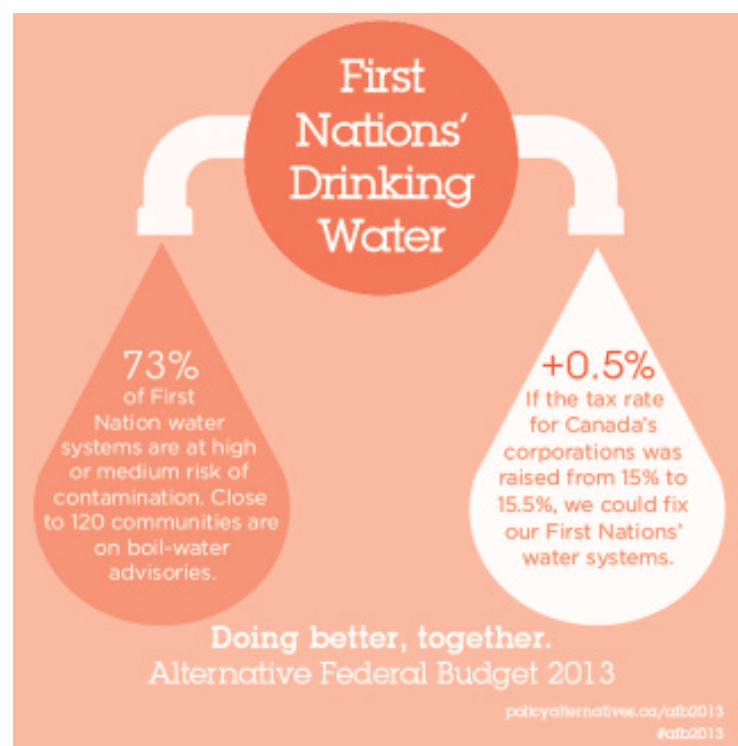
- Provide long-term and sustainable investments to support flexible First Nations skills and employment training responsive to First Nations and industry's needs in the economy. This will be delivered by First Nations-mandated organizations through a renewed relationship.

- Engage in a joint process with First Nations to develop and implement a statutory framework recognizing First Nations Police Services as essential services with equitable funding and capacity supports.

- Support the development and implementation of community safety and security action plans to ensure that all First Nations people – women, men, girls, boys, two-spirit and transgender people and others – are free from violence.

- Support the development and implementation of restorative First Nation justice systems and implement actions to end over-representation of First Nations people in the criminal justice and correctional systems.

- Repeal the Safe Communities Act and imposition of mandatory sentencing.



Reconciliation provided by the TRC and work with the AFN on implementation of the Calls to Action.

Within the first two years, the plan proposes that the newly elected federal government will:

- Commit to increased investments to ensure equality in child welfare services and programs for First Nations children and families, and develop with First Nations an equitable funding formula and escalator.

- Work with the AFN to develop and implement a First Nations Health Plan to close the gap in health outcomes. This requires long-term, sustainable and sub-

- Commit, in Budget 2016, to long-term investments in First Nations water treatment and management systems to ensure universal access to clean water and sanitation.

- Invest in First Nations housing to address the current backlog and demand for new homes.

- Support First Nations housing management authorities.

- Implement, through a multi-party process, the full involvement of First Nations in emergency prevention, management and mitigation agreements and support First Nations' roles and capacities to provide these services directly.

- Work with First Nations on the development and implementation of sustainable strategies to facilitate and enhance capacity to engage actively in the economy.

- Review existing policy and legislation and create a framework for future policy and legislation to ensure consistency with s. 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982 and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

- Create tables, as defined by rights holders, on a Treaty-by-Treaty and Nation basis to ensure the meaningful recognition and implementation of Treaties, Aboriginal rights and title, with independent parliamentary oversight and enforcement mechanisms.

- Engage First Nations as full partners from the earliest stages in all decisions that have the potential to impact First Nations – law, policy, administration and procedure.

- Recognize the inherent rights of First Nations, and provide financial and capacity support for the development and implementation of First Nations laws as they exercise jurisdiction pertaining to their citizens, communities, and territories.

- Ensure meaningful inclusion of First Nations at Ministerial and inter-governmental decision-making tables which impact First Nations.

- Ensure Indigenous people are appointed to the Supreme Court of Canada as well as other decision-making bodies.

- Ensure that all joint processes are adequately supported and financed.

- Recognize and support the inherent rights of First Nations to develop and implement their own environmental regulations to manage traditional territories and resources.

- Ensure First Nations governments are provided sufficient legal, technical and financial capacity to participate in environmental review and other regulatory processes.

- Establish a National Indigenous Languages Revitalization Fund to support First Nations languages revitalization initiatives.

- Establish a permanent National First Nations Languages Institute and commit to ongoing operating funds for revitalization efforts.

- Jointly develop a report card with the AFN and report annually to the Chiefs-in-Assembly and Parliament on the implementation of the 94 Calls to Action contained in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report.

"We are at a pivotal time in Canadian history," concludes the AFN. "Canadians are poised to begin the era of reconciliation and we are issuing this plan to point the way forward to real change through concrete action. We are seeking responses and commitments to this plan from all federal parties. We are reaching out to all of those who will work with us on an agenda for positive change and reconciliation. We are seeking partners who believe in a fair and just Canada. We are seeking partners to build a stronger Canada. Now is the time to Close the Gap." ●

Read more at www.afn.ca



GLOBAL CLASS STRUGGLE

150 million strike in India

Millions of workers across India held a 24-hour strike on Sept. 2 in protest against plans by the government to undermine labour laws and lay off workers. It was the biggest show of strength by trade unions since Prime Minister Narendra Modi took office last year. Modi has promised a string of business-friendly changes to attract foreign investment by gutting labour laws which date back to British colonial rule. Businesses argue that conforming to India's state and national labour laws is "costly and time-consuming," but the unions point out that only the country's wealthy have benefitted from the economic growth of recent years.

The decision to call for a nationwide strike was taken at a National Convention of Workers called by a dozen trade union centres in May. Rallies were held all over India on Sept. 2, as an estimated 150 million workers took to the streets after trade union talks with the government broke down.

The trade unions had presented a charter of 12 demands, including a strong stance against the anti-worker proposed amendments to labour laws, a new minimum wage, an end to contract labour in permanent perennial work, payment of same wage and benefits for contract workers as regular workers for similar work, strict enforcement of all basic labour laws, universal social security cover for all workers, compulsory registration of trade unions within a period of 45 days from the date of submitting applications, as well as immediate ratification of ILO Convention 87 and 98.

Police attacked union members in West Bengal, which has a long history of left-wing union activism. Television footage showed police baton-charge protesters in the state capital Kolkata, and drag away women strikers who had staged a sit-in, while protesters threw stones and smashed vehicles. Nearly 200 people were arrested across the state. Banks, shops and other businesses remained closed in the city, stranding commuters and travellers at the main station.

In Delhi, long queues formed at bus stops, while passengers were stranded at airports as taxis and autorickshaws stayed off the streets.

Industry body ASSOCHAM estimated \$3.7 billion in economic losses from the strike, singling out the country's ports where exports were stranded on the docks.

Union roadmap to rebuild Nepal

The Nepal government has been asked to support a trade union "roadmap for reconstruction and development", in the wake of the devastating April 25 earthquake which cost nearly 9,000 lives and left some 22,000 people injured.

Along with the terrible human cost of the earthquake and aftershocks, Nepal's economy has been hit extremely hard. Exports currently total only around 11% of imports, with the tourist sector hit

especially hard. The Roadmap, drawn up jointly by the Nepalese trade union centres, addresses the immediate crisis in housing, infrastructure and related areas, and also seeks to put the economy on a sound footing for future development. Creation of decent jobs at home is seen as critical in reducing the country's dependence on remittances from workers migrating, often into extremely exploitative and low-paid work, in other countries.

On Sept. 3-4, delegates from the Nepali trade unions and international labour groups met



on the theme "Reconstruction: By creating decent jobs". The meeting asked the government to revise national employment policy to create at least 200,000 jobs, as the reconstruction phase will require huge manpower.

Similarly, the unions have also requested to declare 2015-2025 a decade of reconstruction, converting the present challenges into an opportunity to upgrade the skills of the domestic workforce and to attract Nepali migrant workers and youths outside the country to return home.

Trade unions have appealed to the government to ensure representation of trade unions in recently formed Reconstruction Authority. The Roadmap also suggests the formation of Reconstruction observation committees in all of the 14 earthquake affected districts.

The roadmap proposes the government should increase the minimum wage to NPR one thousand \$12 Can.), guarantee 200 days of employment a year, and ensure workplace health and accident insurance, measures which would make the reconstruction phase worker-friendly.

Kenya nurses strike

Kenyan police on Sept. 3 battled protesters who attempted to storm Nyeri Governor Nderitu Gachagua's office over a health crisis in public hospitals. Officers intercepted the crowd as it headed for the governor's office demanding to meet him over the worsening situation during a strike by nurses and other health workers. This caused a stand-off that gave way to running battles as the protesters blocked roads in town using burning tires.

"Thousands are suffering at home as our rich county officials comfortably fly abroad for specialised treatment. We give them seven days to restore

normalcy in healthcare," warned Wambugu Nyamu, chair of the Citizen Initiative lobby group which organised the demonstration.

Nyamu threatened to collect signatures to have the Nyeri County Referral Hospital reverted back to the national government.

County government representatives failed to turn up at the Labour office in Nyeri for a reconciliation meeting with the nurses' union representatives. Instead the officials were at the Employment and Labour Relations Court in Nairobi which had summoned officials of the two groups to appear before it. Kenya National Union of Nurses (KNUN) secretary-general Seth Panyako accused the government of being arrogant in its response to the nurses' grievances.

German teachers support refugee children

Amid the increasing number of refugees seeking peace and safety across Europe, teacher unions are stressing the importance of integrating refugee children as the school year begins. German member organisations in the Education International (EI)'s European Region, are stressing that every child has a right to education.

As the number of wars and conflicts increases, more people are on the move than at the end of World War II. Even after they receive refugee status, the challenge remains to get children into school and integrated into new communities and cultures.

The German teacher unions have proposed different measures to integrate partly traumatised children with different cultural backgrounds, levels of education and mother tongues into the German education system. They have urged local authorities, the federal states, and the German government to increase their support to teachers and social workers, measures which would ensure a more tolerant learning environment, and give teachers the time to address and tackle racism.

According to the UN Refugee Agency Global Trends report, the number of people forcibly displaced at the end of 2014 had risen to a staggering 59.5 million compared to 51.2 million a year earlier and 37.5 million a decade ago. Over half the world's refugees are children.

Syria has 7.6 million internally displaced people and 3.8 million refugees. Other countries with huge number of refugees include Afghanistan (2.59 million) and Somalia (1.1 million).

Iranian teacher arrests

Fearing the call by educators for gatherings on October 5, International Teachers Day, it appears that the Iranian government has resorted more detentions and further repression of teachers.

The regime's intelligence agents arrested three teacher union

activists on August 31. Mehdi Bohlouli and Mohammadreza Nicknejad were arrested in raids to their homes in Tehran, with the agents seizing their personal belongings, including computers. Ali Hossein Panahei was arrested in Sanandaj, three days after giving a speech urging people to resist discrimination and repression by the Iranian regime.

Rasoul Bodaqi, another imprisoned teacher, still remains in detention despite the fact that his six-year sentence ended on August 6. New charges of "acting against national security" are being fabricated to obstruct his release. The Ministry of Education has expelled Bodaqi from his job after 20 years of teaching simply because of his stance on the rights of educators; this directive was conveyed to him while in prison. Other teachers still in prison include Ali Akbar Baghbani and Alireza Hashemi.

Strike victory saves 1,550 jobs in Brazil

Workers at two major auto companies in Brazil went on strike after the dismissal of 50 workers at Taubaté and 1,500 at Sao Bernardo do Campo. In response to the large strike, the companies decided to cancel the dismissals and reinstate those who had already left their posts.

The strike at Volkswagen began on August 17 and received the support and solidarity of metalworkers in Brazil and throughout the world. The company finally backtracked on August 28, opened a voluntary redundancy programme and amended the collective agreement accordingly. The employer also agreed to negotiate alternatives to dismissals should it wish to cut the workforce in future.

The strike at Mercedes Benz began on August 24 and also received support from dozens of unions in Brazil and abroad. On

August 31, the company cancelled the 1,500 dismissals and the workers agreed to an Employment Protection Plan, which guarantees job security for one year. Unions at both companies are affiliated to the CNM/CUT labour federation in Brazil.

Gender gap at UK universities

The British trade union Unison has condemned statistics published by Universities UK showing that women make up 54% of the total higher education workforce, but despite this 63% of those paid below £17678 (\$36,500 Can.) are women. This equates to over 20,000 female support staff working at UK universities. The same report highlights that while men make up 46% of the total university workforce, over 70% of those staff paid over £57,032 (\$115,000 Can.) are male.

UNISON's General Secretary Dave Prentis said "Women working at UK universities make up almost two-thirds of staff on the lowest pay points, it is a disgrace that so many are in the lowest paid jobs. Universities must do more to identify initiatives that support women in the workplace and help them get promoted.

The report highlights that there is a "misperception of the value of flexible workers" at some universities that meant that "some individuals... could be seen as less promotable because they work flexibly". That harmful view is more likely to affect women than men, says the report.

Davena Rankin, UNISON NEC member for Scotland, said: "Given that in Scotland there is a statutory requirement for all universities to conduct an equal pay audit, we would want to see this element of best practice extended across all universities so that we can start to highlight the real issues that are causing the gender pay gap and barriers for women in the workplace and start to address them at each institution."

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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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Horrors in Australia's offshore detention centres

Australia's anti-refugee policies have been described by the New York Times as "inhumane, of dubious legality and strikingly at odds with the country's tradition of welcoming people fleeing persecution and war." Since 2013, Australia has deployed its navy to turn back boats with migrants and asylum seekers from Iraq, Afghanistan, Sudan, Eritrea and other conflict-riddled nations toward Indonesia. Others are held at detention centres run by private contractors on nearby islands, including the tiny nation of Nauru. The Border Force Act, which took effect July 1, makes it a crime punishable by a two-year prison sentence for employees at these detention camps to discuss the conditions publicly. This article by Peter Mac is from the Sept. 2 issue of The Guardian, weekly newspaper of the Communist Party of Australia.

Last week a former Nauru detention security guard testified he had seen male detainees gasping after experiencing the horrible waterboarding torture, and there are continuing reports of the rape and sexual assault of women, girls and young boys.

Many of the guards are former soldiers, described by journalist Martin McKenzie-Martin as involved in a "hyper masculine and immature culture". They refer to the detainees by identification numbers, not by name.

The women detainees must take showers close to male guards, and must ask them for sanitary pads, because the management maintains they might be set alight and used as weapons during riots!

Morale collapsed within the centre last year after the government announced that no detainees would ever gain Australian citizenship. Incidents of rape, assault, self-harm and attempted suicide increased.

The Abbott government persuaded some detainees with refugee status to resettle on Nauru, offering them rudimentary education, employment and accommodation services. However, that generated bitter resentment among some Nauruan citizens who saw it as an act of favouritism for the "illegals".

Many resettled women have been attacked. One is dying in hospital after having been raped and beaten. She was left semi-conscious for hours before being discovered and taken to the police station and much later to hospital.

Another woman detainee was set on fire after being raped. Yet another found herself pregnant after an attack. Deeply religious, she sought a termination but then attempted suicide after it was performed at a Brisbane hospital. She was then returned to Nauru.

Resettled women have spoken about the "50-dollar man", who rapes women and then drops a \$50 note onto their bodies. However, the Nauruan courts have recorded no convictions for assaults against detainees.

The Australian Lawyers Alliance (ALA) claims that some crimes uncovered by the former Moss and Senate inquiries, including rape, assault, sexual assault, harassment and the trade of sexual favours for marijuana, were never reported to Comcare, the national work safety regulator.

The Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP) claims it reported 81 notifiable incidents over the last two financial years, but Comcare says it only received 79 reports.

A spokesperson for Connect, the company that organises accommodation and other resettlement services, stated. "We

are not aware of any allegations of rape made either to the local police or through Connect's incident reporting process".

However, the Nauru police are notoriously corrupt and the courts subject to ministerial control, and the statement regarding the incident reporting process is only technically correct. Under that process DIBP is required to report to Comcare, any "notifiable incident", including death, serious injury, or illness arising from a detention centre's operation. But not all notifiable incidents involve criminal behaviour, and notifiable incidents don't have to be reported to Comcare unless the patient requires immediate treatment.

One reported case of sexual assault was described as involving "no serious injury or assault", i.e. not notifiable, so no action was taken. Seven other incidents were described as not notifiable because they "did not result from the conduct of the business or undertaking".

Transfield, the company running the offshore processing centres for a \$1.2 billion fee, has confirmed 67 allegations of child abuse at Nauru, including 30 against members of staff.

An ALA spokesman also claims that cases of typhoid and tuberculosis were not reported, and that DIBP over-reports slight injuries to centre workers, but fails to report serious injuries or incidents affecting detainees.

Meanwhile the Papua New Guinea government is furious because three Australian guards at the Manus Island detention centre who were accused of having drugged and raped a PNG nurse were repatriated before a formal investigation took place.

The DIBP has merely described the event as "inconsistent with expected behaviours and contrary to the service providers' code of conduct".

Only a minute percentage of the world's 60 million displaced people seek asylum in Australia. This year more than 150,000 asylum seekers crossed the Mediterranean from Libya to Italy and 157,000 from Turkey to Greece.

In March 479 drowned or went missing in the Mediterranean and in April another 1,308, including 800 in a single wreck. Last week approximately 250 drowned off the Libyan coast, and almost 100 suffocated in two sealed people-smugglers' trucks on the road to Austria.

The huge number of asylum seekers results primarily from wars, most of which involved military interventions by the US, or conflict generated as a result of US intervention.

At least a million people have fled Iraq and Syria, where the brutal terrorist group ISIS has captured

huge areas. The Western forces could co-operate with the Syrian government in dealing with the situation but refuse because that government has an independent foreign policy and wants to break the US-imposed arrangement under which global oil sales are conducted in US dollars.

The US also refuses to adequately arm the Kurds of northern Iraq, even though they have fought ISIS with great courage and determination. Also, supporting the Kurds to fight ISIS would enrage Turkey, a key US ally, which has ruthlessly oppressed its own Kurdish minority.

Australia has participated in most of the US-led wars, which have generated the refugee tidal wave. The appalling situation in our offshore detention centres stems directly from the inhumane policies of offshore detention and mandatory detention, the demonisation of asylum seekers by the government, (which incorrectly describes them as "illegal" immigrants and bans them forever from our shores), and the secrecy and militarism which now dominates immigration operations and is beginning to do so in the wider society.

The Australian Labor Party has endorsed the cruel policy of asylum seeker boat turnbacks, and is unlikely to adopt a humane approach. Nor will it resist US attempts to gain our participation in a new war in Iraq and/or Syria, which would add to the numbers of asylumseekers. ●



Guatemalan president compelled to resign

Special to PV

Guatemala's Congress voted unanimously on Sept. 1 to strip President Otto Perez Molina of his immunity from prosecution. All 132 deputies of the 158-member congress present backed the motion which came in response to a major corruption scandal.

Protesters gathered outside the Congress to celebrate, and prosecutor Thelma Aldana said that she would seek a warrant for the president's arrest. Just a day later, Perez Molina resigned and was soon arrested, cutting short his term in office which would have lasted until January.

These developments followed months of protests sparked by disclosures that Perez Molina was embroiled in a graft scandal. The final straw may have been a national strike on Aug. 27, which closed schools and businesses as huge demonstrations called for the president's ouster.

As U.S. human rights lawyer Lauren Carasik observed in a recent article on the Al Jazeera website, Guatemala "has never reckoned with the bloody legacy of its internal conflict, from 1960 to 1996, which saw the deaths of more than 200,000 Guatemalans, mostly indigenous Mayans. Guatemala has yet to dismantle the inequality, poverty and racism that gave rise to that conflict. The U.S.-backed elites who used state-sponsored terrorism to crush the 36-year insurgency still wield power."

As the crisis deepened, even Perez Molina's former allies turned against him. Most of his cabinet resigned, and the Supreme Court paved the way for his impeachment. But whether he will actually face punishment remains unclear, given the impunity enjoyed by Guatemala's previous criminal leaders.

Carasik says that the vast scope of corruption in the country undermines democracy and

reinforces poverty, inequality and social exclusion. Now, she writes, many Guatemalans "have rejected another illicitly funded campaign and sullied election cycle and are demanding structural reforms, including changes to election and campaign finance laws."

While Washington supported the protests which erupted last spring, the U.S. hopes that the elections held on Sept. 6 can maintain "stability". This runs counter to the demands raised by those who call for deeper structural and social changes.

Perez Molina's involvement in the scandal was uncovered through the forensic work of the United Nations-backed International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala. The Commission found that Guatemala's main political parties derived nearly half of their budgets from corruption, split evenly among business elites and organized crime. Along with weak campaign finance laws and

no independent media, any hope of electoral change was blocked until now.

A former general, Perez Molina was elected in 2012 on an "iron fist" platform. He attended the U.S.-based School of Americas, which trained Latin Americans in military and counter-insurgency techniques. He was a commander in the Nebaj region, where more than 1,700 indigenous Maya Ixil were killed during the "scorched earth" wars against peasants. He was implicated in the 2013 trial of former dictator Rios Montt, who was convicted of genocide and crimes against humanity. Rios Montt was sentenced to 80 years in jail, but his defence team and supporters among the elite soon made sure that the verdict was overturned on a technicality.

Rios Montt is scheduled to face retrial in January. But because the court found that he suffers from dementia, the proceedings will be held behind closed doors, Rios Montt will not be required to attend and he will not be sentenced even if he is found guilty again.

Meanwhile, President Obama's administration is pushing for a \$1 billion aid package to Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador to stem the flow of refugees fleeing violence and poverty. The plan purports to advance good governance, security and economic development. But the downfall of Perez Molina vindicates those who call for genuine change to ensure that such aid benefits the people, not business interests and corrupt politicians. ●



Mass protests and a general strike helped drive Perez Molina from office.



Movies from “don’t miss!” to “a morally dubious fable”

Film round-up from
www.morningstaronline.co.uk

ME AND EARL AND THE DYING GIRL

Director: Alfonso Gomez-Rejon. Review by Maria Duarte

Divided into cheesy chapter headings, there's nothing twee about this brutally funny and exquisitely written coming-of-age tale about a teenage lad forced to befriend a cancer-stricken classmate.

This adaptation by Jesse Andrews of his young adult novel of the same name is a wonderfully quirky and grounded drama, devoid of sentimentality — think a male version of *Mean Girls* meets *The Fault in our Stars*.

It centres on Greg (Thomas Mann), who navigates high-school life by staying under the radar and blending in with every clique while avoiding deeper relationships. He describes his childhood friend Earl (RJ Cyler), with whom he has made 42 spoof short films of classic movies (*A Sockwork Orange* and *Senior Citizen Cane*), as a co-worker.

But his world is turned upside down when his mum makes him hang out with Rachel (Olivia Cooke) who has been newly diagnosed with leukemia. An unlikely friendship ensues.

Refreshingly honest and smart, with cracking performances from the young cast, just as the film is about to plunge into romantic or sentimental ground it veers in the opposite direction.

Don't miss.

RICKI AND THE FLASH

Director: Jonathan Demme. Review by Alan Frank

My heart sank when Meryl Streep, sporting a guitar, dangerously high heels and braided hair, starts to sing in *Ricki and the Flash*. I'd already suffered her warbling in *Into the Woods*. But I was wrong to be apprehensive.

She plays rock singer/guitarist



Ricki and the Flash stars Meryl Streep as Ricki, an aspiring rock star who leaves the Midwest to “make it” in California. Her band, *The Flash*, features (from left) Bernie Worrell on keyboards, Joe Vitale on drums, Rick Springfield on guitar, and the late Rick Rosas on bass.

Ricki, whose career — and life — is going nowhere and she's filed for bankruptcy. Then, former husband and father of her three grown-up children Pete (Kevin Kline) asks her to help their daughter Julie (Mamie Gummer), who's a wreck after her husband leaves her.

Initially, Ricki's a fish out of water in her ex's palatial gated-estate mansion. But you don't need to be a genius to predict the feel-good ending. Happily, thanks to ideally cast key players and director Jonathan Demme's handling of *Diablo Cody's* sweetly perceptive screenplay, getting there is unexpectedly enjoyable.

Julie, who admits to attempting suicide, is played by Streep's real-life daughter, making their on-screen relationship and rebonding all the more poignant — especially since, for once, Streep leaves scenery unchewed and is all the better for it. Kline, in his third film with Streep, is excellent, too. Her manager tells Streep's character, in her daytime job as a supermarket cashier: “I need you to satisfy and delight the

customer.”

She, and everyone else involved, does just that here.

NO ESCAPE

Director: John Erick Dowdle. Review by Maria Duarte

A US family is caught up in a violent coup in one of the most nail-biting thrillers of the year which, disturbingly, lacks any political depth or context. In it, Jack Dwyer (Owen Wilson) moves with his family to “somewhere in Asia” - which looks very much like Thailand - to head his water company's new plant there.

When a rebellion breaks out, headed by armed rebels who are executing foreigners, Jack enlists the help of a mysterious British tourist (Pierce Brosnan) to get his wife Annie (Lake Bell) and their two daughters (Claire Geare and Sterling Jerins) to safety.

Director John Erick Dowdle displays innate skill in delivering a nerve-rackingly tense and heart-stopping action thriller in which you totally empathise with Dwyer

and his wife's agonising plight.

It's brutal stuff and the pair are superb and totally convincing as a married couple caught up in a terrifying situation. Yet Brosnan seems the odd man out, playing a shady and jaded 007-type agent straight out of a different film. But a little more thought should have been spent on the two-dimensional rebels who are portrayed for no apparently good reason as evil, xenophobic and mindless thugs.

If you can screen that out, then this is one hell of a ride.

THE TRANSPORTER REFUELLED

Director: Camille Delamarre. Review by Maria Duarte

It's impossible to imagine *The Transporter* franchise without Jason Statham in the driving seat. But fans can enjoy a reboot which is just as slick and stylish with stunts as insane as in its predecessors.

Ed Skrein is the newly suited and booted crack mercenary Frank

Martin who will deliver anything for a price. Although he lacks the charisma and ebullience of Statham, that flaw's overcome by his being teamed up with the suave and rugged Ray Stevenson who oozes enough charm for the both of them as his father, a retired spy.

Martin is tricked by a femme fatale (Loan Chabanol) in the south of France into helping her and her three sidekicks bring down the Russian human trafficker who forced her into prostitution 15 years earlier.

What ensues is a ludicrous but brainlessly fun non-stop action-packed thriller from director Camille Delamarre which should appeal to fans of the franchise.

AMERICAN ULTRA

Director: Nima Nourizade. Review by Alan Frank

Jesse Eisenberg practically pleads for critical lambasting by dumping art films for this noisy action thriller.

He's fun as Mike Howell, a hapless and apathetic stoner living with girlfriend Phoebe Larson (Kristen Stewart) who works in a cash-and-carry and whose only interest is writing a graphic novel. He's prone to panic attacks too and that makes his unmasking as a highly trained, CIA sleeper agent who bloodily disposes of two assailants with lethal panache all the more surprising.

While this tall tale of corrupt CIA agents and governmental chicanery is twisted and even implausible, director Nima Nourizadeh drives it fast and furiously enough to entertain even though credulity is increasingly stretched.

Fans of kitchenware killing are taught how spoons and a frying pan can be employed to lethal effect, while addicts of suspense and adrenaline-surgingly illogical action delivered ad lib without intellectual pretension should get their money's worth.

As a drug-driven film, not to be sniffed at.

DOPE

Director: Rick Famuyiwa

Malcolm (Shameik Moore) is a geeky teenage African-American hero in Rick Famuyiwa's quirky coming-of-age comedy-drama who lives in a rough, tough Californian neighbourhood.

When his disapproving headmaster tells him: “You're pretty damn arrogant,” Malcolm would agree. He wants out and, being smart, hopes to make it to an Ivy League university but — obsessed with 1990s hip-hop and dressed like a rapper from that era — he's unmercifully teased.

But everything changes when, after attending a drug dealer's birthday party, he ends up with 20 kilos of eminently profitable dope. Geek turns entrepreneur and markets his unexpected treasure trove for bitcoins by using the dark web while having to keep vengeful hoods at bay.

The unabashed enthusiasm of everyone involved is infectious, making this morally dubious fable of crime and no real punishment an unexpected pleasure. ●

Syria Burning: ISIS and the Death of the Arab Spring

Syria Burning: ISIS and the Death of the Arab Spring, by Charles Glass, forward by Patrick Cockburn, 156 pages, OR Books (www.orbooks.com) 2015. Review by Doug Meggison.

On April 8, the first Canadian bombs were dropped on Islamic State targets in Syria. Canada has been bombing targets in Iraq over the last 8 months.

There are about 4 million Syrian refugees and about 7.6 million Internally Displaced Persons, according to the European Commission's ECHO factsheet for April. Over 200,000 people have been killed over the course of the Syrian civil war, since the spring of 2011.

Charles Glass' short book is a well-focused historical survey of

the last hundred years of war and intrigue in this part of the Levant. The author's acknowledgements include the following, which provides a context for his decades of reporting from the Middle East:

“I hope that it will soon be possible to repay the kindness of the Greek and Syrian Orthodox archbishops of Aleppo, Boulos Yazigi and Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim, who were kidnapped in Syria in April 2013. They did all they could to prevent the spread of hatred and fanaticism in their country and became two of among millions of victims in a war that should never have begun.”

A middle chapter is a succinct review of imperialist France's reprehensible occupation after WWI. France, unlike Canada, has, until the time of writing, held off

from joining the US led bombing campaign in Syria - although France was first in joining the US bombing against ISIS in Iraq.

In the concluding chapter, “The Revolution died in Aleppo” Glass writes: “Syria's war is anything its fighters want it to be. It is a class war of the suburban proletariat against a state army financed by the bourgeoisie. It is a sectarian war in which the Sunni Arab majority is fighting to displace an Alawi ruling class. It is a holy war of Sunni Muslims against all manifestations of Shiism, especially the Alawite variety. The social understandings on which Aleppo prided itself are unravelling. Muslim fundamentalists have targeted Christian churches and Shiite mosques. Arabs have fought Kurds. Iraqi Shiites and Sunnis have crossed the border to fight

each other in Syria.”

A small weakness in the book is that he does not make anything of the Russian and Chinese vetoes in the UN which have inhibited conflagration in this reviewer's opinion. As for Russian involvement, Glass should have spent a few paragraphs on how Russian diplomacy enabled the destruction of the Syrian regime's chemical weapons, and removed the immediate threat of US massive invasion.

Charles Glass helps us understand the terrible conflict. He is a reporter not a polemicist, and does not offer a cut and dry solution, but who does have one? He does think the violence and bombing will accomplish nothing and that a negotiated settlement must eventually take place. Canada's war mongers: take note. ●

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What's Left

Vancouver, BC

Ayotzinapa: Chronicle of a State Crime, documentary on the 43 disappeared Mexican students, Monday, Sept. 14, 8:30 pm, Vancity Theatre, 1181 Seymour St.

Hear Communist Party leader Miguel Figueroa, and meet Vancouver-area Communist candidates, Thursday, Sept. 24, 6:30 pm, Centre for Socialist

Education, 706 Clark Drive. Details from 604-254-9836.

Federal election campaign speaking tour

At PV press time, the full details of the election campaign speaking tour by Communist Party leader Miguel Figueroa are still being finalized. For updates, visit the CPC website, www.comunist-party.ca, or ph. 416-469-2446.

Labour history: September 29, 1931

September marks the 84th anniversary of the "Estevan Riot" of 1931, when the RCMP attacked striking coal miners from nearby Bienfait, Saskatchewan. Members of the Workers Unity League, the miners had been on strike since Sept. 7 to improve their wages and working conditions. When they gathered to march through Estevan on Sept. 29, the RCMP opened fire, killing three miners and wounding many more.

People's Voice deadlines

October 1-15 issue: Thursday, Sept. 17

October 16-31 issue: Thursday, Oct. 1

Send submissions to PV Editorial Office,
706 Clark Drive, Vancouver, V5L 3J1
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Navigating Elections Canada's third-party spending rules

By Nora Loreto, Editor of the Canadian Association of Labour Media (CALM).

I don't anticipate removing my Save Canada Post sign from our front door before Oct. 19. The campaign is far from over and I deeply believe that home mail delivery is an issue of social importance.

When I saw a debate on Facebook about whether or not new election third-party spending rules would require me to remove the sign from the window, I immediately uttered an "oh hell no" and stumbled into the debate that is surely occupying the campaigns and legal staff of unions across Canada.

The Conservatives have gamed the rules of this election in their favour. They changed elections rules to make voting more difficult. Elections Canada can no longer promote how voting works, privileging voters who are more seasoned (or, older). The ultra-long campaign period is good news for the parties with the deepest pockets.

And third-party spending has been severely limited.

I support limiting third-party spending. I think that non-political parties need to be limited in how much they spend to support a political party or candidate, and that they should be accountable to Elections Canada.

But the changes to Elections Canada policies go far beyond limiting donations. Kevin Grandia has a great write-up on what Elections Canada's new policies actually say, and it's required reading for anyone trying to make sense of the new terrain.

What remains unclear though, hinges on this: "Election advertising is the transmission to the public by any means during an election period of an advertising message that promotes or opposes a registered party or the election of a candidate, including one that takes a position on an issue with which a registered party or candidate is associated."

This means that any campaign that directly confronts Stephen Harper probably falls under the

third-party rules. Unions who planned to explicitly promote a candidate will have to register as a third party and report their spending.

What is much less clear is the second half of that paragraph: "including one that takes a position on an issue with which a registered party or candidate is associated." If a union has a campaign that fights to save door-to-door delivery for Canada Post, does this new language require that the campaign be registered and spending be tracked by Elections Canada?

... How can Elections Canada regulate what exists in the ether already? Is CUPW really responsible for every Save Door-to-Door sign distributed? I printed mine off myself; do I need to report to my local CUPW office? Do I need to keep track of this in case I surpass the \$200 limit in my plans to paint our windows with *va chier Harper*?

And what's the benchmark to determine if an issue is associated with a party? Google mentions? Party bylaws? Branded announcements about a particular policy? In an era of neoliberal campaigns, the Conservatives could easily change direction on a policy that they once supported. In an 11-week campaign, surely all policies are up in the air and up for grabs by all the parties.

Would a non-registered \$15 minimum wage campaign be illegal, but a "raise the minimum wage by ___%" be legal? What then happens if the Liberals steal the slogan and promise the raise?

None of this has been tested in court so there are no answers to the questions I've posed. There are only better or worse guesses.

These policy changes are clearly targeted towards social movements and unions. Corporations and the rich have other mechanisms to support political parties and they are not likely to be as worried about these changes as are unions and not-for-profit organizations. The few right-wing not-for-profits that exist could easily sit out the advocacy game for 11 weeks and fill their time with punditry on Canada's national news networks.

Considering this, what's the best course of action for unions to take?

Those unions who are fighting to unseat politicians will probably have to register under third-party regulations.

But these changes offer unions the opportunity to double down on traditional organizing methods, while refusing to be intimidated by terrible laws. This language is intentionally unclear. Unions cannot back down in mobilizing their members to vote by conservatively interpreting these rules.

Union organizers should launch issues-based campaigns that call for all parties to respond to their demands. They should centre their campaigns on the core values of their members and endeavour to speak directly to every single union member about what's at stake during this election. Unions must see this

election as an opportunity to engage the grassroots in every workplace across Canada to talk about the kind of government they want.

And, unions have to get creative. They should consider how best to use these exemptions to promote their message:

- the transmission to the public of an editorial, a debate, a speech, an interview, a column, a letter, a commentary, or news
- the distribution of a book, or the promotion of the sale of a book, for no less than its commercial value, if the book was planned to be made available to the public regardless of whether there was to be an election
- the transmission of a document directly by a person or a group to their members, employees or shareholders, as the case may be
- the transmission by an individual, on a non-commercial basis on the

Internet, of that individual's personal political views

Unions must also be ready to confront this legislation in court. If unions are unwilling to challenge unjust laws that are written by unjust rulers, there isn't much hope in saving progressive Canada. Be bold in the interpretation of these laws. Be prepared for fines. Hell, be prepared for jail time.

There is not much the average Canadian can do to confront the bureaucratic attacks waged against them by Stephen Harper. Unions exist to help give power back to the people and democratically represent the desire of their membership.

Harper has long ago declared war on unions. If unions are going to have a chance to win this war, they have to define the rules of engagement on their own terms, not on Harper's.

Never Home...

continued from page 6

are contending with reduced legal avenues, mandatory incarceration for them and their children, a two-tier system that discriminates based on nationality, and lack of access to adequate healthcare and social assistance. If they do manage to be accepted as refugees, their refugee status is conditional. The Conservative government set \$15 million towards reaching an annual target of 875 applications to strip refugee status, and the number of former refugees who lost their protected status and permanent residency has quintupled.

DETENTIONS: The Canadian government jailed 87,317 migrants without charges between 2006 and 2014, and spent more than a quarter of a billion dollars over five years to detain migrants. Migrants, including up to 807 children per year, are the only population in Canada who can be jailed without being charged with a specific criminal offense. This can include indefinite detention, which has repeatedly received strong condemnation by the United

Nations. In 2013 alone, migrant detainees spent a collective total of 503 years behind bars. Some migrants now also face mandatory detention, and detained mothers face the painful choice of keeping their children incarcerated with them or handing them over to a child welfare agency.

DEPORTATION: The Canadian government deported 117,531 people between 2006 and 2014, including to countries with official moratoriums on deportation. The federal government and Canada Border Services Agency bribe people to self-deport and use international smugglers to get fake documents to deport migrants to countries to which they have no connection. Refugees are stripped of their permanent residency and face deportation, undocumented migrants face increased deportation raids, and permanent residents convicted of minor offences - including traffic offences - are deported without a right to appeal.

SECURITY MEASURES: Refugees and permanent residents

are facing secret trials, deportation or limbo due to tightened security processes. New anti-terror legislation and the secret police bill, C-51, grant extraordinary powers for surveillance, secret investigative hearings, and preventative detention without charge. Canada has included charities as well as almost every major Palestinian resistance movement on its anti-terror list. Under the vague guise of 'terrorism,' citizenship can be revoked from some Canadians.

FUNDING CUTS: Over \$53 million has been cut from immigrant services, with additional cuts to refugee health and ESL training. Government offices offering walk-in services have closed, and trained staff in remaining offices have been laid off. This results in a high error rate in immigration processing; in a quality management review of just 88 refugee applications, 113 government errors were identified. Meanwhile, immigration enforcement spending rose by \$107 million between 2010 and 2013, with an overall 2014 budget of \$1.8 billion for enforcement activities. ●

UE becomes first national U.S. union to endorse BDS

Published by *Portside*, August 28, 2015, see <http://portside.org/2015-08-28/ue-becomes-first-national-us-union-endorse-bds>

UE, the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers, held its 74th national convention in Baltimore August 16-20.

Delegates acted on 37 resolutions on collective bargaining, organizing, and political issues, and they upheld UE's long tradition of courageous stands on foreign policy issues when they adopted the resolution on Palestine and Israel. It points to Israel's long history of violating the human rights of the Palestinians, starting with the ethnic cleansing of 750,000 Palestinians in 1947-48 that turned most of Palestine into the State of Israel. It calls for cutting off U.S. aid to Israel, U.S. support for a peace settlement on the basis of self-determination for Palestinians and the right to return. The resolution also endorses the worldwide BDS movement – Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions – to pressure Israel to end its apartheid over the Palestinians just as similar tactics helped to end South African apartheid in the 1980s. UE is now the first U.S. national union to endorse BDS.

Five delegates spoke from the floor in support of the resolution. Angaza Laughinghouse of Local 150, composed of public workers in North Carolina, said, "Our government is on the wrong side. We have to stand on the right side of the Palestinian struggle."

Autumn Martinez of Local 255 said she had met Palestinian trade unionists at the World Social Forum in Tunisia and learned from them of conditions in the occupied territories. "It's absolutely disgusting what is going on. Free Palestine!"

The convention also adopted a resolution on numerous military and foreign policy issues from an independent labour perspective. "For Peace, Jobs and a Pro-Worker Foreign Policy" endorses the work of U.S. Labour Against the War (USLAW); calls for reducing the military budget while improving the pay and benefits of military personnel and veterans and converting to peaceful uses of resources now devoted to the military; demands the end of U.S. military intervention in the Middle

East and other regions; calls for negotiation to resolve the Ukraine crisis; supports Zenroren's call for demilitarization in Japan; and supports the agreement to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons.

"The labour movement needs to have its own independent foreign policy," said Carl Rosen, UE

where UE delegates were meeting. The march was led by members of UE's two Baltimore locals. UE delegates also leafleted workers at an Amazon warehouse about organizing...

UE, founded in 1936, was the largest of the "left-led" unions in the CIO, but CIO leaders turned on UE and other progressive

serving late President Albert Fitzgerald frequently telling union members, "You can't have both guns and butter."

In 1988, delegates to the UE 53rd Convention adopted the resolution "Time for a Just Settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict."

In it they said, "The occupation by Israel of the West Bank and other Arab lands since 1967 has blocked the exercise of Palestinian national rights and resulted in ongoing violations of human, social, political, economic and particularly trade union rights of Palestinians..."

The resolution said the U.S. government had "contributed to the continued conflict by its one-sided support for Israel and its failure to take into account the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people," and it called for the U.S. government to recognize the PLO and the creation of a Palestinian state.

For more than 25 years the U.S. has engaged in a so-called "peace process" with Israeli and Palestinian representatives. But the U.S. role has remained extremely one-sided. The U.S. provides Israel \$3 billion a year in aid and repeatedly uses its UN veto to shield Israel from criticism of its human rights abuses. The Palestinians are worse off. In the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem, Israel continues to confiscate homes and land to expand Israeli settlements which violate international law. Since 1967 Israel has settled more than 500,000 of its citizens in the West Bank, and has been building a wall that separates neighbouring towns and cuts off farmers from their fields. Many human rights activists including former President Jimmy Carter and South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu have called the system of Israeli rule over Palestinian people "apartheid."

In Gaza, 1.8 million Palestinians are crowded into a tiny enclave under continuous military and economic blockade. In the summer of 2014 Israel waged a merciless war on the impoverished population of Gaza. More than 2,000 Palestinians were killed. The vast majority were civilians, including more than 500 children; and the physical destruction was overwhelming. UE's officers issued a statement expressing our union's alarm and over 300 Holocaust survivors and descendants signed a full-page newspaper ad, that condemned the Israeli attack as genocide and declared, "never again must mean never again for anyone." Yet incredibly, the U.S. Senate voted unanimously at the time to endorse Israel's actions.

The source of the conflict goes back to the origins of the State of Israel. The population was overwhelmingly Palestinian Arab (Muslim and Christian) before 1947-48, when well-armed Zionist militias seized most of the territory

of Palestine and expelled 750,000 people from their cities, villages and farms. They executed much of the Palestinian leadership and declared the founding of the State of Israel. As a result millions of Palestinians are refugees both in the occupied territories and in other countries. Israel prohibits their return to their homes.

In recent years racism and extremism in Israel has grown more severe. One-fifth of Israeli citizens are Palestinians who survived ethnic cleansing. Some members of parliament, including cabinet members in Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government, call for stripping their citizenship and expelling them. Some also call for expelling all Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza and annexing them to Israel. The "peace process", supposedly aimed at negotiating the terms of Palestinian statehood in those territories, has been dead at least since March when Netanyahu, in his reelection campaign, declared he would never accept a Palestinian state.

In July 2005 Palestinian trade unions and hundreds of Palestinian civil society organizations called for a worldwide campaign of boycotts to pressure Israel to end its apartheid over the Palestinians. This has developed into a global movement called Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions. BDS was modelled after the 1980s international solidarity campaign that put economic pressure on South Africa's government which helped end apartheid.

The summer 2014 Israeli attack on Gaza increased worldwide support for BDS. UE Local 150 endorsed BDS. The largest union in Britain, UNITE, endorsed BDS in July 2014. UAW Local 2865, which represents 13,000 graduate employees of the University of California, also endorsed BDS last year. COSATU, the Congress of South African Trade Unions that helped defeat apartheid in that country, is a strong backer of BDS. Many progressive Jewish organizations and individuals, in the U.S., Israel and elsewhere actively support BDS as a way to bring about peace and justice for the people of Israel and Palestine.

The resolution adopted by the 74th UE Convention "1) Calls on Congress and the Administration to end all U.S. military aid to Israel; and to pressure Israel to end the occupation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem and the siege of Gaza and negotiate a peace agreement on the basis of equality, democracy, and human rights for the Palestinian and Israeli people, including Palestinian self-determination and the right of return for refugees. 2) Endorses the BDS movement and urges the union at all levels to become engaged in BDS and the movement for peace, justice and equality between the Palestinians and Israelis."

WHY DO I BOYCOTT ISRAEL...?



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Western Region president. Several delegates talked about how they had been inspired by meeting members of Zenroren, the Japanese labour federation, 200 of whom came to New York City in late April to march for nuclear disarmament, with two smaller groups then joining UE members in New Haven and Chicago for May Day events. Brandon Dutton from Local 1161 in Wisconsin said, "We have done enough damage. We need to get out of the Middle East."

UE's convention included outreach and involvement in local struggles in Baltimore. Delegates joined local labour and human rights activists in a march to city hall to rally for Black Lives Matter, the Fight for 15, and several local workers struggles, including the contract fight of UNITE HERE members at the Baltimore Hilton

affiliates in the late 1940s as they sought "respectability" and enlisted in the Cold War. UE was heavily persecuted by the government and employers and raided by "mainstream" unions throughout the 1950s and into the '60s. But the union never abandoned its principles, and even through the worst period of "red scare" attacks, UE waged trail-blazing campaigns for workplace equality for African American and women workers.

In 1964, UE became the first national union to oppose the Vietnam War, and it was in the forefront of labour opposition to Reagan's Central America wars in the 1980s, Clinton's Yugoslav War in the '90s, and Bush and Obama's wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and beyond. Since the 1950s UE has consistently supported disarmament and called for reduced military spending, with its long-

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