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people's VOICE

**Afghan
protests**
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Defeat the Harper Tories - vote for real change

**On October 14
Put people's
needs before
corporate greed!**



A People's Energy Plan for Canada



Use the profits from public ownership and democratic control of oil and gas to cut greenhouse gas emissions by investing in renewable energy and mass

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Labour Day round-up

The year's Labour Day actions featured a wide range of actions, from the traditional parades and picnics, to rallies and protests by workers and their trade unions across the country.

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Tory corruption scandal

Fearing more damaging revelations from a Parliamentary committee delving into the "in-out" scandal, PM Harper called an early election. He should have resigned.

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ApPALING nomination

She may be a hockey mom, but Sarah Palin is connected to some of the scariest neo-Nazi, racist movements in North America. She also wants the religious right to exercise far-reaching control over people's lives.

"Let's renegotiate NAFTA," says USW leader

By Ken Neumann/USW/
CALM

U.S. presidential candidate John McCain apparently thinks Canadians, and perhaps U.S. voters, will be reassured by his promises to defend the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). The truth, however, is different. Citizens in both countries, especially workers, could benefit greatly from a thorough rewrite of NAFTA to put their interests first, rather than the interests of corporate investors who alone have reaped the benefits in the 15 years since NAFTA was signed.

Moreover, a poll conducted in March by Angus Reid Strategies found that only 24 per cent of Canadian voters believe NAFTA should continue under its current terms, as opposed to 45 per cent who said, "Canada should do whatever is necessary to renegotiate the terms of NAFTA" and eight per cent who want to scrap the treaty altogether. Canadians have it right.

Too often, NAFTA has been

used against the interests of workers and communities by encouraging a rush to the lowest labour and environmental standards and by giving corporations an opening to overturn regulations that operate in the public interest.

Labour Comment

A prime example is Canada's restriction on exporting raw logs from B.C., which is now facing a challenge from Merrill and Ring, a U.S.-based company with Canadian timber holdings. Canada is being sued for attempting to ensure Canadian sawmills, which employ Canadian workers, have a shot at getting the logs before they are exported. If this lawsuit is successful, Canada will have to lift the requirement and pay damages to Merrill and Ring. Unfortunately, there is no quid pro quo for citizens, workers or

communities.

Instead of using trade policy to give rights to corporations, why not use trade policy to raise the living standards of working people in each trading nation? Why not make tough environmental and labour standards part of the basic enforcement mechanisms of trade deals, rather than the toothless window-dressing in the NAFTA side agreements on labour and environment?

If corporations are lowering their costs by repressing labour rights or by exploiting environmental loopholes, offsetting duties should be imposed on imports to eliminate that kind of unfair advantage. Most countries currently impose duties on imported products if those products are made with subsidies. These measures, called countervail duties, are used by both Canada and the U.S. NAFTA does not prevent their use.

If subsidizing a company is an "unfair trade practice" resulting in the application of a duty, then shouldn't a duty be applied when a trading nation keeps wages low

by failing to support collective bargaining rights?

More and more North Americans believe trade should be about raising the living standards of the

citizens of trading nations. Measures need to be put into NAFTA to ensure that happens. There is no reason to believe that trade deals are cast in stone. ●



A federal report only CEOs can love

By Louis Erlichman/
IAMAW/CALM

A year ago the federal Conservative government asked a panel of five corporate big shots to review Canada's competition and investment policies. Not surprisingly, when the Competition Review Policy Panel issued their report, they recommended making Canada a better place for corporations and corporate big shots. For the rest of us, not so much.

In fact, the panel basically restated the program that has been put forward by the Canadian Council of Chief Executives (formerly the Business Council on National Issues) for the last 30 years. The program - followed slavishly by successive Liberal and Conservative governments - has increased the earnings of high-income Canadians (CEOs in particular), reduced the income of the poorest Canadians and left most of the rest of running hard just to stand still.

As the most recent census figures showed, between 1980 and 2005, the median earnings of the top 20 per cent of income earners rose by more than 16 per cent, the median income of the lowest 20 per cent fell by more than 20 per cent, and the median income of the middle 20 per cent was flat. Over 25 years, all of Canada's economic growth went to profits and the earnings of the wealthiest.

Over the same time, the earnings of the top one per cent of Canadians went up more than 60 per cent. So you can understand why the panel wants more of the same.

Of course, growing inequality, the loss of good manufacturing jobs and the decline in public services are not worth men-

tioning. They are probably not visible from the panel's lofty perch. After some ritual reiteration about globalization, productivity and competition, they move on to recite the corporate catechism to a receptive federal government.

The panel calls for a further dismantling of Canada's virtually non-existent controls on foreign investment. Canada has long been one of the world's most open and foreign-dominated economies. The panel calls for a weakening of the few remaining foreign ownership controls that provide a small measure of national influence in key sectors like telecommunications, financial services, and air transport. Particularly bizarre is their attack on Investment Canada's pathetically weak foreign investment review.

For all of its language about the importance of competitive markets, the panel proposes weakening the Competition Act and the Competition Bureau, making it even easier for corporations to cut deals and fix prices. It's workers who have to compete, not corporations.

The panel goes well beyond its original mandate of competition and investment policy to put forward the full corporate economic agenda by recommending

- * lowering taxes, particularly on corporations and capital
- * providing government support

for "talent" (ignoring the fact that their proposed tax cuts will continue the cuts in funding for public education; they like training and education as long as someone else pays)

- * forcing municipalities into more wasteful public-private partnerships to fund facilities

- * pushing inter-provincial free trade deals to weaken provincial governments and strengthen corporations

- * encouraging deeper integration with the U.S. to weaken national governments and strengthen corporations

- * promoting trade and investment deals with other countries to weaken our governments and strengthen corporations

- * deregulating, to weaken governments and strengthen corporations, except in areas like patent protection, where regulations protect corporate rights.

There is no sign of good jobs, increasing incomes for most families, better public education or improvements to public health care.

None of this program is new. Corporate CEOs have been directing our governments to deregulate, reduce government services, cut taxes and sign corporate-friendly trade deals.

It remains, however, galling to have my tax dollars pay for this corporate communications effort. They even want to set up a permanent Canadian Competitiveness Council to push the message. Perhaps we can't stop them from promoting their program, but maybe we should force the CEOs to pay for it themselves.

(Louis Erlichman is Research Director for IAMAW Canada.) ●



US Executive pay scaling new heights

The latest survey of US CEO Compensation documents the ever-widening gap between executive pay packages and the earnings of the average US worker. Compensation last year for the chiefs of the 500 companies in the Standard & Poor's 500 averaged \$10.5 million, or 344 times the average workers' pay. Compensation for private equity and hedge fund managers claims a special prize in the inequality sweepstakes. In contrast to their less fortunate counterparts in the S&P 500, the top 50 hedge fund and private equity managers averaged annual pay packets of \$588 million each - more than 19,000 times the average workers wage. ●

<http://www.iuf.org/den5289>

Wealth gap grows in Atlantic provinces

Canadian Press reported on Sept. 4 that "a new study on household debt, financial security and the wealth gap in Atlantic Canada suggests things have grown worse for the region's poor over the past decade."

The Genuine Progress Index Atlantic report, released Sept. 4, says that the richest 10 per cent of Atlantic households own about half the region's wealth, while the poorest 40 per cent together own only 3.6 per cent.

There is plenty of wealth in At-

lantic Canada, co-author Kimberley Tran said in a release, but the distribution is very uneven.

The authors estimate that one-quarter of Atlantic Canadian households have debts as great as their assets, leaving them with zero net worth or less.

While the region has 11,000 millionaires, some 77,000 families would not be able to pay off their debts even if they sold everything, including their houses.

Households in Atlantic Canada experienced the fastest growth in debt in Canada during the six-year period between 1999 and 2005, and consumer bankruptcies have risen to levels much higher than in the rest of the country. Poorer households are increasingly relying on credit cards and payday loans, just to make ends meet.

Tran concludes that governments need to pay greater attention to equity issues, to policies that enhance job and income security, ease student debt loads, and strengthen the social safety net.

"The evidence shows that financial security contributes far more to well-being than ever-higher levels of spending and consumption, particularly when a growing portion of that spending is financed by debt," Tran says. ●

Peace Congress convention postponed

The Canadian Peace Congress convention, originally scheduled for October 4 in Winnipeg, will now be held on October 25. The change is intended to allow fuller participation, since the original date is now in the midst of the federal election campaign. The Peace Congress may be reached at info@canadianpeacecongress.ca or 250-355-2669. The Peace Congress website URL is www.canadianpeacecongress.ca.

Labour Day 2008 marked in the streets

PV Vancouver Bureau

Labour Day was marked on September 1 by protests and union rallies across Canada.

Hundreds of people marched in Grand Falls-Windsor for the Newfoundland town's 88th annual Labour Day celebrations. But the parade came as workers waited for news of mass layoffs at the local Abitibi-Bowater pulp mill.

Abitibi-Bowater released its restructuring plan to the union and to government officials in August, warning of as many as 160 layoffs.

Gary Healey, national representative for the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers union, which represents the mill workers, was a keynote speaker at the parade. His message was that if Abitibi-Bowater "can't, or won't, or don't want to run our mill, we'll find someone else."

One float in the parade was a replica of the Abitibi-Bowater mill labelled with a "For Sale" sign. Another was designed with a doll, representing a child, with a sign asking if her generation would have to go to Alberta for work. The CEP's five union locals at the mill are holding meetings with members to vote on the proposal.

In Halifax, over 300 workers battled rain and winds to march around the Commons before gathering for a picnic and speeches. Keynote speaker Mary Clarke Walker, executive vice-president of the Canadian Labour Congress, said the federal election would

provide an opportunity to push for change.

"Women's wages are still much lower than men's," Walker told the media. "On average it's about 70.5 per cent. If you are university educated ... it's even lower than that."

At the other end of the country, hundreds of trade unionists rallied at the Vancouver Art Gallery to demand an increase in the BC minimum wage and to condemn the provincial Liberal government's huge salary increases to top bureaucrats. Speakers also blasted the government's new "carbon tax" which is deepening the economic hardships faced by working people, and the greed of the big energy monopolies. CEP national union



Vancouver Labour Day rally (Photo: K. Cariou)



CUPW members at the Toronto parade (Photo: Ed Bil)

president Dave Coles spoke to the crowd, drawing noisy support with a rousing call for public ownership of the big energy corporations.

Sudbury's annual Labour Day Parade was led by over sixty female bank workers, who have been on strike against the CIBC for eight months. Their strike symbolized the theme of the Sudbury rally - Equality Once and For All.

John Closs, president of the Sudbury and District Labour Council, told the media that the CIBC strike has "a lot of resonance" in Sudbury, as does the equality theme. The gender gap in the workplace is increasing, said Closs, and is larger in Sudbury than in many other communities because the high paying mining industry is largely staffed by men.

Years ago, mining jobs paid poorly and weren't considered

good jobs, said Closs. The union movement changed that. "We are trying to make jobs in banking good jobs, too," he said.

"Mobilize to Organize" was the theme of this year's Labour Day parade in Toronto. The largest such event in the country drew thousands of trade unionists, marching from Queen Street West to the Dufferin Gates at the Canadian National Exhibition.

For the third year in a row, Labour for Palestine, a network of rank and file union activists promoting the campaign against Israeli Apartheid, marched in the Toronto parade. The float was part of a contingent from the Canadian Union of Public Employees (Ontario), whose 2006 historic "boycott, divestment and sanctions" resolution was followed this year by a similar Canadian Union of

Postal Workers resolution. Three thousand leaflets urging trade unionists to get involved in the struggle against Israeli Apartheid were distributed.

Another Labour Day parade with a long historic tradition continued this year in Sarnia, where 2500 workers and 45 floats took part. Organized by the Sarnia and District Labour Council, the parade was first held in 1902.

Over six hundred workers took part in the second annual Niagara Labour March, rallying at Canadian Niagara Hotels at the base of Clifton Hill.

"This is Canadian Niagara Hotels, famous in Niagara Falls for mistreating its workers," said Alex Dagg, Canadian director of UNITE HERE Canada, which represents many of the hotel workers.

Two years ago, actor Danny Glover and some union members were charged with trespassing after entering one of the hotel lobbies and demanding to speak to an owner. Canadian Niagara has renovated the former Brock Hotel, now called the Crown Plaza, investing millions of dollars on that project, but little for its workers.

Sandra Rebrovich, president of UNITE HERE Local 2347 Niagara, said this year's march focused on the need to fight manufacturing sector job losses that devastated Niagara. The march also highlighted the need to raise workplace standards in the tourism industry. ●

Immigrants face poor work conditions

IWH/CALM

Recent immigrants not only have poorer job situations than Canadian-born workers, but immigrant men are also twice as likely to sustain workplace injuries that require medical care compared with men born in Canada.

The Institute for Work & Health (IWH) has released two new studies comparing work conditions and injury rates between immigrants and workers born in Canada.

"Immigrants with five or fewer years in Canada are more likely to have higher qualifications than their jobs require, to have physically demanding jobs, and to work fewer hours than they want to," says Peter Smith, a scientist at IWH and the lead researcher of both studies. New immigrants are also less likely to have supervisory responsibilities, to be unionized or to have access to employment benefits.

Results from the study were presented at Statistics Canada's socio-economic conference. The findings were based on interviews with more than 76,000 workers, from four waves of Statistics Canada's Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics.

The second study, published in the journal, *Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, looked at work-related injuries in immigrants. The researchers analyzed information from more than

97,000 workers who took part in the Canadian Community Health Survey in 2003 and 2005.

This study shows that new immigrant men report a high rate of medically treated injuries result from work. One explanation might be that new immigrants have more severe work injuries because they work in more hazardous settings, suggest Smith and co-author Cameron Mustard, IWH president. More information on immigrants' work hazards and injury risks is needed to confirm this explanation.

Both IWH studies highlight work-related issues in immigrants that can also affect their health.

"Being overqualified for your job, for instance, is associated with declines in health," notes Smith. Limited access to non-wage employment benefits, such as disability insurance, may result in financial insecurity if a person is unable to work.

The research also shows that conditions may be worse for certain types of immigrants, and may linger for years. Immigrants who are visible minorities, whose mother tongue is not English, or whose highest degree is from outside Canada are more likely to be overqualified, to lack supervisory responsibilities and to be underemployed. Up to 20 years later, immigrants are still less likely to receive non-wage benefits or be unionized. ●

EI doesn't add up for women

CLC/CALM

No matter how you figure it, Canada's Employment Insurance (EI) program is set up so women just can't win. EI is supposed to ensure that workers who are temporarily laid-off or unable to work have an income to see them through this period. EI also covers maternity or parental leave and periods of disability and sickness. EI is funded completely through contributions paid by employers and employees.

EI rules exclude or unfairly penalize women because they fail to take into account the different working patterns of women and men. Only 32 per cent of unemployed women qualify for regular EI benefits, compared to 70 per

cent of women who qualified for benefits before major cuts were imposed in the 1990s. Forty per cent of men currently qualify.

Women are more likely than men to be employed in part-time or temporary jobs: fully 40 per cent of working women are in non-standard employment, compared with less than 30 per cent of employed men. This reality excludes many women from EI benefits even though they have paid into the EI fund. Only about half of part-time workers who lose their jobs qualify for unemployment benefits. Periods of time women spend away from work caring for children or others, also limit their ability to have enough qualifying hours to receive benefits.

The EI program now provides up to 15 weeks of maternity benefits and 35 weeks of parental benefits. Parental benefits can be shared by both parents. However 90 per cent of these weeks are taken by women. Expanding maternity or parental leaves from 10 to 35 weeks in 2001 was a major gain for working women. But to qualify, a woman must have worked 600 hours in the previous year. About three quarters of all women giving birth to a child do qualify, although only 60 per cent claim a benefit. But a full year of leave is much more likely to be taken by women who qualify for a reasonable benefit, or whose union has negotiated a supplement to the EI benefit. ●

(www.onceandforall.ca)

More industrial layoffs hit Ontario

A century of manufacturing farm equipment in Canada will come to an end with the impending shutdown of Deere & Co.'s utility-vehicle plant in Welland, Ontario. Scheduled for next year, the closure will cost 800 workers their jobs. The Illinois-based company said production of its Gator utility vehicles and tractor attachments will move to existing facilities in Wisconsin and Mexico.

The Welland factory, which has been operating since 1911, is the largest private-sector employer in southern Ontario's Niagara Region.

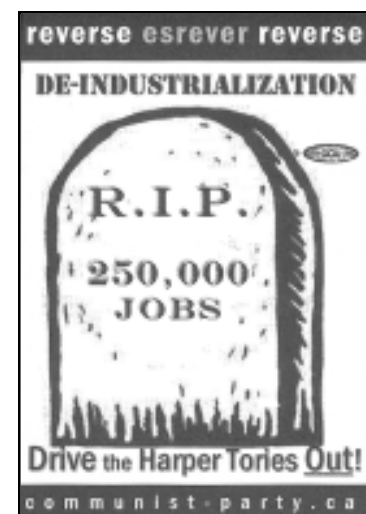
With 52,000 employees worldwide, the maker of John Deere tractors is the world's leading farm-equipment manufacturer, and a major player in construction and forestry equipment. Over the past two years, its shares have soared to

record highs. On Aug. 13, the company reported a third quarter profit of \$575.2 million US, up seven per cent from the same period last year. But the company claims that rising fertilizer and fuel costs will hurt farm equipment sales and cut into its profits. The high Canadian dollar is blamed as another factor.

In Alexandria, the Quebec-owned Premier Wire plant closed suddenly at mid-day on August 28, one week ahead of a previously announced shutdown. The United Steelworkers union is investigating whether the abrupt closure is an unfair labour practice and what the employees are owed, including termination pay and severance.

About 70 employees at Johnson Controls in Tillsonburg will be out of work when the plant, which manufactures foam for automo-

tive seating, eliminates an entire shift of employees at the end of the year. There are currently a total of 316 employees at the plant, represented by the CAW. ●



EDITORIALS

The most critical vote?

Those of us on the Left occasionally poke fun at our tendency to call each federal election "the most important in memory." In reality, while each electoral struggle is important, it often takes years or decades to grasp which campaigns truly marked crucial turning points. The 1935 defeat of R.B. Bennett's Conservatives comes to mind, or the 1988 "free trade election," which saw the Mulroney Tories win a majority even though most voters opposed their sellout of Canadian sovereignty.

The October 14 election may be one such historic campaign, because the stakes have rarely been so high, and the time to tackle humanity's problems is so limited. It's no exaggeration to warn that giving the Harper Tories a majority could quickly take Canada too far down the wrong road to turn back.

Consider some key issues. The full integration of Canada's military into the U.S. war machine has begun, even though nearly two-thirds of Canadians agree that the blood price for the military occupation of Afghanistan has been too high, and even more think a U.S.-led war against Iran would be a catastrophe. Or take the crisis of climate change. Despite overwhelming scientific proof that human economic activities are a key factor in global warming, the Harper Tories stubbornly insist that "what's good for Big Oil is good for the country." The Conservatives scrapped the first steps towards a national child care program, and they refuse to defend the Canada Health Act.

On these and other important issues, the Conservatives are out of step with public opinion. Yet they could win a majority in Parliament with less than 40% of the popular vote. With such a tainted mandate, Harper could spend five years torching Canadian sovereignty, environmental action, and the social safety net. By 2012, Canada could be completely tied to an imperialist power whose most reactionary leaders are willing to destroy the planet to preserve their hegemony.

It doesn't have to be that way. The Tories have vast piles of cash, but their policies stink to the skies. They should be hammered ruthlessly at every opportunity. October 14 will not be the end of the process, but it sets the stage in the next round of struggles for peace, jobs, democracy, social justice, and defence of the environment. Let's get to work!

Unity in Vancouver

Progressive civic activists in Vancouver heaved a sigh of relief on Sept. 8, with the announcement of electoral cooperation involving Vision Vancouver, the Coalition of Progressive Electors, and the civic Greens. The agreement requires ratification at the COPE policy conference on Sept. 14, after this issue goes to press. As supporters of COPE from its foundation forty years ago, we hope that the cooperation deal will receive overwhelming support from COPE members.

The agreement includes eight City Council nominations for Vision and only two for COPE, which is less than many had hoped for. But COPE's greatest strength today is not at the Council level, but at School Board, where the agreement does give COPE five of nine nominations. Overall, the agreement gives the best possible chances to elect several COPE candidates on Nov. 15, an outcome which is crucial to the survival of Canada's oldest labour-left civic reform alliance.

Most importantly, cooperation allows the left and centre forces in Vancouver to unite against the right-wing NPA. Despite some legitimate criticisms of Vision, the fact is that the NPA is the party of big business and the developers in Vancouver. It's time to focus on electing a broad left-centre alliance to City Hall, School Board and Park Board. Only unity can bring victory in November, creating better conditions to fight for social housing, better schools, and all the other reforms desperately desired by working people.

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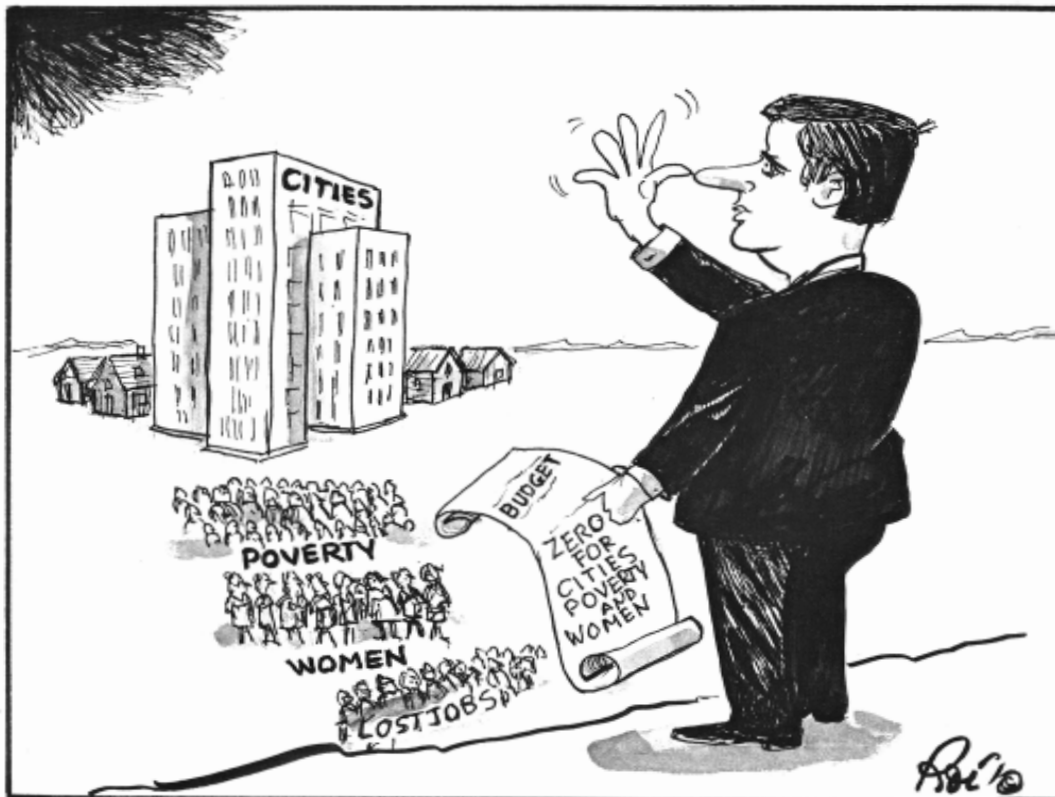
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LETTERS

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WAVE OF THE FUTURE

Vote for a new direction on October 14

A message from Miguel Figueroa, leader of the Communist Party of Canada

The October 14 federal election will mark a crucial moment in our country's history. This is an opportunity to move Canada in a fundamentally new direction - to create jobs, rebuild our decimated industrial base, and improve living standards for working people; to extricate our country from a disastrous war of occupation in Afghanistan; to save our public health care and education systems from the curse of privatization; to stop and reverse the devastation of our national and global environment; and to prevent Canada's complete absorption into the empire to our south.

Is such a new direction possible? Yes, it is!

The first step is to defeat Harper and his Conservatives, and their pro-corporate, anti-people policies which they have already begun to impose with a vengeance over the past three years.

Harper and his band of neo-cons represent the most right-wing, pro-war, and pro-U.S. government in our history. They are in the pockets of the biggest transnational corporations, oil companies and banks who are amassing obscenely-high profits at the expense of working people and our environment.

The Tories have stood idly by while food and energy prices skyrocket, because that's in the interests of their friends in Big Business. They have sabotaged international efforts to reverse global climate change caused by fossil fuel emissions, because that's what the oil and gas monopolies want.

And they have driven our country further down the road of war and militarization to satisfy the Bush Administration in Washington and the military-industrial complex.

And this is only the tip of the iceberg. Imagine what's in store if the Conservatives succeed in their bid to gain a majority! That's why their defeat at the polls on October 14th is so crucial.

The Communist Party and its candidates will be campaigning



Communist Party leader Miguel Figueroa

for fundamental change, for real change that will place people's needs first, not the profit interests of the corporate elite.

We need policies to improve the living standards for workers - especially the poorest paid - by increasing the minimum wage to \$15 an hour, by preventing plant shutdowns and runaways, and by reducing the working week to 32 hours without any loss in take-home pay.

We need to stop and reverse the creeping privatization of Medicare, public education, pensions and other vital social services.

We need to tax the windfall profits of the oil monopolies and use those billions upon billions to lower retail prices - especially for home heating. We must launch a massive investment program into renewable energy, to greatly expand urban and inter-city mass transit, and to safeguard our environment. And we need to nationalize the oil and gas industry in Canada as peoples in many other countries have done so successfully.

We need a new, independent foreign policy based on peace and cooperation, and respect for international law, not on war and militarization.

We invite you to find out more about our "people's alternative" for Canada by visiting our website,

www.comunist-party.ca, or by contacting our offices and candidates across the country.

The future of our country is at stake in this election! It's time to dump Harper and the Tories.

For the rights of workers and the unemployed, for women demanding full equality, for youth and students, Aboriginal peoples and national minorities, on October 14th, you can send a powerful message for real change by voting Communist.

Take Canada in a fundamentally new direction - put people before profit! •

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Communist Party enters election campaign

Just as Stephen Harper unleashed his threat to dissolve Parliament, members of the Communist Party of Canada's Central Committee gathered in Toronto for a two day meeting over the August 23-24 weekend. The meeting finalized plans to nominate some two dozen candidates in the October 14 election, running on a platform to defeat the Harper Tories and to fight for policies of peace, Canadian sovereignty, jobs, social justice, and democracy.

The policy centrepiece of the Communist campaign will be a "People's Energy Plan for Canada," based on public ownership of the oil and gas industry as the material basis for a radical shift in economic and environmental priorities for the country. (See page 7 for details of the Energy Plan.)

Communists will be on the



Communists in the Toronto Labour Day parade (Photo: Ed Bil)

ballot in five provinces: BC, Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario, and Quebec. Party leader Miguel Figueroa, a candidate in Toronto, will be on the road during

much of the campaign, speaking at public forums and media events in most of the ridings where Communists are on the ballot.

The CC meeting heard a wide-ranging report by Figueroa on the deepening crisis affecting the capitalist world. Despite the Harper government's claims, he stressed, Canada is not immune from this crisis. The catastrophic decline in manufacturing jobs, for example, is a clear signal that deeper economic woes lie ahead, requiring a more powerful fightback movement by the working class and its allies.

Central Committee members from across the country discussed recent developments in the struggles against imperialist war, and against the neoliberal policy agenda and corporate attacks on working people here at home.

The meeting adopted a series of special resolutions on urgent topics: support for war resisters; opposition to police violence; solidarity with the women's March for Justice to Ottawa; a call for Stephen Harper's resignation in the wake of the latest Tory corruption scandals; condemnation of NATO's expansionist war drive; and a salute to the Cuban Revolution, which will mark its 50th anniversary on New Year's Day, 2009.

For more information, including the text of the CC resolutions and details of the Communist Party election campaign, visit the Party's website, www.comunist-party.ca. •

Support war resisters - stop the deportations!

Resolution adopted by the Central Committee, Communist Party of Canada, August 24, 2008

Since the start of the illegal U.S.-led war against Iraq, growing numbers of U.S. military personnel have refused to participate in this war of aggression and occupation. Hundreds have crossed the border into Canada, many with their families, just as an earlier generation of soldiers did during U.S. imperialism's dirty war against Vietnam.

These new war resisters base their position on the Nuremberg Tribunal, which established that under international law, soldiers have a moral duty to refuse to carry out illegal orders, such as the massive killings and torture of Iraqis. Yet in December 2004, the Canadian government (then led by Liberal PM Paul Martin) reversed Canada's former position by intervening in the first hearing of a war resister before the Immi-

gration and Refugee Board to argue that the legality of the war had no relevance to his claim.

From the beginning, the war resisters have been welcomed with open arms by Canadians, who have provided shelter, financial assistance, and solidarity. Opinion surveys indicate that most Canadians support the right of the war resisters to stay in Canada; a June 2007 poll conducted in Ontario, for example, found that 64.6% of respondents said that U.S. soldiers who oppose the war should be allowed to stay in Canada. Earlier this year, the House of Commons passed a resolution stating a similar position.

But the Harper minority government continues to defy public opinion and the House of Commons on this issue, choosing instead to support efforts by the Bush administration and the Pentagon to punish the war resisters. This summer, after years of legal and political struggles, the first war resisters are nearing imminent de-

portation back to the U.S., where they face court martials, years in prison, and even the possibility of the death penalty for "desertion during wartime."

The Communist Party of Canada reiterates our full solidarity with all military personnel (including Americans and Canadians) who oppose the imperialist wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and extends our unconditional support for the right of the U.S. war resisters and their families to seek sanctuary in Canada. We condemn the Harper Tories for refusing to reject U.S. demands for the return of the war resisters, yet another sellout of Canadian sovereignty. We urge all Canadians to support the September 13th pan-Canadian Day of Action to support U.S. Iraq war resisters. The members and clubs of the Communist Party will mobilize to take part in the actions, demonstrations, and pickets which will take place in cities and towns across Canada on that day. •



HIS MASTER'S VOICE

End Tory corruption: Harper must resign

Resolution adopted by the Central Committee, Communist Party of Canada, August 24, 2008

Ever since squeaking into office with a minority of MPs and the support of barely one-third of voters, the Harper Tories have governed with appalling arrogance. Repeatedly, this undemocratic government rejects public opinion on key issues such as the unpopular war in Afghanistan, and even ignores resolutions adopted by a majority of MPs, for example on protecting the Wheat Board or welcoming war resisters to Canada.

But the corruption of the Harper Tories has reached new levels with the revelations of the so-called "in-out" scandal. Under this scheme, the Conservatives dumped excess funds into the campaign accounts of certain candidates to pay for national advertising purchases, and then bilked Canadian taxpayers out of millions of dollars by getting tax breaks for such spending.

It is abundantly clear from the testimony of the few Conservatives who have braved their party's threats in order to speak about this matter that the "in-out" practice was well understood to be a violation of Elections Canada regulations. Those who conducted this illegal scheme should face criminal charges, and the Harper government should resign, since this activity was carried out at the highest levels of the Conservative party.

Furthermore, the massive war chest of the Conservative Party, filled with donations from the wealthy and powerful, should be frozen pending the report of a full inquiry into the extent of illegal financial practices by "the favoured party of big business." This episode is a warning that the entire electoral system is in urgent need of reform, to drastically reduce election spending limits, and to ensure equality for all political parties and candidates, including fair access to the mass media. •

Justice for victims of police violence and racism

Resolution adopted by the Central Committee, Communist Party of Canada, August 24, 2008

This meeting of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Canada condemns the ongoing killing of civilians by police officers across Canada, and renews our demand for full civilian oversight of the RCMP, provincial and municipal police forces.

On August 9, 18-year-old Freddy Villanueva was killed and two of his companions were shot by Montreal police officers. This tragic killing is the latest in a long series. The Montreal Coalition Opposed to Police Brutality reports that over the past 22 years, 43 people have died at the hands

of the city's police, most of them members of racialized and impoverished communities. But this blatant record of police violence and racism continues unchecked. Only two officers have ever been charged in these Montreal cases, and both were acquitted.

In Winnipeg this summer, two young Aboriginal men have been killed by police - 17-year-old Michael Langan, who died after being Tasered, and 28-year-old Craig McDougall, the nephew of J.J. Harper, who also died at the hands of police.

The investigations into all these killings are always conducted by other police forces, which routinely clear their colleagues of wrong-doing. We give full support to community demands for a

full and independent public inquiry into these deaths, and for suspension of the officers involved pending such an inquiry. The shocking pattern of impunity for police racism and violence across Canada, most often committed against Aboriginal people and immigrants, must be broken. Instead of an occasional slap on the wrist, criminal charges must be laid against all police officers who abuse their authority by shooting, tasered and beating people. Investigations of all such cases should be carried out by independent bodies, not other police forces. Justice must be won, for Freddy Villanueva, Michael Langan, Craig McDougall, and for the countless other victims of police brutality across Canada! •



The final countdown: 100 months?

By Andrew Simms, *The Guardian*, August 1, 2008

If you shout "fire" in a crowded theatre, when there is none, you understand that you might be arrested for irresponsible behaviour and breach of the peace. But from today, I smell smoke, I see flames and I think it is time to shout. I don't want you to panic, but I do think it would be a good idea to form an orderly queue to leave the building.

Because in just 100 months' time, if we are lucky, and based on a quite conservative estimate, we could reach a tipping point for the beginnings of runaway climate change. That said, among people working on global warming, there are countless models, scenarios, and different iterations of all those models and scenarios. So, let us be clear from the outset about exactly what we mean.

The concentration of carbon dioxide (CO₂) in the atmosphere today, the most prevalent greenhouse gas, is the highest it has been for the past 650,000 years. In the space of just 250 years, as a result of the coal-fired Industrial Revolution, and changes to land use such as the growth of cities and the felling of forests, we have released, cumulatively, more than 1,800 billion tonnes of CO₂ into the atmosphere. Currently, approximately 1,000 tonnes of CO₂ are released into the Earth's atmosphere every second, due to human activity. Greenhouse gases trap incoming solar radiation, warming the atmosphere. When these gases accumulate beyond a certain level - often termed a "tipping point" - global warming will accelerate, potentially beyond control.

Faced with circumstances that clearly threaten human civilisation, scientists at least have the sense of humour to term what drives this process as "positive feedback". But if translated into an office workplace environment, it's the sort of "positive feedback" from a manager that would run along the lines of: "You're fired, you were rubbish anyway, you have no future, your home has been demolished and I've killed your dog."

In climate change, a number of feedback loops amplify warming



through physical processes that are either triggered by the initial warming itself, or the increase in greenhouse gases. One example is the melting of ice sheets. The loss of ice cover reduces the ability of the Earth's surface to reflect heat and, by revealing darker surfaces, increases the amount of heat absorbed. Other dynamics include the decreasing ability of oceans to absorb CO₂ due to higher wind strengths linked to climate change. This has already been observed in the Southern Ocean and North Atlantic, increasing the amount of CO₂ in the atmosphere, and adding to climate change.

Because of such self-reinforcing positive feedbacks (which, because of the accidental humour of science, we must remind ourselves are, in fact, negative), once a critical greenhouse concentration threshold is passed, global warming will continue even if we stop releasing additional greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. If that happens, the Earth's climate will shift into another, more volatile state, with different ocean circulation, wind and rainfall patterns. The implications of which, according to a growing litany of research, are potentially cata-

strophic for life on Earth. Such a change in the state of the climate system is often referred to as irreversible climate change.

So, how exactly do we arrive at the ticking clock of 100 months? It's possible to estimate the length of time it will take to reach a tipping point. To do so you combine current greenhouse gas concentrations with the best estimates for the rates at which emissions are growing, the maximum concentration of greenhouse gases allowable to forestall potentially irreversible changes to the climate system, and the effect of those environmental feedbacks. We followed the latest data and trends for carbon dioxide, then made allowances for all human interferences that influence temperatures, both those with warming and cooling effects. We followed the judgments of the mainstream climate science community, represented by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), on what it will take to retain a good chance of not crossing the critical threshold of the Earth's average surface temperature rising by 2C above pre-industrial levels. We were cau-

tious in several ways, optimistic even, and perhaps too much so. A rise of 2C may mask big problems that begin at a lower level of warming. For example, collapse of the Greenland ice sheet is more than likely to be triggered by a local warming of 2.7C, which could correspond to a global mean temperature increase of 2C or less. The disintegration of the Greenland ice sheet could correspond to a sea-level rise of up to 7 metres.

In arriving at our timescale, we also used the lower end of threats in assessing the impact of vanishing ice cover and other carbon-cycle feedbacks (those wanting more can download a note on method from onehundredmonths.org). But the result is worrying enough.

We found that, given all of the above, 100 months from today we will reach a concentration of greenhouse gases at which it is no longer "likely" that we will stay below the 2C temperature rise threshold. "Likely" in this context refers to the definition of risk used by the IPCC. But, even just before that point, there is still a one-third chance of crossing the line.

Today is just another Friday in August. Drowsy and close. Office workers' minds are fixed on the weekend, clock-watching, waiting perhaps for a holiday if your finances have escaped the credit crunch and rising food and fuel prices. In the evening, trains will be littered with abandoned news-

We face the fallout from the credit crisis, high oil and rising food prices, and the massive added challenge of having to avert climate change.

paper sports pages, all pretending interest in the football transfers. For once it seems justified to repeat T.S. Eliot's famous lines: "This is the way the world ends/ Not with a bang but a whimper."

But does it have to be this way? Must we curdle in our complacency and allow our cynicism about politicians to give them an easy ride as they fail to act in our, the national and the planet's best interest? There is now a different clock to watch than the one on the office wall. Contrary to being a counsel of despair, it tells us that everything we do from now matters. And, possibly more so than at any other time in recent history.

It tells us, for example, that only a government that was sleepwalking or in a chemically induced coma would countenance building a third runway at Heathrow, or a new generation of coal-fired power stations such as the proposed new plant at Kingsnorth in Kent. Infrastructure that is fossil-fuel-dependent locks in patterns of future greenhouse gas emissions, radically reducing our ability to make the short- to medium-term cuts that are necessary.

Deflecting blame and responsibility is a great skill of officialdom. The most common strategies used by government recently have been wringing their hands and blaming China's rising emissions, and telling individuals to, well, be a bit more careful. On the first get-out, it is delusory to think that countries such as China, India and Brazil will fundamentally

change until wealthy countries such as Britain take a lead. And it is wildly unrealistic to think that individuals alone can effect a comprehensive re-engineering of the nation's fossil-fuel-dependent energy, food and transport systems. The government must lead.

In their inability to take action commensurate with the scale and timeframe of the climate problem, the government is mocked both by Britain's own history, and by countries much smaller, poorer and more economically isolated than we are.

The challenge is rapid transition of the economy in order to live within our environmental means, while preserving and enhancing our general wellbeing. In some important ways, we've been here before, and can learn lessons from history. Under different circumstances, Britain achieved astonishing things while preparing for, fighting and recovering from the second world war. In the six years between 1938 and 1944, the economy was re-engineered and there were dramatic cuts in resource use and household consumption. These coincided with rising life expectancy and falling infant mortality. We consumed less of almost everything, but ate more healthily and used our disposable income on what, today, we might call "low-carbon good times".

A National Savings Movement held marches, processions and displays in every city, town and village in the country. There were campaigns to Holiday at Home and endless festivities such as dances, concerts, boxing displays, swimming galas, and open-air theatre - all organised by local authorities with the express purpose of saving fuel by discouraging unnecessary travel. To lead by example, very public energy restrictions were introduced in government and local authority buildings, shops and railway stations. This was so successful that the results beat cuts previously planned in an over-complex rationing scheme. The public largely assented to measures to curb consumption because they understood that they were to ensure "the fairest possible distribution of the necessities and comforts of daily life".

Now, 2008, we face the fallout from the credit crisis, high oil and rising food prices, and the massive added challenge of having to avert climate change.

Does a war comparison sound dramatic? In April 2007, Margaret Beckett, then foreign secretary, gave a largely overlooked lecture called *Climate Change: The Gathering Storm*. "It was a time when Churchill, perceiving the dangers that lay ahead, struggled to mobilise the political will and industrial energy of the British Empire to meet those dangers. He did so often in the face of strong opposition," she said. "Climate change is the gathering storm of our generation. And the implications - should we fail to act - could be no less dire: and perhaps even more so."

In terms of what is possible in times of economic stress and isolation, Cuba provides an even more embarrassing example to show up

Rich create bigger footprint

CCPA/CALM

The richest 10 per cent of Canadians create a 66 percent bigger ecological footprint than the average Canadian household, says a new study by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA).

The study, *Size Matters: Canada's Ecological Footprint, By Income*, is the first Canadian study to link national income and consumption patterns with global warming.

"When we look at where the environmental impact of human activity comes from, we see that size really does matter," says Hugh Mackenzie, CCPA research associate, "Higher-income Canadians create a much bigger

footprint than poorer Canadians."

Among the study's findings:

* The richest 10 per cent of Canadian households create an ecological footprint of 12.4 hectares per capita, nearly two-and-a-half times that of the poorest 10 per cent.

* While the size of an individual's ecological footprint increases as household income increases, the real jump is at that top 10 per cent level. When it comes to environmental impact, it really is a case of the rich and the rest of us.

* The bottom 60 per cent of Canadian households' ecological footprint is below the national average, but even the lowest-income Canadians create an ecological footprint that is several times the average for those in poorer nations.

"All Canadians share responsi-

bility for global warming," says co-author Rick Smith, executive director of Environmental Defence. "But wealthier Canadians are leaving behind a disproportionately larger footprint, and should be expected to make a disproportionate contribution to its solution."

Mackenzie says the study contains lessons for policy makers: "Clearly ecological impact is strongly related to income. Greenhouse gas emissions policies should reflect that reality or risk being less effective and unfair to low- and middle-class Canadians." •

Size Matters: Canada's Ecological Footprint, By Income is available from the CCPA web site www.policyalternatives.ca.

A "People's Energy Plan for Canada"

People's Voice Commentary

Gathering in Toronto over the August 23-24 weekend, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Canada held a wide-ranging debate on the energy industry. The meeting adopted a call to make energy nationalization the material basis for a radical overhaul of the Canadian economy, with the goal of dramatic reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and rebuilding the country's economic foundations. The "People's Energy Plan for Canada" will be a centrepiece of the Communist Party's federal election campaign.

The Energy Plan warns that "Our world - and our country - are entering a period of grave dangers, an era of potentially devastating climate changes, widespread hunger and chaos, all linked to the unchecked growth of fossil fuel consumption, greenhouse gas emissions, and wars to control oil reserves. In response, the Communist Party of Canada proposes far-sighted and radical policy changes, requiring a courageous struggle to take urgent and decisive action."

Skyrocketing energy prices have impacted on Canadian industries and the living standards of working people. But "at the same time, there is growing awareness and concern about the harmful impact of reliance on fossil fuels on our domestic and global environment, particularly with respect to climate change, and about the deadly wars of occupation in Iraq and Afghanistan, waged largely to secure U.S. imperialist domination over energy resources. The outcome of this debate is central to the entire future of Canada and its sovereignty, and to the very future of our planet."

Throughout Canadian history, energy policy and development have been unplanned, driven by the anarchy of "market forces" and the interests of giant energy monopolies. The result has been massive profits for Big Oil. In the first half of 2008, the five biggest Canadian-based oil giants (Husky, Petro-Canada, Suncor, Encana and Nexen) raked in more than \$12 billion. The global oil monopolies (ExxonMobil, BP, Royal Dutch Shell, Chevron and Total) report staggering profits. ExxonMobil alone made US\$40.6 billion in profits in 2007 - about US\$1,300 every second of the year!

Canadians are increasingly aware that reliance on the consumption of fossil fuels threatens the planet, and that pro-corporate governments are obstructing every effort to seriously reduce emission levels of greenhouse gases.

For all these reasons, the Plan states, "Canada today requires a comprehensive, integrated energy policy - one which ensures the security of energy supply to meet the needs of our people and promotes the overall economic and social development of our country, while protecting and enhancing our environment."

The cornerstone of such a policy must be the public ownership of energy, "from its primary production/extraction and refinement through to its distribution and sale. Any meaningful transformation of the energy 'system' is impossible without wresting control from the

private energy monopolies..."

Other policy options fall short, the document states, such as the carbon tax backed by Dion's Liberals and the "cap and trade" favoured by Layton's NDP.

The cap and trade concept allows "dirty" or heavily gas-emitting companies to "pollute and pay," and global monitoring of the "trades" is utterly inadequate. Meanwhile, carbon tax proposals place a disproportionately higher burden on low-wage and poor people than on the wealthy. At best, these concepts are of questionable promise; at worst, they divert attention from far more urgent measures. Both turn the environment into just another commodity, relying on market mechanisms to induce lower emissions, while leaving control in the hands of the same corporations which have degraded the environment in the first place.

Public ownership of energy, on the other hand, has been achieved in many countries, and offers the potential for radical restructuring of humanity's impact on the environment. A massive and complex struggle against the corporate interests will be needed to achieve such a fundamental reform, but it can be won.

Such a move will be a vital step towards restoration of the Canadian sovereignty sold out by Liberal and Conservative governments. Under the terms of the NAFTA agreement, for example, Canada is legally prohibited from restricting the rate of exports of petroleum and other energy to the U.S., even if our energy reserves fall short of future Canadian needs. Left in place, this NAFTA clause will drain Canada's energy to fuel the United States military-industrial complex.

Furthermore, Chapter 11 of NAFTA grants U.S. corporations legal rights to sue Canada if their profits are adversely affected by government policy. This makes it virtually impossible for any federal government, acting upon the democratic will of the people, to nationalize foreign corporate holdings in this country.

The follow-up to NAFTA, the "Security and Prosperity Partnership," calls for a continental energy and natural resources pact which would grant U.S. monopolies even greater guaranteed access by creating an integrated energy marketplace.

For this reason, the Communist Party says that Canada must give immediate notice of intent to withdraw from the NAFTA Treaty, and terminate participation in the SPP negotiations.

A central feature of the "People's Energy Plan" is its firm commitment to fundamentally transform the system of energy production and use, through dramatic overall reductions in greenhouse gas emission, air pollution, and radioactive waste. Such a transformation must include significant public investment in research and expansion of solar energy, wind

power and other renewable forms of energy.

The Plan calls for massive investment in low-cost, publicly-subsidized mass transit systems; inter-city, high-speed rail service to reduce reliance on private automobile and air travel; strict enforcement of substantially higher emission-control standards on vehicles sold and used in Canada;



Nationalize the Gas Gougers!!

Drive the Harper Tories Out!

and the establishment of a publicly-owned "Canadian car" industry using new, non-polluting technologies.

Other policies in the Plan include an end to coal-fired power generation; a permanent moratorium on new nuclear power generation stations, and the phased closure of existing nuclear facilities; termination of feedgrain-based bio-fuel production; cancellation of the proposed Mackenzie Valley natural gas pipeline, and curtailment of other "North-South" projects in favour of an East-West power grid to serve the energy needs of the entire country.

One critical issue in this debate is the impact of the tar sands projects, which are devastating northeastern Alberta. The Communist proposal calls for cancelling expansion of tar sands projects, and the phased reduction of current facilities as export licences expire and as Canadian domestic reliance on bitumen/refined oil gradually declines. The plan supports a moratorium on offshore oil and gas exploration and operations.

The vast profits from public ownership of the oil and gas industry could fund massive programs to environmentally retro-fit small businesses and existing housing stock - especially low-income and public housing - and to set higher energy-conserving standards. Another proposal is for a Canada-wide program of mixed reforestation to replenish depleted forest stands, reduce soil erosion and enhance CO2 absorption.

The Communist Party stresses that "the absence of (an) integrated energy policy, together with other

harmful corporate actions and governmental neglect, has contributed in large measure to the decimation of Canada's industrial base over the past two decades. Industrial development is a cornerstone of any country's economic health, of the maintenance and improvement of workers' living standards, and the preservation of its sovereignty."

A People's Energy Plan would strengthen environmentally-sound manufacturing, benefitting industrial workers and creating countless more jobs in services, trades and related sectors across the country. This would raise the wage rates of workers in general, and strengthen the capacity of the working class to defend the economic, social and political rights of all Canadians.

This strategy is also crucial to the struggle to overcome the legacy of centuries of plunder of Aboriginal peoples in Canada, including the ongoing theft of oil, gas and hydro power from their traditional lands and waters.

To achieve genuine equality of Aboriginal peoples and guarantee their national rights, the People's Energy Plan calls for present and future energy development on Aboriginal lands (both surface and subsurface) to proceed only with their full knowledge and consent, on fairly negotiated terms. The development of a Canada-wide

The centrepiece of the People's Energy Plan is public ownership through nationalization, and the democratic, popular control of energy resource extraction, production and distribution. It is around this pivotal and decisive question that the most intense battles will be fought.

power grid would provide stable and secure supplies of energy to the Aboriginal peoples, especially in rural and Northern communities which currently have poor access to energy, and it would lower the domestic cost of energy to those communities. Finally, it would generate massive revenues to help compensate Aboriginal peoples for the outright thievery of their lands and resources over many generations.

Far-reaching changes to Canada's political structure would be needed to implement a People's Energy Plan. Under current constitutional arrangements, provinces maintain primary control over natural resource development on their territories. The Communist proposal is that crucial decisions over energy development should rest with the Canadian people as a whole, not the provinces. The sole exception should be Québec, which constitutes not just a province but also a nation within Canada. The necessary constitutional changes should be negotiated by governments and the Aboriginal peoples, along with equitable agreements on federal/provin-

cial sharing of the wealth generated through extraction and development of energy resources.

The energy issue is closely connected to Canada's foreign and defence policies. The U.S.-led wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are motivated in large part by the drive of U.S. ruling corporate circles to dominate and control energy resources. The People's Energy Plan calls for Canada to categorically reject the use or threat of military aggression to secure access to natural resources, and to fully respect the sovereign rights of other states and peoples to control their own resources.

The Plan would contribute to the world-wide struggle against militarism, which is incredibly wasteful of energy resources. Canada should immediately end its participation in the occupation of Afghanistan, withdraw from NATO and Norad, and redirect its own bloated military budget to peaceful and socially useful purposes.

The Communist Party advocates "a broad people's movement to launch a political struggle to win and implement a People's Energy Plan, a struggle which will likely involve many pitched battles and partial victories along the way."

The first steps should include the following measures:

- * The rollback (and then capping) of retail energy prices, especially for home heating;
- * Support for stronger mandatory post-Kyoto emission reduction targets;
- * Withdrawal from the NAFTA Treaty and termination of Canada's involvement in the SPP process;
- * Imposition of a 100% "Windfall Profit Tax" on the large oil and natural gas corporations;
- * Renationalization of Petro-Canada and privatized utility companies such as Ontario Hydro, Nova Scotia Power, and others;
- * Re-establishment of a two-price system for oil and gas, with reduced rates for domestic use and world price rates for exported energy;

* A shorter work week with no loss in pay, which would create more jobs and reduce fossil fuel consumption.

The centrepiece of the People's Energy Plan is public ownership through nationalization, and the democratic, popular control of energy resource extraction, production and distribution. It is around this pivotal and decisive question that the most intense battles will be fought. Nationalization and the resulting access to the enormous wealth it generates are necessary to publicly finance the other investments and transformations elaborated in the plan. Just as important, only the sweeping nationalization of Canada's energy resources will make it possible to break the economic and political power of the giant monopolies - the fiercest enemies of energy democratization.

During the current federal election, and at every stage in this unfolding struggle, we must keep our eyes on the prize - Canada's energy for the needs of the people, and under the ownership and control of the people. ●



GLOBAL CLASS STRUGGLE

Power outages spark Bangladesh protests

Hundreds of power-loom workers in Bangladesh protested on Sept. 3 against frequent power cuts, setting 12 vehicles on fire and damaging other property. Around 700 workers rampaged through a power office after production disruptions due to frequent power outages affected their wages.

The workers had been demanding uninterrupted power supply for the last two months. On August 24, they laid siege to the power office and put up barricades on Dhaka-Sylhet Highway to press home their demand. Locals joined in the protests on both occasions.

In another Sept. 3 incident sparked by power outages, several thousand people attacked the Rural Electrification Board office at Mazira in Shahjahanpur. The protesters chased police, pelting them with brickbats after the officers tried in vain to disperse the crowd. The Dhaka-Dinajpur highway was barricaded for about two hours, until top REB officials assured them of sufficient power supply.

Shorter hours in Bermuda?

The government of Bermuda is considering a union proposal to reduce the working week. Education Minister Randy Horton told a Bermuda Industrial Union banquet on August 29 that the government is seriously considering its suggestion that 35 hours rather than 37.5 should be the norm.

Horton, who was Acting Premier at the time, said the plan could have a positive impact on the growing problem of youth violence by allowing parents more time to spend with their children. The openness to the idea appears to be a change in stance on the part of the Government, which opposed a similar proposal from the BIU in 2006 and won against the union when the matter went to arbitration.

In an interview two years ago, former BIU President Derrick Burgess, who is now the country's Minister of Works and Engineering, said: "A 35-hour working week is normal in Bermuda for government workers, banks and office workers. The civil servants have been on a 35-hour week since the 1980s and we want to be in conformity with them. If the civil servants are working a shorter week than their subordinates, that doesn't bode well. The benefits of a reduced week will be that the workers will have more time with their families. It should also relieve some stress and help with sickness levels."

Workers extend strike at Brazil car plants

Workers at automobile plants in southern Brazil owned by Volkswagen AG, Renault SA, and Nissan Motor voted on Sept. 4 to extend their strike into a fourth day to push for a wage increase.

About 9,000 workers joined the walkout in Parana state, causing an overall production loss at the three factories of about 6,600 vehicles, according to the Greater Curitiba Metalworkers' Union.

The automakers, which were scheduled to meet with union leaders on Sept. 4, declined to comment on the strike. But the head of the national automakers' association said the manufacturers were "absolutely open" to dialogue.

"I'm confident we're going to reach an agreement, but one that doesn't compromise the competitiveness of the industry," said Jackson Schneider, president of the automakers' association.

The metalworkers in Parana are demanding a 13 percent wage increase and a one-time bonus of 1,500 reais (\$877) to compensate for inflation. So far, the automakers have offered a 10 percent salary increase plus the bonus.

Metalworkers in the "ABC" industrial hub of Sao Paulo, where Volkswagen and Ford have factories, are also threatening to strike to demand a raise. The workers have voted not to work extra shifts on weekends for the duration of negotiations.

The influential ABC Metalworkers' Union, which was once led by President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, said the workers were demanding a raise of "at least two digits." The automakers have offered an increase of 1.25 percent plus inflation, which is running above 6 percent.

On Sept. 3, workers at General Motors, Honda, Toyota, and Daimler AG's Mercedes-Benz plants in the interior of Sao Paulo state held a 24-hour strike to demand an 18.83 percent salary increase.

"No one likes to strike, but we deserve a bigger piece of the pie in this exceptional moment for the auto industry," said Sergio Nobre, president of the ABC Metalworkers' Union.

Brazil's auto industry has boomed over the last few years, racking up record profits on the back of an economic revival that has pushed down unemployment and driven up real wages. The industry has also benefited from a credit boom that has allowed millions of Brazilians to buy cars for the first time. But the push for wage increases comes just as the auto market in Brazil is showing signs of slowing down. Car and truck sales slumped 15.1 percent in August from the previous month, suggesting that a recent increase in interest rates is starting to crimp consumer demand.

Longer work, less holidays

Irish workers put in longer hours and get fewer holidays, according to a new report on the difference in working times between eastern and western European countries.

The report by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound) showed that in 2007, the average working time in Ireland was 38.9 hours per week, compared to the collectively agreed working time average of 37 hours. The report, which looks

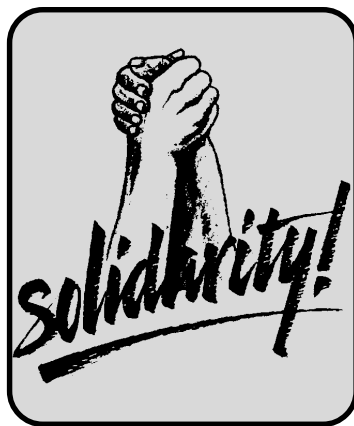
at working time agreements set by collective bargaining in the EU at large, also found that the average paid annual leave for Irish workers stood at 20 days compared to 25.2 days across Europe.

The average working time, covering 75 per cent of the EU labour force, stands at 38.6 hours. But there is a substantial gap between the former EU 15 member states and the new member states.

Swaziland workers protest royal "opulence"

Swaziland union workers launched a strike action on Sept. 4 to raise awareness of the government's opulence and corruption. After a recent European shopping spree by the thirteen wives of King Mswati III, the protesters say it is unacceptable for the monarch to show such opulence when majority of the people live in abject poverty. The Swazi prime minister dismissed the accusations as "without merit".

Vincent Dlamini, the main organizer of the Sept. 4 protest, condemned the extreme poverty in Swaziland, and the "extravagant expenditure" planned for the coun-



try's 40th anniversary of independence on Sept. 6.

Dlamini said workers want the government to respond to their demands. "What we want to achieve is a situation where the government will respond positively to our demand. And secondly, we want to highlight the political crisis in our country so that the world knows that Swaziland is not a peaceful country, but a country in silence. And we want the international community to understand that there is a difference between silence and peace. We have been silent for too long and we have been living under a state of emergency that has existed since 1973."

Opposition political groups seeking democratic reforms have become more active in Swaziland, where the opposition has been banned since 1973 by royal decree. Parliamentary elections are scheduled for Sept. 19.

More killings in Colombia

The trade union movement in Colombia continues to be the constant target of murders, attempted murders, attacks, and death threats. Another three trade unionists were killed during August, which brings the number of trade unionists as-

sassinated in 2008 up to 38 (34 men and four women).

Luis Mayusa Prada, a member of the sub-directorate of the CUT national union centre, was murdered in Saravena on August 8. Manuel Erminson Gamboa Melendez, vice president of the Asociacion Campesina para la Defensa del Putumayo, and a member of the national executive of the agricultural trade union federation, the Federacion Sindical Nacional Unitaria Agropecuaria, also affiliated to the CUT, was killed in a barrage of gunfire, receiving seven bullet wounds, in Puerto Asis on August 13. Omar Galeano Martinez, president of the lottery workers' federation, was brutally murdered on August 23.

US union membership up

U.S. unionization levels have risen so far this year, defying a decades-long trend of decline, according to a report by UCLA's Institute for Research on Labour and Employment.

"The State of the Unions in 2008: A Profile of Union Membership in Los Angeles, California and the Nation" shows unionization rates nationwide rising half a percentage point over the 2007 level, to 12.6 percent of all U.S. civilian workers in 2008. The last time U.S. unionization rates registered such an increase was in 1979.

"This is good news for organized labour," said Ruth Milkman, lead author of the report. "It shows that despite an extremely hostile environment, unions can grow."

In the first half of 2008, the number of U.S. workers on the membership rolls of labour unions increased by 583,300 over the 2007 average. Fuelling the increase was the recent growth in unionization in California, which currently accounts for 16 percent of all U.S. union members, more than any other state. California's unionization rate in 2008 is 17.8 percent, up from 16.7 percent in 2007 and 15.7 percent in 2006. Nearly half

of California's 2,633,600 union members live in the Los Angeles metro area, according to the UCLA study, which is released annually on Labour Day. One component of this growth is recent union organizing, like the Service Employees International Union's successful security officer campaign in Los Angeles.

The study found that union members tend to be older and more educated than non-union workers. Mid-level professionals are much more likely to be unionized than anyone else, especially in sectors like educational service and public administration, which both have relatively large numbers of college-educated workers. This trend also means that more women than men are being represented by unions. Teachers and other educational workers account for more than one-quarter of all unionized workers in the United States, and workers employed in public administration, such as librarians, social workers, and city and county clerical staff account for more than an eighth of union members.

African Americans, who are relatively highly concentrated in public-sector employment, have the highest unionization rate of any racial or ethnic group. And while the gap has recently narrowed, U.S.-born workers have a higher unionization rate (13 percent) than foreign-born workers (10.1 percent), who are less likely to be employed in the public sector.

Average hourly earnings are about \$2.50 higher for union members than for nonunion workers in the U.S. today. Union members also are far more likely to have access to benefits like retirement plans, medical insurance and paid leave than their nonunion counterparts.

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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Sarah Palin linked to U.S. ultra-right

Abridged from an article by Tim Wheeler, People's Weekly World

John McCain's choice of Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin as his running mate stirred sharp opposition from women's organizations, the labour movement, environmental groups and others. Many see it as plunging the McCain campaign further into the hands of the ultra-right.

Lynette Clark, chair of the far-right secessionist Alaska Independence Party told ABC News that Palin and her husband were members of the AIP in the 1990s and attended the AIP's 1994 convention. The McCain campaign admits she attended the group's 2000 convention. This year, she recorded a message welcoming AIP members to their convention in Fairbanks, praising the party for its "role in Alaska politics."

The Southern Poverty Law Center has linked the AIP to the "League of the South," a white supremacist outfit that seeks to outlaw interracial marriage and "reestablish the cultural dominance of the Anglo-Celtic people and their institutions." AIP attended the "First North American Secessionist Convention" in 2007 in Vermont and a second convention of the group this year in Tennessee.

McCain apparently believed that naming Palin would attract women who supported Hillary Clinton. But women's organizations were sharply critical. Nancy Keenan, president of the National Abortion Rights Action League and Pro-Choice America, said the McCain-Palin ticket consists of "two anti-choice extremists who will push a rigid, anti-choice agenda. She's opposed to abortions even in cases of rape and incest."

Palin is no better on energy and the environment, said Ivan Frishberg, political director of Environment America. "Big Oil extended its reach into McCain's campaign" Frishberg said in a phone interview.

"Palin has sided with Big Oil over endangered species and has promoted drilling off of America's coasts and in Alaska's wilderness," Frishberg said. "She would have no problems filling Dick Cheney's shoes with advocacy for Big Oil, dismissal of alternative

energy sources and the stunning admission that she does not believe global warming is 'man-made' even though it is melting the permafrost, glaciers and sea ice in her own state."

The McCain campaign claims Palin supports renewable energy, Frishberg said. When the group researched her background they found she's closely linked with Big Oil and "a record of opposition to renewable energy."

Palin's husband, Todd Palin, works for British Petroleum, one of the largest oil producers in Alaska's North Slope. When she was campaigning for governor, he took a leave, but now he is back with BP.

Sarah Palin says her husband is simply a "blue collar" employee and union member. But Alaskan news media reported he has attended meetings with legislators where Palin's drive to re-write Alaska's petroleum tax was discussed as well as her push for a natural gas pipeline across Alaska. She rammed through a \$500 mil-



South Carolina members of the racist "League of the South," which is tied to Palin's friends in the Alaska Independence Party.

lion taxpayer subsidy for the construction of the pipeline.

Steelworkers President Leo Gerard said in a statement that Todd Palin's membership in the USW "does not automatically qualify her for an on-the-job training program to be a heartbeat away from the presidency." And her

husband's union membership, Gerard added, "does nothing to absolve Sen. McCain of his long history of anti-union sentiment and anti-worker actions" including opposition to workers' collective bargaining rights, privatization of Social Security and Medicare and support for job-destroying trade

deals like NAFTA.

David Lawrence, a 25-year Anchorage resident active in the health care movement, said his first reaction to the Palin nomination was that the Republicans "must be desperate." He added, "Palin is ignorant of national, international and even Alaska state issues." Palin favours privatizing public education along with Social Security and Medicare, he said.

Mayor of a town of less than 7,000, she ran for governor on a promise of transparency and openness, Lawrence said. "But she is notorious for breaking appointments and speaking engagements. She has walled herself off from everyone except a narrow little clique that surrounds her."

Palin is under investigation by the Alaska legislature for abuse of power stemming from her firing of Alaska's Public Safety Commissioner. He had refused her order to terminate a state trooper who was her former brother-in-law, using her office to inflict personal revenge. ●

Huge march in Kolkata condemns pro-imperialist Indian government

By B. Prasant, PV correspondent in India

KOLKATA - A vast sea of people advanced in waves down the streets and lanes of Kolkata, at the anti-imperialist people's march organised on September 1 by the Bengal Left Front. Despite injuries to his right foot, LF chair Biman Basu led the marchers by example, unhindered by the blazing sun above and the molten tar underfoot.

The march commenced amidst rousing anti-imperialist slogans from the Suhrawardi Avenue near the Brabourne College grounds. As the first banners and countless Red Fags fluttered in a welcome breeze, Biman Basu released a single white dove into the glittering blue mid-day sky.

Walking along the A.J.C. Bose Road, we were astounded to see another equally long column marching along the opposite footpath in the "wrong" direction. Polite enquiries revealed that these streams of men and women, many carrying

children carefully shielded from the sun, were going to Park Circus to join up with the eternally long "tail" of our procession.

Police wireless buzzed to speak of numbers. The "guesstimates" were constantly revised upwards, from "one lakh, sir" (100,000), to finally, with a bit of surprise in the voice, "over five lakhs, sir" (500,000). Did we not note a hint of glee in the voices of at least some of the men in uniform?

The lengthening line of people soon merged into a single wave of humanity, a bit clumsy, a bit boisterous, and a tiny bit belligerent, calling upon the central government to stop kneeling down before US imperialism, the perpetrators of crimes all over the world.

Faces in the crowd we saw aplenty as we dodged in and out of the procession. We saw Sudeshna Paul from Belghoria, a former student who is now a young sociology professor at a college in faraway Nadia. She had come to Kolkata braving the train services that suddenly but not strangely started running well behind schedule on this particular day. Quickly snatching up her shopping bags from a roadside stall, she ran swiftly join the marchers as the wave advanced, soon lost in the sea of faces. We saw garage mechanic Akram-ul Huq - an underpaid helper, actually - forego a day's wage to join in, for the marchers are "talking about meri desh (*my country*) being sold out to videshis (*foreign imperialists*) of a faraway land." This is grassroots nationalism in action.

We espied a clutch of budding entrepreneurs, among them Dwijendralal Banerjee, all the way from the far side of the E.M. bypass, braving a fever and a cough. They were soon joined by a couple of thousand young men and women, neatly but unsuitably dressed for the Kolkata summer - ties and jackets and formal trousers - who had left the drudge of seven-days-a-week-work in the secluded comfort of air-conditioned IT offices in sector V of Salt Lake.

Heading towards the Sealdah flyover, the procession was swelled by a very large number of unorganised workers, mostly mutia-mazdoors (headload carriers), autorickshaw drivers and "mechanics," shouting slogans, waving the Red Flag, CITU banners held high as always. Khet mazdoor (agricultural worker) Paran Mondol appeared a bit bewildered. "How could these many men and women come, and who called upon them to come out on a holiday, and how, babu?" was his innocent enquiry.

He himself had come with a hundred-odd group of his fellow agricultural labourers from the extreme southern fringe of Kolkata, the unending green stretches of rice paddies from where the metro citizens have their steady supply of vegetables and rice.

Why have you come, Paran? Well, dada, I understand the Delhiwallah's government is actually engaged in buying rice from

videshis and allowing those "nasty" (that was not the colourful Bengali invective he actually used, of course) "blackers" to get away with their "nasty" (ditto) ways.

The march went on and on. School students joined in somewhere, holding up photos of the eternal inspirational Che Guevara, banners emblazoned with the immortal words "egobo, jotokkhon na jitbchhi!" (onwards, until we achieve victory!), and photos of Bush adoring Singh, and the other way around.

The marchers included black-jacketed lawyers, engineers, artists, intellectuals, students from every tier of education, housewives, sports persons, film personalities. Above all, it included the common people, shouting out slogans from the core of their hearts, making the procession a living protest against imperialist forays and the betrayal of the people by the Singh government. On this day, the people had the final say. ●



Coquille tribe recognizes same-sex marriage

The Coquille Indian Tribe, based on the southern Oregon coast, recently adopted a law recognizing same-sex marriage, and its first such wedding is set for next spring.

Oregon voters amended the state constitution in 2004 to prohibit gay marriage. But as a federally recognized sovereign nation, the tribe is not bound by the Oregon Constitution. The Coquilles are believed to be the first tribe to legalize same-sex marriage.

Native Americans are "sensitive to discrimination of any kind," said Ken Tanner, chief of the Coquilles. "For our tribe, we want people to walk in the shoes of other people and learn to respect differences. Through that, we think we build a stronger community," he told *The Oregonian*.

Becky Flynn, regional director of Basic Rights Oregon, a gay rights advocacy group, said the impact of the Coquille law is likely to be minimal beyond the couple and the tribe. The federal government has the legal right to deny recognition to same-sex marriages under the Federal Defense of Marriage Act.

The first couple to get married under the new law is expected to be Jeni and Kitzen Branting, whose maiden name is Doyle and who legally adopted Jeni's last name three years ago. Kitzen is a member of the tribe; Jeni is not. ●

(Seattle Post-Intelligencer)

REDS ON THE WEB

www.comunist-party.ca

www.peoplesvoice.ca

www.ycl-ljc.ca

www.solidnet.org

Free Liliany Patricia Obando Villota! Solidarity with Colombian workers

By James Brittain

The previous issue of People's Voice reported that Colombian filmmaker, women's rights proponent, labour solidarity activist, and sociologist Liliany Patricia Obando Villota was arrested on August 8 by a special wing of the Anti-Terrorism Unit (Unidad Antiterrorismo) of the Colombian National Police and the Criminal Investigation Directorate, under the direction of the National Prosecutors Office, on charges of "rebellion" and "managing resources related to terrorist Activities". The arrest severs long established relations between the Colombian labour movement and Canadian unions, faith-based communities, Latin American solidarity networks, and social justice organizations.

The primary grounds for Liliany's incarceration is that she allegedly worked to obtain funding earmarked for Colombia's largest rural-based labour organization (FENSUAGRO), but utilized the collected finances for the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army (FARC-EP) - a movement listed as a foreign terrorist organization by the U.S. and Canadian governments.

The Office of the Attorney General of Colombia has announced that the reason for the arrest was that Liliany worked for a non-governmental organization entitled FENSUAGRO and indirectly rallied funds for the FARC-EP through said association. In actual fact, FENSUAGRO is not an NGO, but a structured labour organization in its 32nd year of existence, which organizes and consolidates the many unions, labour associations, and voices of those in the countryside. If the state cannot obtain intelligence of this simplistic nature, any information re-

lated to the charges against Liliany are likely erroneous.

In addition, no material evidence has been found to support the charge against Liliany. The only "proof" presented by the state is purely speculative, as it was allegedly re-

Liliany also worked for FENSUAGRO's international relations commission, and was heavily involved in fundraising in Canada, the European Union, the UK, and Australia.

As a direct result of her efforts,



Photo of Liliany Obando published in a Colombian newspaper.

trieved from FARC-EP computers captured following an illegal raid at an insurgent encampment on March 1, 2008 in Ecuador. Interpol has confirmed that agents connected to the Anti-Terrorism Unit manipulated tens of thousands of files from the seized FARC-EP databases. In their report, Interpol published that "using their forensic tools, specialists found a total of 48,055 files for which the timestamps indicated that they had either been created, accessed, modified or deleted as a result of the direct access to the eight seized exhibits by Colombian authorities between the time of their seizure on 1 March 2008 and 3 March 2008 at 11:45 am."

Over the past several years, Liliany has visited Canada many times to speak with various civil society groups, development agencies, members of religious organizations, unionists, and university students on issues of human rights abuses and anti-labour activities under the Presidency of Alvaro Uribe Velez. During this period

some of Canada's most important unions provided funding to projects across Colombia: the creation of socioeconomic infrastructure for small and medium agricultural producers, human rights education and data collection, and an experimental farming and educational facility called La Esmeralda, which assists displaced rural families in areas of agriculture, gender equity, reading, and writing.

Why has the Colombian state targeted Liliany Obando and FENSUAGRO?

Since its inception, as many as 1500 persons associated with FENSUAGRO have been killed or disappeared by right-wing paramilitaries or state forces, while five thousand members have experienced some form of state-based abuse or human rights violation. In 2007, twenty percent of all known unionists murdered in Colombia belonged to this one labour organization. It is clear that the Colombian state is attempting to silence

any and all measures of international solidarity with Colombian labour and social movements.

Liliany was one of FENSUAGRO's most important contacts outside Colombia. Her work as a filmmaker and a scholar within the National University of Colombia has been widely recognized for its insight. Her analysis on Colombia's political economy has been heard and applauded at countless conferences. Her achievements in raising awareness of the trials and tribulations of Colombia have spanned many countries. It is clear that the state is taking steps to silence this important proponent for social justice, and to block the important efforts made by Canadians to support the struggle of Colombia's rural and urban working classes.

Retrieving information related to Liliany's condition and the case at hand has been very difficult. Nevertheless, contact has been made with Liliany's legal counsel, who say that she has received messages of solidarity from all over the world. Her legal counsel has forwarded a statement of how emotionally touched and tremendously encouraged Liliany is by such broad support for her and all Colombians subjugated to such treatment at this troubling time.

It was hoped that Liliany would be able to obtain a reprieve from her formal incarceration at the women's prison (Buen Pastor) in Bogota. Her legal counsel applied for home detention so that she could care for her two children. The Australian-based Peace and Justice for Colombia (PJFC) has argued that Liliany's detention is a negation of her two young children's basic human rights, as she is a single mother

and principal provider for the family. However, the court denied this request. The PJFC also reported that during the August 8 raid on Liliany's residence in Modelia, Bogota state forces "seized passports, photos and other personal belongings of her children and Mother". Arguing that such items have nothing to do with the formal allegations, the legal counsel requested that the family's possessions be returned. The courts also refused this request.

Targeting Liliany and other social justice activists is a structured tactic on the part of the Colombian state. Canada is in the final stages of a controversial bilateral free-trade agreement with Colombia, where the administration is embroiled in a scandal involving links between top politicians and the paramilitary forces. Liliany was on the cusp of finalizing a significant solidarity project involving several Canadian unions and FENSUAGRO. In conjunction with labour, agronomists, farmers, and researchers, she was working on an expanded development program to further assist rural workers at La Esmeralda.

It is critical for individuals, unions, community and civil society groups, development agencies, members of faith communities, academics, students, and concerned citizens to show their solidarity for Liliany. We must express our opposition to the unjust detention of this important Colombian activist, scholar, and worker. Please demand that Liliany Patricia Obando Villota be released, have all charges withdrawn, and be treated as a democratic citizen. •

*Liliany Obando Free Now!
Libre Liliany Obando!*

Vote for peace, then march for peace

The Canadian Peace Alliance and the Québec-based Collectif Echec à la guerre have announced a pan-Canadian day of action on October 18, to end the war in Afghanistan, and to bring the troops home now.

In an early September call to action, the groups note that "Stephen Harper's government is set to call a federal election for October 14. This is an important moment for the peace movement in Canada.

"Harper has made it clear what his priorities are. On March 13, 2008, his government extended Canada's mission in Afghanistan to 2011, despite opposition from a majority of Canadians. And over the next 20 years, Harper plans to spend \$490 billion on the military budget, including the war in Afghanistan. In 2003, Harper was the only political leader in Canada to support the war in Iraq. Today, he is showing his support for Bush's war by deporting Iraq war resisters to the US.

"Most Canadians oppose this agenda. That's why this election is so important. Elections provide us with many opportunities to talk to people who are concerned about the future of the country, and who want the war to end. All-candidates' meetings, fund-raisers, rallies and other campaign events are occasions to meet and engage with people beyond our existing networks, and to build the day of action on October 18.

"Canadian soldiers will still be in Afghanistan the day after the election. NATO bombs will continue to kill Afghan civilians. Billions in aid money will continue to disappear into the pockets of corrupt officials. Warlords and drug lords will still dominate the Afghan parliament. US/NATO strategy will still

be guided by the needs of pipeline construction.

"No matter what the outcome of the election, Canada still needs a strong and united peace movement. And it needs to send a clear message to whoever forms the government that a majority of Canadians still want the troops to come home."

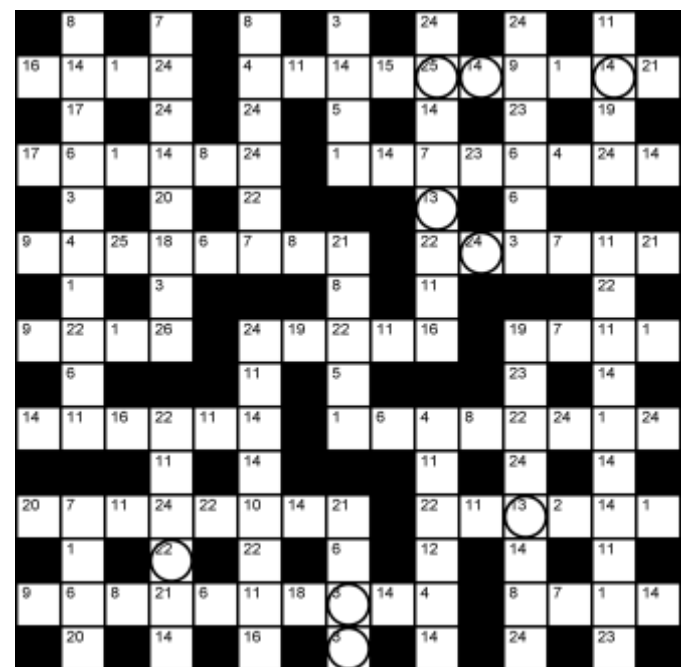
The Canadian Peace Alliance is developing materials to promote the Oct. 18 day of action, and to broaden the anti-war movement during the campaign. To order materials, phone 416-588-5555 or e-mail cpa@web.ca.

For more information, check the CPA website at www.acp-cpa.ca, or visit www.echecalaguerra.org.



PV CROSSWORD

by David Tymoshchuk



This type of puzzle is much like the TV game show "Wheel of Fortune". Each number corresponds to a letter of the alphabet. Here are some clues; see the bottom of page 11 for the solution.

1	2	3	L	U	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	K
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	H	24	25	26	

LETTERS IN CIRCLES: use to complete phrase "___ riots"; enter phrase into searchbar on Wikipedia website (en.wikipedia.org)

Cuba besieged by hurricanes

We had hardly recovered from the emotional impact and material damage caused by the unexpectedly strong winds of Hurricane Gustav on the Isle of Youth and Pinar del Rio, when news were received of sea floods caused by Hanna. Then, the worst news of all: that the very intense Hurricane Ike, turning southwest under pressure from a strong anti-cyclone located north of its course, would strike over more than 1,000 kilometers throughout the national territory.

This means, in fact, that the entire country will be impacted by three hurricanes; and some places will be hit twice. What will remain of the bananas, fruits and vegetables in the intensive-farming areas? Where will there be any beans and other grains? Where will there be a sugarcane or rice plantation? Where will there be a poultry, pork or dairy production center? The entire nation is now in what in military terms is defined as combat alert.

The problems posed in the reflection that defined Gustav as a nuclear strike have multiplied. The principles guiding our conduct are still the same, just that much greater efforts will be required.

The Civil Defense did not lose a second. Comrades in positions of responsibility in both the Party and the government have been moving everywhere. The cadres must demand discipline, withhold their emotions and exercise their authority. The television, radio and printed press are assuming a great responsibility in exercising their informative tasks.

The world has observed with admiration our people's conduct in the face of the ravages of Gustav. As our enemies were cynically rubbing their

hands with glee, our friends who - as has been made evident - are many, are determined to cooperate with our people. The seeds of solidarity planted for many years are growing everywhere. Aircraft from Russia and other countries have been flying in from thousands of kilometers away with products that cannot be measured by their volume or price, but by their significance. We have received donations from small states like Timor Leste, and messages from important and friendly nations like Russia, Vietnam, China and others, have expressed a readiness to cooperate as much as possible with the investment programs that we will have to immediately undertake to reestablish and develop production.

The sister Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, and its President Hugo Chavez, have adopted measures that constitute the most generous gesture of solidarity that our homeland has known.

Despite the intensity of the blows

received and those still to come, I think that our country is in a position to save the lives of its citizens, and families will receive material assistance and food for as long as they need, until they recover - in the shortest possible time - the capacity for food production. This assistance cannot be the same in every municipality since the damages are not the same, neither is the time period needed to get back on their feet.

At this moment we are besieged by hurricanes. We should be more rational than ever and fight wastage, parasitism and complacency. We have to act with absolute honesty, avoiding demagoguery or any concession whatsoever to weakness or opportunism. The revolutionary militants should set an example. They should give and receive confidence. They should give everything for the people, even their lives if that should be necessary. ●

- Fidel Castro Ruz, September 7, 2008

Humanitarian aid for Cuba

The Canadian Network on Cuba and the Canadian-Cuban Friendship Association have issued an emergency hurricane relief appeal, aiming to forward to Cuba an initial contribution of \$100,000. There are two ways to make donations and receive a charitable tax receipt:

1) Send a cheque made payable to "Mackenzie-Papineau Memorial Fund", stating "For Cuba Hurricane Relief", together with your name, address and phone number. Mail to: Mackenzie-Papineau Memorial Fund, Attn: S. Skup, Treasurer, 56 Riverwood Terrace, Bolton, ON, L7E 1S4.

2) Send a cheque to your local Cuba solidarity committee, stating "For Cuba Hurricane Relief". The local committee will send one cheque together with a list of the names and donor amounts to the Mackenzie-Papineau Memorial Fund (Registered charitable organization #88876 9197). Tax receipts will then be issued to individual donors.

Local CCFA groups include: Canadian-Cuban Friendship Association, Box 57063, 2480 East Hastings, Vancouver, BC V5K 5G6.

Canadian-Cuban Friendship Association Toronto (CCFA Toronto), PO Box 743, Station F, Toronto ON, M4Y 2N6. ●

One hundred months to avert disaster?

continued from page 6

our national tardiness. In a single year in 2006 Cuba rolled-out a nationwide scheme replacing inefficient incandescent lightbulbs with low-energy alternatives. Prior to that, at the end of the cold war, after losing access to cheap Soviet oil, it switched over to growing most of its food for domestic consumption on small scale, often urban plots, using mostly low-fossil-fuel organic techniques. Half the food consumed in the capital, Havana, was grown in the city's own gardens. Cuba echoed and surpassed what America achieved in its push for "Victory Gardening" during the second world war. Back then, led by Eleanor Roosevelt, between 30-40% of vegetables for domestic consumption were produced by the Victory Gardening movement.

So what can our own government do to turn things around today? Over the next 100 months, they could launch a Green New Deal, taking inspiration from President Roosevelt's famous 100-day programme implementing his New Deal in the face of the dust bowls and depression. Last week, a group of finance, energy and environmental specialists produced just such a plan.

Addressed at the triple crunch of the credit crisis, high oil prices and global warming, the plan is to rein in reckless financial institutions and use a range of fiscal tools, new measures and reforms to the tax system, such as a wind-fall tax on oil companies. The resources raised can then be invested

in a massive environmental transformation programme that could insulate the economy from recession, create countless new jobs and allow Britain to play its part in meeting the climate challenge.

Goodbye new airport runways, goodbye new coal-fired power stations. Next, as a precursor to enabling and building more sustainable systems for transport, energy, food and overhauling the nation's building stock, the government needs to brace itself to tackle the City. Currently, financial institutions are giving us the worst of all worlds. We have woken to find the foundations of our economy made up of unstable, exotic financial instruments. At the same time, and perversely, as awareness of climate change goes up, ever more money pours through the City into the oil companies. These companies list their fossil-fuel reserves as "proven" or "probable". A new category of "unburnable" should be introduced, to fundamentally change the balance of power in the City. Instead of using vast sums of public money to bail out banks because they are considered "too big to fail", they should be reduced in size until they are small enough to fail without hurting anyone. It is only a climate system capable of supporting human civilisation that is too big to fail.

Oil companies made profits when oil was \$10 a barrel. With the price now wobbling around \$130, there is a huge amount of unearned profit waiting for a wind-fall tax. Money raised - in this way and through other changes in taxation, new priorities for pension

funds and innovatory types of bonds - would go towards a long-overdue massive decarbonisation of our energy system. Decentralisation, renewables, efficiency, conservation and demand management will all play a part.

Next comes a rolling programme to overhaul the nation's heat-leaking building stock. This will have the benefit of massively cutting emissions and at the same time tackling the sore of fuel poverty by creating better insulated and designed homes. A transition from "one person, one car" on the roads, to a variety of clean reliable forms of public transport should be visible by the middle of our 100 months. Similarly, weaning agriculture off fossil-fuel dependency will be a phased process.

The end result will be real international leadership, removing the excuses of other nations not to act. But it will also leave the people of Britain more secure in terms of the food and energy supplies, and with a more resilient economy capable of weathering whatever economic and environmental shocks the world has to throw at us. Each of these challenges will draw on things that we already know how to do, but have missed the political will for.

So, there, I have said "Fire", and pointed to the nearest emergency exit. Now it is time for the government to lead, and do its best to make sure that neither a bang, nor a whimper ends the show. ●

Andrew Simms is policy director and head of the climate change programme at Britain's New Economics Foundation.

What's Left

War Resisters

Pan-Canadian Day of Action, Sat., Sept. 13, to oppose deportations of US war resisters. For full details of local events and planning meetings, visit www.resisters.ca.

Vancouver, BC

Afghanistan's Pipelines, VDLC Pizza Educational, Tue., Sept. 16, 6-7 pm, forum on gas pipelines and energy distribution in central Asia, Maritime Labour Centre, 1880 Triumph St., co-sponsored by Council of Canadians and Vancouver & District Labour Council.

Canada Post 9/11, forum with speaker Sunera Thobani, Monday, Sept. 22, 7:30 pm, Public Library Main Branch, Alice McKay room, hosted by Siraat Collective.

The state of the media today, discussion on creating alternative media, Friday, Sept. 26, 7 pm, at Centre for Socialist Education, 706 Clark Drive, followed by music & food, for info email bclac1998@gmail.com.

Palestinian political prisoners conference, Sept. 27, 11 am-4 pm, SFU Harbour Centre, 515 W. Hastings St., for info call Boycott Israeli Apartheid Campaign, 604-220-0451.

COPE Nomination Meeting: Sunday, Sept. 28, 2:30 pm, Ukrainian Auditorium, 154 E. 10 Ave. (at Main).

Miguel Figueroa Election Tour, hear the leader of the Communist Party of Canada on the issues in the Oct. 14 election, Monday, Sept. 29, 7:30 pm, at the Centre for Socialist Education, 706 Clark Drive. (For details of other cross-Canada tour dates, call the CPC campaign office, 416-469-2446.)

More Power to You, conference organized by BC Citizens for Public Power, Oct. 4-5, 8 am to 4 pm, at SFU Harbour Centre, 515 W. Hastings. Call 604-681-5939 for details.

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.

No Olympics on Stolen Native Land!, panel with indigenous speakers on issues related to the tar sands and the 2010 Olympic games, Sat., Sept. 27, location TBA. Action opposing 2010 Olympic Spirit Train, Sept. 29, 1-8 pm at WP Wagner School (6310 Wagner Rd NW). For info, call Macdonald at 780-233-4992.

Saskatoon, SK

Political discussion & beer, all welcome to join Saskatoon CPC members, third Monday of every month, in the tv room at Amigo's, 632-10 St. East.

Winnipeg, MB

Manitoba-Cuba Solidarity Committee annual general meeting, Mon., Sept. 22, 7 pm at the Workers Organizing Resource Centre, 280 Smith St., mezzanine level. Info dlzack@shaw.ca.

Manitoba Peace Council meeting, Sat., Sept. 20, 10 am, Workers Organizing Resource Centre, 280 Smith St., mezzanine level. Info 792-3371.

Toronto, ON

Support public health care, mass protest Sat., Sept. 27, 11 am, at Metro Hall Square (Wellington & John St), for info call Ontario Health Coalition 416-441-2502.

Montreal, QC

Anti-military recruitment protest, Thursday, Sept. 18, 5:30-7 pm, 1420 Ste.-Catherine O (Guy-Concordia metro), organized by Operation Objection, see www.antirecruitment.info for details.

Sostad runs for North Van Council

Ron Sostad, a longtime community activist in North Vancouver, has launched his campaign for a city council seat in the Nov. 15 municipal election. A freelance writer and a volunteer at the North Shore Neighbourhood House, Sostad says the city of North Vancouver needs a reformer on council, someone who understands the needs of working people, homeowners, tenants, and the growing numbers of street people.

His platform includes fighting to restore social services which have been cut in recent years; support for the rights of the disabled and mentally ill; and defending the democratic rights of all citizens. He will campaign to protect the Official Community Plan, which has been ignored by the current local government.

To contact Ron about his campaign, call 604-990-9773.

People's Voice deadlines:

OCTOBER 1-15 issue: Thursday, Sept. 18

OCTOBER 16-31 issue: Thursday, Oct. 2

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

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Protests grow over Afghan civilian deaths

By Marilyn Bechtel,
People's Weekly World

New protests are raging in Afghanistan as the number of civilians dying during U.S. and NATO attacks on insurgents continues to soar. In the capital city, Kabul, hundreds of protesters blocked the highway to Pakistan Sept. 1. They were protesting the killing of a father and two of his sons during a post-midnight raid in eastern Kabul that Afghans said was conducted by foreign troops. The children's mother was wounded in the attack. NATO's U.S.-commanded International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) later claimed no NATO or U.S. forces were involved.

In another incident the same day, the ISAF acknowledged accidentally killing three children in southeastern Paktika province.

Anger is growing among Afghans over the killings of around 700 civilians so far this year during U.S. and NATO military operations targeting Taliban and Al Qaeda insurgents.

The biggest single civilian toll occurred Aug. 22 when the Afghan government and the United Nations said as many as 90 civilians, including 60 children, died as a U.S.-led air strike hit a memorial service for a tribal leader in the western Afghan village of Azizabad.



U.S. military forces said this week that only five to seven civilians were killed there, along with 30 to 35 Taliban fighters. But an Afghan government investigating team confirmed the larger civilian toll Sept. 1.

Fox News reporter Oliver North, who was with the U.S. forces during the Azizabad attack, interviewed an unidentified U.S. major who cited reports the Taliban would meet there. But Afghan officials said clan rivals gave false information. North was a central figure in the Reagan administration's Iran-Contra scandal.

Afghanistan's U.S.-installed President Hamid Karzai has strongly criticized the U.S. and NATO forces over the civilian toll, and has said the Taliban uses the deaths to turn people against

the government. He is requesting a review of rules governing international military forces in the country.

Seven years after the U.S. invaded the country, conditions remain grim. Some 70,000 NATO troops, the majority from the U.S., have been unable to keep the Taliban from adding conventional military attacks to their longstanding smaller raids. U.S. military deaths are now well over 500, with over 100 killed so far this year. By the beginning of September, 96 Canadian soldiers have died.

As winter approaches, Oxfam International warns that as many as 5 million Afghans face severe food shortages, aggravated by rising food prices, drought and the growing and spreading insecurity.

In a report, "Falling Short," is-

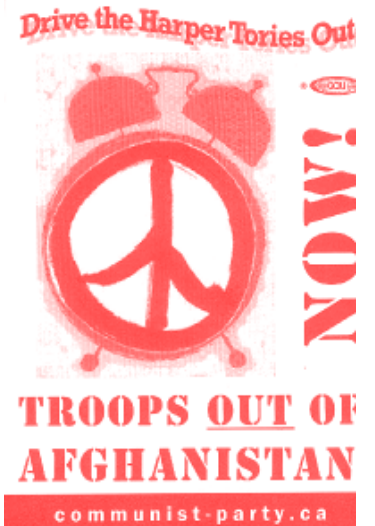
sued earlier this year, Oxfam said reconstruction aid is falling far behind military spending, with much of the aid being allocated to urban areas rather than to rural regions and agriculture, where it is urgently needed.

Though some strides have been made in reducing the amount of land devoted to growing opium poppies, Afghanistan still provides a very large percentage of the world's opium supply.

In a report issued last month, the Rand Corporation called the idea of a "war on terror" counterproductive, and called for intelligence and police cooperation instead. Afghanistan expert Rory Stewart, writing in *Time* magazine, has warned that "a troop increase is likely to inflame Afghan nationalism because Afghans are more anti-foreign than we acknowledge, and the support for our presence in the insurgency areas is declining."

Nation editor Katrina Vanden Heuvel recently wrote, "We need

to think beyond the reflexive response of troop escalation and begin the necessary, tough search for sane alternatives. If Americans are given a clear choice, how many would support bleeding more lives and resources in another failing occupation as an effective strategy of combating terrorism and promoting our national security?" •



Hundreds killed by NATO in Afghanistan

Source: www.stopwarblogspot.blogspot.com. This page on the website of the Vancouver anti-war coalition StopWar.ca contains detailed daily news reports on the war in Afghanistan.

Aug. 4: US troops in Ghazni province kill five civilians.
 Aug. 7: US troops kill five civilians in Ghazni.
 Aug. 9: NATO airstrike kills between 11 and 31 civilians in Kapisa.
 Aug. 12: NATO troops kill driver in Helmand.
 Aug. 13: NATO airstrike kills 3 children in Logar.
 Aug. 16: Local officials say NATO bombing kills 11 civilians in Ghazni.
 Aug. 17: NATO rocket attack kills 3 civilians in Helmand.
 Aug. 19: German NATO troops in Badakhshan province shoot and kill a man later said to have been a civilian.
 Aug. 21: US-led forces call airstrikes that kill between 12 and 20 civilians in Laghman province.
 Aug. 22: US special forces accompanying Afghan troops called in an airstrike in Shindand district of Herat. Estimates by Afghan and UN officials, journalists and the AIHRC range from 78 to 95 civilians dead. Locals say no insurgents were present at the time of the attack.
 Aug. 27: American-led soldiers kill Afghan national cricket star Rahmat Wali in a raid on his home in Khost.
 Aug. 28: In Kunduz, German (or Afghan) troops open fire on a vehicle, killing two children and a woman.
 Aug. 30: In Kapisa, an airstrike in support of US-led forces kills five civilians, according to police officials.
August total: 139 to 184 civilians killed.

July 3: Six civilians killed in US-led airstrike in Farah.
 July 4: Seventeen civilians killed in US airstrike in Nuristan.
 July 6: US airstrike in Nangarhar kills 47 to 52 civilians in wedding party - mostly women and children.
 July 9: In Logar province, NATO troops kill a civilian man and injure his wife in a house raid.
 July 9: Red Cross says 250 civilians dead in five days (i.e. July 4 - 8). The NGO blames both insurgents and NATO/US forces and their Afghan allies.
 Jul 15: NATO airstrike kills eight (perhaps nine) civilians - mostly women and children - in Farah.
 July 16: Local officials say over 50 civilians killed by NATO airstrikes in Herat.
 July 19: NATO forces kill four (perhaps seven) civilians with mortars in Paktika.
 July 20: Airstrike kills nine Afghan police in Farah. Other reports say it was four police and five civilians.
 July 26: British NATO troops in Helmand shoot and kill four civilians at checkpoint.
 July 26: NATO airstrike kills civilian couple in their home in Kapisa.
 July 27: Canadian NATO troops in Kandahar fire on a vehicle and kill two children.
 July 29: An ISAF helicopter kills six civilians in Kunar province, according to local officials.
July total: 147 to 161 civilians killed. Totals are based on the author's own tallies of all available reports of Afghan civilians killed by troops of NATO's International Security Assistance Force and the US-led Operation Enduring Freedom. •

"Free the Five" billboards on Vancouver Island



The "Free the Cuban Five" campaign hit the roads on Vancouver Island recently, with the installation of two billboards on the TransCanada highway between Victoria and Nanaimo. Measuring 10 feet by 24 feet, the signs will remain in place until after the Thanksgiving weekend in mid-October. One is three kilometers north of Ladysmith, visible to southbound traffic. The second is mid-way between Mill Bay and Duncan, visible to northbound traffic.

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