

SEPT.
16-30,
2010

VOL. 18
#15

\$1.50

people's VOICE

**F-35s or homes
and clean water?**

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

Fighting the public sector wage freeze in Ontario

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Labour Day in Toronto - thousands march for union rights and public services. (Photo by Ed Bil)



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Civic campaigns

A look at two progressive candidates in local elections: Bonnie Devine, running for mayor of Calgary, and education activist Julian Holland, candidate for school trustee in Hamilton.

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Palestine solidarity

Supporters of the Palestinian people push back against the drive to isolate and criminalize criticism of the apartheid policies of Israel.

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Close in Venezuela

The National Assembly elections in Venezuela on Sept. 26 are expected to be a close race. That country's Communist Party outlines their electoral tactic and support for the Bolivarian Revolution.

"People Before Profit!" candidate for Calgary mayor

Running on a "people before profit" platform, prominent anti-racist activist Bonnie Devine is one of more than a dozen candidates in the race for mayor of Calgary. The election takes place on Monday, October 18.

A full-time worker and member of her union executive, Devine has previously been a Communist Party candidate in provincial elections.

Devine's platform is geared to the needs of working people and low-income Calgarians - in other words, the large majority of the population of this southern Alberta city.

She calls for reduction of all public transit fares by 50% for one year, followed by elimination of all public transit fares. As Devine stresses, "public transit, as a



Bonnie Devine

necessity for people to travel to work, shop, etc. should be a right." She also wants an immediate return to free transit parking at C-Train stations.

Creation of more low-income housing is among Devine's priorities. "Homelessness is not a

crime. The lack of affordable housing is," she says. "This should be the focus of capital projects in Calgary, not un-needed and expensive bridges or tunnels."

She also advocates establishing a percentage for subsidized housing in new housing projects, setting a portion of the City Budget for a new low-mortgage housing construction program, and greater funding, transparency, and public input into the running of the Calgary Housing Company.

Devine calls for greater funding for public and post-secondary education, and elimination of all public school fees. "Education, as a duty and right, should not penalize those with less," she says, calling for action to increase the number of teachers in the city's schools.

She would also fight for more investment in the number of nurses and doctors in Calgary, where lack of staff is a major obstacle to improving health care delivery.

Among Devine's other platform policies are greater funding for Calgary's food banks, rent controls and more rights for renters, an end to union busting and undercutting (especially via outsourcing), ending privatization, equality for temporary foreign workers, and improved access to childcare.

Reflecting her leadership in the struggle against organized racist groups in Alberta, she calls for greater leadership from City Hall in the fight against racism, homophobia, prejudice, and bigotry.

She urges reduction of property

taxes on homeowners, and an end to special property tax exemptions for corporations.

As Mayor, Devine would take a pay cut. She argues that "the role of Mayor is no more important than the people who take away the trash, fight fires, pack our groceries, stock our shelves, or pump our gas. All these roles together, and more, make Calgary what it is. With this view in mind a pay reduction of 50% is necessary, because you cannot represent people unless you understand their conditions of their lives. These funds can be better allocated to serve the Calgary Food Bank, as food should be a basic right."

For more information, visit <http://bonniedevine.com>, or email info@BonnieDevine.com. ●

Holland in race for Hamilton school trustee

"Too many students fall between the cracks while others don't reach their full potential because of inadequate funding and short-sighted decisions," says Julian Holland, candidate for Ward 4 in Hamilton's public school board election. "It's time to focus on students' needs, and ensure the programs, staff and supports are there for every student to succeed."

With a strong background in community and social justice movements, Holland has a PhD from Hamilton's McMaster University, and is an educator at Mohawk College and McMaster. He is a literacy volunteer, and the father of a son in French Immersion and a pre-school age daughter. He is a former Chief Steward of Sessional Faculty, CUPE 3906 (McMaster University), and a director of Solidarity House in Hamilton.

In his campaign, Julian Holland is fighting for a new needs-based funding formula to cover the real costs of public education in Hamilton and across Ontario. He wants to freeze school closings, and begin genuine consultations with the community, including plans to open schools for community use on weekends and evenings.

Holland wants to expand early learning programs, and favours smaller classes in every grade, with more teachers and support staff for excellence and equity for all, as well as strong, well-funded Special Education programs.

Regarding curriculum improvements, Holland advocates more Canadian history, arts, music, and expanded phys ed programs.

He urges a focus on critical thinking, and the elimination of standardized testing.

Holland's platform includes measures for safe and healthy schools, and more funding for Adult Education and English as a Second Language (ESL) programs.

He calls for removing education from the property tax, and for a single, universal and quality public school system open to all. He opposes racism and discrimination of all kinds, and corporate intrusions in schools.

According to Ajamu Nangwaya, former V.P. of CUPE Ontario, "Julian is a longstanding and principled advocate for equity, social justice and accessibility for all in public education. He is the ideal person to serve as Trustee in Ward 4."

One of the parents and community volunteers who supports Holland's campaign for trustee, Unal Bahar, says "Julian understands diverse communities. He is someone who listens and will advocate for all our children."

"Julian is a staunch defender of accessible, quality education and workers," says social activist Mary Ellen Campbell. "He will bring a refreshing perspective needed to ensure that children have access to quality public education and programs."

Civic elections take place on Oct. 25 across Ontario. To contact Julian Holland's campaign, email electholland@gmail.com, check the web at <http://electholland.blogspot.com>, or phone 905-522-8811. ●

Canada abstains on UN water rights resolution

Council of Canadians/
CALM

The United Nations General Assembly has overwhelmingly agreed to a resolution declaring the human right to "safe and clean drinking water and sanitation." The resolution had 122 countries vote in its favour, while 41 countries - including Canada - abstained.

Nearly two billion people live in water-stressed areas of the world and three billion have no running water within a kilometre of their homes. Every eight seconds, a child dies of water-borne disease - deaths that would be easily prevented with access to clean, safe water.

Maude Barlow, the Council of Canadians' national chair and former senior advisor on water to the United Nations, said she was thrilled with the outcome of the vote.

"It was a great honour to be present as the UN General Assembly took this historic step

forward in the struggle for a just world," Barlow said.

The result does not mean Canada will have to share its water with other countries.

"Canada, whether it voted for or against it, is not on the hook for sharing its actual water," explained Barlow. "The resolution is very clear in that it doesn't touch the sovereign right of Canada or any other country over its water."

While the resolution is a solid victory for water justice for people around the world, the battle is not

entirely won. The victory has to be followed up with actions to ensure that the rights to water and sanitation are implemented. Governments, aid agencies and the UN must take their responsibilities seriously.

Although Canada abstained from the critical vote, Meera Karunanathan of the Council of Canadians, said it does not mean our country can sit idly by.

"It is crucial now that communities in Canada use this opportunity to hold our government accountable to the international commitment to recognize water and sanitation as human rights. We must demand legislation at home to ensure that these rights are enjoyed by all peoples of Canada without discrimination."

"It is time for Canada to do something about the deplorable condition on First Nations reserves that have lacked access to safe drinking water and adequate sanitation for generations. ●



Child care produces tremendous economic benefits, says study

NUPGE/CALM

Every parent who's able to go to work because of child care knows its worth. Parents who see their child thrive in a care setting have nothing but praise for the providers.

Public spending on child care in Canada, including federal contributions, is low compared with other countries. We spend less than one per cent of GDP on early

childhood education services. The U.S. spends double. Nordic countries spend six to seven times as much of their GDP on child care.

A 2009 report from economist Robert Fairholm identified shortcomings in B.C.'s child care system, including an inability to meet demands for service and a shortage of child care workers. Fairholm found that every dollar the government invests in child care has the

potential to return \$2.54 in long-term net benefits.

Research conducted at the University of British Columbia looked at the connection between social achievement and long-term economic growth. It found B.C.'s high rate of children who are not ready to learn when they start school will cause the province to forgo 20 per cent in GDP growth during the next 60 years.

The research argues greater investment in early learning will help the economy in a variety of ways, including productivity gains arising out of more mothers working, being absent less often because of consistent and dependable child care and reduced health, child welfare and justice system costs.

Everyone-not just parents-profits from quality child care. It promotes healthy child development and enables parents to work and pay taxes. Child care builds communities, creates jobs and supports the economy. ●



\$3500 raised at PV Walk-A-Thon

Despite one of the few rainy days in the Lower Mainland this summer, People's Voice supporters gathered in Surrey's Bear Creek Park on August 22 for the paper's annual Walk-A-Thon. Organized by the Lower Fraser Club CPC, the event raised \$3,500, bringing the British Columbia part of the PV Fund Drive close to completion. Members of the Abbotsford Club pledged another \$500 at the Walk-A-Thon, which drew over 50 participants. The successful event means that just over 94% of the 2010 People's Voice Fund Drive target of \$50,000 has been turned in, with less than \$3000 needed to meet the overall total. Ontario, Saskatchewan, Quebec and Newfoundland have achieved their targets, with small amounts left to raise in British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, and the Maritimes. (Photo: members of the Lower Fraser and Abbotsford Clubs announcing results of the Walk-A-Thon) ●

Israel lobby suffers first major setback

By Tim McCaskell, Toronto

Pride Toronto, once known as Lesbian and Gay Pride, is now one of the city's major summer festivals, bringing in millions of dollars of revenue. It has therefore become an odd sort of beast, one foot planted in a community's history of marginalization and struggle, and the other in the world of corporate and municipal marketing.

This contradiction was thrown into relief at Pride 2010, when the festival emerged as a site in the ongoing struggle around the right of Canadians to criticize Israel's illegal occupation of Palestine and the apartheid policies used to maintain its control.

Queers Against Israeli Apartheid (QuAIA) has marched in the Pride parade since 2008. In 2009 its participation was targeted by the Israel lobby, fronted by B'Nai Brith, which tried to pressure Pride Toronto to exclude the group. Unfortunately for B'Nai Brith, the association of its Executive Director, Bernie Farber, with right wing homophobes meant that it had little credibility. Despite harassment from the Jewish Defense League, QuAIA marched without incident.

Over the past year, however, the Israel lobby waged an intense campaign behind the scenes with city councillors and bureaucrats, using a crudely defamatory video equating QuAIA with neo Nazis and anti-Semites. The claim was that QuAIA's presence violated Toronto's anti-discrimination policy. The goal was to convince city hall to defund the festival unless Pride Toronto agreed to act as political censor. The effectiveness of this campaign was reflected in the capitulation of openly gay city councillor Kyle Ray, who had unequivocally supported QuAIA's right to march in 2009, but led the charge calling on Pride Toronto to ban the group in 2010.

As a result of this pressure, on May 21 the Pride Toronto board narrowly passed a resolution banning QuAIA from the parade, citing threats to city and sponsor funding.

The response from the queer community was swift. A group called Pride Coalition for Free Speech (PCFS) was formed and hundreds packed a raucous meeting at the 519 Church Street Community Centre to denounce the banning. Nominees turned down their appointments as Grand



Palestine solidarity activists were also on the streets of Vancouver this summer, including these participants at the Pride Parade on August 1 (PV photo: K. Cariou)

Marshal and Honoured Dyke. Twenty-two former Pride honourees returned their awards in protest. The local community media, *Xtra*, gave pride of place to the protests. QuAIA announced its intention to challenge the ban and march anyway.

Scarcely a week before the festival, a group of senior community leaders brokered a deal. The ban was lifted, and the decision as to whether QuAIA's participation violated any city policy was bounced back to the city. The Israel lobby and right

wing city councillors howled, but city funding had already been delivered, and a motion to rescind it failed. Despite JDL harassment, a group of nearly 300 jubilant marchers joined the QuAIA contingent, just behind an even larger number representing the PCFS.

Several trade unions joined the PCFS marchers, notably CAW, CUPE, and the OFL, reflecting a welcome trend in the labour movement to stand up against the Israel lobby.

This was the first major defeat

for the Israel lobby's campaign to silence criticism of the new apartheid state. In collusion with the Harper government, this lobby had managed to exclude opposition voices from testifying before a Parliamentary committee seeking to define any criticism of Israel as anti-Semitism and contrary to Canadian hate laws. The Canadian Arab Federation and the Ecumenical group KAIROS were defunded because they spoke out against the assault on Gaza. Because it had funded some small Palestinian projects, the director of the federal human rights agency, Rights and Democracy, was harassed until he died of a heart attack. A sitting British MP, George Galloway, was prevented from entering Canada, because he was to speak on Palestine.

The struggle against the Israeli occupation has become inextricably linked to the democratic struggle to defend freedom of speech in the face of attacks by the Harper government. In attempting to muzzle queers at Pride, the Israel lobby ran afoul of years of anti-censorship activism in the queer community. Canadians of all sexual orientations can learn from this example. ●

Pickers protest Israeli ship in Vancouver

Gordon Murray, *Boycott Israeli Apartheid Campaign*

On August 24 at 6:30 am, 50 Palestinian solidarity and trade union activists held an information picket outside Deltaport to inform ILWU local 500 dockworkers and truck drivers about the growing international movement to disrupt Israeli shipping until Israel complies with international law. The response was overwhelmingly positive, with many stopping to listen or discuss the issue. One driver said he'd already told his dispatcher that he didn't want to carry Israeli cargo.

The Deltaport picket was prompted by the arrival that morning of Israel's largest cargo ship, the *Zim Djibouti* with 10,000 containers. Zim is the 10th largest shipping company in the world and is owned by Israel Corp., the country's largest private holding company. ZIM connects Israel to the world and so is a key target in the global movement of Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions. This movement aims to put increasing economic pressure on corporations, Israeli or multinational, that profit from the oppression and dispossession of the Palestinians.

The campaign to boycott Israeli shipping started in February 2009, when South African dockers refused to unload a cargo ship after Israel's assault on the Gaza Strip killed more than 1400 Palestinians, including at least 450 women and children. According to Judge Goldstone's report to the UN, Israel committed war crimes in Gaza "to punish, humiliate and terrorize a civilian population."

Israel has also enforced a brutal

siege on the Gaza Strip for more than three years. With the help of Western imperialist governments including Canada, this siege intentionally denies basic medicine, foods, fuel and reconstruction supplies to 1.5 million civilians, 53% of them children.

Last May 31, the civilian Freedom Flotilla - bearing 10,000 tons of humanitarian aid for the besieged Gaza Strip - was illegally boarded and attacked in international waters by Israeli commandos who killed nine civilians on the *Mavi Marmara*, and wounded more than 50.

Following the attack on the Flotilla, Palestinian civil society, including 15 trade union organisations, called on dockworkers around the world to "refuse to load/off-load Israeli ships and airplanes". They cited the inspiration of "brave and principled actions of dockworkers unions who refused to handle South African cargo" during the Apartheid era.

Dockworkers in the USA,

Sweden, Turkey, India and South Africa have already responded with actions disrupting Israeli shipping to show "Solidarity to the Palestinians. Solidarity to the working class around the world," according to Clarence Thomas, of the ILWU Local 10 Executive in Oakland.

Locally, the Vancouver District Labour Council has passed a resolution endorsing "Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions against Israel in support of ... the total lifting of the illegal blockade of Gaza".

As with the campaign against apartheid, the global Boycott Divestment Sanctions movement has trade unionists at the forefront, including CUPW in Canada and UNITE, the largest public sector union in the UK. These workers are proving that "international solidarity" and "an injury to one is an injury to all" are not just empty slogans but are essential to our daily lives and the struggle to end injustice and uphold universal human rights. ●



Pickers were confronted by local police forces as they spoke to drivers at the Deltaport terminal on August 24. (Photo: K. Cariou)

Canadian Boat to Gaza campaign

Plans are well underway for a cross-Canada campaign to raise funds to purchase a boat to take part in the next "freedom flotilla" to Gaza.

A mission statement from the campaign says that "Canadian civil society has a responsibility to fight the illegal Israeli blockade of Gaza and to expose the Canadian government's unjustified support for Israel. The time has come to send a Canadian boat to challenge the blockade of Gaza, in coordination with similar international efforts. We need to raise \$300,000 (cost of boat and crew, not including aid to carry to Gaza) over the course of the coming couple of months. We need to approach Canadian public figures to be on the boat.

"The blockade of Gaza goes two ways, it restricts bringing materials into Gaza and it does not allow anything to leave Gaza either. This, in addition to starving the population, denies the Palestinians of Gaza the ability to trade with the world, further suffocating them. The Canadian boat, working with the Palestinians in Gaza, will aim to carry exports out of Gaza. Thus asserting their right to export, trade and provide for themselves rather than be at the mercy of international aid."

For more information, visit <http://canadaboatgaza.org> on the Web.

A call to stand with Indigenous women

A statement from Sisters in Spirit 2010

On Oct. 4, the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) and its partners KAIROS, Amnesty International, the Canadian Federation of Students, and the National Association of Friendship Centres will host the fifth annual Sisters in Spirit vigil on Parliament Hill in Ottawa. They will join First Nations, Métis, and Inuit women and their supporters at vigils in communities across Canada to honour their missing and murdered sisters, daughters, mothers, grandmothers, and friends.

Vigils and gatherings will also take place on the weekend before October 4 and throughout the year in locations across the country. Last year, thousands of people attended 72 vigils as part of this movement for social change. Together we call for immediate action to end violence against Indigenous women and girls.

Indigenous women in all parts of Canada face shockingly high rates of violence. According to NWAC's research, more than 580 Aboriginal women and girls have gone missing or been murdered in Canada, most of them in the past two decades. Nearly half of murder cases involving Aboriginal women and girls remain unsolved; by contrast, as of 2005 84% of all homicide cases in Canada were cleared by police. While these numbers are startling, statistics cannot convey the profound impact that violence against women and girls has had, and continues to have, on Indigenous communities already traumatized by centuries of colonization and cultural assimilation. NWAC, through the Sisters in Spirit project, provides crucial research and support for all those affected by violence against Indigenous women...

To find out more about Sisters in Spirit, or to help organize a vigil in your community, please contact NWAC through their website at www.nwac.ca/programs/sis-vigils or by phoning 1-800-461-4043. ●

EDITORIALS

Jobless rate rising

After months of cheery news items about the "recovery," harsh reality is beginning to take hold. Just as the hard-won but short-lived extensions to EI benefits run out, the jobless rate is on the way up again in Canada, and even more ominously, across the border.

Statistics Canada reports that the latest official unemployment rate was 8.1%, up from 8.0% a month earlier. The total number of unemployed Canadians is 1,510,900, up from 1,493,100. For youth aged 15-24, the jobless rate jumped from 14.1% to 14.6%. Of course, hundreds of thousands of "discouraged" workers who have simply dropped out of the official labour force are not even counted. The real jobless total is likely over two million.

StatsCan says the report is even weaker than the headline numbers suggest. The jobs number should carry a caveat, since 68,000 contract educational workers who were reported as out-of-work in July were re-hired in August. Discounting the seasonal variation in the education sector would give an even more dismal picture. Adding to the misery, part-time employment is usually higher during the summer months.

These figures, along with recent indicators from the U.S. economy, confirm that the "double-dip" back into recession, predicted by many economists, is in fact unfolding. How deep, and how protracted the recession will be remains to be seen.

The ruling class "solution" is more tax breaks for the rich and the corporations, and less stimulus spending. These neoliberal policies helped deepen the economic crisis which broke out in the fall of 2008, and which continues across the capitalist world to this day. No, this is a time to step up the fight for People's Recovery policies, based on creating jobs and providing important services to working people.

Who says we can't afford it?

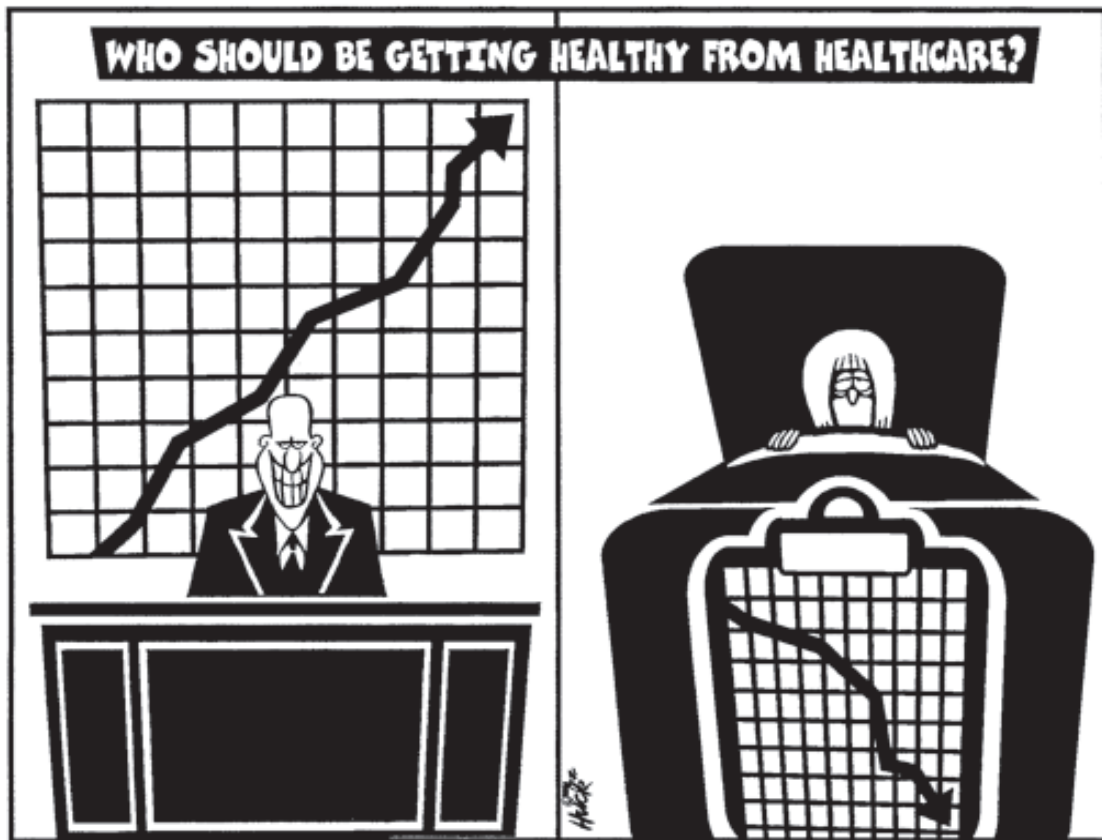
The number one argument against any proposal to improve social programs is usually some variation of "we can't afford that!" Whether it's child care, better schools, decent pensions, or improved health care, the corporate media and right wing politicians nod their pointy heads in unison: too expensive!

Now a study by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives helps expose this dreary lie. A Canada-wide pharmacare program is not only affordable - it would save \$10 billion annually. Of course, this would mean less profits for Big Pharma. But isn't the health and well-being of the population worth the effort of tackling unchecked corporate greed?

We could point out many other instances - check out some examples on page 6. Instead of blowing \$16 billion on a few dozen fighter jets with no purpose except to destroy human life, why not build homes, send students to college and university, provide clean drinking water to Aboriginal communities, and send some real solidarity to the suffering people of Pakistan?

Far from being a waste, each of these expenditures would provide lasting benefits. Every homeless person costs the taxpayers an average of some \$50,000 annually for emergency services, policing, etc. Wouldn't it be cheaper and more humane simply to build more social housing? Wouldn't this option provide jobs for thousands of workers in the building trades and secondary industry?

So what's stopping us? The problem is simple: capitalism. As long as Canada is ruled by a class which profits from hunger, poverty, and unemployment, there will be no serious effort by governments to tackle these evils. Every effort is needed to achieve reforms which can improve the lives of the people, but lasting change requires a more fundamental solution - socialism, which puts power in the hands of the working class.



We can afford universal Pharmacare

Excerpts from *The Economic Case for Universal Pharmacare*, published by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, Sept. 13, 2010

A public drug insurance plan should form an integral part of a country's pharmaceutical policies.

The plan must tie together social programs designed to provide a minimum of well-being for all citizens, health policies designed to optimize public health, industrial policies aimed at attracting foreign investment, intellectual property policies, and tax policies designed to ensure greater fairness in redistributing wealth...

As far back as 1964, the Royal Commission on Health Services recommended that a universal drug insurance plan be established for all Canadians. The National Health Forum, under Jean Chrétien in 1997, recommended universal drug coverage. The Romanow Commission in 2002 recommended catastrophic drug coverage as a first step towards universal Pharmacare. But the National Pharmaceuticals Strategy, implemented since 2004, has failed to achieve even catastrophic drug coverage for all Canadians.

The lack of political enthusiasm for Pharmacare can mainly be explained by fears of the escalating costs such a plan is expected to entail. But this argument, which also predominates in the media, is completely lacking in substance.

The sound economic analysis included in this report shows that the rational implementation of universal Pharmacare, with first-dollar coverage for all prescription drugs, would not only make access to medicines more equitable in Canada and improve health outcomes, but also generate savings for all Canadians of up to \$10.7 billion in prescription drugs. Canadians cannot afford not to have universal Pharmacare.

Canada spent \$25.1 billion on prescription drugs in 2008. The cost of drugs has risen at more than 10% per year since 1985, and represents a major element in the increase of total health expenditures.

To reduce the burden on public finances, access to private insurance (though more costly to

individuals) has also risen. So have deductibles and co-payments in government plans, coupled with a constant increase in the share of out-of-pocket expenditures for prescription drugs.

Only 45% of total drug expenditures come from public spending, which is very low compared to other OECD countries. Canada is second among OECD countries, behind the United States, in the participation of private insurers in drug expenditures.

According to a survey by Statistics Canada, 24% of Canadians have no drug coverage, and 8% of Canadians admit they did not fill a prescription in the last 12 months due to the costs of drugs.

Citizens with inadequate drug coverage are mostly unemployed or self-employed workers. This lack of coverage for drugs prevents many Canadians from receiving the quality of health care they need. For example, after myocardial infarction, free medications would increase a patient's life by one year, on average.

The current system has become a jumbled assortment of public and private plans in which individual coverage is no longer based on patients' needs, but subject to where people live and work, as well as on each person's and family's financial means.

... Canada has among the highest detail prices for prescription drugs among OECD countries, and Canadians pay 30% more than the OECD average.

Switzerland, like Canada, pays high prices to support its national pharmaceutical industry. The burden is not problematic for Swiss citizens since 94% of drug costs are paid by public spending as compared to 45% in Canada. Switzerland benefits from huge spin-offs from the industry: the ratio of pharmaceutical R&D on sales is 113%, but only 7.5% in Canada...

In Canada, the prices of brand-name drugs are normally capped at the median price of seven comparator countries. The problem is that these seven comparator countries include the four countries with the most expensive brand-name prices (United States, Switzerland, Sweden, and Germany). Every year, Canada is thus automatically the fourth or third most expensive country in

terms of brand-name drugs. By taking a more rational approach to choosing the comparator countries used by the Patented Medicine Prices Review Board for determining the price of patented drugs, by sliding from the fourth to the seventh most expensive country in the world, Canadians could save another \$1.43 billion.

A universal Pharmacare program would also help coordinate public programs to address the unethical rebate system for pharmacists. By setting up a supply system such as the hospitals have, a universal Pharmacare program could save at least \$1.31 billion per year on the cost of generic drugs - and without reducing the profits of generic manufacturers.

Ontario has moved to eliminate the system of kickbacks, but, without national coordination, it is not clear if the savings in Ontario will translate into overall savings throughout Canada.

If Canada chooses to get rid of industrial policies that artificially inflates drug costs in order to implement competitive purchasing (in the same way that New Zealand does, for example), Canadians could save more than \$10 billion on the cost of their prescription drugs.

A universal public plan would make it possible to realize these substantial savings in an efficient, fair, and transparent manner. •

PEOPLE'S VOICE

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

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

Volunteers and contributors for this issue:

Dave Arland, Ed Bil, Wally Brooker,
Miguel Figueroa, Sam Hammond, Tim McCaskell,
Gordon Murray, Tim Pelzer, B. Prasant, Liz Rowley,
W.T. Whitney, and our mailers in Vancouver &
Toronto.

Editor: Kimball Cariou Business Manager: Sam Hammond
Editorial Board: Kimball Cariou, Miguel Figueroa,
Doug Meggison, Naomi Rankin, Liz Rowley, Jim Sacouman

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People's backlash challenges HST in B.C.

By Kimball Cariou

The "harmonised sales tax" which took effect in Ontario and British Columbia on July 1 represents a win for big corporations, at the expense of working people and a wide range of smaller businesses. Instead of bringing more revenues to cash-starved governments, the HST transfers money directly from consumers to business.

The issue has dominated B.C. politics since mid-2009. If an election was held today, the Liberals under Gordon Campbell would be reduced to a handful in the Legislature.

With an approval rating at just 12%, Campbell has swallowed a slice of humble pie, agreeing to hold a referendum on the HST on Sept. 24, 2011. But the move is a tactical retreat, aimed at saving his government and keeping the tax.

British Columbians are particularly angry at the way the HST was imposed. For a full year, the Liberals claimed that the HST was "not even on the radar" during the May 2009 election. Instead, they stuck to the line that they were compelled to consider the HST only later, when the economic crisis compelled them to accept a standing federal offer to take a \$1.6 billion bribe to implement the HST.

That myth exploded in early September, when documents accessed under freedom of information laws proved that cabinet ministers had been informed about the HST months before the election.

Campbell's new announcement came as a committee of the B.C. Legislature met to deal with a petition to repeal the HST, signed over 700,000 voters, more than one-fifth of the total electorate. After a legal appeal against the petition by a big business alliance was thrown out by the courts, the committee was left with two options: recommend a vote by MLAs, or a non-binding referendum in the fall of 2011.

Both options presented dangers but also some advantages to the Liberals. With their majority, they could vote down the proposed repeal, then try to ride out the storm until the next provincial election in May 2013, perhaps with



One of the first public rallies against the HST, organized in Surrey in the summer of 2009 by progressive political activists in the South Asian community. (PV photo: K. Cariou)

a new Liberal leader.

But this alternative would have snubbed the petitioners - who represent a huge majority of the population, according to surveys - and risked alienating the traditional Liberal support base. That could mean an NDP victory in 2013, and perhaps a split in right-wing political forces, damaging the Liberals beyond repair.

Agreeing to hold a referendum could temporarily dampen public anger. Campbell argues that the HST will bring swift improvement to the B.C. economy, and a pro-HST referendum result. But the recently released documents include assessments that the damage to the economy will be substantial, lasting for some five years.

B.C.'s "recall and initiative" legislation, adopted under the NDP back in the early 1990s, was never meant to have real teeth. To succeed, an anti-HST referendum would need a turnout of at least 50% of all registered voters. Voter participation in the last B.C. election was just 55%. Even a strong vote against the HST, but with a turnout closer to the 30-40% usually seen in municipal campaigns, would allow the Liberals to leave the HST in place.

In another tactical move to head off a backlash against this scenario, Campbell has agreed to abide by

the majority vote, despite the turnout rule. This shift will apparently require an amendment to the province's electoral laws.

Perhaps more significant, there is no requirement that the referendum question be prepared by Elections BC or an independent body. The danger remains that the Liberals may try to manipulate the outcome by twisting the wording to make repeal less likely.

Another advantage held by the Liberals has been the refusal of the provincial NDP to state any clear alternative. Under Carole James, the NDP has tried to cozy up to big business, pledging to maintain the

huge tax breaks to corporations and the wealthy granted by the Campbell government since 2002.

Those tax cuts, which aim to make B.C. the lowest corporate tax regime in North America, cost the provincial treasury over \$1.5 billion annually, adding up to some \$12 billion. In other words, the federal government's \$1.6 billion incentive to B.C. for implementing the HST could be recovered within a year or two. But the NDP caucus has been told to "stay on message": the provincial economy is in terrible shape, and the Liberal cuts in taxes and program spending cannot be reversed.

For their part, the Greens regard the HST as a consumption tax, which they support in principle.

In the meantime, plans are underway for recall campaigns, led by former Social Credit Premier Bill Vander Zalm. The loss of even half a dozen MLAs could cost Campbell his majority, triggering an early election. But to succeed, a recall must be signed by 40% of the voters in a riding, collected within just 60 days.

The Premier's resignation could also be forced by a province-wide vote by his party's membership this fall. Conducted before every Liberal convention, this vote has always been a formality, but things could be different this time. Several prominent Liberals have called for Campbell to step down, only to reverse their statements within hours, evidently under brutal pressure from the premier's office.

Only one provincial party has called both for the repeal of the HST and for reversal of the tax cuts to the rich and the corporations - the Communist Party of B.C. It's a popular position, but one ignored by the "major" parties. This astonishing gap between the needs of working people and the failure of the NDP and Greens to challenge the corporate agenda needs to be challenged by the organized working class and its allies.

In the words of Sam Hammond, Provincial Leader of the Communist Party of BC, "The pro-corporate stance of the Liberal Party and the open transfer of \$1.9 billion into the bank accounts of business from the pockets of consumers, the exposed lies of the Premier and Cabinet Ministers over HST preparations, and the democratic backlash of voters has created a tense 'wait and see' situation. The continued courtship of business by the NDP's Carole James, as well as the pro-HST position of the Greens, has left BC voters with little clear choice of alternatives. This has created the peril of populist forces of the right injecting dangerous 'smaller government, smaller social programs' agendas into the political arena."

Perhaps more than any other issue, the HST debate proves the need for the working class in British Columbia, and in particular the BC Federation of Labour Convention this fall, to project its own independent political voice in a much bigger way. ●

Rescind the HST in Ontario!

Commentary from the Communist Party (Ontario)

The Ontario Liberal government, in cahoots with the Tories in Ottawa, are bailing out corporate Ontario with another \$9 billion gift of public tax dollars.

They're doing it by relieving Big Business of \$4.5 billion in sales taxes, and by cutting the corporate income tax (CIT) and capital taxes by another \$4.5 billion.

And the public's going to shell out for it by: (1) paying a new 13% Harmonized Sales Tax that will likely increase after 2015; and (2) paying for program and service cuts and user fees after the Liberals finish their "rigorous strategic spending review."

This is public money that ought to go into job creation, health, education, housing, child care, social programs, a higher minimum wage and increased pensions.

They hope you won't notice their tax "reform" is a massive tax grab - from your pocket into the pockets of the corporations and the wealthy. They hope you won't object when hospitals, schools and public services are cut back, sold off, or privatized because corporate tax cuts have stripped the cupboards bare.

The HST is a cash cow and a pork barrel for Liberal and Tory governments that can increase the tax rate whenever they want after 2015. That's what countries with "value-added" (VAT) taxes

do - in Europe and elsewhere. In England, VAT taxes rose to 17.5% January 1, 2010. In France, the VAT tax on food is now 19.6%.

The Harper government is cutting a \$5 billion cheque to help McGuinty sell the HST to the public. Like Flaherty did to sell corporate tax cuts when he was Treasurer in Ontario, every family will get three cheques totalling up to \$900, and every individual will get up to \$300, all before the fall 2011 provincial election. That's the price these governments and their big corporate friends are willing to pay, to get the HST through. That's how important it is to corporate Canada.

And that's why Conservative leader Tim Hudak won't promise to rescind it if the Tories win the 2011 provincial elections.

We need progressive tax reform based on ability to pay - that is, tax reform that will shift the load off working people and put it on those most able to pay - the corporations and the wealthy. Until the 1960s, corporations used to pay up to 50 cents of every tax dollar. Now they pay pennies. And working people pay more and more, and get less and less. The Tories in Ottawa are dropping corporate taxes to 15% by 2012 while the Liberals in Queen's Park are dropping corporate taxes to 10% by 2014 for a combined Marginal Effective Tax Rate (METR) of 25% - the lowest rate in the industrialized world, and 15% lower than in the US Great Lake states.

In August, the BC courts found the Campbell government could

not block a public campaign to force a referendum on the hated HST. If working people can overturn the HST in BC, it can be done in Ontario too. Mass protests and pressure on MPPs and the Legislature now can make rescinding the HST a central issue in the 2011 provincial election campaign.

Petitions and protests can force the issue here too!

Progressive tax reform would:

- Axe the HST, and eliminate the PST and GST
- Double the corporate tax rate for a combined METR rate of 50%
- Restore and expand the capital tax and the corporate minimum tax
- Introduce wealth and inheritance taxes on estates over \$500,000
- Eliminate taxes on incomes under \$35,000
- Remove education from the property tax, cutting it by 50%

Progressive tax reform would generate funds that could be used to:

- Put Ontario back to work
- Build affordable housing
- Raise the minimum wage to \$16
- Raise pensions and lower the voluntary age to 60
- Eliminate tuition and fund public and post-secondary education
- Expand Medicare to include pharmacare, denticare, long-term care
- Phase out nuclear and coal fired power and replace them with publicly-owned and environmentally sustainable solar and wind energy. ●

Food insecurity haunts U.S. families

As the recession continues, economic casualties continue to mount. Banks continue to foreclose on home loans, people are still losing their jobs, and a growing number of people are having more difficulty feeding themselves and their children. According to the 2010 Missouri Hunger Atlas, one in four Missouri families with children worries about putting enough food on the table. This atlas is the only study in the U.S. to document food insecurity in every county in a state.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, more than 900,000 Missourians have difficulty obtaining sufficient food to lead active and healthy lives. While public and private programs provide a safety net for many, nearly 420,000 Missourians cannot meet their food needs consistently.

"Food insecurity goes beyond the table; it has serious economic consequences as well," said Sandy Rikoon, director of the Interdisciplinary Center for Food Security at the University of Missouri that released the atlas. "People who are not eating healthily or are not able to provide enough food to their children will miss days at work, experience declines in their health and experience more anxiety, thus creating significant economic losses."

The U.S. national food insecurity average has risen significantly over the past decade. Currently, 14.6 percent of the U.S. population is considered "food insecure," indicating that there are difficulties in obtaining adequate amounts of food to feed the household. Nearly 16 percent of the Missouri population is considered "food insecure."

Crisis in Honduras: labour takes hold

W.T. Whitney, *People's World*

The labour movement, responding to murders of peasant activists and to precarious living conditions, is leading popular mobilisation in Honduras. Now a teachers' strike is targeting the government of President Porfirio Lobo, legacy of last year's US-assisted, right-wing coup that removed President Manuel Zelaya.

In late August, three members of the Unified Campesino Movement of Aguan (MUCA) were ambushed and murdered, allegedly by assailants hired by agribusiness tycoon Miguel Facussé. The body of peasant leader Maria Teresa Flores, mother of 14 children, was found in the same region, a week after she had been tortured and murdered. The shooting death on August 25 of Israel Zelaya Diaz brought the total of journalists killed this year to nine.

In a radio interview, Berta Oliva, president of the COFADEH human rights group, revealed the existence of a common grave containing the bodies of 100 recently assassinated victims.

Prensa Latina reported that 50,000 Honduran have lost jobs this year and that 180,000 went jobless in 2009. Drought in

southern Honduras has necessitated UN food aid. Teachers, up against a proposed General Education Law that would privatise education, are at the centre of mounting turmoil.

They went on strike early in August, demanding the government pay back \$242 million plundered from the teachers' pension fund after the coup, pay into the pension fund more than \$200 million unpaid since 2007, and reverse the firings of workers at the National Autonomous University. On August 20, police attacked 25,000 teachers marching in Tegucigalpa, wounding several. Some 30,000 demonstrated on August 23. "We don't want public education to die," Edgardo Casana,



Striking teachers rally in Tegucigalpa

president of the COPRUMH teachers' union, told reporters.

Meeting simultaneously in Honduras, unionists from 12 countries belonging to FELATRAC, the Coca Cola workers' federation, sent a letter to Latin American presidents. They backed the striking teachers' demands and urged the presidents to continue non-recognition of the Porfirio Lobo government and fight to keep Honduras out of the Organisation of American States. In the letter, they blamed biofuel-producing landowners, Facussé chief among them, for 10 peasant murders this year.

Edgardo Casana, expressing gratitude for FELATRAC's support, noted, "In the end, the world acquires goods, capital, and

wealth through the muscle power of workers."

In a dramatic display of worker solidarity, "hundreds of thousands" of Hondurans mobilised by the National Front of Popular Resistance (FNRP) and the CUTH Labour Federation marched on August 18 in support of the teachers. They demanded also a minimum wage increase; rejection of a proposed "public-private investment law", seen as a vehicle for privatisation; and action against a pending "law on temporary employment" that assails social security.

Union leader and FNRP head Juan Barahona told reporters, "We are not going to rest until Honduras is re-founded." He anticipated an announcement soon as to whether or not FNRP had reached its target of securing one million signatures in favour of a Constituent Assembly. The FNRP web site on Aug. 27 published "communication number one" of the "Regional Committee for the General Strike," now in the planning stages. At a press conference CUTH secretary general Israel Salinas declared, "We are living in a situation of ungovernability."

Setting the tone for worker mobilisation is ex-President Manuel Zelaya. In an August 22

letter from exile in the Dominican Republic, the former lumber and cattle businessman denounced the "insatiable appetite of a few" who are privatising basic services. Addressed to "Worker Comrades of Honduras", the letter called upon unions and peasants to join Indigenous and African-descended peoples in struggle for rights "delayed for centuries". Writing as the "Coordinator General of the FNRP", Zelaya accused the current regime of "turning back all the laws, decrees, regulations we took [as President] to benefit the people."

"We are all workers, all of us who work for salaries and other compensations," Zelaya explained. And "the working class, employed, unemployed, and underemployed, in rural areas and in cities, must feel itself unified and must identify with this struggle." He concluded: "Workers of my land, unity with the teachers or death!"

Honduran academician and veteran human rights activist Juan Almeyda, quoted in a recent NACLA report, commented, "Today, the struggle is precisely about the neoliberal economic model, imperial globalisation, and this whole campaign by financial capital to gain power over our lands, to take our resources." ●

Our choice: fighter jets or homes and clean water?

As Parliament resumes this month, MPs will debate the priorities for Canada, including choices between military hardware or urgent social and economic priorities. We urge readers to send their MPs a message: the Harper government's plan to spend \$16 billion on F-35 fighter jets should be scrapped, in favour of public transit, social housing, clean drinking water, access to education, and humanitarian assistance.

65 fighter jets: \$16 billion



The Harper Tory government plans to spend \$9 billion on 65 new fighter-jets built by the U.S. transnational McDonnell-Douglas, plus another \$7 billion on "ancillary costs" such as future parts and maintenance. The price per jet, including the long-term contracts for parts and servicing, has jumped to \$245 million. These are not "defensive" weapons, and they have little use for search and rescue operations - they are purely war-making machines. With its large payload capability, the F-35 can carry more weapons than the C-18 fighters it replaces. The F-35 comes with a wide range of deadly armament: the GAU-22/A four-barrel 25mm cannon (400 rounds); up to two air-to-air missiles and two air-to-air or air-to-ground weapons; two 1,000lb. bombs; a maximum of eight "Small Diameter Bombs"; Brimstone anti-armor missiles; and cluster bombs. At the expense of being more detectable by radar, many more missiles, bombs and fuel tanks can be attached on four wing pylons and two near wingtip positions. Solid-state lasers are being developed as optional weapons for the F-35. (Source: Wikipedia)

Human needs: total \$16 billion

5000 buses



Canadian municipalities desperately need more high-quality public transportation. To purchase 5,000 new transit buses, at a cost of about \$500,000 each, would cost about **\$2.5 billion**.

30,000 homes



Hundreds of thousands of Canadians are homeless or in danger of living on the street. To build 30,000 social housing units, at \$200,000 each, would cost about **\$6 billion**. This would immediately cut costs for emergency health care and policing.

Humanitarian assistance

The federal government has allocated a miserly \$33 million to help the people of Pakistan, hit by the worst humanitarian disaster in recent years. Multiplying that amount by fifteen times would bring the total to **\$500 million**.

Tuition for 50,000 students

Canadian students are increasingly sentenced to a life term of heavy debt loads. If the federal government provided four years of free post-secondary tuition for 50,000 young people, the cost would total about **\$1 billion**, an investment in Canada's future.



Clean water



At any given time, up to 200 Aboriginal communities across Canada live under "boil water" advisories. Spending **\$1 billion** to help build safe and secure clean drinking water systems would be a major improvement in living standards for Aboriginal peoples.

The launch of the national child care program, cancelled when the Harper Tories took office four years ago, was estimated to cost **\$5 billion**.



Defeat Ontario's Public Sector Wage Freeze

Raise wages and living standards for all!

Defend free collective bargaining!

Commentary by the Ontario Committee, Communist Party of Canada

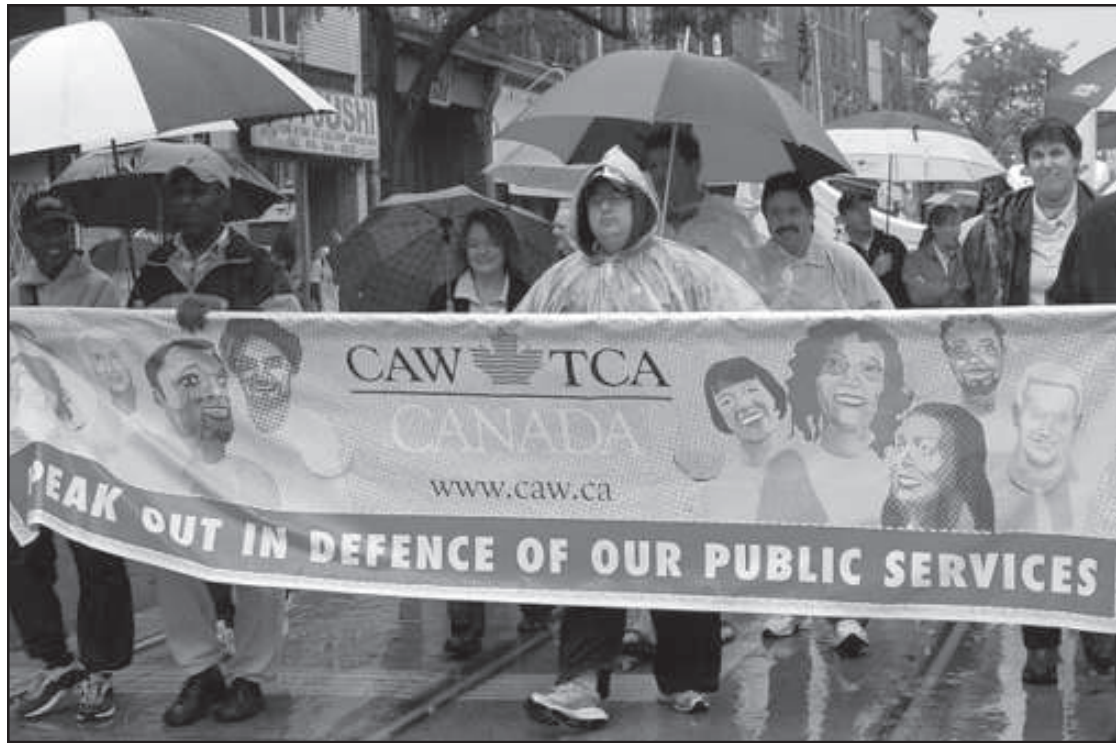
The Ontario government, in collusion with private sector employers, is about to download the cost of the economic crisis onto the backs of public sector workers with "consultations" aimed to corral unions into framework agreements that will result in a 6% wage cut over two years. The cuts will take place during the next five years, whenever collective agreements come up for renegotiation.

Wage Freeze = 6% Wage Cut

The so-called "wage freeze" is actually a wage cut when the annual inflation rate of almost 3% is included. This is a wage cut that workers will never get back. Furthermore, the money "saved" in unpaid wages has already been spent: on a \$4.5 billion corporate tax cut. This is on top of a permanent reduction in the corporate tax rate (down to 10%) and on top of the \$4.5 billion gift to Business given via the HST. There is no "saved" money going to improve public services.

Privatization of Services

In fact, public services, unionized jobs, and free collective bargaining in Ontario are all in danger from this real reduction in health care spending. Wage cuts, contracting out, privatization, and deregulation are all parts of the Liberals' spring budget, appropriately named "Open for Business". This is a Big Business agenda - aimed to increase profits by selling off public assets, reducing and privatizing public services, and permanently reducing public sector wages by 6%. Because of Balanced Budget legislation, it will also mean layoffs.



Scenes from this year's Labour Day parade in Toronto, where thousands of trade unionists marched for jobs and public services. (Photos by Ed Bil)

The Velvet Glove and the Iron Fist

The provincial government's strategy in this summer's "consultations" with labour is to scare unions into voluntarily accepting the 6% wage cuts. But the government is also threatening to introduce wage control legislation, using the "consultations" as justification in any future court challenge by labour.

The government's agenda is all about driving down wages, undermining free collective bargaining, and privatizing Ontario's public services and assets.

The Working Class Under Attack

This attack on public sector wages and free collective bargaining follows on the heels of the attack on autoworkers 18 months ago, when CAW members saw their collective agreements

ripped open and plundered three times in six months. Facing not only the employers but the Canadian, US, and Ontario governments and a vicious national media, the CAW was forced to negotiate wage cuts and concessions "with a gun to the head".

In Sudbury and Port Colborne, 3,300 USW miners struck for 360 days against Vale Inco, the second largest mining company in the world, before being forced back with two-tier pensions and cuts to take-home pay. Once again, the Liberal government sided with the employers, steadfastly refusing to pass the anti-scab legislation that could have forced the employer to the table to negotiate a settlement.

Now, Premier McGuinty justifies the attack on the public sector by claiming "fairness": public sector workers must take the same beating as private sector workers with lower wages, poorer pensions, and weaker unions. Furthermore, if public sector workers don't take the cuts, public services will suffer.

An Injury to One is an Injury to All

With these arguments, McGuinty and the employers behind him, hope to split the working class and turn the public against public sector workers and their unions. It's a vicious, ugly and dangerous strategy with all workers in the bulls-eye.

Across the province - and around the world - workers are losing ground to corporations and right wing governments that are driving down wages, stripping pensions and benefits, using scabs, police and courts to attack unions and threaten free collective bargaining.

Bad Economics

But workers didn't cause the crisis, and they should refuse to pay for it.

In fact, reducing wages will deepen the crisis by reducing

purchasing power and increasing indebtedness. The results will be inflation, more layoffs, higher unemployment, reduced tax revenues to government coffers and increased EI and welfare payouts from government coffers. Privatizing public assets and services will cut wages even further, and cost the public more in higher user fees and lost public resources and property.

The crisis in public services isn't caused by public sector wages or expenditures. In fact, expanding public services and improving them would help the economy and serve the public interest very well.

This is a revenue crisis, caused by right-wing governments determined to reduce corporate taxes at any cost. That's why Ontario and Canada now have the lowest corporate income taxes of any industrialized country, and why corporate taxes here are 15 points lower than the US Great Lake states - our biggest trading partner.

What Ontario Really Needs: A People's Recovery

Raising corporate taxes, expanding services, creating jobs, raising wages, and expanding purchasing power - this is an economic policy that would lead to a People's Recovery in Ontario.

We should build affordable social housing, introduce a provincial system of universal,

quality public childcare, expand Medicare to include dentistry, pharmacare, and long term care, and build a publicly owned transportation system to build public transit, interurban light rail systems, and a Canadian car. We should develop the north, in consultation with the Aboriginal and northern peoples, to develop secondary industry and manufacturing and turn one-industry towns into diversified, stable economies. We should put Ontario back to work, in well-paid, permanent, unionized jobs.

A United, Fighting Labour Movement

The message is clear: labour must unite to defeat the attack on workers' wages - public and private sector. There must be a coordinated and united response, led by the OFL and CLC to defend and improve all wages and working conditions, and fight to expand the public services, manufacturing jobs, and labour rights that are all under ferocious attack in Ontario today.

The OFL convention decisions are the basis for mobilizing labour and its allies, including youth and students, women, seniors, Aboriginal Peoples, People of Colour, the environmental, peace and social justice movements, farmers and cultural workers, and all those concerned with defending our rights and standards.

What's needed is a united leadership with the will to mobilize the labour movement and its allies in a province-wide struggle to defend workers' jobs, wages, pensions and living standards, and to curb corporate power and defeat right wing governments at every level. This is the key issue today.

Defeat the Wage Freeze

A mass struggle led by the OFL, that puts masses of people into the streets in independent labour political action, is both possible and urgent to defeat wage restraints and mount an effective counteroffensive against the right-wing, corporate assault.

The Communist Party stands 100% with public sector workers and their unions fighting to defend public services and free collective bargaining. We are committed to help build a movement that can roll back the corporate agenda, and roll out a People's Recovery in Ontario.





GLOBAL CLASS STRUGGLE

French unions call for new actions

French trade unions mounted a show of strength on Sept. 7, when huge numbers turned out to protest against the government's pension changes. The CFDT union estimated that 2.5 million people took to the streets in more than 150 cities and towns. The police estimate was 1.1 million, but both figures were bigger than on a similar day of mobilisation in June.

Public transport, airports, schools, banks and postal services were severely disrupted throughout the day, and France Telecom and electricity supplier EDF were also affected.

The government wants to raise the minimum retirement age to 62 from 60 by 2018, provoking fierce opposition. As protesters took to the streets, there were chaotic scenes in the National Assembly when the debate on the pension reform Bill began. The session had to be temporarily adjourned after communist deputies left their seats and approached the government benches with petitions against the proposals.

In Paris, hundreds of thousands congregated at the Place de la Republique, which was reclaimed from the normal weekday traffic and turned into a colourful carnival in the sunshine. So big was the crowd that when the red flares went up and the march began, its head was already some distance away, at the Place de la Bastille.

Six major union groups issued a joint statement on Sept. 8, saying they were not satisfied by minor modifications offered by President Nicolas Sarkozy to his so-called "reforms". They called on French workers to make September 23 "a major day of strikes and demonstrations" to fight the plan, which will shift more of the burden for the economic crisis on French workers.

The statement came after Sarkozy insisted that there will be no backtracking on a new retirement age, claiming that this is the essential element of reducing France's high budget deficit.

Unions have called for taxes on certain bonuses and on the highest incomes to help fund the pension system. They also condemn the absence of exceptions for women who stop work to raise a family and those working in jobs with little or no security.

The National Assembly, France's lower house of parliament, was to vote on the bill on September 15. But the game is not over, as the bill has also to go before the Senate on October 5. Final adoption is expected by the end of October.

Following the first mass protests, opinion polls showed 55% think the government should drop the new minimum retirement age altogether.

SACP/COSATU bilateral meeting

The leadership of the South African Communist Party and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) met on Sept. 6

to discuss issues of common interest and how best to take forward the struggle for socialism.

The meeting coincided with a day in which the public sector unions announced the suspension of a successful, militant and widely supported strike action which had lasted more than three weeks. A comprehensive post-mortem of the strike will be made on the political implications and lessons to be drawn and how to maintain the militancy and resilience displayed by the public sector workers. This will include a broad discussion to heighten the momentum of a living wage campaign.

The bilateral meeting agreed that both organisations will work towards ensuring that they strengthen each other, and that the most immediate challenge is to ensure that the ruling Alliance and its individual partners, including the ANC, are strengthened. The participants look forward to the ANC's forthcoming National General Council, which will carry out a mid-term review of how the alliance is confronting its challenges.

At the same time, the SACP and COSATU warned against "any ill-conceived agendas for a 'regime change'," noting the dangers posed by demagogues "who use revolutionary fiery slogans to woo the masses when their real intention is to secure political power as a prerequisite to amass wealth for themselves, and whose main target is the President."

The meeting expressed concern that the ANC government's efforts to improve the lives of the people are likely to be unsustainable if they only tinker with the fundamental ownership patterns, which largely remain colonial in content and form.

The meeting declared that COSATU and the SACP "cannot be aloof and fold their arms" amid signs that capital stands to benefit by the diversion of private and public funds into projects which have nothing to do with improving the lives of the working class and the poor.

Algeria dock strike

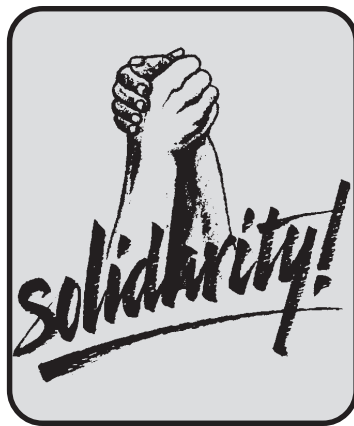
Dockworkers at Algeria's busiest port, operated by Dubai-based DP World, recently staged an unofficial strike in protest at a management drive to raise productivity. The port was functioning normally after a deal was reached over the Sept. 5-6 weekend. But for weeks before that, stevedores were operating an unofficial go-slow strike, with just a handful of containers being moved each day and a backlog of ships offshore waiting to unload.

"I waited 25 days before my four containers were unloaded in the port of Algiers," Reda Rahmouni, a book importer who has regular dealings with the port, told Reuters. "There is nothing official, but it seems that they are on strike ... They unload only eight to nine containers per day."

DP World, a unit of conglomerate Dubai World, took control of operations at the terminal last year under a 30-year operating concession. The terminal, re-named DP World Djazair, handles

more than 60 percent of Algeria's external trade.

In a media statement, DP World said "We have been working with the union to increase the efficiency of the terminal and have reached an agreement that will see service improve there. DP World Djazair is operating as normal." But other sources said the go-slow was sparked by a dispute over pay and an attempt by DP World managers to introduce new shift patterns to



improve productivity, and that the issues at stake are far from settled.

TNCs abuse U.S. workers

In a new report "A Strange Case: Violations of Workers' Freedom of Association in the United States by European Multinational Corporations", Human Rights Watch provides a detailed description of violations of internationally recognized labour standards, including fundamental workers' rights on freedom of association, by European multinational companies in their U.S. operations.

The companies spotlighted in the report include Norway-based Kongsberg Automotive, Germany-based Deutsche Telekom's T-Mobile USA and Deutsche Post's DHL, UK-based Tesco's Fresh & Easy Neighborhood Markets and G4S Wackenhut security, France-based Sodexo food services and Saint-Gobain industrial equipment, and the Dutch firm Gamma Holding.

The report notes the hypocrisy of companies which publicly adhere to the core labour standards of the International Labour Organization, including the principles of freedom of association and collective bargaining, yet in practice trample on workers' fundamental rights. Violations include harassment of workers, union busting activities, promotion of anti-union messages while preventing pro-union voices, recourse to strikebreakers, and spying on and dismissing employees involved in organizing.

The full report is available on the Human Rights Watch website, www.hrw.org.

Death in Mexican mine strike

One worker died on Sept. 8 in clashes between union workers and company contractors at the massive Cananea copper mine in northern Mexico, the local government said.

The mine, owned by major

copper producer Grupo Mexico, has been the site of tension after a three-year strike ended earlier this year. The striking miners were removed from the premises by federal police but have continued to protest outside the mine gates.

Grupo Mexico, which operates in Mexico, Peru and the United States, began hiring contract workers to repair damages to the mine but have faced resistance from dismissed union workers. Federal police now help guard the facilities.

Cananea, near the border with Arizona, is the largest copper mine in Mexico but has not been producing since the dispute began in 2007. The mine has the capacity to produce 180,000 tonnes of copper annually but the company has an ambitious expansion plan there.

Cambodia strikes planned

Cambodia faces one of its biggest industrial actions in years after a coalition of garment unions said Sept. 10 that 80,000 workers would strike in a dispute over the revised minimum wage. Ath Thorn, the president of the Cambodian Labour Confederation, said the work stoppage would run for five days starting Sept. 13.

"We are pushing for negotiations on the wage and other benefits," he said. "We don't demand a minimum wage - we demand a living wage."

The coalition, which represents around a quarter of Cambodia's garment workers, said July's four-year agreement between government, GMAC and some of the other unions to increase the monthly minimum wage by five dollars to \$61 was insufficient.

The workers were seeking a

"living wage" of \$93 per month, echoing a finding by the government's National Institute of Statistics that the country's 358,000 garment workers need to earn that much to afford food, housing and travel expenses.

Garment manufacturing is Cambodia's largest foreign exchange earner, with the bulk of exports sent to the United States and the European Union. The global economic crisis seriously affected the industry, which accounted for 15% of gross domestic product in 2008 and two-thirds of exports.

Costa Rica union leader reinstated

The supreme constitutional court of justice in Costa Rica has ordered the immediate reinstatement of the legitimate executive board of the dockers' union Sindicato de Trabajadores de JAPDEVA (SINTRAJAP). It also declared void all agreements brokered by a government-appointed representative.

The court ordered on Aug. 25 that the board, including ousted general secretary Ronaldo Blear, be reinstated and declared that agreements regarding concessioning of the ports of Moin and Limon to private interests were invalid.

In March 2008, Oscar Arias's government announced plans to privatise the ports in Limon province, putting thousands of dockers' jobs at risk. In January 2010, Arias and the president of the port administration and development board replaced the SINTRAJAP union leadership with a "sham" executive board, to help facilitate the privatisation process.

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

Send me information on the Communist Party of Canada

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

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

Parti Communiste du Quebec (section du Parti communiste du Canada)
5359 Ave Du Parc, Suite "C"
Montreal, QC, H2V 4G9
Email: pcq@cpc-pcc.ca

B.C. Committee CPC
706 Clark Drive, Vancouver, BC, V5L 3J1
Tel: 604-254-9836 E-mail: cpbc@telus.net

Edmonton CPC
Box 68112, 70 Bonnie Doon PO
Edmonton, AB, T6C 4N6
Tel: 780-465-7893 Fax: 780-463-0209

Calgary CPC
Unit #1, 19 Radcliffe Close SE,
Calgary, AB, T2A 6B2 Tel: 403-248-6489

Saskatchewan CPC
Email: <mail@communist-party-sk.ca>

Ottawa CPC
Tel: 613-232-7108

Manitoba Committee CPC
387 Selkirk Ave., Winnipeg, MB, R2W 2M3
Tel/fax: 204-586-7824

Ontario Ctee. CPC
290A Danforth Ave., Toronto, M4K 1N6
Tel: 416-469-2446

Hamilton Ctee. CPC
265 Melvin Ave., Apt. 815
Hamilton, ON,
Tel: 905-548-9586

Atlantic Region CPC
Box 70, Grand Pré, NS, B0P 1M0
Tel/fax: 902-542-7981

"Peace is possible, but not the Obama-Netanyahu way"

"The key to success for any political negotiations is the will on the Israeli side to put an end to the occupation and to remove the settlements in order to enable the creation of a Palestinian state with its capital in East Jerusalem, besides Israel, whose capital is West Jerusalem", insisted the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Israel, meeting in Haifa on Sept. 3, 2010.

The CPI went on to say, "The opening ceremony for direct negotiations between the Netanyahu government and the PLO, apparently served US President Obama as a diplomatic and political achievement in the run-up to the Congressional elections in November. Nevertheless, it does not seem that the planned negotiations between PM Netanyahu and PLO Chairman Mahmoud Abbas will bring about a peace agreement.

"The CPI continues to support the attainment of a just, stable peace through negotiations based on the relevant UN resolutions, on the ending of the Israeli occupation and on the recognition of the Palestinian people's right to sovereignty and independence in the territories occupied in 1967. The experience of the 17 years since the signing of the Oslo Accords has taught us that without prior agreement on a timetable for the negotiations and their goal - the creation of a Palestinian state with its capital in East Jerusalem

and the resolution of all final status issues, including the refugee issue - the negotiations have no chance of bringing about an end to the conflict.

"The right-wing government led by Netanyahu is interested in direct negotiations as a means of escaping the trough which it has found itself stuck in vis-a-vis international public opinion since the Gaza war (2008/9) and the criminal killing of the passengers aboard the Gaza solidarity flotilla. Netanyahu also considers that ostensible progress will assist the US in pressuring the Arab states to join the conspiratorial offensive on Iran, which is an American-Israeli strategic target. What Netanyahu's government does not have, as is clear from statements by foreign minister Avigdor Lieberman and other ministers, is the will to dismantle the settlements and end the occupation.

"Netanyahu and his government do not only reject the principles of retreat from all territories occupied in 1967, the dismantling of the settlements and the solution of the refugee question in accordance with UN resolutions - they are preparing to renew construction in the settlements at the end of the current freeze period. And if that is not enough, they demand that as a precondition for any progress towards an accord, the Palestinian leadership recognize the annexation of territories to Israel

and the 'Jewish character' of the Israeli state, by which is meant its exemption from the demand for equal national and civil rights for the Arab population in Israel.

"We Israeli Communists, Jews and Arabs, warn that Netanyahu's positions and demands, backed up by the Obama administration, will not lead to a peace accord but to another war. The Israeli army's provocations on the northern border and in the Gaza Strip, the accelerated arms race and the various maneuvers all indicate preparations for a military offensive against targets near (Lebanon, Syria) and far (Iran).

"Many Palestinian voices have been raised in criticism of President Abu-Mazen, who has vacillated in the face of the Obama administration's threats to block all economic aid and decided to join the talks. The Palestinian left has published an important and unequivocal proclamation calling to abstain, under current circumstances, from participation in US-sponsored talks, and warning that these will weaken the Palestinian Authority.

"The CPI stands in solidarity with the left forces within the Palestinian people, who are struggling against all setbacks in the fight to end the occupation and the attainment of a just and stable peace, and who demand that the Palestinian Authority take a firm stand on Israel's complete retreat from the territories

occupied in 1967.

"The CPI calls upon the lovers of peace in Israel, Jews and Arabs, to struggle together against Netanyahu's right-wing government and its disastrous policy and for an Israeli-Palestinian peace without occupation or annexation...."

In another resolution, the CPI Central Committee condemned "the repeated demolitions of the unrecognized village of al-Araqib in the Negev, entailing the abuse and exposure of its residents, are an expression of the escalating policy of racist dispossession, disrespect for basic human rights and ethnic cleansing.

"Arab and Jewish egalitarians have mounted militant opposition to the demolitions, aiding in

rebuilding the village. The CPI is proud of their action and commends them.

"The CPI denounces the demolitions, the police brutality, and the arrest and court proceedings against fighters for peace and equality - among them Ayman Odeh, Secretary of Hadash (The Democratic Front for Peace and Equality).

"The CPI reiterates its support for the right to shelter and the right of the Bedouin Arabs to live on their land. The CPI's Political Bureau calls upon the party's organs to continue their actions of solidarity with the residents of Al-Araqib, to gather donations for them and to do all they can to support the village's reconstruction." ●



Mohammad Barakeh (above left), member of the Israeli Knesset for the communist-led Hadash coalition, at a peace demonstration.

Potential for change after Australia election

Bob Briton, *The Guardian*, newspaper of the Communist Party of Australia

After two weeks of intense behind-close-doors bargaining, Australia will have a minority Labor government reliant on support from the Greens and independents. On the night of the election it was obvious that the Greens would have the balance of power in the Senate. The situation is bursting with potential for positive change, but also for destabilisation by forces unhappy at the dent put in the old two-party arrangements.

The people of Australia will have to wait and see just how binding the various agreements entered into by Gillard, the Greens and independent members of parliament will be. Most importantly, working people will have to organise and press for the long-promised shift away from the neo-liberal economic, social and political agenda.

Australians voted for fundamental changes in 2007 but were duded by the Rudd/Gillard government. Neither Labor nor the Coalition showed any preparedness to deliver on demands for greater rights for workers in the workplace, action on climate change, more humane treatment for asylum seekers, more resources for public health and education, and so on. The result of the August 21 poll was a vote of no confidence in the preparedness of both of them to introduce these long overdue changes.

The "wish-lists" submitted to the leaders of the major parties are notable

for the items that pick up on the public's exasperation at capitalist globalisation and neo-liberalism. Bob Katter requested reintroduction of industry protection for banana and sugar cane growers thrown to the wolves with the dropping of import barriers and the signing of so-called "free" trade agreements. Rob Oakeshott has asked for an emissions trading scheme.

Because of the rapid growth of the vote and influence of the Greens, the most important document to come out of the recent period of limbo is probably the agreement between them and Labor. It isn't a grab-bag of detailed policy demands. In fact, the only policies potentially carrying significant funding price tags are a dental care scheme to be announced in the 2011 Budget, a study for High Speed Rail links, a price on carbon and a reduction in emissions by 2020. There is agreement for a full parliamentary debate on Australia's involvement on the war in Afghanistan, which was never endorsed by the Australian people and which is becoming less popular by the day.

The Greens' list could be seen as unambitious but the possibilities for more thoroughgoing changes in future are contained in the document's sections on "Goals" and "Improved processes and integrity of parliament". Labor and the Coalition are still the two biggest groups in both houses of parliament but the 2010 election may well have spelled the end of their almost exclusive sway on Australian parliamentary politics. People want more transparency,

less influence from cash splashing corporate interests and reform to the way the federal parliament operates. The Greens are pressing for some important changes in line with these wishes.

Prime Minister Julia Gillard, deputy Wayne Swan, Greens leader Bob Brown, Greens Adam Bandt MP and Senator Christine Milne have signed off on the agreement to "work towards":

- Lowering the threshold for declaration of political donations from \$11,500 to \$1,000; ban foreign donations and anonymous donations over \$50; increase the frequency of disclosure and create an offence for violating "truth in advertising" in the Commonwealth Electoral Act.

- Further reform of funding of political parties (the Greens favour full public funding of elections).

- Reform of the "above the line" voting for the Senate to make it less likely that voters will walk away after simply putting a "1" in the box.

- Referenda during the 43rd parliament on Indigenous constitutional recognition and

recognition of local government. Parliaments to serve their full term.

Australians are tired of frontbenchers turning parliament into a circus, taking time away from the consideration of issues weighing on the community. Among other parliamentary reforms, the Greens/Labor agreement sets down for immediate introduction:

- Fixed time limits for questions and answers.

- A fixed and fair allocation of questions for independent and minor party members.

- At least 2.5 hours to be dedicated to debating and voting on private members' bills and time dedicated to vote on such bills in every full sitting week.

- Enforcing of the Parliamentary Code of Conduct and maintenance of the government's lobbyists register.

There are various two-way undertakings to give notice of intentions to introduce legislation, consultation and briefings from the Treasurer and the Minister for Finance with their departmental

secretaries, and so on. The document is about small incremental changes. They will not change the voting system for the House of Representatives that still returns results skewed in favour of the bigger players and effectively shuts out large sections of public opinion. The Greens have only just managed to put a tiny chink in that armour with the election of Adam Bandt for the seat of Melbourne. A start has been made but fundamental parliamentary reform is still to be put on the agenda (see True Representation).

The coming together of Labor, the Greens, Tasmanian independent Andrew Wilkie and two of the "three (independent) amigos" would hold out some hope for action on the long-ignored wishes of the Australian people. But hope is not enough. If the Greens are going to be able to make the most of the opening that has been given them by voters, action in support of progressive demands will have to be organised in the labour movement and the rest of the community. We can't "leave it to the Greens".

It is not time to stop pushing for the abolition of the Australian Building and Construction Commission, for example. It is not time to stop demanding action on climate change or an end to the privatisation going on by stealth, particularly in the fields of health and education. Neither is it time to downplay or shelve the socialist alternative to the whole capitalist system of exploitation. In fact, the time to step up the efforts to build the party carrying those hopes, the Communist Party, has well and truly arrived. ●

The Communist campaign

The Communist Party of Australia is a member of the Communist Alliance, an electoral formation which fielded candidates in the Senate in New South Wales and for the lower house seat of Sydney in the recent elections. The response to the Alliance's campaign was encouraging, though the results overall were modest. Over 5,500 votes were cast for Senate candidates Brenda Kellaway and Geoff Lawler. In the seat of Sydney, community activist Denis Doherty received about 500 votes, or around one percent of "first preference" ballots. ●

Documenting the real price of crude oil

CRUDE, directed by Joe Berlinger, Entrende Films production, 90 minutes, reviewed by Tim Pelzer

Texaco discovered oil in Ecuador's leafy rain forest during the 1960s. As Joe Berlinger's documentary, *Crude*, reveals, Texaco created a death zone in this fragile ecosystem as it developed the oil fields, inhabited by indigenous people and wildlife.

While Texaco and the Ecuadorian government profited, the rain forest's occupants did not. The company dumped 18 billion gallons of untreated toxic residue and 18 million gallons of oil and waste water into the forest that stretches 440 kilometers. Today, 1,000 waste ponds continue leaking toxic chemicals and oil residues into streams and rivers. Gas flared off during oil extraction has created black rain, further contaminating local drinking water. Sickness and

death from cancer, poisoning and other illnesses are common. Many children are born with birth defects.

In 1993, 30,000 people in the rainforest sued Texaco (now Chevron, which purchased the company in 2001) in the US courts, demanding that the company pay for medical bills and remove waste



pits and toxic chemicals from the jungle. Chevron denies guilt and instead blames state owned PetroEcuador, which took over the oil fields during the

1990s, for causing the mess.

Company scientists deny that Texaco had caused sickness and death by dumping toxic waste and oil. Instead, they blame elevated bacteria levels in the water. Berlinger exposes this lie by showing local streams and wells streaked with the bright purplish sheen of oil and petrochemicals. In another scene, scientists remove oil-soaked samples of soil from shallow holes. Each new rainfall

washes this black poison into local water sources.

An independent environmental assessment estimated clean up costs and medical compensation at \$27 billion US, exceeding the \$20 billion fund that British Petroleum has to establish to clean up the Gulf of Mexico oil spill.

Berlinger's camera follows three men who are leading the fight against Chevron: attorney Pablo Fajado, community leader Luis Yanza and US lawyer Steven Donziger. Fajado reveals that the army kidnapped and tortured his brother to death in the 1970s for speaking out against Texaco.

Chevron has called the two Ecuadorian leaders "con men" who are out for financial gain.

The country's left-wing president Rafael Correa supports the court case against Chevron. The case also has the support of rock star Sting and his wife, who have used their celebrity status to raise public awareness about the rainforest disaster.

After nine years, Chevron succeeded in having the lawsuit moved to the Ecuadorian court system. However, the court has still not ruled on the case. The current judge has to first wade through a room full of technical

reports, which is expected to take several years. To avoid paying for the clean up, Chevron's strategy is to keep the case tied up in the courts.

The latest news is that Chevron has gone after Berlinger. A US court ruling last May ordered the filmmaker to hand over 600 minutes of unseen documentary film footage to Chevron, to help it win the court case in Ecuador. Backed by US news organizations and actors such as Robert Redford, Berlinger is appealing the ruling. He and his supporters argue that free speech is at stake and that the court ruling casts a chill over independent probes into the activities of multinational corporations.

Crude is a powerful exposure of corporate abuse and greed, with important parallels to the environmental destruction involved in the northern Alberta tar sands extraction. Look for the film at outlets which carry documentaries, such as Videomatica in Vancouver or Bay Street Video in Toronto. ●



Leon Rosselson sings for Palestine

By Wally Brooker

The Last Chance: Eight Songs on Israel/Palestine, a new compilation CD from Leon Rosselson, is a powerful personal statement from a distinguished British folksinger who continues to be one of the finest progressive songwriters working in the English language. Rosselson's songs draw from a deep well of musical traditions: English music hall, labour anthems, French realist song, Jewish folk and European classical. His great accomplishment is his consistent ability to integrate his fine melodies with acutely observant lyrics and wordplay.

Rosselson, now 75, comes from a communist party background. Once a member of a socialist-zionist youth movement, today he's an active supporter of the boycott, divestment and sanctions campaign against Israel. In the revealing notes accompanying this CD, he describes spending a year in Israel at the end of the fifties "where the word 'Palestine' was never mentioned" and admits that he has "argued the rights and wrongs on both sides" over the years.

Now he acknowledges that critics of the 1993 Oslo Accords were right. Israel's goal for Palestine, he writes, is "a patchwork of disconnected Bantustans." In his personal view, a two-state solution is now "almost impossible



Leon Rosselson

to envision."

Leon Rosselson is the composer of *The World Turned Upside Down*, a much-covered song about the Diggers, the agrarian communists who represented the left-wing of England's bourgeois revolution in the mid-17th century.

His topical and satirical songs first gained notice on the influential BBC-TV show *That Was the Week That Was* in the early sixties. Since then he's released some 20 albums and written 17 children's books. Storytelling is, indeed, a strong feature of Rosselson's art.

The Song of Martin Fontasch tells the tale of a folksinging Jewish partisan during World War II who manages to convince his German captor to let him write one last song before he is shot. Adapted from a story by the Jewish-Italian writer Primo Levi, this effective opening track links Jewish resistance to the genocidal Hitler regime with the contemporary Palestinian liberation struggle. The connection is suggested by the use of contrasting musical forms. The verses narrating the grim story of the Jewish partisan and his German captor are sung in march time while

the chorus breaks out into a yearning waltz of freedom:

This song is for those who are cast out by history

The banned and abandoned, the spurned and ignored

Whose homes have been taken, whose dreams have been broken
Who huddled on hillsides, demand to be heard.

Palestine is not named, but if anyone hasn't yet got the analogy, Rosselson drives it home in the last verse:

Then let not our sufferings turn our souls to ice
So that we do to strangers what was done to us.

Rosselson's *Song of the Olive Tree*, convincingly performed here by English folksinger Janet Russell, is a song of classical simplicity. Its melody alternates between minor and major tonalities as it contracts the destruction and theft of Palestinian olive trees by the occupying regime with the deep inter-generational meanings that they hold for the Palestinians:

The settlers came, they beat us black and blue.
They said, Next time we shoot you. Understand?

But still we dared to come, we had no choice
We came at night like thieves to our own land.

The most unusual track on the album is *The Last Chance*, narrated and sung by Rosselson, who accompanies himself on the piano. It's set in the late fifties in a nightclub in Beersheva, a city on the edge of the Negev desert in southern Israel. The protagonists, Meier and Sam, engage in an increasingly acrimonious debate. Meier, a butcher and holocaust survivor, espouses militant Zionism and despises not only Arabs, but also "donkey riding Yemenis" and other non-European Jews.

The mournful, pacifist-leaning dancer Sam mischievously questions the newly victorious ideology. Their debate climaxes when, in a fit of rage, Meier flings a stone in the dancing Sam's

direction. In response Sam puts his arms around his head and says, "I want to go home." Elegiac in its tone, *The Last Chance* appears to be a metaphor for the broken dream of an exclusive Jewish state in Palestine:

They came from nowhere
The lost, the broken, and the mad
They blundered in like blind invaders

There's not a weak track on the album, but in the interests of brevity I shall restrict myself to brief comments on two other songs.

They Said examines the guilt and denial surrounding the notorious massacre of Palestinians in the village of Deir Yassin in April 1948, an atrocity that many historians believe precipitated the flight of 750,000 Palestinians from their homeland called the Nakbah. Rosselson sang this song in 2005 at a commemorative meeting near the site where Deir Yassin had once stood, organized by a group of Israelis called Zochrot (Remembrance).

Yafa! (Jaffa!) introduces Palestinian singer Reem Kelani. She performs the only non-Rosselson piece on the album. It's a keening qasidah (vocal improvisation) based on an Arabic poem by the Jaffa-born Palestinian writer Mahmoud Salim al-Hout (1917-1998) who was driven into exile in 1948 and lost all of his manuscripts in the process. The anguish of the uprooted poet is powerfully conveyed and transcends language.

This album is highly recommended. It can be ordered directly from the artist (with PayPal) at www.leonrosselson.co.uk or from www.fourdogsmusic.co.uk. They're your best bet if you want the hard copy with Rosselson's notes. If you're satisfied with just the music it can be downloaded from iTunes.

Profits from the sale of *The Last Chance: Eight Songs on Israel/Palestine* will go to Medical Aid for Palestinians (www.map.org.uk). ●

Hollywood skewers Wall Street?

Readers looking for a break from the stresses of work and political action might want to check out a surprising Hollywood flick this fall. *The Other Guys* stars Will Ferrell and Mark Wahlberg as two New York detectives who don't quite fit in with the other cops in the squad room. Reviews have been mixed: there are plenty of laughs, but the plot line is predictable. It's the content and the credits that are unusual. Ferrell and Wahlberg are chasing white collar crimes committed by the ultra-rich - the kind of ripoffs that make bank heists look like petty cash. Then the closing credits feature a Michael Moore-style graphic depiction of the astounding gap between wealth and poverty in the United States. Aimed directly at the staggering "bailout" handed to the financial tycoons during the recent economic meltdown, this is worth the ticket price.

Public sector wages trail private sector

NUPGE/CALM

Private sector workers have pulled ahead of public sector wage settlements as governments across Canada increase their focus on budget deficits.

Data from Human Resources and Skills Development Canada shows overall gains are the

smallest in a decade and that Canadian households have less disposable income available than previously after inflation is taken into account.

Gains in the public sector in June averaged just two per cent (annualized) for 41,890 employees covered in 10 agreements surveyed. In the private sector, 9,389 workers

in seven private sector settlements monitored by the department received average (annualized) increases of 2.2 per cent.

Average wage settlements across both the public and private sectors were 2.2 per cent on an annual basis in June, a fraction above the trend of 2.1 per cent across the first half of 2010.

For the first six months of the year, private sector gains averaged 2.2 compared with 2.0 per cent for the public sector.

The 2.1 per cent overall wage increase for both sectors in 2010 is well below the 2.4 per cent that workers in both sectors averaged last year and just ahead of the decade low of 1.8 per cent recorded in 2004. Pay raises averaged three per cent in the years preceding the financial crisis of 2008. ●



CCFA activist Liz Hill speaks at "Salsa in the City Square"

CCFA holds 15th annual Toronto-Cuba Friendship Day



The fifteenth annual Toronto-Cuba Friendship Day was celebrated at Nathan Phillips Square on Sunday, August 25 by the Canadian-Cuban Friendship Association. "Salsa in the City Square" festivities included Cuban food, a beer garden, displays, and music by three bands - Yani Borrell y los Clave Kings, Sonido Cubano, Pablo Terry & Sol de Cuba. (Photos by Ed Bil)

Luis Corvalan, 1916-2010

On June 2, Luis Corvalan Lepe, former General Secretary of the Communist Party of Chile (1958-1989), passed away peacefully in a hospital in Santiago, Chile.

Comrade Corvalan was born September 16, 1916 in Pelluco, a small town in the most southern part of Chile. He embraced a commitment to socialism while studying to be a teacher in Chillan, 500 kilometres south of Santiago.

In 1932 he joined the Communist Party of Chile, which was founded 20 years earlier by the lithography worker Luis Emilio Recabarren. At the end of 1937 Corvalan was called to Santiago to work with Carlos Contreras Labarca, general secretary of the party. He also worked in the central committee of the Chilean Young Communist League.

This period in Chile saw the creation of the Popular Front and a solidarity movement with the struggle of the Spanish Republic against fascism. In the 1940's the C.P. Chile entered a time of remarkable growth, winning 17% of the votes in the municipal election of 1947, to become the second political force in the country.

But President Gonzales Videla succumbed to the anti-communist pressures of the U.S. and in 1948 outlawed the Communist Party of Chile. Many of its leaders and militants were interned in concentration camps, including Luis Corvalan.

But the Communists continued to call for united action of left wing forces against the government. In the election of 1952 the party supported Socialist Senator Salvador Allende, who finished with 5% of the votes. By 1958, still outlawed, the tenth congress of the Communist Party named Luis Corvalan as its General Secretary.

The profound political friendship with Allende culminated in the victory of the Popular Unity coalition in 1970, when Comrade Corvalan said: "Never before were the prospects of a popular victory so large and so significant as the victory today. For our party to succeed; The people must be the government and with it we will be able to create a new social order".

During the thousand days of this unique political experience, Corvalan and the Communist Party of Chile were the most staunch and loyal allies of President Allende, until September 11, 1973, when the government was overthrown by a military coup.

Corvalan was sent to Dawson Island in southern Chile, along with other leaders of the Popular Unity Coalition. He also went through other concentration camps, such as Ritoque and Tres Alamos. In December 1975, he was sent into exile by the military dictatorship, exchanged for a Soviet dissident, and lived in the USSR for a few

years. His son Luis Alberto died from torture at the hands of Pinochet's secret police.

Corvalan was one of the main theorists guiding the evolution of the political line of the "Popular Rebellion of Masses", which meant that in the struggle against such a brutal dictatorship, the people have the right to use all forms of resistance, including armed struggle against the dictatorship.

Loyal to this political line, Corvalan went back to Chile clandestinely, risking his life to continue the struggle in the country that he loved so much. He remained General Secretary of the Party until 1989, with Chile still under Pinochet's dictatorship.

Until the last days of his 94 years, Luis Corvalan, "Don Lucho" as he was called by his comrades and by the people, worked and lived as a revolutionary, as a true Communist. He contributed all his life to the fight for a better world, for peace and socialism for all humankind. ●



Luis Corvalan (right) with President Salvador Allende.

What's Left

Prince George, BC

Rally against HST, 10 am, Sat. Sept. 25, outside Liberal MLA Pat Bell's office (770 Central St. East). Organized by Fight HST Committee of Prince George-Mackenzie and Prince George-Valemount ridings.

Victoria, BC

The Palestinians: A Social and Cultural History with Terri Hunter MA. Saturdays, 1-2:30 pm, Sept. 25 thru Oct. 16, Monterey Centre, next to Oak Bay Library. For info and registration phone the Centre at 370-7300.

Vancouver, BC

Coalition of Progressive Electors AGM, 2:30 pm, Sun., Sept. 19, Japanese Language Hall, 475 Alexander.

Criticize Israel, Go to Jail? Forum with Prof. Michael Keefer ("Antisemitism: Real and Imagined"), Thur., Sept. 23, 7:30 pm, SFU Harbor Centre, 515 W. Hastings. Organized by Seriously Free Speech Ctee.

Left Film Night, Sunday, Sept. 26, 7:30 pm, "The Secret in Their Eyes," award-winning drama from the era of military dictatorship in Argentina. Free, donations welcome, Centre for Socialist Education, 706 Clark Drive. For info, call 604-255-2041.

Real Aid, True Solidarity, with Afghan MP Malalai Joya, Tue., Oct. 12, 7 pm, at W2 Storeum, Fundraiser organized by StopWar peace coalition, proceeds to grassroots relief in Afghanistan and the Canadian Boat for Gaza campaign. Advance tickets \$10-20 from People's Co-op Books, 1391 Commercial.

Toronto, ON

Celebration of Life for Gordon Massie, Sun., Sept. 19, 2-4 pm, GCDO Hall, 290 Danforth Ave. For details call the Communist Party office, 416-469-2446.

The floods in Pakistan, forum with Prof. Murtaza Haider (Ryerson U) and Consul General of Cuba, Jorge Soberon, plus report on relief work in Pakistan, Sunday, Sept. 19, 2:30-5 pm, Room TRS 1-149, 7th Floor, Rogers School of Management (Ryerson University), 55 Dundas St. W. Organized by Committee of Progressive Pakistani-Canadians, endorsed by South-Asian People's Forum, call Omar, 416-536-6771.

Montreal, QC

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

People's Voice deadlines:

OCTOBER 1-15 issue: Thursday, Sept. 23

OCTOBER 16-31 issue: Thursday, Oct. 7

**Send submissions to PV Editorial Office,
706 Clark Drive, Vancouver, V5L 3J1,
<pvoice@telus.net>**

Pakistan Communists seek solidarity

In a letter to their international comrades and friends, the Communist Party of Pakistan has appealed for assistance.

"Pakistan, apart from the disasters inflicted at the hands of imperialism and its cronies, Islamic fundamentalists (Talibans), has now been a victim of greater than Tsunami magnitude flood calamity... About 20 million people have lost their every belonging, households etc. Similarly about 6 million are left in the open air, with no means of living and shelter, homes and property inundated, crops value \$1 billion US destroyed. Millions of women, children, and sick are stranded in the flood inundated areas, as the roads, bridges and other communication and electricity infrastructure are totally ruined. Continuous rains and floodstreams hamper the meager available rescue and aid works.

"The Communist Party workers, youth and supporters have already started humanitarian rescue and aid works in the flood effected areas, with covert names for better known security reasons to all and sundry.

"The Communist Party of Pakistan extends its appeal to all the fraternal parties, friends, individual comrades, philanthropists, charity organizations and sympathizers. Please render to us whatever possible help so that we could dispense our relief work to the victims of this colossal calamity.

"Here is the account number for those who wish to remit donations directly into the CPP flood relief fund: Muslim commercial bank, Risala Road, Branch, Hyderabad, Pakistan, 0076-02-01-008749-9 (0076 country code, 02 currency code, 01 branch code, 008749-9 the principal account number). Contact comrade Imdad Kazi, in charge of the CPP flood relief, on his cell number, 0092 333 2714014, for any details and queries.

"Comradely, Maula Bux Khaskheli, General Secretary, Communist Party of Pakistan" ●

REDS ON THE WEB

www.comunist-party.ca

www.peoplesvoice.ca

www.ycl-ljc.ca

www.solidnet.org

Why vote for the Communist slate in Venezuela?

Crucial parliamentary elections are coming up in Venezuela on Sept. 26. The PSUV, the ruling party led by Chavez, is expected to win once again, but the outcome could be tighter than previous elections. The opposition forces have managed to regroup into one "grand coalition" which includes even some nominally "left" and previously pro-Chavez forces. There is also an intensified disinformation and slander campaign by the bourgeois media, both domestic and international. According to a study by the National Electoral Council, 75.4% of televised campaign advertisements have been pro-opposition, and 24.6% have been pro-government since the race for 165 seats in Venezuela's National Assembly officially began.

The Communist Party of Venezuela (PCV) has reached an electoral agreement with the PSUV, and is endorsing the pro-Chavez slate in its entirety. This agreement is different from the previous set of elections, when the PCV supported most of the PSUV candidates, but ran three or four PCV candidates in specific areas where the PSUV candidates were considered either corrupt or "closet" counter-revolutionaries.

The PCV is campaigning hard to get voters to support the PCV "slate", which is identical to the PSUV slate. The PCV's reasoning is laid out in the following article, translated from the Spanish original.

By Alejandro Ruiz, From Venezuela Cantacarlo, Sept. 10, 2010

For the first time in its nearly 80-year history, the Communist Party of Venezuela (PCV) has a prominent place on the ballot: top left, next to the majority United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV). The place, once reserved for the bourgeois parties AD, Copei and the reformist MAS, is now reserved for the forces of the Bolivarian Revolution, and this is no small thing in political-electoral struggle.

Thanks to the alliance between socialists and communists for the



upcoming elections on September 26, all candidates of the PSUV are those of the PCV in the nomination lists in all states. So why vote for the Communists? Is it not the same as voting PSUV?

Electoral speaking it is the same, but every vote for the PCV will have a distinct quality in the battle to deepen the revolution, to fight the counter-revolutionary and reformist tendencies.

This reason would be enough to vote for the Communists. But there are other reasons as well. Every vote for the PCV would be a recognition of its consequential history, since its founding in 1931, in the fight for socialism and its loyalty to Commander Chavez since his presidential candidacy in February 1998.

While some who claimed they were loyal to President Chavez have since betrayed the Revolution and deserted to the ranks of the opposition and imperialism, the leaders and militants of PCV have remained consistent over the 11 years of this revolutionary government.

Each ballot marked "PCV" is a vote against the renegades of the past and against the traitors of today with their theories of "democratic socialism", who have now joined with the most reactionary forces in intemperate attacks against Chavez and the Revolution.

Every vote for the Communists is also a vote for honest and constructive criticism of revolutionary failures and errors in the development of governance.

In addition, each vote for the PCV is a vote in support of

proposed revolutionary laws which help to transform the social relations of production and to build the hegemony of the socialist alternative to the current capitalist reality, such as the Law of the Social Councils of Workers, permitting the working class to exercise control in existing public and private companies.

Your vote for the PCV will support those who have strongly promoted the passage of the New Organic Labour Act in the National Assembly and in the streets - a law which will establish general and absolute job security, the reduction of the working day, retroactive increases for pre- and postnatal care and other social benefits.

A vote for the PCV is also a vote for its proposal to nationalize and socialize the entire banking and financial system of the country, with mechanisms for the participation of workers in the control of management. And to root out those corrupt financial elements who victimize their customers, and profiteer off of our country's oil revenues.

And finally, a vote for the Communists will strengthen the international movement that has been most engaged in defense of the Bolivarian Revolution around the world. While so-called "socialist" parties on various continents and the Socialist International (SI) itself are uniting

with the right to attack Chavez and his government, the Communist parties everywhere - in Europe, Asia, North America, South America, Africa and Oceania - are fervent defenders of the Bolivarian Revolution.

Each vote for the PCV will be like a stone in the teeth of the anti-communist campaign of the Cardinal and the bourgeoisie. It will be like a stone in the teeth of the liars of Globovision, the newspaper *El Nacional* and other private media. Every vote for the Communists will be a missile to the heart of imperialism and its lackeys. And the more the votes, the more the enemies of our Revolution will tremble in fear. ●



President Hugo Chavez on the campaign trail in Venezuela.

"The US will be in Iraq for years to come"

Commentary from Prensa Latina (Cuba)

Any question about the issue has been cleared up by General Raymond Odierno, commander of the U.S. forces in Iraq: the Pentagon's troops could be in that nation for long after 2011.

That confirmed the opinions of commentators and analysts who say that the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq is a relative fact, because that country continues to be occupied, despite Washington's attempts to make it seem as though it were the opposite case. It is true that the 4th Stryker Brigade, comprising 4,000 combat troops, left Iraq on August 19, in a move that more than a few saw as symbolic of the end of military operations there and the army's shift to a diplomatic role.

Instead, however, the Pentagon left 52,000 soldiers in Iraq - 2,000 are expected to leave on August 31 - and the U.S. Department of State announced a 50-percent jump in contractors for security work, up to 7,000 troops.

Of course, the White House has asserted that the forces it will keep in the Arab nation will carry out missions of advisement and training for Iraqi forces in what they have dubbed Operation New Dawn.

However, Gen. Odierno made it clear: 2011 will not be the year of total withdrawal; troops may remain.

Moreover, a condition was set: U.S. combat forces will only return to Iraq if the Iraqis "completely fail," the high-ranking U.S. military officer said on the Sunday news

programs "Face the Nation" and "State of the Union," on CBS and CNN television.

What would be considered as the total failure of Iraqi forces? Would that create an opportunity for the White House to give the order to invade whenever it considers it convenient?

The Iraqi people are "growing," Odierno said. "We continue to see development in their planning, their ability to conduct operations. We continue to see political development, economic development, and all of these combined together will start to develop an atmosphere that means better security."

However, violence is taking lives every day in Iraq. Less than a week ago, a suicide bomber tied an explosives belt to his waist and blew himself up at an army recruitment center. The outcome of the tragic incident was more than 100 victims, 48 of them killed.

In his remarks on the situation, President Obama wants to remind the people of the United States that he is keeping a campaign promise by ordering the end of combat missions in Iraq and bringing thousands of troops home.

Of course, thousands more remain in Iraq, with its mined lands and well-protected oil. ●

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