

SEPT.  
16-30,  
2014  
  
VOL. 22  
#15  
  
\$1.50

# people's VOICE

**Social Forum  
Call to Action**  
*See pages 4, 12*

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



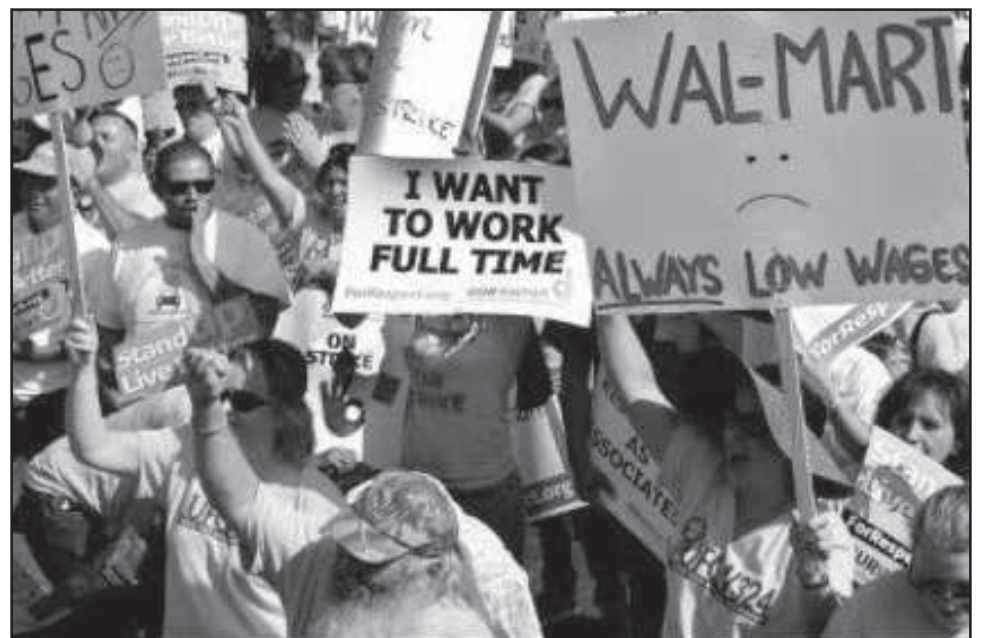
*In the streets,  
on the picket line,  
at the ballot box...*

# The fight to defend public education

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# Harper vs. Women

By Marianne Breton  
Fontaine, Montréal

Rape culture, discrimination, poverty, violence, etc.; the list of evils of patriarchy is long. One might think that every year, the status of women is improving in Canada. But it's not, and it's not just women's groups and the left that say so. According to the World Economic Forum, Canada's place on the international gender equality index has steadily declined from 7th place in 2004, to 25th in 2009. This is not a coincidence; it is the result of clear policies enacted against the advancement of women's equality. Yes, Harper is anti-women!

## Funding for women's groups cut

Since Stephen Harper took power in 2006, the Conservative government gradually eliminated funding for groups that promote women's rights. For example, he has closed 12 of the 16 regional offices of Status of Women Canada. The Conservatives have made significant changes to the funding criteria of women's organizations, saying that they will only fund groups that are "directly involved" with women. In other words, groups that were doing research on issues affecting women, defending feminist positions or lobbying on women's issues are no longer considered eligible for funding. Harper did not stop there. He also removed the word "equality" from the ministry's objectives. Thus, groups such as the Victoria Status of Women Action Group (SWAG) and the Coalition for Pay Equity in New Brunswick saw their funding cut drastically, and in some cases these groups have had to close their doors permanently.

In 2010, 12 women's groups

including the Council of Intervention for Quebec's Women's Access to Work (CIAFT) and the Network of Regional Women's Groups had their funding eliminated overnight. Many saw the move as punishment, since these groups were opposed to the anti-choice views of Harper. He also eliminated the Court Challenges Program, which supported legal action on the part of victims of gender discrimination.

## Social programs and women's poverty

We know that the economic and social policies of the Conservatives are devastating to the majority of the people. But we often forget that these measures preferred by the economic right (also enacted on behalf of global capital internationally by social democratic governments) disproportionately affect women. Women are poorer because of the patriarchal system in which we live, and tend to depend more than men on public services and the "social safety net" that was built through years of popular struggles. Canadian women earn on average 71 cents for every dollar made by a man. It's even worse for Aboriginal women in Canada who earned an average of 46 cents for every dollar earned by other workers, in 2006. Cuts in social services have also specifically targeted Aboriginal women since Health Canada has made large cuts to health care for Aboriginal peoples.

The Conservatives also prey on elderly women by imposing substantial cuts to public pensions. Older women already face a more difficult retirement since low wages and job insecurity prevents many women from earning decent pensions during their working lives.

## Against workers

The possible abolition of the Rand formula; the mandatory disclosure of financial statements of unions to ensure that they do not finance "political" groups; special back-to-work legislation; compulsory voting for unionization: Harper hates unions, and these recent measures prove this beyond a doubt. Labour has long been a major player in the struggle for feminist demands. Unions have also helped to drastically improve living conditions for their members. Unionized women in Canada earn 39% more than non-unionized women. They are also twice as likely to receive a pension and have better benefits, greater protections for human rights and superior job security.

The Tory reform of Employment Insurance is another attack against workers, but especially for women. First, women work at part-time jobs more often than men because of family burdens and systemic discrimination in the labour market that predisposes women to insecure jobs and at lower pay. Women have less access to Employment Insurance and will be more prone to EI investigations, while with lower wages than men, they are already disadvantaged by the system. The EI system was already sexist; it is now even more sexist with the Conservative reforms.

Why stop there? The Conservative government has questioned the right to pay equity for workers in the public sector. That is to say, Harper has removed the right of women occupying positions in the federal public service to turn to the courts in order to demand equal pay for work of equal value. He also stopped recognizing the "invisible work" of women by eliminating questions around unpaid work in the census. Thank you Harper!

## Anti-choice agenda

Harper stopped Canada's funding of abortion services through international aid. Under his government, the introduction of bills that have challenged women's right to choose has increased. Fortunately, none of these bills have passed, but we are not fooled. According to a list of anti-choice MPs compiled by the Coalition for Abortion Rights in Canada, two-thirds of the Conservative caucus are anti-choice. While the Harper government is thinking of re-criminalizing abortion, many forget that the pro-choice struggle is far from complete. It's not all women in Canada who have access to abortion services. For example, in Prince Edward Island, there are absolutely no such services.

## Harper complicit in violence against women

Harper has implemented restrictions in the immigration system that penalize refugees and female victims of sexual and homophobic violence. He has worked hard to abolish the firearms registry. Remember that women



(This article is published in Issue 17 of the new Rebel Youth magazine, <http://rebelyouth-magazine.blogspot.ca>. To buy a copy or subscribe, email [rebelyouthmag@gmail.com](mailto:rebelyouthmag@gmail.com) or snail-mail 290A Danforth Ave, Toronto, ON, M4K 1N6. A three issue/year subscription is \$12, or \$4 per issue sent by mail.)

are a minority among gun owners, the vast majority being men. At the same time, women are three times more likely to be victims of homicide committed by their spouses.

He still refuses to launch an inquiry into the 1200 missing and murdered Aboriginal women despite calls from the international community, requests for the Auditor General, demands coming from all directions, and the cries of Aboriginal families. To add insult to injury, in 2010, Harper eliminated funding for the database project of Sisters in Spirit, an Indigenous group that had supported these women.

## Women with disabilities ignored

We saw all the measures the Conservatives have taken against women, but violence is also perpetuated by inaction when it comes to women with disabilities. The Harper government has ignored repeated requests for the development of a national strategy for people with disabilities who face serious problems of poverty, exclusion and marginalization. Harper's restructuring of government funding criteria also endangers support for groups of people with disabilities.

## Women, stay home!

First note that there are fewer women in politics in the Harper government. They represent only 17% of the Conservative caucus. This is not a coincidence. In the ideology supported by Harper, women's place is in the home. He has supported income tax splitting for couples. Not only does this measure favour the rich, but it also provides a strong incentive for wealthy families to keep women at

home. He also abandoned the national childcare program and replaced it with a taxable allowance of \$100 per month per child under school age. Another incentive for women to stay at home.

## REAL Women, religious and ideological influences

But from whom does Harper get his charming political advice when it comes to public policy affecting women? He relies heavily on a group called "REAL Women." To give you an idea of what this group stands for, they said they were very pleased with cuts of \$5 million to Status of Women Canada: "This is a good start, and we hope that the Status of Women will eventually be eliminated entirely since it does not represent "women", but only represents the ideology of feminists."

This group believes that the nuclear family is the most important unit in Canadian society, and the fragmentation of the Canadian family is a major cause of social disorder. They lobbied the government for legislation to promote what they believe to be the Judeo-Christian model of family life, and for the support housewives. It is also opposes feminism, abortion, LGBT rights and same-sex marriage. REAL Women was outraged when Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird criticized the Russian anti-gay hate law.

This is a group advising Harper. But there are several others. For example, anti-choice lobbyists have privileged access to the offices of the Prime Minister. Lobby groups such as the religious Defend Marriage Coalition boast of their unprecedented access to the Parliament in Ottawa. How reassuring! ●

## Social Workers respond to C-36

### Statement from the Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) on Bill C-36

In response to a ruling by the Supreme Court of Canada that Canada's prostitution laws were unconstitutional and inappropriate, the Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act (Bill C-36) was introduced in June by Justice Minister Peter MacKay. If enacted as drafted, the new legislation will effectively make prostitution illegal for the first time in Canada.

Beginning September 9, 2014, Bill C-36 will be before the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee of the Senate for review. In anticipation of the Senate of Canada's review of this legislation, the Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) developed Prostitution Policy in Canada: Models, Ideologies, and Moving Forward; a discussion paper that serves to analyze and react to Bill C-36 from various perspectives, including feminist and harm reduction approaches, in the hopes of generating a social work dialogue around the issue.

After discussion and analysis, CASW believes that Bill C-36, with its increased criminalization of the worker and a simultaneous provision of \$20-million over five years in new funding to help sex workers get out of the trade creates a confusing and, frankly, unhelpful model. CASW agrees that it is inconsistent of the government to establish new legislation whereby prostituted individuals are regarded as victims in certain situations but not in other instances.

If sex workers are victims in need of assistance how might they also be criminals? This is an important question for the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee of the Senate to consider when moving forward in reviewing Bill C-36.

As Canada readies itself for the September 2014 opening of the Human Rights Museum, which heralds "Canadians' commitment to human rights," CASW urges the Senate and the current federal government to reassess Bill C-36: criminalization of the worker is not a human rights response to prostitution policy.

# Legal challenge against Medicare delayed by six months

A dangerous legal challenge against Canada's universal Medicare system, which had been scheduled to go to trial on Sept. 8 in B.C. Supreme Court, has been put on hold. The judge hearing the case granted a request from the legal team representing the plaintiff, private clinic owner Dr. Brian Day, for a six-month delay of the trial in order to pursue a resolution with the defendant, the government of British Columbia.

As reported in the Sept. 1-15 issue of PV, Day's challenge targets legislation that limits for-profit delivery of medically necessary services, allegedly because these rules violate the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. In reality, Day's clinic often charges clients more than the cost of procedures carried out under Medicare. It had been expected that an eventual ruling would be appealed up to the Supreme Court of Canada.

A victory for Day would open the gates to a US-style system, where most residents have to pay for private health insurance through employers. Health Coalitions across Canada have campaigned to push back against health industry privatizers, by demanding that governments put the health of the people ahead of profits.

The BC Health Coalition and Canadian Doctors for Medicare welcomed the possible resolution of the charter challenge.

"We are pleased that Day seems to be finally recognizing the need to abandon a law suit that never had any merit, and was no more than a stalling tactic that has allowed him to flout the basic rules of medicare, rules that virtually all

other Canadian doctors respect and comply with," said Rick Turner, BC Health Coalition co-chair. "The case has cost far too much time and taxpayer money already."

Both groups, which have intervener status in the charter challenge, are calling on the BC government to ensure that any resolution of the case protects equitable access to care for patients.

"The request for a resolution is a positive first step but we are quite disappointed that, as of yet, we have not heard Dr. Day make a commitment to actually stop unlawfully billing patients," said Dr. Monika Dutt, chair of Canadian Doctors for Medicare.

"A 2012 BC government audit of Day's Cambie and Specialist Referral clinics revealed that these

clinics extra-billed patients \$491,654 in roughly a 30 day period," said Dutt. "Even more outrageous is the fact at the same time, claims appear to have been submitted by the clinic to the Medical Services Plan for services provided to some of these same patients."

The BCHC and CDM argue that the province should insist that Day cease charging patients for services covered by the MSP.

"I'm hoping to see this case end once and for all," said Turner. "It is a distraction that prevents us from focusing on real solutions to issues like long wait times that will not compromise Canadian values of equitable access to health care based on need not ability to pay and responsible management of public funds." •

# Private care is no cure

NEWS ITEM  
COPEMAN CORP PLANS TO OPEN  
THREE NEW CLINICS IN ONTARIO



## Victory for Mexican union leader Napoleon Gomez

The United Steelworkers (USW) has praised an Aug. 28 Mexican appeals court decision that definitively quashes criminal charges against Napoleon Gomez Urrutia, President and General Secretary of the National Mine and Metal Workers Union, Los Mineros.

"Napoleon has been such an inspiration, and we've been proud to stand side by side with him through eight years of fighting these false charges," said Ken Neumann, USW National Director. "Now he's finally victorious."

In a unanimous decision, the Fourth Collegiate Tribunal for Criminal Matters of the First Circuit in the Federal District ruled that the government's criminal charge against Gomez, based on the

dissolution of a union trust fund in 2005, was baseless and unconstitutional. This is the eleventh time that the Mexican government charged Gomez with the same offence and the eleventh time that the appellate courts have ruled in his favour. The Mexican Attorney General's office announced that it would respect the decision, which cannot be appealed.

"This is a triumph for the USW-Mineros alliance and for the international trade union solidarity campaign," said USW International President Leo Gerard. Since 2005, the USW and Los Mineros have constructed a North American solidarity alliance based on joint bargaining, organizing and political action.

"This court decision should

finally end the political persecution of Napoleon Gomez," Gerard said. "Since 2005 Gomez and Los Mineros have been attacked by the Mexican government and giant mining companies like Grupo Mexico.

Due to the accusations, Gomez has lived in Canada since 2006. He was granted Canadian citizenship in June of this year.

Los Mineros has been targeted for winning the highest wage increases of any workers in Mexico and for organizing thousands of new members in a democratic labour organization, as well as denouncing corruption and industrial homicide in the mining industry.

"Now it is time for justice. Mexico must immediately tell Interpol to withdraw its Red Notice

so that Gomez can travel freely outside of Canada," said Gerard. "In addition, Grupo Mexico and the other Mexican mining interests must sit down with Los Mineros to negotiate an end to the existing labour conflicts. Canadian mining companies such as Excellon that have flouted the rights of Mexican workers and landowners should also come to the table."

"The persecution of Napoleon Gomez is a case study in impunity," Gerard said. "The U.S. and Canada should not even think of expanding Mexico's trade benefits under the Trans-Pacific Partnership, or any other trade agreement, until it is clear that Mexico is going to respect its own law and deal fairly with Los Mineros." •

(www.usw.ca/losmineros)

## Public Education Project candidates in Vancouver

Jane Bouey has served two terms as a Vancouver School Board trustee, in 2002-05 and again in 2008-11, when she was the vice-chair of the VSB. This fall, Bouey and Gwen Giesbrecht, the former chair of the Vancouver District Parent Advisory Committee, will be trustee candidates for the Public Education Project. This group was formed to address the tendency for Vancouver civic elections to focus exclusively on City Council issues, virtually ignoring public education.

September began with teachers across British Columbia on strike against a government which stubbornly refuses to engage in serious collective bargaining. Liberal Premier Christy Clark hopes to use the dispute to inflict further damage on the public education system, openly encouraging families to shift to private schools.

Speaking to People's Voice, Bouey explained why she has decided to run again for VSB trustee during this unprecedented attack against public education.

I believe in the enormous democratic potential of a well-funded public education system. Having served two terms on the Vancouver School Board, I take pride in past accomplishments, but there is much that we must achieve. The Liberals have

systematically and intentionally undermined public education. At the same time, they slashed taxes, giving \$2 billion in annual breaks for the rich and corporations. When I was first elected in 2002, Christy Clark had rammed through legislation that illegally ripped up contracts with teachers, and instituted a policy of "Choice". Teachers, students, education workers, parents, and some school boards effectively pushed back much of this Fraser Institute inspired agenda.

However, public confidence in the school system, teachers' morale, and the quality of education have suffered. The greatest victims have been students with challenges such as learning disabilities, English as an additional language, those living in poverty, and those who face racism, homophobia, and transphobia.

**What are the key issues facing the Vancouver school district?**

Among the critical issues for our schools, underfunding is number one. The VSB says that "since 2002-03, \$47 million in education services have been cut

in the Vancouver school district because provincial government funding increases have not kept pace with rising costs." This includes \$31.5 million in lost



Jane Bouey (left) and Gwen Giesbrecht will be on the ballot in Vancouver as School Trustee candidates of the Public Education Project.

staffing (including 524 entry level teachers) and \$15.5 million in cuts to educational supplies and services.

These cuts disproportionately impact students with special needs. The BC Teachers Federation calculates that the number of specialist teachers in special education dropped by 769 FTE from 2001 to 2012. This is why class size and composition must be fairly negotiated.

The massive cuts to maintenance budgets, and layoffs of CUPE, IUOE, and trades people, mean that despite the hard

work of district employees, our schools are not as clean and well-kept as they need to be. Seismic upgrading still lags behind the promises made by the province, putting students and staff at risk. The threat of school closures is ongoing. Layoffs mean increased workloads, and lower employee morale. Most important, students don't receive the quality of education they deserve.

Underfunding also pushes districts, administrators, and even individual teachers and parents to desperately seek more revenue. While COPE and Vision/COPE school boards have tried to reign in various fees that parents pay, the system is greatly subsidized by fundraising, and through donations by teachers. Districts compete to attract international and online students, and set up academies and mini-schools to compete with publicly-funded private schools.

There are growing pressures to look to corporate funding, P3s, contracting out, and selling of land. So far, in Vancouver, this neo-liberal agenda has been largely pushed back. The COPE school board of 2002-05 that I served on even "contracted-IN" cafeterias.

More than ever, it is essential to elect trustees who will not buckle to these pressures.

Declining enrollment is a serious issue in Vancouver, which has many private alternatives. The rising cost of housing pushes many families to the suburbs in search of affordable places to live. This raises the issue of a living wage, which I support.

There are other important issues, such as standardized testing, the new B.C. Ed Plan, the even newer B.C. Skills for Jobs Blueprint. Public education must be defended from moves that would lessen the role of critical thinking.

**How do you relate public education and equity issues?**

I am proud that the COPE and Vision/COPE boards to which I was elected took a leading role in advocating for public education. We did our best to keep cuts away from classrooms, to win more support for inner city students, to defend fair collective bargaining, to improve aboriginal education, and to work for safer, more welcoming schools for all students.

In 2002-2003 public hearings were held across the province, to develop the Charter for Public Education. The Charter stresses

## EDITORIALS

### It's about respect, not dollars

The federal Conservative government faces growing pressure to call a full public inquiry into the huge numbers of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls across Canada. After building for decades, this crisis is highly visible to the international community. UN Special Rapporteur James Anaya has made a wide range of recommendations on the situation faced by indigenous peoples in Canada, including for such an inquiry. This is the position of almost all Aboriginal organizations, the provincial premiers, the Opposition parties in Parliament, the labour movement, and many others.

Yet the Harper Tories, backed by a few corporate columnists and their legion of rabid social media trolls, stubbornly refuse. Over and over, they claim that an inquiry would be a waste of time and resources better spent on improving the lives of Aboriginal women.

But why can't a country as wealthy as Canada afford both? If the federal government can spend tens of billions on new fighter-bombers and a heavily armed fleet of ships, why can't it spare a tiny fraction of that amount on clean drinking water, decent housing, free education, and job creation for the poorest and most heavily oppressed people in Canada? Plus a few million dollars more to find out why Aboriginal women face such shocking risks of violence and murder?

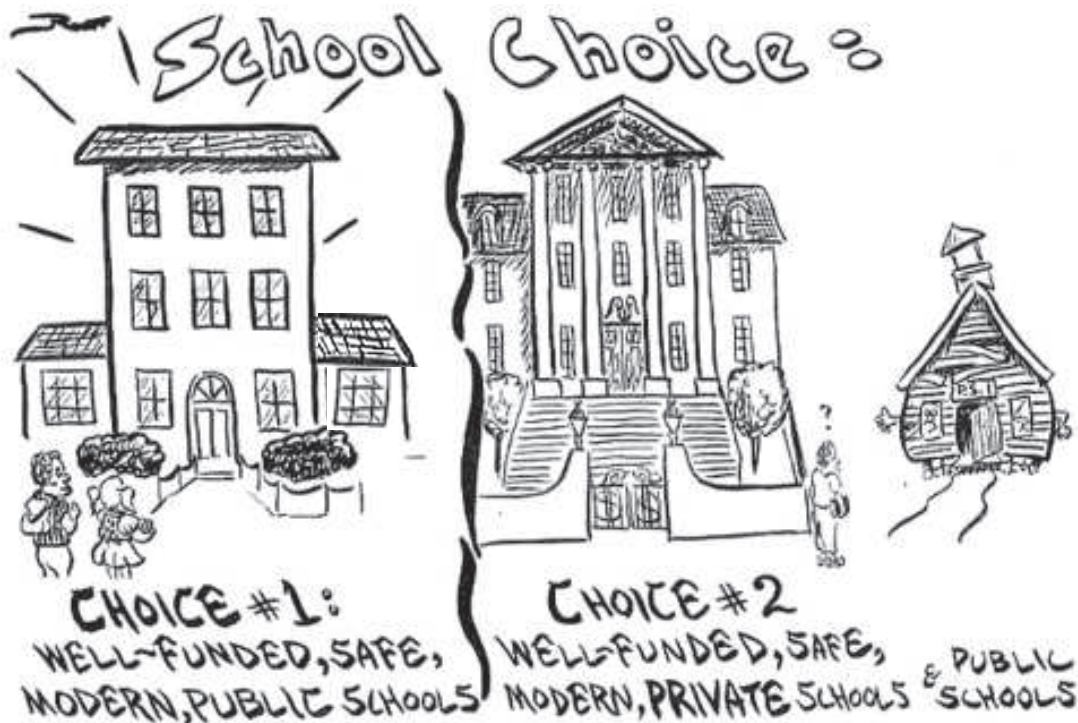
This is not about dollars, it's about respect. The government is obligated to take immediate action on this just demand, because it comes from the indigenous peoples of Turtle Island. Just once, Stephen Harper should shut his patronizing, patriarchal, racist mouth, call off his attack hounds, and simply do the right thing.

### Unite to defend public services

The Call to Action by the recent Peoples' Social Forum in Ottawa includes these words: "it is more necessary than ever to work together to counter the current federal Government and the dominant elites' savage attacks to our collective and individual rights, our jobs, our pensions, our public services, our environment, to immigrants, the poor, people of colour and, ultimately, to our future and that of future generations."

This Call is very timely. The new government of Quebec is launching a major austerity blitz, and working people are already resisting, including municipal workers in Montreal fighting to defend their hard-won pensions. On the west coast, Christy Clark's Liberal government is sabotaging the public education system with the aim of encouraging parents and students to switch to taxpayer-funded private schools, but parents, students and teachers are rallying together in huge numbers. In Ontario, newly re-elected Premier Wynne campaigned on a budget that promised an across-the-board public wage freeze, privatization of public services, and the sell-off of public assets. Wynne didn't talk much about her neoliberal agenda, allowing Tim Hudak's Tories to corner the market on far-right ideas, but the emerging labour/community coalition in Ontario has a big job to stop this assault. Everywhere, governments keep slashing taxes on the rich and the corporations, drying up revenue that could be used to improve and expand desperately needed public services.

The ideological poison behind this attack is the concept that as "consumers" we should pay as private individuals for health care, education, or pensions. That view is deliberately promoted to undermine decades of social gains achieved by working people in the wake of the Great Depression. Similar collective action is desperately needed today, to stop the right-wing steamroller, and to win the struggle for a better future. The fight to defend public services is a great place to start building a united, powerful resistance.



## People's Social Forum marks new stage for movements

By Darrell Rankin,  
Manitoba leader of the  
Communist Party of Canada

Canada's first Peoples' Social Forum marked a new stage in the renewal of Canada's labour and democratic movements. The forum was a challenge to our time of few victories, where strikes are few even for economic demands, where most people are not on the streets or organized.

It was a blow against the oppressive dread produced by inactivity. Close to 5,000 people attended the four-day forum which ended on August 24 in Ottawa.

Hundreds of people at the closing assembly approved a Call to Action with the aim of freeing society from "neoliberal capitalism, imperialism, patriarchy, colonialism, racism, heterosexism, and ... the domination of large companies on Peoples."

The forum was a movement of movements, a showcase of 500 workshops and assemblies for activists, and a snapshot of the state of the peoples' movements in Canada at a time of growing crises. Crucially important was the prominent participation and respect for the Aboriginal rights movements.

"Capitalism still continues to wreak havoc," said Hassan Hussein at the Take Back Labour assembly. Hussein's bid for CLC president last spring helped consolidate the growing involvement of unions in the political struggle.

From rank and file activists to newly-elected CLC president Hassan Yussuff and leaders of

CUPW, CSN and UNIFOR, labour's presence was prominent. The financial support of several CLC affiliates made the forum possible.

From the standpoint of resistance and renewal in heavy defensive struggles, dangers and setbacks, the forum represents an advance in some important areas, such as recognizing the need for movements of all nations in Canada to work together, to develop a peoples' agenda, and for organizing and action.

The closing assembly opened with the comment that "2015" was in the background of the entire forum - the need to defeat the Harper Conservatives and their agenda, "even for those who do not believe in electoral politics."

The Take Back Labour assembly report disclosed vast challenges: to democratize the labour movement, organize the unorganized and marginalized, develop a militant left agenda, become action-oriented, work with a broad range of groups and to decolonize the labour movement.

Also in the background was socialism with tables and newspapers promoting a range of left and Marxist views. The Young Communist League was well-represented, hosting two workshops against austerity and war.

It was a forum where you could ask labour economists like Jim Stanford or anyone else: "Is capitalism getting better or worse?" The answers - or absence thereof - showed that socialists are on the right track and it's time to brush up on Marxism.

As reflected in the Call to Action, the forum was not socialist in content. However, the Call contains demands that fundamentally challenge capitalism.

For people entering political life, the forum was an enriching experience, especially for those with instincts to attend the more crucial workshops. The best workshops were those where people had a chance to participate in the discussion, such as the democratic convergence assembly with small group discussions on topics such as developing a peoples' agenda.

The months ahead will see the development of various peoples' agendas. This can only be welcomed as the start of a more serious discussion about theory and tactics to realize these programs with the support of millions.

For those of us who believe in fundamental social change, this is a great opportunity to raise the discussion "how would such a new society differ from socialism?"

The next peoples' forum will be held in Montreal in 2016. By then, the discussion may allow one of the assemblies to be devoted to socialism, or socialism and the peoples' agenda. ●

**(For the text of the "Call to Action" from the Peoples' Social Forum see page 12)**

## 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.,  
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### LETTERS

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## Correction

In our previous issue, we printed a graphic about events during the "October Crisis" of 1970. The graphic states that the War Measures Act was imposed by Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau in response to the kidnapping of British diplomat James Cross and the killing of Quebec Labour Minister Pierre Laporte by the Front de Libération du Québec. In fact, Cross was kidnapped by the FLQ on October 5, 1970, and then Laporte on October 10. On October 16, the War Measures Act was declared, the Canadian military was deployed in Québec, and hundreds of people were arrested with no charges or bail, including many with no connection to the FLQ. Only after that declaration was Pierre Laporte killed. Police reports kept secret until 2010 indicate that his death came accidentally during a struggle with his abductors. James Cross was released by an FLQ cell on December 4, in exchange for free passage to Cuba for its members. Three other FLQ members were arrested on December 28 and later convicted for the killing of Laporte.

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# Jonquière Walmart ruling: a victory for workers' right to organize

*Central Executive Committee, Communist Party of Canada, Sept. 2, 2014*

A decade ago, Walmart workers in Jonquière, northern Québec, made international media headlines and won the attention of the labour movement around the world. In August 2004, the workers became among the first Walmarts to unionize in North America.

Winning a certified union was a small but significant advance against a notoriously vicious anti-labour mega corporation - and a breakthrough for organizing the unorganized in general. After a hard struggle, the workers joined Local 503 of the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW).

Walmart, however, refused to negotiate a collective agreement in good faith and after several months, the UFCW was forced to demand that an arbitrator settle the collective agreement. Just days after, Walmart announced it was closing the Jonquière store, throwing nearly 200 workers into unemployment and tearing up Québec labour law. There was immediate broad public outcry across Québec and the rest of Canada against Walmart's attack

on the workers democratic right to organize.

Now, after a protracted legal battle by the UFCW and great determination, tenacity and perseverance by the Jonquière workers who filed many complaints, court cases and appeals, the Supreme Court of Canada (SCC) has historically ruled largely in their favour with a 5-2 decision authored by Justice Louis LeBel. (The workers also beat out a former major multinational Canadian law firm, expert on labour law, where various former Prime Ministers like Trudeau and Chretien have worked).

The struggle to win the ruling shows how hard workers must fight just to win enforcement of the existing provincial labour code. While a victory, the workers have still lost their jobs. Nor is their fight for compensation completely over. Walmart will have to pay the union's legal fees, and an arbitrator will impose what LeBel very generally called an "appropriate remedy."

That notwithstanding, LeBel's ruling is positive and should be used to the maximum advantage by the labour movement.



Specifically, the SCC ruling agreed with the workers that Walmart shutting down their store was a drastic change in their "working conditions" - which is forbidden by s. 59 of Quebec's labour code while the collective agreement is being negotiated - and saw this action as a violation of the workers right to have negotiations in good faith, and their fundamental human rights including freedom of association. Further, the SCC ruling explicitly says that "The mechanism codified in s. 59 is by no means specific to Quebec, as it exists in all provinces

of Canada and at the federal level."

The SCC ruling therefore reinforces workers' legal right to organize, at a moment when existing labour law is under an unprecedented attack in Québec and federally by the Harper Conservative government (Air Canada, Canada Post, EI, etc.) It helps not only the Jonquière and Walmart workers but workers in general. If other corporations temporarily lay off employees, dismiss them, or close-up an entire shop after an organizing drive, they will most likely also be forced to pay. The SCC ruling may not

prevent shop closures during organizing and collective bargaining, as companies can still close a shop, but that cause must now be proven. Although big business has considerable time to demonstrate such just cause, this proof is the burden of the corporation not the union.

The Communist Party of Canada has always supported any strengthening of all workers' right to organize (including foreign workers, part-time, "on call," domestic, agricultural, contract workers, etc.) The Communist Party also opposes mass layoffs and shop closures, and demands they be prevented through legislation with teeth - including the employer giving two years notice and also public tribunals on any large shop closures, with the power to nationalize the shop.

Furthermore, the Communist Party has long proposed that a Bill of Rights for Labour be enshrined in a new Constitution, drafted by a constituent assembly of the peoples and nations of Canada, which should extend and protect the political rights of labour as well as the rights to collectively organize, to free collective bargaining, and to strike. ●

## Gaza's resilience and Bibi's false victory

*By Ramzy Baroud, UK Morning Star*

In the rush to analyse the outcome of Israel's 51-day war in Gaza some may have neglected an important factor: this was not a war by traditional definitions of warfare, thus the conventional analyses of victory and defeat are simply not applicable.

That being the case, how can we explain Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's triumphant statement on August 28 and the massive celebrations on the streets of Gaza regarding the resistance "victory" over Israel?

To be truly fathomed, they must be understood in context.

Soon after the ceasefire declaration on August 26, ending Israel's most destructive war on Gaza yet, Netanyahu seemed to have disappeared from the scene.

Some Israeli media began predicting the end of his political reign. Although this notion was a bit hasty, one can understand why. Much of the man's political career was predicated on his "anti-terror" stance and Israeli security agenda.

He served as prime minister from 1996 to 1999, with the decided aim of defeating the Oslo "peace process." He argued it compromised Israel's security.

Then as a finance minister in Ariel Sharon's government (2003-05), he was troubled by Sharon's intentions regarding withdrawal from Gaza. In fact, it was the Gaza "disengagement plan" that ended the Netanyahu-Sharon alliance.

It took Netanyahu a few years to fight his way back from the seeming oblivion in Israel's complicated political landscape. He fought a gruelling political battle, but managed to redeem only some of the right-wing Likud

party's past glory through fractious alliances. He served as prime minister from 2009-2013, and for a third term (a rarity in Israeli history) from 2013 to the present.

He succeeded not simply because he is a shrewd politician, but also because he managed to unite Israel around one goal - security. This he did by fighting "Palestinian terror," a reference to various Palestinian resistance groups, including Hamas, and building Israel's military. He had such command over that political discourse that no-one even came close - not the newcomer centrist politician Yair Lapid or even right-wing and far-right hawks Avigdor

post-ceasefire press conference is telling enough.

He seemed desperate and defensive, arguing that Hamas failed to achieve its war objective, although it was Israel, not Hamas, that instigated the war with a list of objectives - none of which were achieved anyway.

Hamas responded by mocking his statement as the group didn't start the war, nor had any demands then, a group official told Al Jazeera. The demands were made in the subsequent ceasefire talks in Egypt and some of them were in fact achieved.

Netanyahu is twisting language and stretching the truth in a

Wrong. Even the tactical victory was denied this time around, unlike previous wars, most notably the so-called Operation Cast Lead

**Other voices...**

(2008-09). The Gaza resistance must have learned from its past mistakes, managing to withstand a 51-day war with a destructive outcome unprecedented in all past Gaza conflicts.

Shortly after the ceasefire, hundreds of fighters representing all factions, Fatah included, stood at the ruins of the Shejaiya neighbourhood in Gaza city. "There is no room among us for that defeated, weak Arab," the military leader of the Gaza resistance Abu Ubaydah declared as throngs of people showered the fighters with kisses.

The victory of the resistance cannot be understood within the same context of Israel's own definition of victory, or false victory. What is clear is that the resistance "was able to establish deterrence, displaying an incredible level of resilience and strength, even when equipped with primitive weapons," as argued by Samah Sabawi.

The very idea that powerful Israel, and the likes of Netanyahu, can use Palestinians as a testing ground for weapons or to enhance approval ratings seems to be over. The "old wisdom" of Sharon that the Arabs and Palestinians "must be hit hard" and "must be beaten" as a precondition for calm or peace was challenged as never before in

the history of Arab-Israeli wars.

Gaza's ceasefire "celebrations" were not the kind of celebrations that would follow a football match win. To comprehend it as an expression of mere joy is a mistake and reflects a lack of understanding of Gaza society.

It was more of a collective statement by people who lost 2,143 lives, mostly civilians, and have over 11,000 wounded and maimed to care for. Let alone the total or partial destruction of 18,000 homes, 75 schools, many hospitals, mosques, and hundreds of factories and shops.

It was a message to Israel that the resistance has matured and that Israel's complete dominance over when wars start and how they end is over. Interestingly, "liberating Jerusalem" was in fact a dominant theme among jubilant Palestinians in Gaza. Another theme was the insistence of national unity among all Palestinians.

Resistance discourse, al-muqawama, is now the most dominant in Palestine and it goes beyond factional divides or the tired discussion about useless "peace talks" that garnered nothing for Palestinians but territorial loss, political division and much humiliation.

That sentiment is already reverberating in the West Bank. But how it will be translated in the future is yet to be seen considering the fact that the Palestinian Authority (PA) there is weak in its dealings with Israel and very intolerant of any political dissent.

After failing to end the Gaza resistance, Netanyahu is left with nothing other than putting pressure on PA President Mahmoud Abbas, 79, whose choice, after Gaza's war, means so little to begin with. ●



*Two Palestinian boys walk amid the rubble of destroyed homes in Shejaiya, Gaza, on August 27, 2014.*

Lieberman and Naftali Bennett.

But then Gaza happened - a war that could possibly become Netanyahu's biggest miscalculation and perhaps the reason for his downfall. Aside from the collapse in his approval ratings, down from 82 per cent on July 23 to less than 38 per cent shortly after the ceasefire announcement, the man's own language in his

desperate attempt to score a political victory, or to simply save face. But few are convinced.

Writing in Foreign Policy on July 20, Ariel Ilan Roth came to an early conclusion about the Gaza war, claiming two things were certain: "The first is that Israel will be able to claim a tactical victory. The second is that it will have suffered a strategic defeat."

# Labour must lead escalating fightback in solidarity with BC Teachers

**Statement by the Communist Party of BC, Sept. 3, 2014**

British Columbians are dismayed and increasingly angry that public schools across the province are closed as the 2014-15 academic year begins, with no end in sight to the labour dispute imposed on students and teachers by Christy Clark's Liberal government. The Communist Party of BC stands in solidarity with the BC Teachers' Federation in their courageous struggle for a fair collective agreement, the right to negotiate class size and composition, and a funding formula which reverses many years of cutbacks, layoffs and school closures across the province.

Over the summer, many remained hopeful that the government would eventually back down from its refusal to engage in real collective bargaining, and find a way to reach an agreement with the BC Teachers Federation by Labour Day. Now, it is clear to both critics and supporters that the Premier's long-range goal is to use this dispute in order to gut the public education system across the province and to smash the BCTF.

Premier Clark's determination to push this agenda has not changed since her first period as Education Minister under Gordon Campbell, when the Liberals illegally ripped up collective agreements, slashed funding for education and other vital programs, and launched a vitriolic propaganda campaign against teachers and other public sector workers. On two different occasions, the courts have ruled that the Liberals violated the

constitutional collective bargaining rights of teachers, and even that their actions were intended to provoke a strike and shut down the school system.

As the Communist Party of BC pointed out last spring, "The entire public health and education sector

rates by 50%, to build housing for all the homeless living in our streets, and to do much more to improve the lives of working people and the poor.

"The Liberals, similar to capitalist governments everywhere, support the wealthy and

of this dispute. This is a further big step towards a US-style voucher system, in which corporations extract huge private profits from public education. The Fraser Institute has advocated such policies for decades, and this fanatically pro-corporate think

The moment has arrived for the labour movement and its allies - all those who stand against the privatization of public assets and social programs - to take a decisive, powerful collective stand against this government and its far-right agenda. The resistance against this corporate-driven attack must move quickly towards escalating mobilization by both public and private sector unions, using a wide range of tactics including massive demonstrations, occupations, job actions, and labour/community strikes. Labour has everything to gain and little to lose by deciding to step up the fightback immediately, while public opinion is still largely on the side of the teachers. The alternatives - leaving the teachers alone on the picket line, or surrendering in faint hopes of an NDP victory in some future election - are simply a recipe for an historic defeat which would weaken the entire labour movement in British Columbia.

The moment has come for decisive action by the entire trade union movement and its community allies. Every possible form of pressure must be exerted now to force Premier Clark to enter genuine collective bargaining and to fund the public school system properly, so that all B.C. students can receive the high quality education they need and deserve. The Communist Party of BC urges the BC Federation of Labour to respond to this urgent crisis with an immediate solidarity summit meeting of all unions and community groups to begin building powerful, united fightback movement against the Liberal government's corporate agenda. ●



is under ruthless attack. In country after country, austerity policies have created higher unemployment and slashed the quality of public services, as part of a drive to shift the wealth produced by working people into the hands of transnational corporations and their wealthy shareholders. BC Liberal taxation cuts for the rich and the corporate sector have cost the public treasury over two billion dollars annually for the past twelve years, enough to reverse the underfunding of education and the health care system, to boost social assistance

the corporations, not the vast majority of working people. The goal of the BC Liberals is to create endless crises in the public education system, not to improve schools. They want to impose a form of unofficial privatization by forcing British Columbians to turn to profiteering private school operators to educate our children."

This analysis has been proven correct by developments over the summer, especially the government's decision to offer parents \$40 per day for each student under 13 for the duration

tank has enormous influence over the Liberal provincial government. The current dispute was deliberately engineered by the government to declare that this artificially-created crisis justifies a complete restructuring of the public school system. There should be no illusions - such an outcome would inevitably expand in the direction of wider austerity, privatization and contracting out across the entire public sector in British Columbia, with disastrous consequences for working people and our communities.

## BCTF calls for binding arbitration

On Sept. 5, the BC Teachers Federation called for binding arbitration in their labour dispute. While the Liberal provincial government has rejected this offer, BCTF members were voting on the proposal on Sept. 10, after this issue went to print.

We reprint here excerpts from a Sept. 5 news conference by BCTF President Jim Iker.

... Earlier this week, I outlined a simple, pragmatic, and practical way forward to ensure all parties involved reach a fair settlement so we can get schools open...

Throughout this dispute, BC teachers have led the way in trying to reach a fair deal that gives our students more support. We have made moves, proposed creative ideas, and taken job action only when absolutely necessary.

In return, the government has put up road blocks. Their focus has been on delay tactics, a \$40-a-day payout scheme, and attack ads on Twitter. I hope that all comes to an end today.

This week, the BCTF Executive Committee met with our provincial Bargaining Team and we are proposing another way forward to get students and teachers back in the classroom.

Today, we are not closing any doors, just opening a new one. Mediation with Vince Ready in our view is still a viable option.

However, BCPSEA [BC Public Schools Employers Association] and government made it clear last weekend that they were not ready or willing to get the job done. They did not respond in any meaningful way to any of the significant moves teachers made.

Today, we are putting forward another option for all of us - government and teachers to resolve this dispute and reach a fair settlement. The BCTF is calling on BCPSEA and the BC Liberal government to agree to binding arbitration.

If the BCPSEA agrees, the BCTF will quickly put the question to our membership for a province-wide vote to end the strike.

It is the fastest and most fair option that will see schools open and kids back in classrooms. Teachers want to be in the classrooms teaching. I think parents and students agree - and I hope government does as well.

For this option to work, the BCTF is proposing to send matters of compensation, benefits, and preparation time to binding arbitration.

We will also ask government to leave the matters currently before the court, and related to the court ruling, to the courts.

BC teachers remain 100% committed to improving the learning conditions of our students.

And, we will continue to stand up for our Charter rights. But we don't think arbitration is an appropriate avenue for matters before the courts.

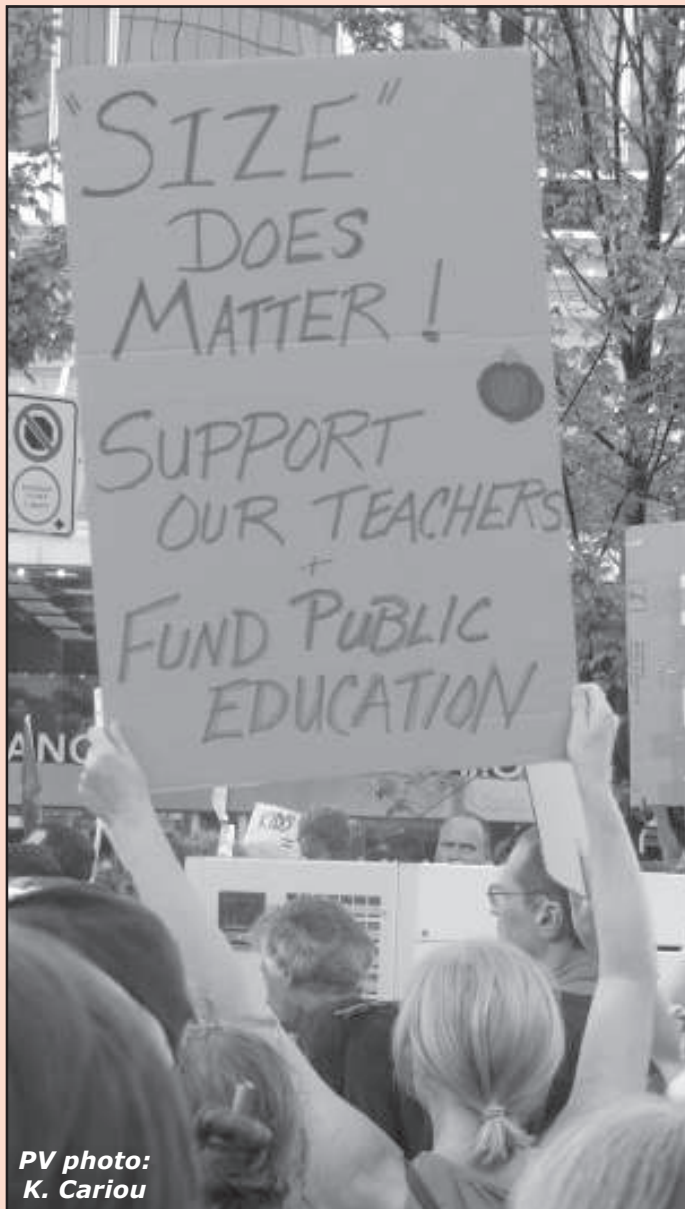
As you know, their attempt to bargain their way out of their two court losses has been the biggest obstacle to a settlement. They must drop E80 and negotiate a new fund that will provide meaningful improvements to students' learning conditions in the interim.

The government's current Learning Improvement Fund does not meet the needs of our students. It's just the same money they keep re-announcing. The status quo isn't good enough.

Everyone knows our schools are underfunded. We must take action now.

Two days ago Premier Clark called class composition her number one priority. Parents and teachers will hold her to that.

It's time to see more investment throughout the public education system to improve the learning conditions of all students - those with special needs, those learning English, those who just need some more one-on-one time - all children. Every one of our students deserves more than this government is giving them... ●



PV photo: K. Cariou

# Maduro announces "Five Big Revolutions" in Venezuela

With files from TeleSUR - venezuelanalysis.com

The government of Venezuela is stepping up its efforts to respond to the unrest which shook the country earlier this year, with a combination of structural changes and economic measures.

On Sept. 2, Venezuelan president Nicolas Maduro announced what he described as "five revolutions", as part of a need to "improve our service to the people."

Maduro said the revolutions would be a "a new way of functioning" for the government, and emphasized the need for a more "efficient" government.

The following five revolutions, he said, "should be united, and should define the government policies, giving power to the people, it will be the people who push government policy."

The first revolution that Maduro outlined is the economic revolution, promoting production, "in order to guarantee stability".

"All the efforts of the government should be concentrated on this, to make this revolution successful," he said.

The second revolution is the knowledge revolution, involve science, technology, and culture. "I call on all of Venezuela, on the youth, students, teachers, to be part of this revolution, to be part of the country's social development, its spiritual development, forming a new ethics for a new society," Maduro said.

The missions are the third revolution. Maduro emphasized their importance in "building socialism, creating the new society, where social rights and life are guaranteed."

The fourth revolution involves state policies and "creating a new state, one that's really democratic, one that's about justice, and



Demonstrators at a huge pro-government rally earlier this year in Venezuela.

rights." It aims to transform all governmental structures, and end with what "remains of the bourgeois state." Maduro emphasized the importance of the fight against corruption.

In this fourth revolution he also announced a range of new ministers and structures. Maduro announced a timeline for social movements to elect "popular presidential councils", including for communes, women, youth, culture, and workers. Elections will be held during September and October.

In terms of the new ministries, they will be restructured, with some combined, and many falling under "vice-presidencies". The vice-presidency of economy and finances, for example, will group together six ministries. Of these, the minister for petroleum will no longer be Rafael Ramirez, who becomes the foreign minister.

Maduro said the fifth revolution

was one of "territorial socialism". He explained that it was about consolidating the communal model, and creating a "new eco socialist model".

"It's not about environmentalism, its about ecosocialism, environmentalism isn't enough," Maduro stated.

Meanwhile, the "biometric system" now installed in 11 major supermarket chains nationwide to combat scarcity has produced immediate results. All supermarkets will have the system installed by Nov. 30.

"The eternal lines have grown shorter... and products that used to be considered 'a big find' are ever-increasing upon the shelves," read a recent headline in Zulia state's largest private newspaper, *Panorama*. The state's capital and Venezuela's second largest city, Maracaibo, has been the center of the government's pilot program since August.

The system is composed of

fingerprint scanners stationed at check-out counters, to track how much each individual buys, blocking customers from making over-large or over-frequent purchases. It comes in the latest wave of reforms to eradicate scarcity and speculation.

The measure will only be directed at 23 basic products, among them milk, flour, and beef, which are the most common objects of smuggling. If a customer is not purchasing one of these 23 items, they are not required to scan their fingerprint.

It is estimated that 40% of Venezuelan products are smuggled illegally out of the country to be sold for a profit. Internally, the system will avoid the schemes of street vendors, known as *buhoneros*, who hoard basic items to be re-sold for hugely inflated prices when they grow scarce.

In Maracaibo, supermarket owners report that since the system's installation, products

which used to be swept off the shelves in hours are lasting over four days.

In border areas, the biometric system will replace the previous slower method of taking down each customer's identification number. Smuggling mafias would easily steal people's ID numbers to bypass this previous system.

But not everyone is impressed. Caracas mayor and hardline opposition advocate Antonio Ledezma warned that the scanners were a sign of the further "Cubanization" of government policy. The opposition Democratic Unity Roundtable (MUD) upped the ante by declaring a campaign against the system, starting with a nationwide *cacerolazo* (public banging of pots and pans) in resistance to what MUD spokesman Cristobal Fernandez Dalo calls a "repressive" operation.

Vice-president Jorge Arreaza has asked that Venezuelans not be "manipulated" by the opposition, insisting that the system will not "restrict consumers... only help to identify those who speculate, steal, and profit from the food of our people."

Others say the system only skirts the surface of the real issues at hand. Caracas resident Alexis Yanes told reporters that he agreed with the new measures but, "it would be good if companies increased production and improved distribution as well. That [sector] is very impaired right now."

On the other side of the struggle against smuggling, the Venezuelan National Guard has been cracking down on the Colombian border since August 12th. Two weeks later, 148 people linked to smuggling had been arrested, and 641 tons of food, 413,854 liters of gasoline, and 301,440 medicines had been seized while being transported illegally out of the country. ●

# U.S. leads West in child homicides

The US leads Western nations in child homicide rates, while millions of children around the world are threatened with physical, sexual and emotional abuse, including murder, rape and bullying, a new UNICEF report reveals.

The report, entitled "Hidden in Plain Sight: A Statistical Analysis of Violence against Children", demonstrated that death by homicide is every much a threat for young people as it is for adults.

In 2012 alone, murders claimed the lives of about 95,000 children and adolescents aged 0 to 19 - almost one in five of all homicide victims that year.

Although most of the young homicide victims (around 85,000 or 90 percent) came from low- and middle-income countries, such as in Latin America and the Caribbean, the United States took the top spot among 34 Western democracies, with an average of four adolescent homicides per 100,000 people in 2012. (Incidentally, this is the same child homicide rate recorded for Iraq, which is suffering in the aftermath of the 2003 US military invasion).

The number one cause of death among males between the ages of 10 and 19 is homicide in several Central and South American countries including Panama, Venezuela, El Salvador, Brazil, and Guatemala, according to the report.

Meanwhile, Nigeria has the largest number of children's deaths, totalling 13,000 in 2012. Brazil was second with 11,000 deaths.

The United States ranked seventh in the world (behind Nigeria, Brazil, India, Congo, Mexico and Ethiopia) in global homicide figures among ages 0 to 19, with over 3,000 youth homicides recorded in 2012.

"If there is one common aspect of human society right now, it is the fact that tremendous violence is committed against children," Susan Bissell, chief of the child protection unit at UNICEF said in a press release.

The problem of children and adolescents joining gangs was also factored in as a reason for high violence and homicide rates among youth. In the United States, for example, 273,875 children (under age 18) were

believed to be involved in some 29,900 gangs in 2011.

The UNICEF report, compiled from 190 countries, also revealed that two-thirds of children worldwide between the ages of 2 and 14, which is almost 1 billion, are physically punished by their parents or caregivers, while more than one in three students between the ages of 13 and 15 worldwide face regular bullying in school.

"We're not talking about a little smack on the bottom," Bissell said. "We're talking about a blunt instrument, and repeated."

The violence "cuts across boundaries of age, geography, religion, ethnicity and income brackets," UNICEF Executive Director Anthony Lake said in a statement. "It occurs in places where children should be safe, their homes, schools and communities. Increasingly, it happens over the internet, and it's perpetrated by family members and teachers, neighbours and strangers and other children."

The report also devoted a section to sexual violence, revealing that around 120 million girls, or one in 10 worldwide, have been forced into a sexual

relationship.

Data from 40 low- and middle-income countries indicates that exposure to certain forms of sexual violence is not uncommon in the experience of many girls: The number of females aged 15 to 19 who have ever experienced some sort of unwanted sexual experience in



their lifetime varies widely, ranging from no reported experiences among adolescent girls in Kyrgyzstan to 22 percent among girls in Cameroon.

Among adolescent girls who have been subjected to sexual violence, the most likely

perpetrator was an intimate partner or a relative, the report stated.

However, it is not only low-income countries that are susceptible to such acts of violence. The UNICEF report pointed to the Optimus Study carried out in Switzerland in 2009, which collected information from adolescent boys and girls (aged 15 to 17) on their experiences.

In terms of sexual victimization a much higher proportion of adolescent girls (22 percent) said they experienced at least one incident in their lifetime than adolescent boys (8 percent). The report mentioned online interactions as a source of the victimization among youth.

The conclusion of the UNICEF report was that the footprint left by violence against children has increased in the past decade.

"Violence begets violence. We know a child experiencing abuse is more likely to see violence as normal, even acceptable and more likely to perpetuate violence against his or her own children in the future," Lake said.

<http://rt.com/news/185256-us-unicef-children-homicide/> ●



# GLOBAL CLASS STRUGGLE

## Ebola kills 120 health workers

Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) has impacted highly on health care workers across the West African region. According to a report from the World Health Organisation, more than 240 health care workers have been infected with 120 of them dead.

Since the outbreak of the virus, 2,615 persons have been infected out of which about 2,000 have died.

Speaking at a training workshop and launch of the WHO interim infection prevention and control guidance for healthcare workers, National President of the Medical and Health Workers Union of Nigeria, Dr. Ayuba Wabba, said health workers are particularly vulnerable. He added that with the way Ebola virus is evolving, there was need for extra care on the part of health care providers.

He said, "while all health workers are at risk and should safeguard against infection, some are more at risk due to the higher probability of coming in contact with patients who might be infected with Ebola virus. These include all our members working in the following departments: medical laboratory, health information, community health, laundry, nursing care, clinical services, and environmental health. There is every need for extra care to be taken by these cadre of health-care workers... The WHO guidance booklet will be of immense value for this, which is why we are making copies available to all state councils and branches of the union. Access to this must be available to all our members."

The meeting stressed that since the disease has no cure, the emphasis should be on prevention.

## VW spied on Brazilian workers

At the height of union unrest in Brazil in the 1980s, nearly 20 companies fed information to the country's brutal military dictatorship to quash the worker uprising, and Volkswagen played a crucial role.

Documents uncovered by Reuters show that the company spied on union leaders and activists, helping the military and police identify and attempt to suppress workers. Among them was Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, who later became the country's president.

Papers from VW marked "confidential" were unearthed as part of President Dilma Rousseff's "truth commission", which is investigating abuses by the government and industry leaders from the 60s through the 80s. VW supplied intelligence on everything from union meetings to strike demands, going so far as to take down license plate numbers of the vehicles present at union events.

And Volkswagen went even further, according to Reuters. The company reported the showing of a socialist-themed film at a union headquarters; the contents of flyers distributed outside its factory doors

and the names of those distributing them; and an incident in which "several addicted workers were caught smoking marijuana."

Such information was typically used by police to monitor, harass and detain union activists in the hope of discouraging future unrest, said Sebastiao Neto, a member of the National Truth Commission. He cited testimony the group has gathered from workers who met with such treatment.

Volkswagen and other companies involved in the spying could face civil lawsuits and even reparations if they contributed to human rights violations.



## Abolish Ministry of Privatisation!

Representatives of the major trade union organisations of Pakistan have urged the government to scrape its privatisation plan for key state institutions and abolish the federal Ministry of Privatisation.

In a resolution passed at a joint meeting convened on Sept. 6 in Karachi, the labour leaders deplored the past experience of privatisation calling the process disappointing and damaging to the country and overall economy. The meeting decided to form a committee against privatisation, and to organize mass protests around the issue.

Millions of workers lost their jobs and earning sources and the country was deprived of valuable revenue earned from these institutions. The only tool of the workers to get their rights if bargaining rights, which was snatched after the privatisation.

The trade union movement received a great set up because of the past process of privatisation as mostly the new private owners removed the members of the unions and started fresh recruitment on contract basis.

We do not see any benefit to the economy from the privatisation of the mostly profit-earning institutions, except for a few whose performance can be improved through good governance, they added.

The past government of General Pervaiz Musharraf privatised the profit earning Pakistan Telecommunication Corporation Limited (PTCL).

The meeting warned that if the government did not stop the process of the privatisation, the trade union movement would start an agitation campaign against the process. Participants included representatives of the Karachi Port Trust Labour Union, Skyways

Union PIA, All Pakistan Trade Unions Organisation, Sindh Labour Federation, Home-based Workers Movement, Mazdoor Mahaz Amal, Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum, and others.

## Energy workers vs. privatization

Workers and trade union leaders staged a demonstration on Sept. 5 to oppose plans to privatize Taiwan's state-run petroleum company. CPC Co, a state-owned petroleum, natural gas, and gasoline company, is the core of the Taiwanese petrochemicals industry.

The protest rally took place outside an industry forum held in Taiwan to promote the experiences of selling off state-owned energy companies in neighbouring Asian nations such as Malaysia and South Korea's Korea.

Brandishing placards and shouting slogans, representatives from the CPC Co. workers' union disrupted the proceedings. Union Secretary-General Chuang Chueh-an stated that CPC Co. employees are staunchly against plans to privatize the company, which they compared to shooting an arrow before a target has been drawn.

Chuang stated that the union is especially vexed by the event, which was aimed at privatizing CPC Co. under the guise of a discussion on sharing the experience of Asian state-run energy companies. He emphasized that if CPC Co. is privatized, the nation's fuel prices would be exposed to the influence of volatility in international markets. The interests of employees would be harmed by inevitable cuts in wages and benefits following the privatization process, he added.

CPC Co. has recorded losses this year, but Chuang urged governing bodies to conduct a debate to decide the fate of the company. He also urged petrochemical experts to lead the company should the government insist on carrying out its privatization plans. CPC Co. blames its losses on government policies stating that the company must sell fuel at subsidized rates.

## UK unions step up fightback

The squeeze on public sector pay, the prospect of more public sector strikes and attacks on unions were at the top of the agenda for over 500 delegates from more than 50 British unions at a four-day event in Liverpool, held by the Trades Union Congress (TUC).

A TUC poll has found that a majority of workers have seen their pay fall behind inflation in recent years. Commissioned for the conference, the poll found half the work force think their employer could afford better pay rises than staff have been given.

"We've seen the economy recovering, prices going up, profit margins going up," said TUC general secretary Frances O'Grady. "The only thing that isn't going up is people's wages and people feel pretty determined that now is the time that Britain needs

that pay rise."

O'Grady said that workers were not sharing in the benefits of the economic recovery, and predicted both industrial action and protests would take place in future months.

The UK minimum wage for workers over 21 is set to rise to 6.50 pounds next month, the first real-term cash increase since 2008. But O'Grady urged Chancellor George Osborne to commit to the TUC's call for fresh increases in the minimum wage, and for employers to begin paying the "living wage", pegged to actual living costs in specific areas.

Unions representing about six million members across the public and private sectors debated issues including jobs, the economy, public services and TTIP - the planned EU/US trade deal. A series of motions called for unions to step up campaigns for better pay including taking co-ordinated industrial action.

Following a one-day strike in July, public sector unions are planning further action in October, according to Dave Prentis, general secretary of one of the largest trade unions, Unison.

"In the week starting October 13 we will be taking action, not only in local government but also in the health service and other public services," he said.

Local government workers are expected to strike on October 14. Health workers are also likely to take industrial action that week as hundreds of thousands of NHS staff are currently being balloted. Unions say that 60% of NHS staff were denied a pay award this year.

The TUC is also organising a march and rally in London on October 18 on the issue of pay.

The conference also highlighted the Conservative Party's plans to

curb industrial action with higher thresholds in strike ballots. O'Grady describe the plan as a "fundamental attack on human rights that takes the UK towards the kind of regimes seen in undemocratic authoritarian states".

## U.S. labour urged to back wealth tax

With the wealth gap in the United States greater already than in any other major country, U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders has called for a progressive estate tax on multi-millionaires and billionaires.

"A nation will not survive morally or economically when so few have so much while so many have so little. We need a tax system which asks the billionaire class to pay its fair share of taxes and which reduces the obscene degree of wealth inequality in America," Sanders said in a Sept. 6 speech at the Vermont AFL-CIO annual convention.

The growing wealth gap in the U.S. is worse now than at any time since 1928, the year before the Great Depression began. The top 1 percent of Americans own more wealth than the bottom 90 percent. The richest 400 Americans have amassed more than \$2 trillion in wealth, a sum greater than all of the assets of the bottom 150 million Americans combined. One family, the Waltons of Walmart fame, owns more wealth than the bottom 40 percent of Americans.

More Americans live in poverty today than at any time in history. Half of all Americans have less than \$10,000 in savings. The U.S. has the highest rate of childhood poverty - 22 percent - than any other major country.

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

## Join the Communist Party of Canada



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

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# Scotland's referendum: the Communist view

**A long-awaited referendum on whether Scotland should become an independent country will be held on September 18. The following statement on this issue was adopted in March 2014 by the Scottish Committee of the Communist Party of Britain.**

The Scottish Committee of the CPB defends the right of nations to self-determination and condemns the Coalition government for its threats of non-cooperation.

If a majority of the Scottish people vote for independence in the 2014 referendum, then their decision should be respected. Our commitment to the right to self-determination is one of principle. At the same time, the Communist Party maintains its other principle of judging the exercise of that right in terms of the class interests of the Scottish people and of those of working people in Britain and internationally.

On this basis, Communists do not believe independence on the terms proposed is in the interests of working people today any more than it was in the 1970s. At that time Communists and the Left in the trade union led the way in the fight for a Scottish parliament with powers to intervene in the economy, to develop public ownership and increase labour's power over capital - powers that would in turn strengthen the bargaining power of working people across Britain.

It is our conviction that

independence as proposed in the White Paper would weaken such bargaining power and strengthen that of big business and of its state machine at both British and Scottish level. Membership of the sterling area would subordinate Scotland to current neo-liberal policies without any power to change them - at the same time as seriously eroding the opportunity for united working class action across the nations of Britain to do so.

Worse still, membership of the EU would oblige Scotland to incorporate in any written constitution the terms of the 2012 Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance. This Treaty requires even tougher controls on government spending than the Stability and Growth Pact - with the same objective: using unemployment as the market regulator to curb the trade union movement.

While it is conceivable that some of the most reactionary aspects of the White Paper, such as NATO membership and reducing Corporation Tax, might be reversed as a result of subsequent political mobilisation by the Left, we judge it to be extremely unlikely that there would be a reversal of positions on Sterling and EU membership.

The transition to independence will take place at a time of diminishing oil revenues and unfavourable economic circumstances - allowing any Scottish government, and the big business controlled media, to call for fiscal "stability" in face of



Scottish First Minister Alex Salmond and Deputy First Minister Nicola Sturgeon walk past a sign showing the date for the Scottish independence referendum

adverse market reactions. Left-wing supporters of independence need to think through the consequences. The socialist Left does not possess anything like mass support in Scotland today.

Election results show this. The inevitably rancorous negotiations over the division of resources will harden nationalist attitudes. Yet these years, 2015-2017, will be precisely when the terms of the new written Scottish Constitution will be determined and the SNP's White Paper demonstrates a clear intent to do so on the terms set by big business and Scotland's own finance capital sector.

This is why Communists oppose this White Paper on Independence. Instead we continue to call for radical federalism as the best way of developing class cohesion across the nations of Britain: national parliaments with powers

of economic intervention, ownership and control and a federal parliament with overall powers over economic policy and a constitutional obligation to redistribute in terms of social need.

We believe that this provides the best framework for uniting working people on class terms against the state power of big

business. Currently that power is concentrated at British level and represents above all the interests of the City of London.

Under a "White Paper" Scottish Constitution, big business will continue to exercise this power through its disproportionate ownership of the Scottish economy and the binding requirements of its instruments, the Bank of England and the EU Treaties.

A No vote in the referendum has to be made the springboard for remobilising the working class movement at British level to demand real constitutional change.

The fight for radical federalism, as outlined in Red Paper, must begin now. At the same time the fight for the objectives of the People's Charter and the People's Assembly, backed by the united trade union movement in England, Scotland and Wales, must be stepped up. Radical Federalism will only be won on the basis of class mobilisation across the nations of Britain. •

## School privatisation gains momentum in UK

An influential British Tory think tank, the "Centre for Social Justice" (CSJ), has set out a sweeping blueprint for more schools privatisation, in a new report claiming to be about "closing the divide" in education.

The CSJ, founded by social

security axeman Iain Duncan Smith, hired a host of advisers including representatives from leading "academy school" privateers to draw up new policy brainwaves.

Its hit list included a push for more charities to get involved in running "free schools", a payment-by-results "national improvement programme" to encourage academy chains to take over schools in "disadvantaged" areas, and extra powers for new regional schools commissioners to privatise local management.

Critics have long warned against the risks of emphasising "good" and "bad" schooling, which creates a system where some sites are set up to fail.

The UK government boasts that 250 free schools have opened since 2010. Any "suitable sponsor" can apply for approval to open a free school, including businesses, academy chains, parents, teachers, other schools, universities and faith groups. Private schools can also apply to convert to free school status to access state funding. Free schools do not need local authority support, and many have been approved to open in areas with surplus places.

"Free Schools" can set their own pay and conditions for staff; employ teachers without qualified teacher status; determine their own admissions policy and curriculum; and set the length of terms and school days.

"Academy schools" are directly funded by the Department for Education, and operate as non-profit charitable trusts. Many receive financial support from personal or corporate sponsors, often with no experience in the education sector. One is Sir Peter Vardy, the Evangelical Christian car dealer, whose Emmanuel Schools Foundation promotes the teaching of creationism. The

see UK Schools, page 11

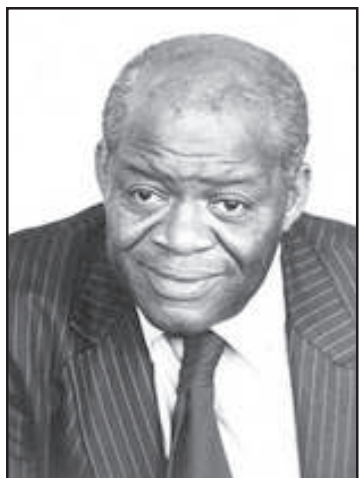
## President Obama, let the heroes go!

By James Thompson, <http://houstoncommunistparty.com/>

President John F. Kennedy wrote a landmark book called *Profiles in Courage*. He studied the lives of a number of political leaders in the United States who stood up to negative forces and did the right thing even though it may not have been in their best political interest.

President Obama is reportedly an admirer of John F. Kennedy. President Obama is also a recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize.

It is puzzling to many why the president has not responded to the mass movement demanding the release of the Cuban 5 (a.k.a. Miami 5). The mass movement is very large and is international in scope. Many high-ranking celebrities and political leaders



Henry Winston, a prominent leader of the Communist Party USA, spent seven years in US jails as a political prisoner.



Three of the "Cuban Five" heroes - Gerardo Hernandez, Ramon Labanino and Antonio Guerrero (1st, 2nd and 5th from left) remain imprisoned in the US.

both in the United States and around the world have united with a single demand - "Free the 5!"

The Cuban 5 are five heroes who came to the United States to gather information on right wing terrorists located in Miami who were plotting violence against Cuba. Indeed, they carried out many attacks on this sovereign nation and killed many people and destroyed much property. The Cuban 5 were successful in gathering crucial information which they supplied to the Cuban government so that they could prevent these violent attacks. These courageous men fought international terrorists toe to toe and saved many innocent lives.

On September 12, 1998, the Cuban 5 were arrested. They received a trial which many maintain was unfair and they received astronomical sentences compared with others convicted of similar charges. One of the 5 completed his sentence in 2011 and was released and returned to Cuba. Another completed his

sentence and returned to Cuba in 2014. Three remain in prison and have been there since 1998.

A US government operative, Alan Gross, was apprehended by the Cuban authorities for attempting to incite Cubans to overthrow their government. He has been languishing in prison for many years now and has been ignored by the Obama administration. The Cubans appear eager to make a swap of the three remaining Cuban 5 for Alan Gross. However, the effort of the Cubans has fallen on deaf ears.

President John F. Kennedy was faced with a similar situation when he took office. A high-ranking leader of the Communist Party of the United States of America (CPUSA), Henry Winston, had been apprehended during the McCarthy era and was imprisoned for a number of years before Kennedy took office. There was an international outcry at this injustice and there were demands to release Mr. Winston. On June 21, 1961, President Kennedy granted Winston executive clemency and

he was released. This was at the height of the Cold War and there was great reactionary pressure to leave Mr. Winston in prison in spite of his serious medical problems. President Kennedy demonstrated his courage and fairness in reversing this injustice even though it was not in his best political interest.

The 16th anniversary of the arrest of the Cuban 5 would be an excellent time for President Obama to demonstrate to the world that he has the courage that President Kennedy had by releasing the 5 and arranging for a swap for Alan Gross. The world could then see that President Obama is a Nobel Peace Prize winner not only in name but also in action. He could follow this courageous act by working with Congress to end the blockade of Cuba and lift travel restrictions so that US citizens could travel freely to one of our country's closest neighbors. President Obama campaigned for office on themes of "Change" and "Progress." Mr. Obama, show us some Change and Progress! •



# A study of energy, art and human society

**Art and Energy: How Culture Changes**, by Barry Lord, AAM Press 265 pp. Review by Wally Brooker

Barry Lord's new book *Art and Energy: How Culture Changes* is about the influence of changing sources of energy on aesthetic culture, as well as the influence of aesthetic culture on the pace of adapting new energy sources. While sources of energy from earlier eras are still necessarily with us (firewood, coal, wind, etc.), there is always, he says, a cutting edge source of new energy that transforms the social-economic environment and the resulting cultural values.

Commenting on the Greek poet Hesiod's description of Zeus' rage after learning that Prometheus had given fire to human beings, Lord writes, "such a god's-eye view of the fires of many communities gives us a glimpse of the prehistoric and ancient world's primary cultural centre, the hearth". Fire allowed humans to gather together in the evening to tell stories, invent songs and dances, and reinforce their values. The use of tallow lamps enabled the astonishing cave paintings found in Africa, Spain and Southern France, painted by artists some 30 millenia ago.

The kiln was a further application of fire, fostering the craft of pottery. Later came the forge, which introduced bronze and iron, transforming the weapons of war and the tools of agriculture, and harnessing animals for domestic use. In a vivid passage, Lord contrasts the tamed animals depicted on the walls of Egyptian tombs with the energetic animals of prehistoric cave artists.

## Co-operation & Slavery

Lord asserts that co-operation in the workforce is also a source of energy, with the earliest co-operation being the division of labour between women and men. Once the advantage of co-operation was understood, collective identity followed, and the acknowledgment of individual leaders. Large-scale collective labour made it necessary to store and distribute surpluses over a wide area, making armed guards



*Fire Hearth 790,000 BC by Giovanni Caselli*

necessary, as well as taxes, marketplaces, and writing.

Slavery became a vital source of energy in the ancient world. Total control of agricultural labour gave economic and military advantages to slave society elites. This mode of production made standing armies possible, as well as a leisure class that engaged in philosophy and literature, and invested its surplus in ambitious works of architecture, and monuments that served to proclaim and maintain its dominance. Slave artisans were disciplined to provide exquisite pieces of jewelry, furniture, bronze, ceramics and glass.

## Wind Power

In the period of European civilization known as the "Renaissance" cultural change was powered by technological developments in sailing. New methods of rigging made it possible to harness wind energy to explore the globe and exploit other peoples and resources. Human energy was organized for the exchange of surplus, an activity that required the invention of an abstraction: the international exchange rate.

Lengthy trading expeditions were risky and expensive affairs (as Shakespeare dramatized in *The Merchant of Venice*). To spread the risk, joint stock companies were formed, followed soon after by stock exchanges. The age of sail coincided with the growth of competition between merchant empires. Artists began to celebrate

heroic individuals and wealthy patrons, rather than religious themes. A new individualism emerged in the arts with the rise of genres like portraiture (Rembrandt), and the novel (Cervantes, Defoe).

## Coal: The Culture of Production

The decline of the age of sail was precipitated by an energy crisis in Europe. By the 18th century, many countries were experiencing deforestation. The solution to the crisis was found in the "underground forest". Coal emerged as the cutting edge energy. It reorganized workplaces and concentrated a growing population into cities. Coal stoked the industrial revolution, fuelling steam engines, cotton mills, and railroads. It made overnight postal service and daily newspapers possible, and global mass markets for cultural works, like the phenomenally popular novels of Dickens and Hugo.

Some artists, like the poet Baudelaire, responded to the new mass culture by embracing alienation. Others, like the painter Van Gogh, gave a new dignity to industrial and agricultural labourers. More radical new ways of seeing were pioneered by Turner and the impressionist painters, with their interpretations of the steam and smoke of the industrial environment.

## Electric Transformations

In Lord's scheme of energy transitions, electricity is an anomaly. It is an application, rather than a source of energy. Electricity brought about qualitative change. The culture of production was transformed by power grids and circuits. Electrical appliances changed the nature of housework and the role of women, and the phonograph, cinema, and radio transformed social and cultural awareness.

During the age of coal the industrial proletariat became aware of itself as a class and launched its epic struggle for workers rights. However, it is arguably the coming of electricity in the late 19th century that inspired mass socialist and communist parties and the world's first socialist revolution. Lenin famously said that "communism will be the Soviets plus electricity." But while working class

organizations grew rapidly in this era, artists too, felt that they could change the world.

Electricity inspired international modernism, a movement for the transformation of art and society that included the architecture and design of the Russian constructivists, the Bauhaus school, the cubism of Picasso, the epic theatre of Brecht, the abstract music of Schoenberg, surrealism and the anti-art of Dada, the revolutionary muralists of Mexico, and the cinema of Chaplin. It was an age that favoured innovation over imitation.

## Oil & Gas: Culture of Consumption

Since 1900, the internal combustion engine has driven an era of oil and gas, transforming landscapes into highways and parking lots, and leaving behind an ever-increasing carbon footprint for subsequent generations. Ford's offer of a Model T on easy credit to his workers dramatically enabled consumer culture. In the mid-20th century, working-class solidarity countered consumerism, but neoliberalism, symbolized by Thatcherism in the 80's, partly succeeded in replacing the social identity of unions with that of the individual consumer. Contemporary governments continue to promise high consumption levels, whatever the cost.

Post-modern philosophy corresponds to consumer culture, as opposed to class identity, in that it offers a "marketplace of ideas," and eschews "grand narratives". Artistic disciplines are characterized by a smorgasbord of alternative styles and meanings. Artists themselves are encouraged to develop their art as a brand. Ubiquitous corporate sponsorship imposes brands on cultural institutions and festivals. Large-scale international art fairs like the Venice Biennale confirm the culture of consumption and the growing wealth and power of the top-tenth of art dealers and auction houses.

## Nuclear Energy: The Culture of Anxiety

Nuclear power was the first energy source to arrive as a weapon. The bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (as well as the application of industrial methods by Nazi Germany to exterminate Jews, Roma and other peoples) caused many artists and intellectuals to re-evaluate their ideas about the nature of humanity.

Borrowing from a popular 1947 poem by W.H. Auden, Lord characterizes this phenomenon as "the culture of anxiety." The mood was expressed after the war by absurdist writers like Camus, Ionesco and Beckett, and filmmakers like Resnais and Antonioni.

In recent decades, new causes of anxiety have emerged with fear of nuclear meltdowns and global warming. Fears actively fomented by governments in the metropolitan centres of capitalism include growing anxiety about "security" and "austerity". Lord provides examples of the efforts of several contemporary multimedia artists to warn of the corrosive effects of this culture of anxiety.


Some contemporary artists, reacting to the wasteful and environmentally destructive culture of consumption, are reflecting a "culture of scarcity." They advocate impoverished art, made from discarded or low-cost materials. But, says Lord, this "frightens the haves and discourages the have-nots." He names his vision of the emerging sustainable world "the culture of stewardship". Its key values are storage, access, and sustainability.

Lord rightly celebrates electronic archives (libraries and museums) as creative cultural and media centres, but his description of digital data as "congealed energy" calls for fuller explanation. When he writes approvingly of new museums designed by architects with sustainability in mind (living green roofs, geothermal wells), and art galleries that offer immersive experiences, one might well ask, who is this for? Where are the visions of sustainability for the 99%?

While he argues that digitization has weakened the collective identities that formerly supported transformative causes, he nevertheless concludes on an optimistic note, predicting that the time will come when the culture of consumption will be a distant memory. But we can't build a sustainable future on hope alone. Where is the human agency to bring about these changes?

These criticisms aside, *Art and Energy* is thought-provoking and highly readable book.

Barry Lord and his partner Gail Dexter Lord are international museum consultants. Together they've published a series of widely-used manuals for museums, as well as an important contribution to cultural theory: *Artists, Patrons, and the Public: Why Culture Changes* (2010). •



## La Trova Nuestra

**Friday, Sept. 26, 8 pm**

### "La Peña Nuestra"

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

**About Vancouver's "La Trova Nuestra"**

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



## Public Education slate in Vancouver....

continued from page 3

that "as a community we promise to prepare learners for a socially responsible life in a free and democratic society, to participate in a world which each generation will shape and build. We promise a public education system which provides learners with knowledge and wisdom, protects and nurtures their natural joy of learning, encourages them to become persons of character, strength and integrity, infuses them with hope and with spirit, and guides them to resolute and thoughtful action."

The Charter emphasizes strong local democratic governance, and equitable access to programs, resources, experiences and opportunities for learners, regardless of geographic location or socio-economic status.

I participated in this process, and our COPE board of 2002-05 endorsed the Charter.

This position reflects my personal history of involvement in the struggle for equity. I was on the executive of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, and had been active in the areas of anti-poverty, LGBTQ Rights, needs of students with developmental disabilities, and anti-racism.

The VSB's work in combatting discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression has been outstanding and comprehensive. I played a key role in the formation and adoption of an LGBTQ policy and action plan back in 2004. Between terms on the Board, I became active in the national education committee of Egale, and I was a member of the VSB Pride Advisory Committee. In 2008-11, again a trustee, I worked with other members of the Pride Advisory to develop the first drafts of the revised policy adopted by the Board last June. I helped to build the coalition of support for that revised policy.

There is a strong correlation between equity concerns and underfunding. Equity policies require funds for in-service training and professional development, for counsellors and teachers who have time to meet the individual needs of students.

Programs such as Junior Kindergarten - which was cut in Vancouver - make a huge difference in the struggle for equity.

Initiatives such as the Inner City and Community Link-funded programs (hot lunches, additional targeted staffing) face constant downward funding pressures.

Vancouver did have an excellent Adult Education program for those who struggled to complete their schooling. That program is now a shell of what it was prior to provincial policy changes and resulting cuts.

In our diverse city, the majority live in a household for whom English is an additional language, yet the District struggles to maintain adequate ESL learning. This too is a funding and provincial policy issue.

Teachers and support workers do amazing work to build inclusive schools, with diminishing resources. But there are still huge barriers for students with special needs, those who live in poverty, for whom English is a second language, who are Aboriginal, who experience racism, homophobia and transphobia. The Board must focus resources disproportionately in these areas, in order to achieve equitable outcomes.

*How should school trustees respond to the provincial austerity agenda?*

After more than a decade of underfunding, I believe that school districts should just say "no" to more devastating cuts. This was seriously considered by the Boards that I served on. We were told by parents and unions that we needed to stay in office and fight the province, and do the best we could with what we had. But how can School districts make the case that these cuts are untenable, if we keep making them and continue to operate? Doesn't this make us susceptible to the province's accusation that we just "cry wolf"? I cannot justify voting for another compliance budget that fails to meet the learning needs of our students. Instead, the VSB must join with parents, students, unions and the community to build strong coalitions in support of public education.

If elected, these principles will guide my work as a trustee, in close cooperation with students, teachers, support staff, parents, and all supporters of public education across British Columbia. ●

### "Vote Larry Wasslen for Ottawa City Council"

Labour activist Larry Wasslen has announced his campaign for Ottawa City Council, in the Kitchissippi ward.

"This election is about the a clear position in favour of strong public services delivered by municipal public service workers with secure jobs, union wages, benefits, and pensions," says Wasslen. "It's time to draw a line in the concrete and say we will not accept the austerity agenda. Fair wages, no contracting out, no P3s. This is our city and we demand better! On October 27 put a working class voice back on city council!"

For more information, look for "Vote Larry Wasslen for Ottawa City Council" on Facebook.

### UK schools privatization...

continued from page 9

majority of academies are sponsored either by religious groups, or groups and individuals with a religious affiliation. The academies scheme has been widely criticized for allowing schools to choose pupils, not parents and students to choose schools.

The UK National Union of Teachers opposes giving state funding to small groups of individuals who are unaccountable to local communities. The NUT says that free schools undermine

teachers' professional status and their pay and conditions, and the ability of local authorities to plan and manage schools. "Free schools", says the union, fuel social segregation, and receive a disproportionate share of capital and revenue funding at a time when education budgets are being cut.

Even the CSJ report's pro-privatisation authors, which include figures from academy chains Ark, Leaf and Lead as well as Deutsche Bank, acknowledge that free schools are opening in poorer areas but sucking up the wealthiest and most academically gifted children.

The NUT says that any claim that greater private-sector involvement would address differences in pupils' grades was missing the point. It warns that there is no evidence that academies, free schools and faith schools have been effective in tackling disadvantages in education.

"Education inequality will not be ended until the wider problem of child poverty is eradicated," says NUT deputy general secretary Kevin Courtney. "Britain has a growing gap between the wealthiest and least well off families - a shameful fact that the government should address as a matter of urgency if it is serious about improving educational outcomes for children from poor families." ●  
(www.morningstaronline.uk)

## What's Left

Vancouver, BC

**People's Climate March**, Sunday, Sept. 21, 1 pm, CBC Plaza (W. Georgia & Hamilton), in solidarity with rally at UN Climate Conference in New York.

**La Trova Nuestra**, evening of Latin American music, admission \$10, 8 pm, Sept. 26, Centre for Socialist Education, 706 Clark Drive.

**Left Film Night**, "NATO's Secret Armies" (2009 documentary), 7 pm, Sunday, Sept. 28, Centre for Socialist Education, 706 Clark Drive. Ph. 604-255-2041 for details.

**Celebrate 70th Anniversary of the Guatemalan Revolution**, Sat., October 18, 7 pm-midnight, Centre for Socialist Education, 706 Clark Dr. Donation \$10, music with DJ Carlitos Tun Tun, delicious Guatemalan food. Organized by Otto Rene Castillo Club CPC.

Winnipeg, MB

**7th Annual Anarchist Bookfair and Canzine DIY Fest**, weekend of Oct. 24-26, at the University of Winnipeg ("The Hive" in Lockhart Hall, and Bulman Centre). For info and to reserve tables, <http://wpgbookfairdiyfest.com/>

Toronto, ON

**15 years: too long, too wrong!** Demonstration to demand release of the Cuban Five, Friday, Sept. 12, 5:30-6:30 pm, outside U.S. Consulate, University Ave. and Armoury St. Sponsored by Friends of the Cuban Five-Toronto.

Montreal, QC

**Grand Union Coalition March** for free collective bargaining: negotiations, not confrontation! Sat., Sept. 20, gather 11 am at Parc Lafontaine (near Metro Sherbrooke), march 12 noon to Premier Couillard's office. Organized by CSN, FTQ and other union groups.

**Public services and programs under attack!** Halloween demo against Liberal austerity carnage, Friday, October 31, 11 am, gather at McGill College Ave. and Sherbrooke (near Metro McGill).



### People's Voice deadlines

October 1-15 issue: Thursday, Sept. 18

October 16-30 issue: Thursday, October 2

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

### NATO Summit means intensified aggressiveness, warns WFTU

By George Mavrikos, General Secretary of the World Federation of Trade Unions, [www.wftucentral.org](http://www.wftucentral.org)

The NATO Summit which took place in Wales, 4-5 September, marks the intensification of the aggressiveness of this imperialist political and military coalition. Its capacity to act and militarily intervene in every corner of the planet will be further enhanced. In every corner where the interests of the monopolies from the USA and the European Union are at stake, and where the strong competition between them with other forces impacts the distribution of the capitalist plundering, NATO will be there against the people.

Not by accident, the special subject of this Summit was the strengthening of NATO's presence in Europe on the occasion of the bloody developments in Ukraine and the climaxing confrontation with Russia.

This is why the imperialists are trying to bridge their inter-imperialist contradictions, and draft the further empowerment of NATO wolf pack and its bases in Europe, in cooperation with the European Union, seeking to face Russia from a more powerful position. The plans for the increased military expenses of NATO, the so called "Missile Defense System", the increase of the so-called "flexible military forces" and the greater attachment of Ukraine to the NATO strategy, will all facilitate this objective in the name of "European Safety".

The increase of military expenses will be paid by the workers with new taxes and salary reductions.

These developments bring serious dangers of military conflicts but also the risk of a generalized ignition ... (to protect) profits and the strategic plans of the European and American monopolies.

The support offered by NATO to the illegitimate Government of Kiev, which is being supported by the fascist forces for the continuation of the bloodshed in East Ukraine, confirms the need for all of us to fight for the dissolution of NATO now.

We call all the working people of the five continents to strengthen their struggle against the participation of their countries in the NATO military plans, that have brought so many sufferings to the international working class and the popular strata of all the countries, and to demand to end now the murderous attacks of the Government of Ukraine against the Russian-speaking population of the country. ●



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

# People's Social Forum issues "Call to Action"

*The Peoples Social Forum drew thousands of activists to Ottawa from August 21-24, taking part in rallies, workshops, assemblies, and networking. The gathering concluded with the adoption of a "Call to Action" at a final convergence assembly. While the Call may be amended to include recommendations from thematic assemblies held earlier, it represents an important advance towards unity of progressive movements across Canada. This includes significant support from the labour movements (Canadian Labour Congress, la Confederation des syndicats nationaux-CSN, la Federation des travailleurs et travailleuses du Quebec-FTQ), Idle No More, Defenders of the Land and other groups to continue meeting for strategic planning. Here is the text of the Call to Action:*

We participated in the Peoples' Social Forum because it is urgent to stop the attacks on democracy, and to free our societies of neoliberal capitalism, imperialism, patriarchy, colonialism, racism, heterosexism, and of the domination of large companies on Peoples. The Peoples' Social Forum process has allowed us to intensify a convergence of an unheard diversity between our movements.

The unified and unprecedented social movement that we build is more necessary than ever to work together to counter the current federal Government and the dominant elites' savage attacks to our collective and individual rights, our jobs, our pensions, our public services, our environment, to immigrants, the poor, people of color and, ultimately, to our future and that of future generations.

We do not want a State that supports the Canadian mining companies here and abroad. A State that tramples the rights of the Palestinian people by supporting the Israeli regime's Apartheid, in spite of the numerous international resolutions. We do not want a State that oppresses the First Peoples. We do not want a State increasing militarization and criminalizing dissent.

During this social forum, we have shared the sprouts of a new vision of society, based on social and environmental justice, self-determination of Indigenous Peoples, human rights, democracy, equality between individuals and between Peoples, the inclusion of all generations, solidarity, and a new economic paradigm serving

people, not the opposite.

We want a society that fights against the disparities between the rich and the poor, men and women, whites and people of color. We want to defend and widen our public services and social programs to respect social, economic and cultural rights.

We know the importance of promoting, loudly and clearly, a different model of society. It is not only a question of opposing the Conservatives, our movement must go beyond this electoral deadline because it is also a question of regaining control over our collective future.

However, in the short run, we must propel the social movements' current convergence towards an active, non-partisan role and lead a combative campaign against the Conservatives. As long as the Conservatives impose their idea of society, we will not be able to protect our rights and the environment, and we will not be able to carry out an open debate on what would be a society fair, viable and respectful of its Peoples'.

We commit ourselves to maintain dynamic and durable ties throughout the structures that the Peoples' Social Forum bequeaths us (caucuses, regional commissions, networks created for workshops and convergence assemblies). The fire within us as we leave this meeting must live on!

The systems of oppression and domination are closely intertwined and that is why it is necessary to fight them all. Each of the attacks against one of our movements is thus an attack

against us all and weakens the movement in general. We are responsible for fighting the oppression within our movements, and for showing solidarity to people at the margins of our struggles. We are also responsible for working together to express our solidarity to all of the other Peoples of the Earth. We must recognize in our movements the reality of the Canadian colonialism that

differentiates, within the movement, the First Peoples.

This forum has given us hope in our capacity to surpass our limits and to, together, overcome. We are politically united and shall be active in every corner of the territory where we are present. We call for demonstrations throughout the country, actions, and concerted reactions from various movements to conservative attacks. We must counteract in a creative and

massive way. They must understand that we will not leave them to their own devices without reacting. They must feel the weight of our convergence!

We must show that another vision for our society is not only possible, but necessary. The PSF's conclusions are a collective responsibility. This urgent call for social movements to converge is embodied in action. The solutions belong to us, organizations and individuals. The change we wish to see is our responsibility. The scale of this change depends on our involvement!

Our call is wide and is addressed to all the population and the other movements. It is a call to work together to beat the Conservatives. A call to work together to defeat conservatism and neo-liberalism. A call to rebuild a healthy democracy and to think of another system, not based on oppression and exploitation, but on an economy valuing life and the well-being of people and the earth. ●



## Bhagat Singh's relative denounces ongoing repression in India

By Gurpreet Singh, Surrey, BC

A visiting relative of the towering Indian revolutionary Bhagat Singh has denounced ongoing repression in different parts of the world's largest democracy.

Harbhajan Singh Dhatt's brother was murdered by the Punjab Police in 1989. He says that state repression goes on in his home country with the patronage of the corrupt political leadership,



Harbhajan Singh Dhatt

which does not want to address real problems and often uses the power of the gun to silence voices of dissent.

Bhagat Singh was in the forefront of the armed revolution that was launched to liberate India from British rule. He was hanged for waging war against the Empire in 1931. Before his hanging, Bhagat Singh said the struggle for social justice and equality would go on even after India gained official independence. He predicted that class struggle will continue in post-independent India if power was vested in the hands of the rich and influential.

On a recent private visit in Greater Vancouver, Dhatt said that these observations have proven to be correct in the light of continuous exploitation of the poor and underprivileged in India.

Dhatt notes that the disparity between the rich and the poor has grown over the years, with the Indian establishment giving concessions to big businesses and corporate houses and doing nothing to eradicate poverty. He believes that these problems have contributed to the political insurgencies, such as Maoism. "Instead of going into the roots of the socio-economic problems, the political leadership is increasingly using police force as a tool to muzzle any voice of opposition," he says.

Dhatt warns that the political leadership also relies heavily on armed vigilante groups to instill fear in the minds of public. To prove his point, he showed pictures

of some armed gangsters posing fearlessly before cameras on social media. He claimed that despite complaints to the police about such illegal activities, no action has been initiated: "Instead of going after such elements, the police threaten those who fight for social justice."

His younger brother Kuljit Singh Dhatt was kidnapped and murdered by the police. Early this year, the courts convicted three former police officers for conspiracy and murder. In all, five officers were involved, but two of them have died. One of the deceased officers, Ajit Singh Sandhu, committed suicide in 1997 following a series of litigations for his involvement in human rights abuse.

As a village headman, Kuljit Singh Dhatt consistently opposed police high handedness when the Sikh militancy was at its peak. Although he had no affiliation with any Sikh militant group, the police detained him and tried to implicate him in a murder case.

"The police were obviously annoyed with him as he stood in their way. They wanted to teach him a lesson. Thus they entangled him in a motivated case," Harbhajan Singh Dhatt says.

According to him, Kuljit died after being subjected to electric shocks. Later the police concocted a story about his escape from custody. Following the intervention of the Supreme Court of India, a commission of inquiry was constituted, finally leading to the conviction of three former cops after 25 years. ●

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