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people's VOICE

Union coming to Dofasco?

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Is the U.S. behind recent killings in Latin America?



Report on page 5



Above: US AWACS surveillance aircraft, identical to those stationed at the Pentagon's Manta air base in Ecuador. US spying and bombing capabilities are far beyond those of any Latin American military, and observers believe the US played a key role in the March 1 attack which killed FARC-EP forces inside Ecuadorian territory.

Below: Hundreds of thousands of people rallied on March 6 against the terror inflicted by Colombia's armed forces and paramilitaries. The biggest demonstrations took place in Colombia itself, and solidarity protests were held in many other countries, including Uruguay (seen here).



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Civic circus?

Half a dozen candidates are in the race to win mayoralty nominations in this fall's municipal election in Vancouver. That could spell good news for COPE... depending on who runs for which civic party.

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South African teachers

Fourteen years after South Africa's first democratic election, teachers are an important part of the working class struggle for economic and social justice.

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Kosovo: the real story

The western media invariably portrays the story of Kosovo as a heroic struggle for national freedom. But a look at the history of the region soon reveals a far more complex tale of fascism and imperialism.

Dofasco: a breakthrough for Steelworkers?

By Sam Hammond

In the 1930's a member of Local 105 International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers took an electrician's job in the Dominion Foundries and Steel Company (Dofasco). Also a member of the Communist Party of Canada, he organized the first SWOC (Steelworkers Organizing Committee) chartered local in Canada - Local 1004 of the United Steelworkers of America.

Harry Hunter was eventually fired by Clifton W. Sherman, the head robber baron of Dofasco. Harry became the first employee of the SWOC in Canada and laid the groundwork for the famous Hamilton Local 1005 at Stelco's Hilton works, which is still alive and fighting today.

Local 1004 fell into oblivion and unfortunately didn't survive long enough for the post-war resurgence of industrial unionism. Harry Hunter was fired in the steel union's anti-communist purges carried out by Phillip Murray and Charlie Millard, but went to work immediately for the United Electrical Workers Union which organized three large Westinghouse

plants in Hamilton. Later he worked full time as a Communist Party organizer and played an important role on Hamilton City Council for many years.

The first Steel local in Canada at Dofasco is long forgotten, and the courageous efforts of left militant workers like Harry Hunter have been either forgotten or purposely obscured by historical revisionism. Labour legend has it that the implementation of profit-sharing and a carefully nurtured sense of community implemented by the Dofasco corporate brass have made the second largest steel producer in Canada un-organizable.

But legend is legend, and the truth is there has never been a massive serious attempt to organize Dofasco by the Steelworkers, who were too busy in the 40's and 50's raiding Mine Mill and UE to organize much of anything unless workers came pounding at the door. I have lived in Hamilton since I was born in 1941, and I have been involved in Hamilton labour since 1961; in my opinion, the organizing attempts have been half-hearted.

Stelco, part of the 1946 Hamil-



The Dofasco steel plant in Hamilton

ton Labour war, and Dofasco, notoriously unorganized, have both disappeared in the cauldron of Free Trade neo-liberal foreign takeovers. Stelco is now US Steel and Dofasco is now Arcelor-Mittal. The U.S. and Euro-Asian imperialists have divvied up Hamilton's waterfront, eyeing the windfalls of ownership as they compete globally for resources and markets.

This largest of Canadian industrial cities has felt the effect of globalization and Free Trade like no other. We have lost the manufacturing enterprises of Massey-Ferguson, a Studebaker auto plant, Otis Elevator, Proctor and Gamble, Canadian Porcelain, three Westinghouse plants, Frost Fence

and Wire, International Harvester, Hoover appliances, Dominion Glass and the American Can Company, and literally dozens of peripheral secondary plants and suppliers. The products these plants made now arrive in our city on trucks carrying containers from ships and rail, acquired from off shore or other parts of the Americas. Tens of thousands of lost jobs, but still we survive in a sort of industrial twilight zone created by a succession of Liberal and Tory governments that have peddled us as commodities for sale - cheap.

In this twilight zone we still produce even more and better quality steel with less than 25% of the 1960's work force. The Steelworkers union is still in Stelco, and has fought its way through bankruptcy protection and past bottom-feeding capitalist speculators. Overall, the union has represented Hamilton steelworkers very well.

The so-called "profit sharing" plan at the now Arcelor-Mittal plant (still called Dofasco in local vernacular), is really an employee investment fund: the company matches employee contributions up to a ceiling and pays dividends on the employee share, according to a corporate controlled percentage supposedly based on annual profits. Employees receive lump sum or other payments on retirement, really based on their own investment.

In a real profit sharing plan, workers receive a portion of the profits they have created. The Dofasco plan is not this at all. It is a hybrid, and in this writer's opinion, there has never been a thorough and public comparison of this plan with the real benefits of

the Steelworkers Union pension and benefits plan. The Dofasco workers are very edgy right now, because in a non-union situation the plan could fall under the axe at any time at the whim of their new owners, and what would they have left?

The corporate myth is unraveling. The myth of a corporate family where there have been no problems for almost seventy years, no grievances, no health and safety grievances, no unfair dismissals and no need for representation at the Labour Board, is digestible only by those who believe in Bugs Bunny and the Tooth Fairy. The rest of us know better and Dofasco workers are very uneasy.

Besides this general uneasiness there is a feature at Dofasco that is the direct result of a non-union environment. The amount of "contracting in" of labour not directly employed by Dofasco (cleaning, maintenance and engineering services) is only known to the corporation, but it is a serious quantity.

On Thursday, March 20, on the front page of Hamilton's only large daily newspaper, *The Spectator*, is a half page picture of Wayne Fraser with the headline "The Dofasco Choice". Under the picture is this caption: "For Decades, the steel company founded by the Sherman family fought fiercely to keep the union out. Today, United Steelworkers leader Wayne Fraser makes history by walking through Dofasco's gates. He has permission to ask workers if they want a union." Wow! Permission?

Apparently USW and ArcelorMittal have similar agreements at their US plants. ArcelorMittal purchased outright International Steel Group, which had cornered a majority of US steel manufacturing through the purchase of plants under bankruptcy protection, then re-tooled at the expense of retirees and reduced pension and health benefits. The purchase injected the Euro-Asian interests into US manufacturing in a rather large way.

Under the USW-Arcelor Mittal Dofasco agreement, the company

see DOFASCO, page 11

\$50,000 Fund Drive Maritimes takes early lead

The East coast has taken an early lead in the annual People's Voice Fund Drive, with \$450 arriving at our Hamilton business office by March 20. That's over one-third of their regional target, less than three weeks into the campaign. British Columbia is running second, with \$4637 turned in, or 23.2% of their provincial goal. Look for more details in our next issue.

March saw big distributions of PV bundles across the country on International Women's Day (March 8), the March 15 "World Against War" rallies, and on March 21, the International Day for the Elimination of Racism. On these three important dates, thousands of people took part in a wide range of events, many of which were publicized in our pages. In every case, speakers focused on the need to block the right-wing, anti-people agenda of the Harper Tories, with some sharp criticism levelled at Stephane Dion's Liberals for their

refusal to let Canadian voters dump the Conservatives in an election campaign.

People's Voice will continue to help mobilize stronger extra-parliamentary opposition to the Conservative agenda this spring. We'll be in the streets at Earth Day events around April 22 (be sure to support grassroots actions on this day, not phony corporate "greenwashing" activities!), at the Day of Mourning for Workers Killed and Injured on the Job (April 28), and of course at May Day rallies and meetings wherever these are held.

To keep publishing and building the working class media, we need your support for our annual \$50,000 Fund Drive. Keep those donations coming, and please plan to attend our fundraising events!

First off the mark is the monthly Left Film Night on Sunday, March 30, starting at 5:30 pm with a Spaghetti Dinner organized by the Vancouver East Club CPC. For just \$10, you'll get spaghetti, salad

and garlic bread, and a short documentary on Venezuela. Then at 7 pm, take in *Shut Up & Sing*, the story of the Dixie Chicks standing up to the Bush regime and the U.S. ultra-right for their anti-war statements.

Our Niagara Peninsula supporters are holding a social with guest speaker Sam Hammond, our PV business manager. It's happening in St. Catharines on Thursday, April 24, 7 pm, at 8 1/2 Allan Drive (off Hillpark Lane, which is off Vine St. between Scott and Carleton). For information, call 905-646-7274.

The annual PV Mother's Day Pancake Breakfast will be at 5435 Kincaid St. in Burnaby, Sunday, May 11, starting 10 am. For just \$10 (or \$5 for those under 12) get all you can eat - pancakes, sausages, and much more - plus the company of old and new friends and supporters. Don't be late: last call for pancakes will be 12 noon.

Remember that this year's "PV Shopping Bag" includes the following:

- "The Gruesome Acts of Capitalism," a 112-page booklet by David Lester, full of astounding facts and figures about the exploitative system which threatens our planet;
- a 12-month complimentary PV sub (keep it or give it to a friend);
- People's Voice 2008 Calendar;
- People's Voice "Karl Marx" T-shirt (tell us what size);
- a surprise music CD - pick classical, oldies, or folk.

For a \$100 donation, you get your choice of one of these items. For each additional \$100, choose another item from our Shopping Bag. For a donation of \$1000 or more, take the entire Shopping Bag, and receive a lifetime subscription for yourself or a friend. ●

Here's my contribution to the PV Fund Drive!

Enclosed please find my donation of \$ _____ to the 2008 People's Voice Press Fund Drive.

Name _____

Address _____

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Prov. _____ Postal Code _____

Send your contribution to:
People's Voice, 133 Herkimer St., Unit 502, Hamilton, ON, L8P 2H3

MAY DAY 2008 GREETING ADS

To mark May Day 2008, People's Voice will print greetings from a wide range of labour and people's organizations in our May 1-15 issue, which will be distributed at events across Canada. The deadline for camera-ready ads is April 19; if PV is preparing the layout, the deadline is April 17. Please check with us about the format if your ad is being sent electronically.

Ad rates (based on 5 column page):

One column-inch.....	\$10
One column x 2 inches.....	\$20
Two columns x 2 inches.....	\$35
Two columns x 3 inches.....	\$50
Two columns x 5 inches.....	\$75
Three columns x 4 inches.....	\$90
Two columns x 7 inches.....	\$100
Three columns x 7 inches.....	\$150

**Send greetings to People's Voice at:
706 Clark Drive, Vancouver, V5L 3J1
Fax (604)254-9803 E-mail: pvoice@telus.net**

Best case/worst case scenarios for Vancouver campaign

By Kimball Cariou

The stage is being set for municipal elections across BC on November 15, but nowhere is the scene more crowded than in Vancouver, where half a dozen mayoralty candidates are jockeying for attention. Electoral divisions on the left and centre of the spectrum leave the right-wing Non-Partisan Alliance in the pole position at the moment, but that could still change. If not, the civic left, represented by the Coalition of Progressive Electors for 40 years, could be squeezed out of the race, with disastrous consequences for working people and the poor.

On the positive side, the NPA also remains divided between supporters of Mayor Sam Sullivan (a federal Conservative) and councillor Peter Ladner (a Liberal). Faced with a mayoralty nomination announcement by Ladner, Sullivan quickly agreed to drop the NPA's rule against challenging incumbents. The move signals Sullivan's confidence that he has the backing of the majority of NPA members, despite widespread voter unhappiness about his autocratic style and his pro-big business stance on key issues.

Some read Ladner's challenge as a tactical move to keep Liberals inside the NPA's "big tent" in the wake

of yet another mayoralty announcement. Cold-shouldered by long-time NPA colleagues for his own independent streak, Parks Commissioner Alan de Genova (also a Liberal) recently bolted to Vision Vancouver, the centrist group formed by ex-Mayor Larry Campbell and several city councillors originally elected as part of the labour-backed COPE majority in 2002.

After leaving COPE, Vision won four council seats in 2005. But the new party has been an uneasy alliance of mainstream New Democrats, federal Liberals, and independents. Largely dependent on financial backing from "progressive" developers and professionals, Vision has also retained the support of some sections of the trade union movement. But if de Genova wins the mayoralty nomination, it would indicate that Vision's Liberal wing has gained the upper hand, to the dismay of some NDPers who had seen the new party as their surrogate on the municipal scene.

Two NDP-aligned candidates are also seeking the Vision nomination: Vancouver-Fairview MLA Gregor Robertson, and ex-COPE city councillor Raymond Louie.

The crowded Vision race has overshadowed a growing public demand for unity of the centre-left forces against the NPA, which had seemed vulnerable after Sullivan dragged out last year's strikes by municipal workers. Appeals to Robertson in particular to run as an independent backed by both Vision and COPE have gone unanswered. Most recently, Vision backroom figure Geoff Meggs threw his hat into the ring for a city council nomination, another sign that Vision insiders are distinctly cool towards any cooperation with COPE.

From the COPE perspective, a new opinion survey conducted by Ladner brought some encourag-

ing news. The poll of 400 residents shows the three parties virtually neck-and-neck, indicating that COPE's bedrock public support has not been wiped out by the political infighting on city council. However, COPE seems unlikely to receive the levels of labour backing which have been essential for its campaigns over the last few decades.



COPE councillor David Cadman

There has been a grassroots movement to urge COPE's lone city councillor, David Cadman, to run for mayor, especially if de Genova wins the Vision nomination. In that scenario, Cadman would appeal to a wide range of voters disenchanted with Conservative Sullivan and Liberal de Genova, who share common positions on most issues. Labour backing for Vision would start to shift back towards COPE, giving it the muscle to rebuild across the city. Cadman could become mayor with several COPE councillors at City Hall.

On the other hand, gambling on an unsuccessful Cadman campaign could leave COPE with nobody on city council. And it remains to be seen how Vision's mid-June nomination meeting will play out. A Robertson nomination could still leave room for Vision-COPE cooperation, such as a deal to limit

the numbers of candidates by each party, maximising chances to defeat the NPA on council, school board and park board.

A Raymond Louie campaign could be more problematic. On one hand, it would be difficult for COPE to play the spoiler in Louie's bid to become the city's first Chinese-Canadian mayor. However, he is still remembered for abandoning important COPE positions during his 2002-05 term on council, for example by voting for higher transit fares.

In the meantime, social problems continue to mount here in "Shangri-La By The Sea." Homelessness keeps rising as home ownership and rental housing become more expensive, and the NPA-led city council has passed yet another tax shift, moving more of the burden for services away from the corporate sector and onto homeowners and small business. Preparations for the 2010 Winter Olympics have shifted valuable resources from more urgent priorities, and Mayor Sullivan's "eco-density" strategy has been widely condemned as a cover for imposing the burden of new growth onto underserved east side neighbourhoods.

This is a recipe for voter anger, but until the three major parties settle their slates (the NPA will start with a partial set of nominations in early June), the electoral picture here remains murky.

Celebrating its 40th anniversary this year, COPE could make a comeback from its 2005 losses. But in a full-blown three-way race, COPE could potentially suffer further defeats, and the NPA could be re-elected with little opposition at City Hall, crippling the movement for progressive civic reform during the pre- and post-Olympics period. Time is running out to forge some measure of unity to avert this worst-case scenario. ●

MANITOBA NEWS

Compiled by PV Manitoba bureau

Pine Falls mill to stop recycling

PINE FALLS - Tembec is to stop recycling old newsprint and start making its paper exclusively from new pulpwood. This corporate decision will be responsible for the loss of the recycling capacity of 100 metric tonnes of old newsprint per 24 hour period. After the closure, any recycling will now require shipping old paper out of province, making cost effectiveness questionable. The de-inking plant closure in April will cost 12 full time jobs.

Citing a drop in the price of pulpwood, Tembec "conservatively" estimates it will need 200,000 additional trees to be felled every year, adding to the destruction of dwindling forest reserves in Manitoba. Considering that in Grassy Narrows, trees continue to be stolen off Aboriginal land, how many more trees will be taken from reserve lands, pushing prices down?

Logging in Manitoba parks

WINNIPEG - Protesters rallied at the Legislature building on February 27, to bring awareness of logging in the Grass River, Duck Mountain, Spruce Woods and Whiteshell provincial parks. The provincial government has contracts with Tembec, Tolko and Louisiana-Pacific. Great, more trees to replace recycling and boost shareholders' profits.

New construction wages on June 1

New minimum wage rates for the construction industry will be in place June 1. Labour and Immigration Minister Nancy Allan announced March 11 that the "government is now implementing the Construction Industry Wage Consultation Panel recommendations."

The Consultation Panel is a joint industry-labour group (co-opting labour yet again in "partnership") covering rural and urban construction. Rate increases are staggered with the heavy sector increases effective June 1, Jan. 1, 2009, and Jan. 1, 2010. Industrial commercial and institutional (ICI) sector increases are effective June 1, 2008, June 1, 2009, and Jan. 1, 2010.

The new minimum wages in 2008 reflect an average four per cent increase in the heavy construction sector and an average three per cent increase for ICI construction in Winnipeg. Further increases in 2009 and 2010 range from three to six per cent, depending on the trade. Wage increases... just in time for the construction market crash?

Treatment plant upgrade for Maple Leaf

Brandon's industrial wastewater treatment facility will be upgraded, allowing Maple Leaf Foods to expand its operations and increase provincial hog-processing capacity, Premier Gary Doer announced March 7. Why is the NDP government subsidizing Maple Leaf profits? The corporation should pay for its own expansion.

Green lights, not green transit

Winnipeg Mayor Sam Katz is encouraging car use by synchronizing traffic lights, hardly a replacement for the scrapped rapid transit plan. Transit use remains low and inconvenient, many bus shelters are no longer heated, and new door hardware has frozen doors shut in some locations. On the bright side, bicycle use is up - former transit users now cycle. Bike paths are to be put in after past summers of "Critical Mass" bike rides forced the issue onto the front page and into the council chambers at city hall.

Nurses reach 11th hour agreement

The Manitoba Nurses union reached a tentative agreement on March 8, two days before a strike vote was to be held across the province. Already nurses had been ordered not to pick up extra shifts, and to do so was considered "crossing a picket line" according to a union letter. The agreement includes a 10% increase over two years among other points. The ratification vote was March 27.

Winnipeg's "Keystone Kops"

PV Manitoba bureau

WINNIPEG - "Hole-eee sh%@!" were the words that escaped from Judy Wasylycia-Leis' lips as the police cars and paddy wagon cut across Main Street towards the crowd, sirens wailing, engines revving, lights flashing. Standing beside her, I could see that the Winnipeg North NDP Member of Parliament was incredulous at how crazy the situation had become.

An hour earlier on March 15, a peaceful rally calling for the withdrawal of Canadian troops took place in front of the Canadian Grain Commission building. Largely silent, we marched in a circle on the sidewalk with signs and banners. Passing cars, transit buses, and semi-truck air horns honked and blasted in agreement with our modest but resolute picket.

A few speakers noted the significance of the event: the fifth anniversary of the opening of the Iraq theatre of the on-going war. Another point raised is that Canadians must realize that the Afghanistan theatre is part of the same war, not a separate war as the government spin doctors claim. Calls to defeat Harper were made, and speakers expressed anger that the opposition Liberals do anything but oppose the Tories.

Across the street, a number of unmarked vans and cars took photographs of all the demonstrators. Indignant, the crowd moved *en masse* at the next crossing signal and openly questioned the city police about their actions. Wasylycia-Leis, among others, grilled the officers, who remained in the vehicles.

The rally was about to disperse when a private security guard dressed in a shirt, tie and blazer came out. In an angry and raised voice, he shouted "this is private property!" and "you are loitering."

A couple of meters away stood a bus stop. Shouts of "how can we be loitering?... why are the police here taking our pictures?... Aren't they loitering?" came from the now irritated crowd.

The security guard responded that he could let the police on the property and chose to do so. He continued to provoke the assembly, and then came the paddy wagon. People were getting instinctively afraid and angry. This had clearly become a farce.

It is fitting that this all took place in the Keystone province, on the Ides of March and the Day against Police Brutality. It is a bitter irony that in the war to bring "democracy and freedom" abroad, we felt like we were on the way to

a totalitarian state.

I asked Judy Wasylycia-Leis what the police answered about why they were spying on us. "(They told me) they were doing it to protect us... they do this (surveillance) at every demonstration," she said, not impressed at the answer the cops gave her.

(According to the book *Police Crowd Control*, by Capt. Charles Beene, the police take pictures for evidence when they prosecute a protester in court. No mention about protection).

Another protester exclaimed at the fast police response time and complained to an officer about slow response to violent crimes in the North End (in reference to the 500 missing women in Canada). The police commanded photographers not to take photos. "How come you can take our pictures?!" a woman protested.

We resumed dispersing. A police officer went into the Winnipeg Commodity Exchange next door. By observing the state's response to the protest, I felt that we were doing the right thing. The powers that be see peace activists as dangerous enough to keep watch over. The Tory government in Ottawa and big business City Hall, what a bunch of control freaks! ●

EDITORIALS

The anti-China campaign

Canada has joined other NATO states in recognizing Kosovo independence, and now a campaign has begun to boycott the Beijing Olympics around the Tibet issue.

Both cases involve a long history of imperialist efforts to fan separatist forces, with the aim of destabilizing and breaking up countries which are reluctant to submit to western dictates. Similar strategies have been attempted in Nicaragua and South Africa, and can be seen today in Venezuela and Bolivia, among others, often using regional or tribal elites to raise the cry of independence for their own narrow interests. The CIA's intervention in China during the late 1950s backed the Dalai Lama's brutal feudal clique. The point is that some "national liberation movements" are tools of imperialist divide and rule tactics.

Given the Canadian state's stubborn refusal to accept the right of self-determination for Aboriginal peoples and Quebec, this country should certainly avoid whipping up anti-China sentiments. The underlying motive for such efforts has nothing to do with popular liberation; in fact, many of the most outspoken anti-China voices reject the legitimate demands of Aboriginal peoples and Quebec within Canada. The real goal is to isolate China, which right-wing sections of big capital view as a potential geopolitical rival to the US Empire.

The economic base of the sabre-rattlers is the U.S. military-industrial complex, represented in the White House by the Bush Republicans and in Canada by the Harper Tories. These forces constantly encourage the most jingoistic and chauvinist views, creating new "enemies" and new reasons to step up profitable military production in preparation for the next war.

The western imperialist powers which committed genocide against indigenous peoples and which occupy Iraq and Afghanistan and which deny self-determination for the Palestinians have no right to lecture the peoples of China about human rights and democracy. Rather than encouraging the tragic violence in Lhasa, the Harper government should respect demands for social justice and national self-determination in our own country.

Taser abuse still unchecked

An RCMP Taser cover-up has renewed the simmering controversy over police abuse of the 50,000-volt stun guns. The Canadian Press and CBC report that the Mounties refuse to release crucial details recorded each time an officer uses a Taser: who is being hit, whether they were armed, why they were fired on and whether they were injured.

The media obtained forms under the Access to Information Act showing 4,000 RCMP Taser incidents over the past seven years. Incidents have risen to more 1,000 annually in 2006 and 2007, from about 600 in 2005. An estimated three-quarters of Taser victims between 2002 and 2005 were unarmed. As the Globe and Mail reported on March 25, "several of those reports suggested a pattern of stun-gun use to keep suspects in line, rather than to defuse major threats."

This pattern is confirmed in Vancouver, where a Freedom of Information request recently compelled the police department to post details of about 150 Taser incidents from 2002 to early 2007. In many cases, police fired as soon as someone displayed a "fighting stance," or to get non-violent suspects to follow orders, recalling the Robert Dziekanski death at Vancouver International Airport last October.

The facts are clear: Canadian police forces increasingly use Tasers as a cheap and easy method to stun civilians into submission. This powerful weapon, so easily abused, is a menace to the public and should be removed from police arsenals.

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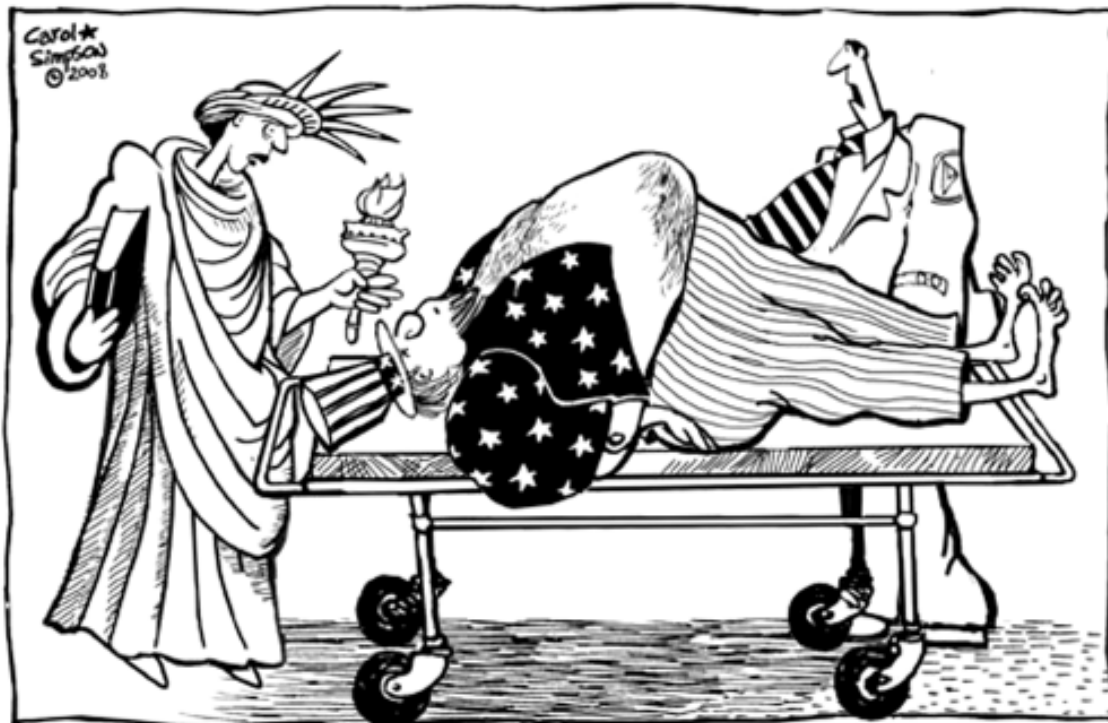
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LETTERS

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

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"No need for an autopsy.
It was that steady diet of junk politics and Fox News."

Harper Tories block UN resolution on right to water

The Council of Canadians is calling on the Harper government to stop blocking a resolution tabled by Germany and Spain at the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) in Geneva calling for water and sanitation to be recognized as a human right.

Tabled on March 10, the resolution has faced numerous objections from Canada and the United States, the only two countries to go on record at the United Nations in opposing the right to water.

"Recognizing water as a human right is vital to ensuring that governments address the reality of more than a billion people who are currently without access to clean

water," says Maude Barlow, chairperson of the Council of Canadians and author of *Blue Covenant: The Global Water Crisis and the Coming Battle for the Right to Water*. "It is shocking that Canada would work with the United States to oppose this fundamental right."

The joint resolution promoted by Germany and Spain aims to establish a "Special Rapporteur" with the mandate to provide guidance on the right to water and sanitation, identify best practices, investigate country situations and promote the right internationally. The resolution follows a report by Louise Arbour, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights stat-

ing that "specific, dedicated and sustained attention to safe drinking water and sanitation is currently lacking at the international level" and recommending that access to safe drinking water and sanitation be recognized as a human right.

Canada is working to weaken the resolution by demanding that references to the right to water and sanitation be removed and that the scope be reduced. Canada wants the proposed position of "special rapporteur" to be downgraded to an "independent expert" serving for only one year instead of the proposed three years. ●

(Council of Canadians)



Letters to the Editor

Why pick on the CWB?

My MP David Anderson wrote this in a local paper, "I believe that farmers...when they produce a product they should have the freedom to market it as well." If Mr. Anderson believes this, then he is at odds with a big part of the Conservative Party's agricultural policy.

This can be found on their website.

"Canadian Wheat Board: A Conservative Government will give farmers the freedom to make their own marketing and transportation decisions and to direct, structure, and to voluntarily participate in producer organizations.

"Supply Management: The Conservative Party believes it is in the best interest of Canada and Canadian agriculture that the industries under the protection of supply management remain viable. A Conservative Government will support supply management and its goal to deliver a high quality product to consumers for a fair price with a reasonable return to the producer."

It should be noted that supply management organizations are in fact marketing boards although the policy statement is careful not to call them marketing boards.

There are dozens of marketing boards in Canada and at least five

of them operate under federal legislation. They are: Canadian Egg Marketing Agency, Canadian Turkey Marketing Agency, Chicken Farmers of Canada, Canadian Hatching Egg Producers and the Canadian Wheat Board.

Isn't it interesting that all five of these boards negotiate a price for their commodities, all are single-desk sellers, all manage the supply that goes to market and none are voluntary.

So why is the Canadian Wheat Board the only one of these boards where Anderson insists producers should have freedom of marketing choice? Could it be because most of the marketing boards in Canada

are in Ontario and Quebec? I have no doubt the Conservative government would like to get rid of all marketing boards but know if they tried it would be very unpopular in Ontario and Quebec where most of the voters are.

When it comes to an agriculture policy it appears that the Conservatives would never think of letting an honest principled position get in their way.

Bev Currie, Swift Current, SK

New issue of Rebel Youth

The Winter-Spring 2008 issue of Rebel Youth is hot off the presses, featuring 32 pages of eye-catching graphics and hard-hitting news and analysis. Features include reports on the Quebec student strike, the fight for a livable wage, and an update on the corporate-driven "Atlantica" project. And check out reviews of music, the racist/sexist/Islamophobic "other Disney," and the appalling "Skinny Bitch" diet book.

Pick up your copy for just \$2 at your nearest Communist Party office, at progressive bookstores, or contact Johan Boyden, johan@ycl-ljc.ca, 416-964-3894.

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Was U.S. involved in killing FARC-EP leaders?

PV Vancouver Bureau

A March 12 article posted at www.venezuelanalysis.com by Acadia University assistant professor and solidarity activist James J. Brittain suggests that there may have been U.S. involvement in recent deadly attacks which killed high-ranking leaders of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army.

Titled "Was the United States Involved in Recent Attacks Targeting the FARC-EP?", Brittain's article notes that the United States has remained surprisingly silent on these attacks, even though successive U.S. administrations have backed the Colombian state's war against the insurgents.

On March 1, Colombian President Alvaro Uribe Velez and other officials sanctioned an air and ground assault which resulted in the deaths of Comandante Raul Reyes (a FARC-EP Secretariat member) and other leading members of the rebel army.

Hours later Defence Minister Santos said that Colombian forces began the operation with an air assault followed by ground combat. Santos claimed that intelligence information related to a satellite phone used by Comandante Reyes had enabled the Colombian military to pin-point the location of the FARC encampment.

While the U.S. backed the military raid, which was condemned as illegal by most members of the Organization of American States, Washington had little more to say about this military achievement by its principal Latin American ally.

As Brittain reports, a high ranking official within the Colombian Defence Ministry has leaked that the United States was involved in the March 1 operation. Through satellite intelligence gathering over southern Colombia and northern Ecuador, the U.S. had retrieved signals from the FARC-EP's 48th Front, and handed over this information to the Colombian police. Colombian officials were able to process the data and find the exact location of Comandante Reyes. "The leaked information demonstrated that the US was, at the very least, indirectly involved in the actions of March 1st, 2008," notes Brittain.

A week later, Ecuador's Defence Minister Wellington Sandoval announced that further investigation of the area targeted during the March 1 attack revealed that the site had been bombarded with incredible precision. Five "smart bombs" were detonated within a 50 metre diameter, a virtually impossible achievement given the military capabilities of the Colombian Air and Armed Forces. The arms used during the incursion, Sandoval said, can only be deployed by aircraft with the capacity to fly at a considerable height and velocity, weaponry that is not found within the Colombian Air Force or any other Latin American nation. In fact, only the U.S. air force has such capabilities.

Brittain concludes that "it is quite likely that the United States played more than an informal role in the aggression."

Less well publicized in North America was the murder of FARC-EP Comandante Ivan Rios.

On March 7, Defence Minister

Santos again took to the airwaves in Colombia, announcing that Rios, another member of the Secretariat, had been killed on March 4 by a FARC-EP member named Rojas and two other FARC-EP combatants. Santos claimed that the killers had severed Rios' right hand to prove his identity, and then taken his laptop and identification to the Colombian Army and intelligence services. The murder apparently occurred during a Colombian military operation designed to capture Comandante Rios after receiving intelligence that he was located in a high-elevation region in the Department of Caldas.

Confusion immediately began to circulate around the Santos account, since another state official within the Prosecutor's Office had reported a different version. This anonymous official had prematurely contacted the press to report that Comandante Rios had been killed on March 7th during an attack carried out by an elite wing of the Colombian Army. Adding to the questions, the Colombian state has given no details about the identity of "Rojas."

Brittain notes the difficulty of believing the Santos account, since "each Comandante associated with the Secretariat has a cadre of more than a dozen immediate personnel which are not only responsible for the Comandante's protection but oversee the ongoings of the guerrilla camp..." All meetings with any Comandante are coordinated each day and formally scheduled, and take place under heavily guarded conditions. Brittain asks, "How is it then that not only one but three armed FARC-EP combatants were able to violently enter into Comandante's Rios' barracks directly in front of an entire FARC-EP Front, which includes two FARC-EP Companies and two FARC-EP Guerrilla Squads which contain, on average, at least twelve combatants per squad?"

He calls the Santos story "incredibly simplistic," noting further that the tactic of cutting off limbs "has been systemically employed by paramilitaries, privately funded 'security forces' and right-wing civilian vigilante groups dating back to the 1940s and increasingly carried out over the past decade."



Keith Stansell, one of three US military contractors captured by the FARC-EP when their aircraft went down during a counter-narcotics mission.

Brittain's conclusion is that the details of the Rios murder are "symptomatic of those carried out by Colombia's many far-right paramilitary groups", but that "the Colombian state cannot afford to have a paramilitary group claim responsibility for the murder of Comandante Rios for this would, once again, demonstrate that the state has either failed in their political capacity to demobilize the paramilitary forces and power, or more accurately, that the state has been complicit in covering up the actions of Colombian paramilitarism..."

Countless researchers and journalists, he notes, "have exposed how reactionary forces dress up in fatigues making themselves appear to be FARC-EP combatants. Paramilitaries have regularly presented themselves as members of the FARC-EP so as to commit atrocities against civilians in the hopes of creating false condemnations aimed at the insurgency."

Brittain also suggests a plausible motive for these latest developments, and for the possibility of direct U.S. involvement in the killings. The Bush administration has had great difficulty in getting Congress to pass the new Free-Trade Agreement with Colombia, since many Democratic Party politicians are concerned about unpunished



This image of a U.S. military intelligence ship anchored off the Caribbean island of Curacao (near the Venezuelan coast) was taken on March 1 by an amateur photographer and widely distributed by alternative news media. Venezuela's Navy was closely watching the unannounced presence of several U.S. military vessels some 75 kilometers northeast of the Paraguana Peninsula in western Venezuela.

atrocities committed by the paramilitaries, and the failure of the Colombian/US military strategies. "If the Bush administration was able to claim even the slightest victory over the FARC-EP then they could argue that their counter-insurgency funding has been successful and that a new FTA should be supported in Congress,"

writes Brittain.

US Special Forces and Marines have been illegally engaging in counter-insurgency campaigns in Colombia for years, he adds. Even though the legal number of US troops in the country cannot exceed 800, thousands have been operating in campaigns against the FARC-EP. ●

SA teachers optimistic, says Salome Sithole

People's Voice recently interviewed Salome Sithole, the Vice-President for Sports, Arts and Culture in the 230,000-member South African Democratic Teachers' Union, who was in Toronto for a convention of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation (OSSTF). Sithole, a member of the South African Communist Party, lives in Whitbank, Mpulanga Province, a small city about 106 kilometers from Johannesburg.

People's Voice: What changes have you seen since the end of apartheid in education?

Salome Sithole: That would be integration. I am an elementary school teacher and I began teaching in 1989, until 2006 when I was elected to National office. After the 1994 election, there was an exodus of some black communities into the cities, moving into houses and neighbourhoods we could not before. We could not go to certain schools, we could not organize a teachers union - in 1989 I was brought before a high court [and charged with being a troublemaker] for organizing the union. But I was not arrested, and we had good lawyers. Times were changing and in 1990 we organized SADTU.

Before democracy, there was a lot of oppression - what the principal said goes. For example, if you started at a school you would be given a job, no questions asked. You would be given the choir, even if you had no experience in teaching music. They also dictated

what we could wear...

I once went to the Principal to inquire about my salary; I wanted to know when I would get a pay increase. This was logged as disobedience. So that does not happen either. The people enforcing this, the principals, were black. We were being oppressed by our own people!

People's Voice: What is your view about the recent changes in ANC leadership?

Sithole: We were involved in the process through COSATU, the trade union central of South Africa. We really pushed for leadership changes. The workers are powerful, they either make you or break you. But I think [the past ANC leaders] forgot. We are thinking the current leadership is a people's leadership. The fact that they come down to the people is important. Jacob Zuma went to the COSATU Central Executive to find out how they are doing, to ask what they are doing right, what they can do better. And we told him. Zuma is a humble person... There are problems, but Zuma's election indicates there will be changes. Education and nurses are a priority. Some of the nurses have recently negotiated raises in their salaries. So they are leaders for the people. We are all optimistic.

People's Voice: What is the perspective of the SACP on these developments?

Sithole: The SACP shares the same perspective, more or less, as COSATU. But South Africa is a capitalist country. We have to deal with that first. It is no more about racism, it is about economic inequality. Now there is economic

segregation between have-nots and haves, the business people. We have political power, but not economic power. Maybe we can overcome this, make changes, and move towards socialism.

In the immediate, the SACP is running a number of campaigns. There is the Red October Campaign, and our SACP demand for a social grant for children was recently implemented. Every child should get grants to be able to go to school, so they don't have to drop out. \$180 a month can pay for school fees.

There is also the Black-list campaign implemented by the SACP. This is not a political black-list, it is a list that prevents you from getting a bond or a house. It prevents you from buying anything. The list is of people who can not pay back loans immediately, they may be missing some months. So business people put them on a black list. We think this should be removed.

The Red October campaign is also about banks. We have big capitalist banks, and we pay high interest rates. We think we should move away from this. Of course, the SACP can not establish a bank. The people should establish their own national bank.

People's Voice: Tell me about the struggle for accessible education.

Sithole: Before democracy there was a struggle by university students. Every one should have free education - this has been the demand... The new leadership have said finally that they will establish

see South Africa, page 7

Global protests mark Iraq war anniversary

PV Vancouver Bureau

Five years after imperialist bombs started killing Iraqis, the illegal U.S./UK war against Iraq remains deeply unpopular around the planet. Opposition to continuing the war is a majority sentiment which continues to build in the United States and Britain, giving reason to hope that forcing an end to the occupation is possible.

The fifth anniversary of the war was marked by protests in dozens of countries, some on the March 15-16 weekend, others on March 19 (the actual date), or on March 22-23. While the turnouts were not as large as during the first two years of the war, the geographic breadth of the demonstrations is a strong indication that billions of people are sick of the carnage and waste created by Bush's aggression.

Over twenty Canadian cities and towns held rallies, most on March 15, two days after Stéphane Dion's Liberals voted with the Harper Conservatives in Parliament to extend Canada's military mission in Kandahar to 2011.

Several days earlier, Dion was challenged by anti-war protesters as he campaigned with Bob Rae during the Toronto Centre byelection. Demonstrators from the Toronto Coalition to Stop the War entered a room at the St. Lawrence Market where the Liberal campaign event was taking place, pushing toward the stage. A spokesperson for the Coalition urged the Liberals to side with the New Democratic Party and Bloc Québécois in the parliamentary vote. Dion's party rejected that advice, turning against the majority of Canadians who want an end to the mission now, or by the originally scheduled February 2009

date at the latest.

About a thousand people took to the streets on March 15 in Toronto, despite the frigid weather which continued to grip much of Canada. Nearly that number turned out in Vancouver for a rally organized by the StopWar peace coalition.

Internationally, the biggest anti-war protest took place in London, where tens of thousands gathered in Trafalgar Square before marching through the historic centre of the city, ending up in Parliament Square. Rallies were also held in Glasgow and other cities, organized by the Stop the War UK coalition and its affiliates.

Thousands of protesters marched in Washington, DC, on March 19, one of many actions held across the United States by United For Peace And Justice and other groups. The Washington demonstration was just one part of a week of UFPJ activities.

As public opinion in the United States swings increasingly against the war, growing numbers of protesters are engaging in direct actions. UFPJ held some fifteen actions designed to disrupt Washington, including offices of military contractors. One target was the American Petroleum Institute, where demonstrators chanted "No blood for Oil." Others barricaded the national headquarters of the Internal Revenue Service, where 32 were arrested on March 19.

Another highlight of recent U.S. protests was the Winter Soldier hearings called by Iraq Veterans Against the War to draw attention to atrocities by U.S. forces. The event was deliberately similar to the testimony by Vietnam vets in 1971 which helped blow the lid off the horrors of that war. ●



"Day of the Dead" procession on March 19 in Washington DC



The Vancouver rally on March 15 was kicked off with a rousing set by legendary punk rock band DOA (Photo: K. Cariou)



Invest in housing, not war, was one of the key messages of the March 15 rally in Toronto (Photo: Ed Bil)

Iraq war could hit \$2 trillion

Excerpts from a March 17 commentary by Martin Wolk, chief economics correspondent for MSNBC:

One thing is certain about the Iraq war: It has cost a lot more than advertised. In fact, the tab grows by at least \$200 million each and every day....

White House economic adviser Lawrence Lindsey offered an "upper bound" estimate of \$100 billion to \$200 billion in a September 2002 interview with The Wall Street Journal. Lindsey argued the cost was small, adding, "The successful prosecution of the war would be good for the economy."

U.S. direct spending on the war in Iraq already has surpassed the upper bound of Lindsey's upper bound, and most economists attribute billions more in indirect costs to the war effort....

Joseph Stiglitz, a Nobel Prize-winning economist and self-described opponent of the war, puts the final figure at a staggering \$1 trillion to \$2 trillion, including \$500 billion for the war and occupation and up to \$300 billion in future health care costs for wounded troops. Additional costs include a negative impact from the rising cost of oil and added interest on the national debt. ●



The Canadian Peace Alliance website reported some two dozen anti-war actions on the March 15-16 weekend, all demanding to "bring the troops home from Afghanistan" (Photo: Ed Bil)



At this anti-war rally in Tel Aviv, members the Communist Party of Israel condemned the occupation of Palestine.

**YOUTH
FIGHTBACK**

People's Poets: not just a name

The People's Poets are three young Edmonton artists who make conscious Hip Hop. Active for just over a year, 4Life, Solidario, and Rosouljah grew up in Canada and share Latino roots. The group cites influences from Dead Prez and Common to Silvio Rodriguez, Violeta Parra and even Sting. Earlier this year, People's Voice spoke with the group about Hip Hop and the struggle for a better world.

People's Voice: What is the meaning of People's Poets?

Solidario: "We be the People's Poets and we believe another world is possible." I think it is very important the People's Poets is not just a name belonging to us. It is a name belonging to all of humanity, and poets who have always expressed the masses.

PV: Why Hip Hop?

Rosouljah: We like it, we've been listening to it our whole life. It is music from the marginalized. We grew up listening to folk music from our own homelands which talked about social change. Today, Hip Hop is an accessible medium internationally. In every corner of the world, people are using it to raise consciousness.

Solidario: Red Hip Hop is a growing movement across Latin American and the Caribbean. We're not so much into Regitonne, which is really sexualized. Our approach is for the people, our perspective is revolutionary.

PV: Do you see connections between your struggles and black youth?

4Life: I've been inspired by the African American civil rights movement, just like Malcolm X was an inspiration for Dead Prez. Hip Hop tries to also counter gang culture, and people on that level really inspired me as well.

Rosouljah: Most definitely. Racism is a dominant factor in the analysis of society. The reality of colonial history is all one history, and the way our people from the global south have been treated is an oppressive one.

Solidario: These are systems of



People's Poets logo by Solidario

oppression, racism and class intersect. The level of racism certain groups face in society will be different, but we will all be affected by class - women too.

PV: How did you become becoming politically conscious?

Rosouljah: I can remember going to the library at 13, looking at

photographs of Chile and the Presidential Palace. President Salvador Allende at the window. And then - rubble. That made me realize I had to do something. This historical context was always very important. It wasn't until I was an adolescent that it all came together. I heard Sting's song "They Dance Alone." It wasn't until I heard that song that I began being more politically conscious about what had happened in the past, and what is currently happening.

Solidario: My Dad was a political prisoner from Chile, we came to Canada as refugees. My father was active here in Chilean Communist Party, as well as unions, political and cultural movements. Outside of Latino folk music, I find hip hop artists speak about injustices, they also brought historical events to life in their music.

PV: What do you think about Latin America today?

4Life: Latin America's move toward the left definitely inspiration, gives hope. I think when you're [talking about the] youth movement.

Rosouljah: When a country like Venezuela gets over 80 percent of its petroleum back - for us this is a foretelling of a socialist future to come. Bolivia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Cuba: they all want more for their people. There is huge inequality in South America. But people are becoming aware of who is responsible.

PV: How do you find Alberta?
Solidario: I've lived here since 1977. I've always met activist people. It is not what you see on the news. People in Alberta rallied against Bill 11, privatizing health care. There is also culture of resistance, and groups working for social change.

4Life: The reality is that there are so many sub-cultures, because of all the cultures here, because of the imbalance between rich and poor, you see radicals. In Edmonton you sometimes can't keep track



From the People's Poets Myspace page (Myspace.com/peoplespoets): "4Life layin it down and rosouljah backin him up"

of how many good things are going on every night.

PV: What are you doing now?

Solidario: Check out Myspace.com/peoplespoets. Our first event was the Day of Action for peace in March, our last event

was just recently, during AIDS awareness - people know that we are committed. We also make an effort to be part of the movement, which is really important to us. If you are an artist you should be out there sharing your craft. ●

UQAM BANS DISSENT

The University of Quebec at Montreal has obtained a court order banning all protesting, picketing, leafleting or political agitation within 100 meters of campus. Violation is punishable with a \$50,000 fine or imprisonment. The ruling is being appealed by the campus student unions. Last November, police brutally suppressed student occupations in Montreal, making over 100 arrests and injuring many students.

U of T ASSAULTS PROTESTORS

Over thirty student protestors were roughed-up and pushed around by University of Toronto police during a non-violent occupation of the President's office this March. The students requested to speak with President David Naylor and deliver a letter asking the University Affairs Board to hear a student presentation on access to education. The Board will be voting on 20% tuition increase.

KHADR SUPPORT GROWS

Support is growing for child soldier Omar Khadr, a Canadian citizen and the only foreign national left in Guantanamo Bay, says the Council on American Islamic Relations Canada. Last month, several British legal associations wrote Prime Minister Harper demanding his repatriation, as did all Federal opposition parties later that month. Khadr has been in the US concentration camp since 2002.

Brock University students turn out to hear Communists

By Asad Ali and Betsy MacDonald

St. Catharines, ON - Thirty people gathered on the eve of the Easter long weekend at Brock University to hear Communist Party of Canada leader Miguel Figueroa on how we can stop a Harper majority. Most of the audience was students, joined by labour leaders, academics, and solidarity activists.

Figueroa outlined the first steps of the Harper minority government as part of capital's offensive around the world, which is not limited to privatization but also changing key appointments. He pointed out that polls show the Tories are out of step: two-thirds of Canadians are against extending the imperialist war in Afghanistan, and 49 percent favour nationalizing energy resources, providing an objective basis for stopping a Harper majority. The Tories are further weakened because of recent scandals such as allegations of a bribe offer to the late MP Chuck Cadman.

However, explained Figueroa, since the Liberals are also pro-business, opposing the Tory agenda would be "biting the hand that feeds them". The NDP holds back because it doesn't want to "hand the Liberals a victory in the eyes of the Canadian peo-

ple," and so ends up strengthening the Tories in parliament.

Figueroa described this as opportunism, "putting the short-term interests of a small section ahead of the interests of the whole movement." For this reason the mainstream parties alone can't bring down the Tories; the extra-parliamentary movements must exert the pressure required to stop the Harper Tories.

One young man new to politics asked about the basics of demonstrations because he is "looking forward to becoming more involved", and a young woman told Figueroa "I appreciate that you spoke in a way that we can all rally against Harper."

Seven people signed up to join the Young Communist League (YCL), and sufficient signatures were gathered to register a YCL campus club at Brock. The event was co-sponsored by the Eric Blair Club CPC and the Brock Socialist Club.

The previous day, Figueroa gave an hour-long interview to the Brock radio show *Basta*, and CUPE 4207 of graduate students subscribed to ten copies of People's Voice. The YCL fliered the campus and YCL General Secretary Johan Boyden spoke about the need to eliminate tuition fees. Campus journalists were present at the event and interviewed Figueroa afterwards. ●

South African teachers' union...

continued from page 5

free university education up to the level of undergraduate. After undergraduate you will have to start paying.

I think the lack of access to education has a larger influence on society, such as the crime rate. Youth drop out, and turn to crime to keep a livelihood. People look up to people who have things, and there are break-ins to homes, and cars, to get things. With more education, and jobs I think the crime rate would go down.

I don't think that children should pay anything to access sports. But there is an organization, the United School Sports Association of South Africa, which before democracy used to charge extortionate fees. For example, if you have to participate in a local sports tournament, they would charge you 4,000 Rand. But a mother only earns 300 Rand a month. Most students rely on their mothers incomes. The fathers have either died

from AIDS or they are working far away from home.

Well, we fought until the two ministries signed an agreement. We also demanded that the



USSASA be disbanded. But it wasn't, and today they are still trying to charge fees. The USSASA also said that teachers should not teach sports. Only USSASA people should. They said we should not teach sports because teachers go on strike.

People's Voice: What about privatization?

Sithole: Privatization is happening. They are privatizing water. We used to get clean running water. Now in Soweto you purchase a coupon and get so much water. Until you can pay, your water system is closed. So if you buy a coupon for 100 Rand, and it is used up on Friday, during the weekends the office is closed so you will go without water until Monday. People do their washing in buckets, saving water. The same is with electricity. You get charged 50 Rand for electricity, it is not as much as you can use.

They've outsourced responsibility to the companies, and the companies cut corners. They don't use enough cleaner in the water. There are actually worms in the water. Once, we had to resort to bottled water, which is very expensive. But you have a choice: purchase bottled water, or drink the water with worms in it, and be prepared to die. ●



GLOBAL CLASS STRUGGLE

Indian left parties protest price rise

Close to half-a-million people held a militant demonstration at the offices of the central government in Delhi on March 18, protesting the rising prices of essential commodities like rice, wheat, edible oil, sugar, clothing, footwear, and utensils. The rally was called by the Communist Party of India (Marxist), the Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU), and other Left parties and mass organisations.

The price rises have been accompanied by a deliberate sabotage of the public distribution system (PDS) system through which such commodities are supplied at controlled and subsidised prices. The UPA government has also ignored the rampant hoarding and racketeering going on in essential commodities.

The price hike of petrol and diesel has already increased prices thanks to higher transportation costs. Added to the misery has been a drastic reduction of the central quota for wheat and rice for the Left-ruled states of Bengal, Kerala, and Tripura. The process is aggravated by the UPA government giving liberal permission to futures trading and forward trading, euphemisms for government-guided hoarding and artificial price increases to serve the interests of big capital, indigenous and otherwise.

The prime minister was his usual pleasant and low-key self when a deputation of the Left leadership met him with a memorandum of demands. "We shall certainly have the demands looked into," was his comment.

(From PV correspondent B. Prasant)

Pakistan's "employer of choice"

Unilever was recently rated "employer of choice" in a survey of MBAs from nine of Pakistan's leading business schools. This follows a series of other awards to Unilever Asia for "Excellence" and "Significant Achievement" in human resources management.

On March 8, the Pakistan internet journal *The News* reported that "Pakistan's largest consumer products company... cannot keep up with demand for some of its products.... Demand is so strong that, in the case of foods, despite doubling production capacity, Pakistanis can't seem to have enough of them."

But for shareholders, the company's greatest achievement has been to combine growth with a radical reduction in the number of employees through outsourcing and casualizing the workforce. Of the 8,000 people employed in Unilever Pakistan's factories and offices, only slightly over 500 are employed on permanent contracts.

Last October, management at the company's personal products factory in Rahim Yar Khan fired

all but five of the plant's 292 temporary workers, following the union's announcement that it would open its membership to temporary workers who are owed permanent status by law after nine months of continuous service. All the fired temporary workers were replaced by agency workers, who have no right to achieve permanent status or to join a union.

Within 24 hours of the mass firings, a labour contracting company was established called SAAD



Enterprises (SE) to supply the plant with 300-350 agency workers, of which nearly 100 were from the temporary workers dismissed in October. These 100 former temporary workers were all "released" by the company a month later, after the 30-day deadline for legally challenging the dismissals had elapsed. As a result, these workers could not file court cases over their illegal dismissals.

The International Union of Food Farm and Hotel Workers proposes to give Unilever a new award, a "Special Commendation Certification for Nepotism and Union-Busting in the Service of Contract Labour Excellence."

Ver.di prepares further strikes

Workers in public transport, waste removal and many other sectors in Germany have been taking part in warning strikes in recent weeks. Now, Public Service International affiliate Ver.di is preparing for a strike that might become one of the biggest ever in the history of German public services.

For 13 years, most of Germany's public sector workers have received salary increases at a lower rate than in the private sector and often below the national inflation rate. Ver.di members demanded a salary increase of 8% in this year's collective bargaining campaign.

Attempts to reach an agreement with the public employers have failed. The government has offered a 5 percent increase over two years, accompanied by a longer working week. If no agreement is reached, larger strikes will be held across the country in April.

In another development, Berlin transit workers have paralyzed travel in the German capital since early March. An open-ended strike over pay brought subway, tram and bus services to a halt on March 5, leaving commuters with only the city's S-Bahn light rail system, which is owned by national railroad Deutsche Bahn AG.

Millions protest Greek "reforms"

Greek trade unions said millions of people took part in a March 19 general strike, paralysing train, bus and airline services across Greece and confining ships to ports. Schools, ministries and banks were closed for the day.

The unions described the strike - the third of its kind in as many months in Greece - as the biggest protests so far against the government's "pension reform" plan. A survey by the country's banking unions showed that 71% of the population oppose the changes and 69% support the strikers. Despite this massive public opposition, the right-wing government used its razor thin majority to push the changes through Parliament a day later.

More than 130 social security and pension funds will be merged into 13 funds, cutting administration costs but also reducing pensions in the process. The retirement age will be increased in some sectors, up to 68 from the current age of 65 for men, and 60 for women. These negative changes are the results of applying the decisions of the European Union, the IMF and the OECD, which have demanded a wide range of anti-labour legislation.

Human trafficking in Jordanian garment industry

In a joint letter to Jordan's Minister of Labour Basem Al-Salem, the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and the International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers' Federation (ITGLWF) have demanded immediate action to uphold the rights of Vietnamese migrant garment workers employed under conditions of forced labour.

"This case has several elements that indicate that the workers might be the victims of human trafficking in the sense of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime, including forced overtime, deceptive recruitment and the retention of passports of the migrant workers", say the two organisations in their letter.

"Some 176 Vietnamese migrant workers at W&D Apparel in the Al Tajamouat Industrial Estate in Amman went on strike (in January) in protest at exploitative conditions", explains ITGLWF General Secretary Neil Kearney. The workers, mainly women, were protesting the exploitative working and living conditions they faced at the Taiwanese-owned factory.

During the ten-day strike, management cut off the workers' food, made a side deal with a small group of workers, and called in the police to force the workers out of their dormitories. By the time the strike was over five workers had to be taken to hospital for emergency medical treatment.

The workers had apparently paid a labour broker \$1,600 US in recruitment fees, the equivalent of nearly three years' minimum wage. Many were forced to borrow the

money from loan sharks at exorbitant interest rates. The workers were promised wages of \$220 US a month, but once they arrived in Jordan their employer confiscated their personal documents, forced them to work for up to sixteen hours a day, and paid them between \$80 to \$150 US per month.

Suriname banana workers on strike

Banana workers at the Jarikaba Operations in Suriname launched a spontaneous walkout March 17, after rejecting a proposal from the company to increase salaries by 5 percent. Workers are also protesting the fact that the management is refusing to meet with the Jarikaba Workers Union (JWB). The workers are paid just 26 Surinamese dollars (US\$10) per day, while working conditions are poor and overtime is not being compensated.

"We are being treated as slaves," a Haitian migrant worker told a Caribbean Net News reporter at the plant. Employees complained about poor medical facilities and safety standards, and rude supervisors who threaten to fire them if production is lagging.

The union, representing over 600 workers, sent a letter to the company in 2007 asking for talks, but the management has failed to respond. The workers vowed to continue the strike until the union leadership is invited for negotiations.

"We don't want to destroy the company or the banana industry, but we want good industrial relations in Suriname," said a union spokesperson. Taking into consideration the current economic situation in Suriname and the very positive results of the company, a pay rise of at least 50 percent is a reasonable increase, he argued. Suriname's banana production in 2007 was a record 56,000 tonnes, valued at US\$19.36 million. In 2008 production is expected to increase further to over 70,000 tonnes.

Violent wage protest in UAE

Around 1,500 workers in the United Arab Emirates staged a violent protest for higher wages on March 18, setting vehicles on fire and damaging property. Similar actions in the past year have involved mostly low-paid Asian workers, who form the bulk of hundreds of thousands of foreign construction and unskilled workers in the booming oil-rich Gulf country.

The workers went on strike and rioted in their living quarters in the industrial area of Sagaa in Sharjah, which is adjacent to Dubai, reported the state WAM news agency. They set fire to a floor reserved for the management of the accommodation, stoned and torched dozens of cars and buses in the parking lot, and tried to attack police and labour ministry officials who went to the site.

The online news service ArabianBusiness.com said the workers, employed by engineering contractor Drake and Scull, were angry over unpaid wages. A company spokesperson denied this, saying some workers were unhappy that a minimum 10 percent pay rise announced on March 17 did not make up for the falling value of the UAE dirham, which is pegged to the dollar, against the Indian rupee.

Many construction workers in the Emirates earn less than 200 dollars a month and have been hit by mounting inflation, which reached 9.3 percent in 2006. A Dubai court recently sentenced 45 Indian construction workers to six months in jail followed by deportation over a violent protest to demand wage increases. ●

Many "Global Class Struggle" reports are based on news 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.

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Empowering the poor: Bengal state budget

By B. Prasant, PV
correspondent in India

In sharp contrast to India's central budget (see the March 16-31 PV), the budget for the 2008-09 financial year presented by Bengal's Communist-led Left Front government visibly prioritises the empowerment of the poor, placing emphasis on land development, agriculture, education, literacy, and mass health. In particular, small landholders and small traders will reap the biggest chunk of the financial and infrastructural benefits.

Expanded opportunities for economic development will increase the growth of production

and employment, widening the state's income base. The consequences of development-oriented, pro-people and pro-poor growth of the economy will expand over the comparatively backward societal tiers, and across the urban and rural expanses of Bengal.

The budget totals Rs 12 billion (Indian rupees, the equivalent of \$300 million Cdn), up from Rs 9 billion last year. What is noteworthy is that successive Left Front government budgets have been oriented towards the empowerment of the poor and the down-trodden, the weaker economic groups. Cutting across lines of caste, gender, religion, commu-

nity, these budgets arch over the World Bank's grave pontifications about the "Third World urban-rural divide."

The state's domestic product growth rate is expected to be 9%, just under the double-digit figures that could put the economy on the way to overheating. The total number of jobs to be generated makes for hopeful reading for the mass of the people, while throwing into theoretical disarray the right-wing economists of gloom-and-doom (and their so-called "left-leaning" underlings) who desperately seek to prop up the thesis of "economic liberalisation" at every level.

The employment figures predicted (and here we are speaking of direct employment) are 3 million in agriculture, 25 million in industries, and 3 million in self-help groups and self-employment schemes.

The Left Front government realises that the scope for employment depends largely on the empowerment of the poor and working masses possess at the ground level. A series of waves must be created through wider mass movements to make such politico-economic empowerment a reality.

If the tiller is not empowered, employment opportunities in agriculture will go on shrinking, or at least not go up. If there is no empowerment of workers and the small entrepreneur, employment in industries will go down rather than up. Without the masses being empowered in the health and education sectors, there cannot be any increase in productivity and employment.

The overall allocation for agriculture has been doubled to Rs one billion. The greatest strategy for empowerment of the rural poor in the villages is land reforms. The latest budget increases spending in this area from Rs 300 million to Rs 700 million. The state government will step up the process of purchasing land on the open market, handing it over to small peasants at no cost. A premium of up to



Members of Bengal state fishermen's cooperative.

15% is paid to make land sellers find it attractively profitable to sell to the state government.

Once the land is vested and then transferred, the government provides further support for agriculture, such as a shelter fund for poor peasants. The state's contribution for the provident fund scheme for landless agricultural labourers has been doubled in this year's budget, to bring in 1.5 million new beneficiaries.

To increase the growth rate of agricultural production from just below 4% to over 4.5%, appropriate agricultural inputs will be made available to the cultivators. Irrigated land mass will be increased from the current 70.5% to 75% of the cultivated and cultivable land plots. The national rural employment guarantee (NREGA) projects are continuously augmented. To cope with the after-effects of the bird flu (4.4 million birds had to be culled), an extra Rs 400 million

will be spent. The public distribution system will be further strengthened despite the non-cooperation of the union (central) government.

With industrial development progressing in Bengal, the budget emphasises the twin processes of rehabilitation-compensation and professional on-the-job training plans for the land losers. An additional fund of Rs one billion has been created for this purpose alone.

Ninety percent of Bengal's villages and townships have been brought under the electrification scheme, and 85% of the state is equipped with a constant supply of potable water. The health infrastructure of rural areas is undergoing further expansion and upgrades.

In all, the finance minister of the state Left front government has placed a pro-poor, development oriented budget, with a deficit of just Rs 20 million, which is to be covered through taxing financially able groups of the population. ●

Anti-racists confront Aryan Guard

About 30 white supremacists were vastly outnumbered by 150 anti-racist protesters in Calgary on March 21 - the International Day for the Elimination of Racism. Police were on hand to protect the so-called Aryan Guard, arresting at least two people during the confrontation.

The Aryan Guard group has become increasingly visible in Calgary, recruiting young people and issuing violent threats. Two recent firebomb attacks in the city have been linked to the pro-Nazi organization, but no charges have been laid.

Speaking to the *Calgary Herald*, Bonnie Collins, whose home was firebombed in February, said "This is a sad sight, an unsettling sight... We'll always meet them head on every time. I'm scared, but I'm not going to stand down ever... We have to stand together and fight their horrible ideas and ideology."



ANC commemorates Battle of Cuito Cuanavale

The African National Congress has marked the 20th anniversary of the battle of Cuito Cuanavale by extending its best wishes to the people of Angola, Cuba, Namibia and South Africa.

Starting in mid-1987, the armies of Cuba, Angola and South Africa clashed in the continent's largest land battle since World War Two. The epic struggle became one of the most important episodes of both the civil war in Angola (1975-2002) and the Border War launched by the apartheid state against its neighbouring countries during the 1970s and '80s. After its failure in early 1988, the South African military was compelled to leave Angola, paving the way for the end of apartheid within a few short years.

As the ANC says, "The victory of Angolan and Cuban troops in that war marked a turning point in the war of aggression against the Angolan people, laying the basis for the independence of Namibia

and contributing to the eventual commencement of negotiations in South Africa."

To mark this important historical event, the ANC sent a delegation to Angola led by President Jacob Zuma, deputy Secretary General Thandi Modise, and several NEC members. An official South African parliamentary delegation also travelled by convoy to Cuito Cuanavale to commemorate the battle. The delegation included military veterans from both sides, and representatives from government, scholars and civil society.

The ANC National Executive Committee paid tribute to the many thousands of Angolans, Cubans, Namibians and South Africans for their sacrifices in the fight against the forces of apartheid and imperialism in the protracted Angolan war. The ANC also honoured the Soviet people for their support in the war.

Shortly after his release from

apartheid imprisonment, former South African President Nelson Mandela gave a speech in Havana where he stated: "The Cuban people hold a special place in the hearts of the people of Africa. The Cuban internationalists have made a contribution to African independence, freedom and justice unparalleled for its principled and selfless character - We in Africa are used to being victims of countries wanting to carve up our territory or subvert our sovereignty. It is unparalleled in African history to have another people rise to the defence of one of us. The defeat of the apartheid army was an inspiration to the struggling people in South Africa! Without the defeat of Cuito Cuanavale our organizations would not have been unbanned! The defeat of the racist army at Cuito Cuanavale has made it possible for me to be here today! Cuito Cuanavale was a milestone in the history of the struggle for southern African liberation!" ●

REDS ON THE WEB

www.comunist-party.ca

www.peoplesvoice.ca

www.ycl-ljc.ca

www.solidnet.org

Czech Communist Youth lose appeal, but continue to resist

On March 19, the trial to determine the legal status of the Czech Communist Youth Union (KSM) began. It ended a day later with the courts upholding an October 2006 decision to ban the organization by the Ministry of Interior of the Czech Republic.

The KSM had filed an appeal against the Ministry's decision. Coincidentally or otherwise, the trial was finally scheduled to begin just three days before the 8th Congress of the KSM, which opened on March 22 in Prague.

The Interior Ministry attack on the legal existence of the KSM started in November 2005, under a pretext that the KSM was engaged in activities restricted to political parties. This claim was baseless, since the Czech legal system defines the exclusive area of political parties as participation in parliamentary elections.

The second line of attack targeted the Marxist character of the KSM. The Ministry demanded that the KSM renounce its political program, communist identity, goals, and theoretical basis in Marx, Engels and Lenin.

The Interior Ministry later dropped these arguments, in favour of claiming that the KSM's goal to replace private ownership of the means of production with collective ownership was illegal. In response, the KSM organized an information campaign in the Czech Republic and abroad, filed an action against the decision of the Ministry, and intensified its public activities.

The KSM has since gathered 150,000 names in a petition campaign against a plan to construct a US military base in the Czech Republic. The Communist youth have also kept up their struggle in defence of free education for all (threatened with a plan to introduce fees for university studies), and started a public campaign against the disastrous social and economic policies of the current right wing government.

The KSM is refusing to submit to the court ruling, and its Congress was held as scheduled. They are calling on all supporters to publicize the growing anti-communism and violations of fundamental democratic rights, which have become state policy in the Czech Republic.

For more information, visit www.solidnet.org. ●



Censoring news in an "open" society

Censored 2008: the top 25 censored stories of 2006-7, edited by Peter Phillips and Andrew Roth with Project Censored, published by Seven Stories Press, 2007, 396 pages.

Reviewed by **Tim Pelzer**

Did you know that the Bush administration has given itself the legal right to declare any American citizen an enemy combatant and lock him/her up indefinitely? These persons do not have the right to challenge their arrest and imprisonment in the US courts through *habeas corpus* laws until after prosecution and sentencing. Given that US law does not impose trial period timelines, the Bush government could imprison

Fraser University Communications professor Robert Hackett have selected stories from a variety of alternative internet media and print outlets.

US involvement in ensuring that the right-wing National Action Party (PAN) won the July 2006 Mexican elections was one such story that made the list.

As *Alternet* points out, US public relations firms, hired by PAN, helped engineer a media advertising campaign that painted leading left-wing candidate Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador as a dangerous socialist threat. US firms such as Walmart and Halliburton helped pay for the advertising campaign against Obrador. In the end, the negative media campaign, combined with electoral fraud, secured victory for PAN presi-

labour. Contractors have hired thousands of workers from Southeast Asian countries and smuggled them into war-torn Baghdad against their wills to build the embassy. According to a Pentagon report, contractors have confiscated workers' passports to prevent them from leaving, charge recruiting fees that leave workers indebted to their employers for many months or years, provide substandard living accommodations, and show little concern for worker safety. Managers often beat workers, who are paid from \$10-\$30 for a 12 hour work day. The US has so far not reprimanded any of the contractors.

Much of the US tax money going to rebuild Afghanistan is being wasted, claim CorpWatch and *Tomdispatch.com*. US aid, designed to make Afghanistan a better market for US exports, is being squandered on overpaid "experts" and products and services imported at inflated prices from the US.

The FBI told the *Muckraker Report* that Osama Bin Laden was not on its ten most wanted list because it lacked hard evidence to prove that he was the ringleader of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The Bush administration used Bin Laden's role in the attacks as a justification to invade and occupy Afghanistan. Attempts to verify the authenticity of the videotapes that the Bush administration claimed it had in which Bin Laden claimed responsibility for the attacks through the Freedom of Information act were ignored.

Included in the book are independent investigative reports. Dianne Faretta outlines how fake news clips, produced by public relations firms contracted by US corporations and government, are being aired by news networks as real news.

"Thanks to resource strapped - and sometimes ethically challenged - newsrooms, VNRs (Video News Releases) are routinely incorporated into newscasts, without any disclosure to viewers" writes Faretta.

The book also follows up on previous stories in *Censored 2006*, such as the electoral fraud undertaken by the Republican Party in

the 2004 elections.

Censored 2008 should be widely read. Apart from revealing the manipulative, shallow na-

ture of the corporate media, it demonstrates how censorship can thrive in an "open" society like the US. •



"Another undisclosed NEWS source."

American citizens as long as it wants, as it has done in Guantanamo.

This and other stories are revealed by Project Censored's engaging *Censored 2008: the top 25 censored stories of 2006-7*.

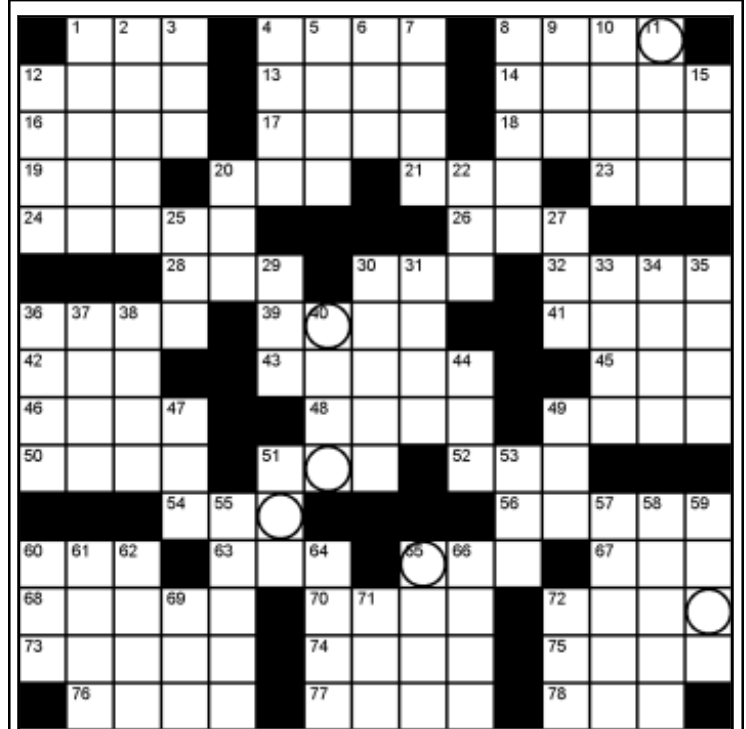
The book sheds light on the latest news stories ignored by the corporate-controlled news media over the past two years. A panel of academics that includes Simon

dential candidate Felipe Calderon. The US wanted Calderon to win because he promised to open the state-run oil sector to private investment and control, as well as greater cooperation with the US.

According to CorpWatch (www.corpwatch.org), the US is constructing a monster embassy in Baghdad covering 104 acres, worth \$592 million, using forced

PV CROSSWORD

by David Tymoshchuk



Across

1. Wednesday's child (3)
4. Hindu god or divinity (4)
8. "curb" (4)
12. "tore" by another name (4)
13. radar missing letter (4)
14. tickle to play (5)
16. convince to go (4)
17. part of a fork (4)
18. theatrical entertainment (5)
19. trainer, wonder, warner (3)
20. a cereal crop (3)
21. radio missing two letters (3)
23. 7th letter of the Greek alphabet (3)
24. an assembly of church delegates (5)
26. female gamete (3)
28. it's a "plus" (3)
30. CBC's blueprint (3)
32. Bush power (4)
36. board sport on coast (4)
39. one of Saturn's moons (4)
41. green, blue, brown, grey, or hazel (4)
42. end of an (3)
43. used for bread (5)
45. finish (3)
46. optics have these (4)
48. a trick (4)
49. scraps of food (4)
50. predetermined lot (4)
51. a drunk (3)
52. are you sleeping or agreeing with me? (3)
54. Egyptian snake (3)
56. island travel means (5)
60. can be farm animal (3)
63. sailor talk (3)
65. apartment (3)
67. grade of colour (3)
68. 1948 Nobel Prize winner (5)
70. retro lamp (4)
72. Congratulations it's a ___! (4)
73. ___ tiny (5)
74. to distort facts (4)
75. uptight; rear reference (4)
76. don't you ___ do that again! (4)
77. ___ Grey tea (4)
78. pool missing letter (3)

Down

1. ___ wart (5)
2. gay/bi people can't donate one (5)
3. before (old English) (3)
4. type of modern mining (4)
5. cut (4)
6. Jan is the man in the tan ___ (3)
7. place or region (4)
8. City NE of Moscow (5)
9. day before (3)
10. wander or roam about (4)
11. very, brutally dry wine (4)
12. vessels to bathe in (4)
15. year is not finished (3)
20. not a 2 or even a 10 (3)
22. Che's profession (3)
25. that clumsy loaf is missing something (3)
27. have you an h? (3)
29. oxymoron beer (3)
30. It's a ___! (slang for good looking) (5)
31. category of instrument (4)
33. one who eyes another (4)
34. found in park (4)
35. plural of 20 down (4)
36. DIYour ___ (4)
37. product of protein metabolism (4)
38. go off on a ___ (4)
40. role model (4)
44. perfect score (3)
47. smaller than ocean (3)
49. ___ to joy (3)
51. join CSIS to become one (3)
53. often (3)
55. part goat; Bacchus attendant (5)
57. ugly calloused unicorn (5)
58. out in country (5)
59. shout out (4)
60. but (3)
61. toward lee side of vessel (4)
62. capital in Ukraine (4)
64. otherwise (4)
65. to allege as fact (4)
66. used with ratchet (4)
69. not an even number, not even a pair (3)
71. alias (3)
72. space; bad retailer (3)

LETTERS IN CIRCLES: complete phrase "___ Disaster". Enter phrase into searchbar on wikipedia website (en.wikipedia.org)

Look for answers in our next issue

Revolutionary Voices



People's Voice 2008 Calendar, dedicated to the struggles of the international working class for peace and socialism.

Featuring notable dates, short biographical sketches, plus poetry, speeches, and writings by Che Guevara, Clara Zetkin, Norman Bethune, James Connolly, Emiliano Zapata, Nikos Beloyannis, Dolores Ibarruri, V.I. Lenin, Pablo Neruda, Gladys Marin, Tim Buck, Nazim Hikmet, Ho Chi Minh, and Salvador Allende.

For your copy, send \$10 plus \$2 mailing costs to People's Voice, 133 Herkimer St., Unit 502, Hamilton, ON, L8P 2H3. Information on bulk orders available on request.

YCL calls to eradicate racism

On March 21, the International Day for the Elimination of Racism, the Young Communist League of Canada issued a statement joining "with all those demanding an end to racist wars, environmental destruction, inequality, and attacks on civil and democratic rights."

The statement goes on to say: March 21 marks the anniversary of the 1960 Sharpeville Massacre, when police used low-flying jet fighters and armoured vehicles to attack a non-violent demonstration of over 7,000 South Africans against Apartheid's pass-book laws. The attack killed 67 people and wounded 186 protestors.

Being born non-white is not a crime. But in Canada, it usually means you are sentenced to a lifetime of systemic racial oppression. This cannot be understood as simply a matter of individual prejudice. In the grand sweep of our country's history, genocide, colonization, national oppression, racism, sexual assault and sexism, discrimination against immigrants, homophobia and other forms of oppression have and continue to play a major role in the functioning of Canadian capitalism.

The ideology of sexism and racism are also used as a rationale and enforcer of the most brutal policies of our government-including Canada's participation in coup and occupation of Haiti, the war in Afghanistan, and Canada's support for the ongoing Israeli occupation and oppression of Palestine.

There can be no peaceful co-existence with racism and with the violence it invariably spawns. The ideology racism is not abstract. It is used to divide and defeat the working class.

We demand respect for and call for the defense of civil and democratic rights, including the elimination of racial profiling by the police and the civilian and community control of police and prisons; reform to immigration and refugee laws; strengthening and enforce-

ment of hate laws; support of black-focused schools; and the enacting and enforcing equality in education, employment, healthcare and housing as a priority.

We express our solidarity with the young anti-racist activists, one of whom was a Communist Party election candidate, whose home was recently fire-bombed by neo-Nazis during the Alberta election.

We note with alarm the growing racism campaign against immigrants and racialized communities including "anti-Islamic racism" or "Islamophobia," a new label for an old form of racism that is today viciously used to justify oppression and imperialist policy.

We demand an end to the national oppression and racism Aboriginal peoples (including First Nations Inuit, and Metis peoples) face; immediate action for just and early settlement of Aboriginal land claims; Treaty implementation; solidarity with Aboriginal struggles including Sun Peaks BC, Grassy Narrows Manitoba, and Caledonia, Ontario; recognition of self-determination and self-government; implementation of the Kelowna accord at a minimum and the signing of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples by Canada; support of the Native Youth Movement and their opposition to the 2010 BC Olympic games profiteering; removing the current federal cap on core funding to First Nations; and an

end to the Canadian government's policies of suicide, genocide and assimilation.

We demand that everyone should have the right to dignity, life and justice, and access to employment, labour rights, education, health care, sports, culture, and technology.

To push back racism and sexism will take a mighty and united struggle. Together we can beat it by uniting all races, ages, and genders.

The capitalists will never end racism on their own because it serves their economic self-interest. For youth & students, the working class and the people as a whole, racism holds back our demands for a better future. Racism is not an advantage to white youth. There are only setbacks when there is no unity.

Sexism, racism, and class exploitation are inseparably linked and impact all our lives, but through unity and militancy we can defeat this system of oppression. In the longer term, socialism is a historic necessity if humanity is to win that battle and reach the stage of real democracy. The struggle to defeat racism not a distraction from the struggle for socialism, it is part of that struggle, and continues after socialism has been won. Socialism creates conditions to profoundly deepen the anti-racist struggle.

It is not only possible to bring an end to racial oppression and inequality in our country, it is a dire necessity.



Maryam Firooz, 1913-2008

The Tudeh Party of Iran reports that comrade Maryam Firooz has passed away at the age of 94 after many years of heroic struggle for the freedom of Iran and for the emancipation of women from gender and class oppression.

Born in 1913, Maryam Firooz and joined the Tudeh Party in 1944 during the rise of national and anti-colonial movement in the country, and was loyal to her beliefs till she died. After the Shah regime's attack on the Party in 1948, she was forced to live underground, and after the August 1953 coup d'état she went into exile in the Soviet Union and then the German Democratic Republic. In Germany, she earned a PhD degree and taught French at a university. She continued her political activism and spent her

spare time translating and writing, including articles in the party's press and theoretical journal, and her autobiography.

Amid the historic struggle of the Iranian people against the imperial regime of the Shah, Maryam Firooz was elected as a member of the Central Committee in 1978, and after the victory of the revolution in 1979, she returned to Iran. There she was assigned the difficult task of reviving and developing activities of the Democratic Organization of Iranian Women. During these critical and complex years, she played a decisive role in organizing women against the restrictive and anti-woman laws of the Islamic Republic.

With the betrayal of the regime's leaders against the popular movement and the brutal at-

tack on the Tudeh Party of Iran, Maryam Firooz and her husband, comrade Nouredin Kianouri, were arrested in February 1983 and sent to the regime's torture chambers. The regime's goons even detained and harassed their daughter and their 9-year old grandchild, trying to break the spirits of these militant fighters.

Released from prison in 1990, Maryam Firooz lived along with Comrade Kianouri under house arrest in Tehran, under constant watch of the Iranian security forces. After her death, she was buried by the regime, which did not even inform her friends and relatives.

Paying tribute to the lifelong struggle of Maryam Firooz, the CC of the Tudeh Party says that "her memory will always be cherished!" •

What's Left

Victoria, BC

Rally to save schools, Monday, April 7, 11:30 am, province-wide rally at the Legislature to oppose the sell-off of public school lands. Info at bc.lands@gmail.com or call Jessica, 250-598-9272.

Annual Corporate Golden Piggy Awards, Sunday, April 13, 2-4 pm, at new location, St. Ann's Auditorium, 835 Humboldt St. (at Blanshard), free admission.

Vancouver, BC

People's Voice Spaghetti Dinner, 5:30 pm, Sun., March 30, dinner \$10, at Centre for Socialist Education, 706 Clark Drive. Followed at 7 pm by **Left Film Night**, featuring "Shut Up & Sing," documentary on the Dixie Chicks, admission free (donations welcome). For information, call 604-255-2041.

April Left Film Night, Sunday, April 27, 7 pm, Centre for Socialist Education, 706 Clark Drive. "Harlan County USA," documentary on Kentucky coal miners' strike by Academy Award-winning director Barbara Kopple. Free (donations welcome), call 604-255-2041.

Frank Paul Rally: stop the violence, Wed., May 7, 11 am to 5 pm, Federal Court Building, 701 W. Georgia St., organized by Indigenous Action Movement.

Burnaby, BC

Mother's Day Pancake Breakfast, proceeds to People's Voice, Sunday, May 11, 10 am (last call for pancakes 12 noon), 5435 Kincaid St. Admission \$10 (or \$5 under 12), call Anna, 604-294-6775.

Edmonton, AB

Edmonton Young Communist League, meets regularly at Remedy Cafe, 8631-109 St., 5 pm, second Friday each month. Discussion topics and suggested readings on Facebook: www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=3559215104.

Winnipeg, MB

Manitoba-Cuba Solidarity Committee, monthly meeting, Mon., Apr. 14, 7 pm, Workers Organizing Resource Centre, 280 Smith St.

Young Communist League-UW campus club meets 1st & 4th Wed. each month, 5:30 pm, U of W buffeteria (4th floor top of escalators). Next meeting March 5. E-mail us at ycl_manitoba@ycl-ljc.ca

YCL movie nights on U of W campus. To get on the notice list for time, room, and films, just e-mail us at yclmovienight@hotmail.com.

St. Catharines, ON

People's Voice Social, Thur., April 24, 7 pm, at 8 1/2 Allan Drive, (off Hillpark Lane), hosted by Eric Blair Club, with guest speaker Sam Hammond, People's Voice business manager and CPC-Ontario St. Catharines candidate in 2007 provincial election. For directions/info call 905-646-7274.

Montreal, QC

Vigil against occupation of Palestine, Fridays, noon to 1 pm, at Israeli Consulate, corner of Peel and Rene Levesque. For info: Palestinians And Jews United, 961-3928.

People's Voice deadlines:

APRIL: 16-30 issue: Thursday, April 3

MAY 1-15 issue: Thursday, April 17

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

Dofasco breakthrough....

continued from page 2

will issue a letter to 3500 workers from the desk of vice-president Andy Harshaw, where the workers are "strongly encouraged to consider" the union pitch. Union Reps will be escorted by company officials to different work areas to address the workers and make the argument for unionization. If a majority of workers agree, they will elect from amongst themselves members to comprise a negotiating committee which will at some point present a contract for ratification. If the contract is ratified, the plant will automatically be unionized and the Steelworkers will become the certified bargaining agent.

What is important here, and is shared by the CAW-Magna deal, is that ratification of the first agreement and certification of the union are the same. One vote. What is different, at least with the limited

information, is that the first agreement will be hammered out by a committee of elected workers free of management input, instead of being presented by a union-corporate committee as at CAW-Magna. Also the Steelworkers have made a big effort to point out that the right to strike has not been and will not be compromised.

Is this a legitimate new organizing strategy, or another corporate-union partnership? The jury is still out on this one and will stay out until more than the initial sketchy information is available. There are definitely perks for the corporation, and we must analyze these as well as the union benefits to make a sound judgment. Until this becomes clearer, we must hope for the overall welfare of these workers who have been riding the benefits of unionized Steelworkers struggles for generations without being in the family. •

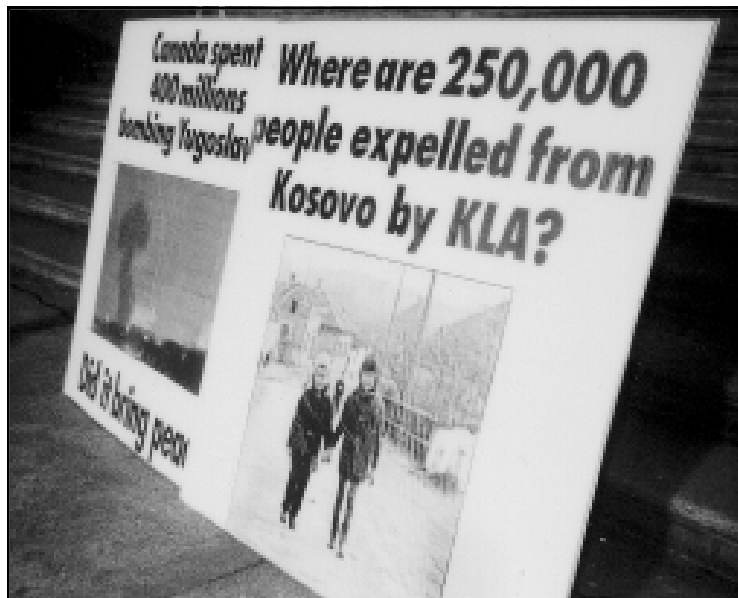
Imperialist origins of the Kosovo issue

By Darrell Rankin

Kosovo is the site of a bloody battle in 1389, important in the history of the Serbian people's struggle for freedom from the Ottoman empire. Kosovo itself was finally wrested from the Ottoman empire in 1912 by the Kingdom of Serbia; many Albanian people lived in the province at that time, but it is clear that Serbian people had lived there continuously since the 14th century or earlier. (See the reference below to the demographics of Kosovo.) Since 1912, Kosovo has been an ethnically diverse but integral part of Serbia's national territory.

Since 1999, when the NATO military alliance conquered Kosovo (illegally sanctioned later by the United Nations Security Council), much that marked the long history of the Serbian people in Kosovo has been obliterated. Many centuries-old Serbian churches and other monuments have been destroyed. The Ottoman empire was more tolerant of religious differences than today's NATO/Albanian government.

Recent tensions in Kosovo have their origins in the Second World War, when Italy occupied Kosovo (later Germany controlled the territory). Italy forcibly united Kosovo with fascist Albania. Albanians accompanying the Italian forces (with the support of local Albanians) carried out a campaign of



Signs from 1999 protests against the NATO war on Yugoslavia

murder and expulsion against the still-remaining Serbian population. This was the first major 20th century displacement and massacre of Serbs in Kosovo.

The Albanian fascist puppet president and other fascists made statements in support of genocide against the Serbs and other non-Albanian nationalities in Kosovo. Close to 9,000 collaborationist Albanians served in the German army (the Skanderbeg SS Division), which exterminated Serbs, Jews and Romany ("Gypsies").

The Serbian people had few col-

laborators during the Second World War; many died fighting the fascists or were annihilated. Estimates range from 700,000 to 1.2 million out of a population of 10 million - perhaps the highest national death rate after to the Jewish people in that war. In recent years, the Serbian people suffered the most from displacement during the break-up of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in the 1990s; most were internally displaced to Serbia and do not have official status as refugees (see notes below).

During the Second World War, approximately 10,000 to 30,000 Serbs were murdered in Kosovo; about 100,000 were driven out and replaced with immigrants from Albania. Close to 40 per cent of Jewish people living in Kosovo were murdered - over 200 people. Fascist Albanian forces continued fighting the Yugoslav government for six years following the War.

It is no secret that many Albanian people who settled in Kosovo during the Second World War opposed Yugoslavia's sovereignty over Kosovo; many refused to take part in censuses carried out by the Yugoslav government. In the 1980s, some extremist elements started a campaign of terrorism and murder against the Yugoslav government, resulting the death of thousands of people in Kosovo, especially after 1993. A leading group in this campaign was the "Kosovo Liberation Army" which targeted Serbs, Romany and unwilling Albanians. Even the United States government recognized the

KLA as a terrorist organization until 1997, when it became convenient for the U.S. to change the designation. It is now known that both the U.S. and German governments secretly trained and equipped the KLA in the 1990s.

An enormous lie was used to "justify" NATO's aggression against Yugoslavia in 1999: the need to "save" the Kosovo-Albanians from being massacred by Serbian nationalist forces. For example, the U.S. Secretary of Defence declared that 100,000 Kosovars had perished. The reality was quite different. (See the testimony of Canada's ambassador to Yugoslavia, James Bisset, cited below.)

NATO fabricated its *casus belli*, using lies to win support for its illegal aggression against Yugoslavia. The real purpose of the war is contained in NATO's Rambouillet document, which the military alliance used as an ultimatum against Yugoslavia. The Rambouillet accord had terms no sovereign country could agree to, such as abandoning socialism and imposing a "free market" economy on all of Yugoslavia, the presence of NATO military forces throughout all Yugoslavia (not just Kosovo), the immunity of NATO forces from legal action, etc.

The authors of this ultimatum were not very careful to hide their intentions. Of course, appendix "B" of the Rambouillet accord was not well known in 1999; it was buried by the corporate media. The official story emanating from Washington, taken up by the compliant corporate media and repeated in Canada's Parliament, was that the

"murderous" Yugoslav government rejected signing a "humanitarian agreement" with NATO in Rambouillet to protect the Albanian people of Kosovo.

The Serbian parliament did state its willingness, before the NATO bombing, to "examine the character and extent of an international presence in Kosovo immediately after the signing of an autonomy accord acceptable to all national communities in Kosovo, the local Serb minority included."

That did not stop NATO from carrying out a barbaric, criminal bombing campaign against Yugoslavia, without seeking the sanction of the United Nations Security Council. The country is now covered with cluster bombs, poisoned with depleted uranium. Thousands of people died in the bombing, in the deliberate targeting of objects indispensable for life (a war crime), and the predictable retaliatory and defensive actions by the KLA and Serb government forces. NATO's 25,000 missile strikes and bombing raids wounded thousands and crippled the Serbian economy, causing an estimated \$60 to \$100 billion (U.S.) damage.

Following NATO's occupation of Kosovo, the vast majority of the Serbian population (200,000 to 280,000) left; virtually none have returned. With NATO's blessing, the KLA carried out the second major ethnic cleansing of Serbs, Romas and other groups from Kosovo. The remaining 100,000 or so Serbs and non-Albanian people in Kosovo are forced to live in "protected" areas, virtually imprisoned in small Gaza-like territories. ●



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For further study and independent corroboration:

A demographic history of Kosovo

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographic_history_of_Kosovo

Roots of Kosovo Fascism, by George Thompson, at

<http://emperors-clothes.com/articles/thompson/roots.htm>

Serbian casualties in the 20th century:

www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/62/315.html

Appendix B of the Rambouillet agreement

www.swans.com/library/art6/pendixb.html

A study of media coverage leading up to the 1999 NATO aggression:

www.tenc.net/gilwhite/rambouillet.htm

Why Canada should not recognize Kosovo,

by James Bisset (Canada's ambassador to Yugoslavia in 1999)

<http://globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=8126>

See also Ambassador Bisset's testimony before a Parliamentary committee in 2000: www.tenc.net/articles/bisset/bisset.htm

A brief survey of the KLA's terrorist origins, tactics and crimes: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kosovo_Liberation_Army

"Grave consequences" of Kosovo independence

A recent common declaration of leading Communist and Workers' Parties has condemned the self-proclaimed independence of Kosovo.

The statement reads: "The undersigned Parties faced with the self-proclaimed Kosovo independence, promoted by United States of America, NATO and European Union declare that:

"Such a step - that violates international law and United Nations' resolutions on this subject - will have grave consequences in the Balkans region and internationally. It brings serious dangers for the peoples, triggering border changes, threatening to engulf the whole region in a new escalation of conflicts, wars and external interventions, and raising a dangerous international precedent. Our Parties voice against the secession of Kosovo from the Republic of Serbia. We demand that all governments refrain from recognizing the Kosovo independence as well as from dispatching troops in the area."

Signers include the Workers Party of Belgium, Communist Party of Brazil, Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia, Communist Party of Cuba, Communist Party of Greece, Communist Party of India (Marxist), Workers Party Ireland, Party of the Italian Communists, Lebanese Communist Party, People's Party of Panama, Portuguese Communist Party, Communist Party of the Russian Federation, South African Communist Party, Communist Party of Spain, Communist Party of the Peoples of Spain, Syrian Communist Party, and Communist Party of Ukraine. The statement has since been endorsed by the Communist Party of Canada and other parties. ●