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people's VOICE

**SUDBURY
MINERS**
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End the Coup in Honduras!



***Honduran oligarchy "at war against Chavez"
Canada must act now!***

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Winnipeg water

Ignoring the protests of hundreds and the views of most citizens, Winnipeg's City Council voted 10-6 on July 22 to take fateful steps towards privatization of the city's water utility.

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The struggle in Iran

The movement for democratic rights and freedoms in Iran flows from the workers, students and women of that country, involving millions of people.

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Olympic anger

As the countdown to the 2010 Winter Olympics continues, public anger is intensifying at the shocking cost of the Games. But protests against this fiasco will be strictly limited, if police and VANOC have their way.

Sudbury miners take on a big foe

By Sam Hammond, Chair of the Central Trade Union Commission, Communist Party of Canada

Vale Inco, a subsidiary of Companhia Vale do Rio Doce (CVRD), was founded by the Brazilian government in 1942. Just seven years later, it was responsible for over 80% of Brazilian iron ore exports. As a publicly owned company, CVRD had access not only to government capital but to all the vast resources of Brazil. By 1970 CVRD was the major stakeholder of the Carajas Mine, which still has reserves of 1.5 billion tonnes of iron ore, and had become the biggest exporter of iron ore in the world. During its time of public ownership CVRD (Vale) had developed ownership and investment in transportation (railroads), built ports for the export of ore, and branched out into hydro electric and steel.

In 1997 the Brazilian federal government, in a much disputed political decision, allowed the privatization of Vale. The company was delivered to the lusty hands of the "Brazil Consortium" formed and led by the National Steel Company (CSN). This privatization of course transferred huge profits from the public purse to the bank accounts of Brazil's wealthy investors. It also gave considerable geography and access to natural wealth that was previously controlled by a public company into the hands of a private industrial/investment cabal.

Between 2000 and 2007 the huge and varied holdings of Vale were sold off. The company consolidated itself using \$4.9 billion of its now privatized capital to purchase outright most of its competitors, which gave it own-

ership of 85% of Brazil's iron ore and virtual 100% ownership of all Brazilian iron ore exports. The consolidation of Vale into a mining-only company set the stage for Vale to release itself from its dependency on the price of iron ore and to diversify into non-ferrous metals.

In 2006 Vale acquired Inco, Canada's second largest mining company, paying \$17.7 billion in cash and assuming Inco's \$1.2 billion in debt. This was a major part of the transfer of Canadian extraction, manufacturing, transportation, energy and forest industries into foreign ownership and con-

rol, a process very advanced but not yet complete. With the acquisition of Inco, Vale boosted the output of non-ferrous metals to 34% of its world output and broke its dependency on the iron ore market, although iron ore is still 64% of its business.

Just prior to the Inco grab,

Vale's largest customer, Arcelor-Mittal (the world's largest steel producer), purchased Canada's second largest steel mill (Dofasco) located next door to the largest (Stelco) which was soon consumed by U.S. Steel. These three pur-

see **SUDBURY**, page 11

Winnipeg water changes "a monumental robbery"

PV Manitoba bureau

Ignoring demands for public hearings and widespread opposition to privatization, Winnipeg City Council voted 10-6 on July 22 to create an "arms length" municipal water corporation with the authority to sell water outside City limits and to privatize some of its services.

The Communist Party called the changes "a monumental, undemocratic robbery" and a giant betrayal of Winnipeg, especially the core area which has some of Canada's poorest neighbourhoods. "The polite fiction that provincial parties should stay out of civic politics needs to be set aside on an issue of this magnitude and urgency," said the Party.

The sale of water outside Winnipeg will alter the region's development for decades to come, yet its effect on housing in the core and throughout Winnipeg was essentially ignored. Constantly denying that privatization was proposed, Mayor Sam Katz and his supporters manipulated the debate to avoid the housing issue.

Urged on by people like David Angus of the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, Council voted for the proposal with slight amendments. Angus argued the debate was purely ideological and capa-

ble of being decided without reference to any facts.

The water corporation will privatize up to 49 per cent of "new wastewater treatment infrastructure services," which will just be the start. Dozens of organizations spoke against privatization, defending wages, jobs and democratic control of the utility.

The Communist Party further pointed out that "access to water and development are intimately combined" and that the proposal failed to study the impact or reveal who would benefit outside the city.

"I cannot imagine a more unpatriotic measure by a City Council," said Darrell Rankin, Manitoba leader of the Communist Party. "No one wants a City Council that supports giant, private land speculators outside the perimeter at their expense. Mayor Katz stated he does not want elected politicians to control the new water corporation. We don't need a corporation that gives sweet deals to major corporate customers and subsidizes the cost of new water lines to new developments outside of Winnipeg. Residential water bills are going to skyrocket. We need democratic control of water."

The vote signifies that land developers outside Winnipeg have more sway than those inside, which is essentially being abandoned. About four large land develop-

ment corporations dominate the market in the region. Major new industrial and housing developments outside Winnipeg will devastate the city as a whole. The plan will not help existing rural dwellers with better water services.

"With one vote, City Council will erase all the housing improvements in Winnipeg's core area. (This) will show their true attitude to the thousands of families looking for decent, affordable housing in Winnipeg," said Rankin. The vote would break decades of promises by all levels of government "made to Aboriginal organizations, housing coalitions and anti-poverty groups" to end the housing crisis.

In an earlier statement, the Communist Party urged people to "protest the proposal and vow to defeat any City Councillor voting in favour of the measure" and for other provincial parties to set out their

views, calling for the Manitoba legislature to hold an emergency session "to prevent any privatization or corporate model."

Acting in contempt of democracy, Katz and his supporters on Council released the new corporation's business plan on June 26, less than a month before the vote. On July 15, nearly 30 groups and citizens expressed opposition at a meeting of Council's executive policy committee. An opinion poll released on July 21 said that 67 per cent of the public wanted to delay the vote to allow more time for study and improvements to the plan.

Nearly fifty people rallied against the proposal at a July 15 protest organized by the Winnipeg Labour Election Committee, which announced a second rally to be held on July 21. Nearly 300 attended the next rally which featured a broad range of speakers. ●



Speakers at the July 21 rally included a University of Manitoba students union Aboriginal representative, a former leading member of the National Anti-Poverty Organization, and a former NDP MP. Others were from the Social Planning Council, the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace, the Council of Canadians, the Canadian Federation of Students, the Green Party of Manitoba, and the Labour Election Committee. Nearly 4,000 people signed a petition against privatization.

\$50,000 Fund Drive

Walk-A-Thon: Sunday, August 9

The political pace slows down a bit in July, including reports on our annual Fund Drive. But we do have some information to update the drive, which is now at \$41,320, or 82.6% of our \$50,000 target.

Ontario remains in the lead, with \$20,390 turned in, or 92.7% of their \$22,000 provincial target, and most of the rest ready to submit. Alberta is in second place at 85.5%, or \$2053 out of \$2400 raised, ahead of Saskatchewan's 82.5% (\$660 on their \$800 target). Brit-

ish Columbia supporters have donated another \$1160, reaching a new total of \$14,787, or 71.8% of their \$20,600 goal. That doesn't yet include funds raised at the very successful Moncada Day picnic organized by our supporters in Nanaimo, attended by our circulation manager Sam Hammond. Manitoba is next at 67.2% (\$1615 out of \$2400). Another \$1815 has been raised by readers in Quebec, the Maritimes, Newfoundland, and elsewhere.

Our biggest fundraiser of the

year takes place on Sunday, August 9 - the Walk-A-Thon at Bear Creek Park in Surrey; see the ad on this page for details. We urge supporters across the Lower Mainland region to join us and to bring a donation to help take BC over the top.

Contributions will also be welcome on Friday, August 14, 12 noon, when we meet for an informal gathering at the Centre for Socialist Education to celebrate the life of the late Nat Sherlock, who was instrumental in organizing the mailing of People's Voice for several years after our launch in 1993.

PRICE INCREASE

We regret to inform readers that the relentless increase in costs of production and mailing have finally compelled us to raise our rates. As of Sept. 1, a one-year subscription in Canada will cost \$30, and a two-year sub will be \$50. The rate for low-income readers will rise to \$15 for one year. For our friends in the US and overseas, a one-year subscription will now cost \$50 in Canadian funds. The cover price for newstand and bookstore sales will be raised to \$1.50.

Annual People's Voice Walk-A-Thon



Bear Creek Park, Surrey, BC

Sunday, August 9

gather at the picnic area near the 140 St. parking lot, just south of 88 Ave.

11 am - Walk around beautiful Bear Creek Park
12 noon - Enjoy an international potluck lunch
1 pm - relax and enjoy a cultural program

For more information, call Krishna (604-940-0420) or Harjit (604-543-7179)

Here's my contribution to the PV Fund Drive!

Enclosed please find my donation of \$ _____ to the 2009 People's Voice Press Fund Drive.

Name _____

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

Canada's EI benefits well below OECD average

PV Vancouver Bureau

A new study from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) reports that fewer unemployed workers are receiving regular EI benefits now than during previous recessions. Released on June 30, the study by economist Lars Osberg also finds that in terms of access, benefit duration, and income replacement levels, EI in Canada falls far below most other OECD countries.

In January 2009, the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate in Canada was 7.7%, the same rate as in February 1990, near the start of the early-1990s recession. But only a bit over half as many of the unemployed are getting unemployment benefits in 2009, compared to 1990. Perhaps not surprisingly, the International Monetary Fund in its World Economic Outlook of October 2008, argued that Canada's system of adjusting benefits to local unemployment levels should be emulated worldwide.

The CCPA notes that until the late 1980s, unemployment insurance in Canada - as in most other OECD nations today - was an unemployment benefits program; its costs were the UI benefits it paid to unemployed workers and its revenues came from a payroll tax (the premium income collected from employers and employees).

Over the last two decades, however, the federal government has shifted training expenditures, employment service and benefit costs from its Consolidated Revenue Fund expenditures to the EI Account. As well, throughout the late 1990s, premium income greatly exceeded expenditures, allowing the Chretien Liberal government of that time to use the surplus in EI revenues to reduce Canada's general government deficit.

"In this global recession, the weakness of Canada's EI system has become a glaring federal policy omission," says Osberg. "Now that they need a social safety net, many Canadians are discovering they do

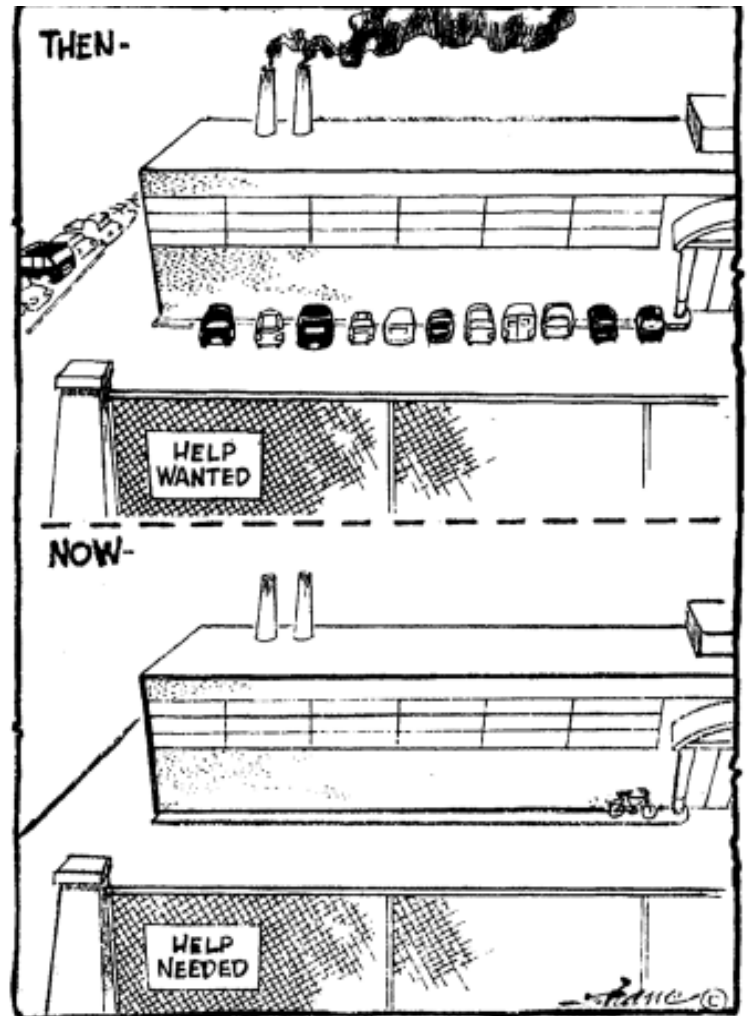
not have much of one."

According to the study, the inadequacies of EI - combined with weakened provincial social assistance programs - have produced a massive risk shift, the burden of which is being borne by Canadian families who have fallen victim to the global recession.

"Since low-wage individuals are especially likely to experience unemployment, the downloading of recessionary risk is having its biggest impacts on disadvantaged Canadians," Osberg says. "These impacts will only increase as EI benefits are exhausted in the coming months."

The study warns that benefits for current EI recipients will run out sometime before February 2010, when the OECD estimates that employment will be 10.5% - substantially higher than it is now.

The study recommends reforms such as the easing of entrance requirements, and a "second tier" of unemployment benefits to address the problems of those who are unemployed for long durations. ●



CLC President says unemployed spend into local community

An improved Employment Insurance program would provide a better stimulus to the economy than anything the federal government has tried so far, says Canadian Labour Congress President Ken Georgetti.

He was responding to the Statistics Canada labour force figures for June, when a net of 47,500 workers lost their full-time jobs. There are now about 1.6 million unemployed Canadians, an "official" unemployment rate of 8.6%. Fewer than half of the unemployed are actually collecting benefits due to rules, regulations and obstructions embedded in the EI system.

"This government can't seem to get its infrastructure projects off the ground but it could stimulate the economy overnight by improving EI benefits," Georgetti says. "We know the unemployed spend every dollar that they receive directly into the local community. Improving EI is the best and easiest way to kick start the economy."

Georgetti called the agreement by Harper and Michael Ignatieff to create another committee to study EI a mistake. "We already know what has to be done and putting off changes for months will only hurt unemployed Canadians, their families and their communities. Many people who lost their jobs last fall have already used up their EI benefits. They are going to end up on social assistance and at food banks."

He noted that a wide range of premiers, mayors, city councillors and editorial writers from major newspapers have backed the growing consensus that the Employment Insurance must be fixed now - not next fall or winter.

The CLC is calling on Ottawa to provide regular EI benefits on the basis of 360 hours of work, no matter where people live and work in Canada, to make all workers eligible for up to 50 weeks of EI benefits, and to raise benefits immediately to 60% of earnings cal-

culated on a worker's best 12 weeks of earnings.

Meanwhile, CLC Senior Economist Sylvain Schetagne noted that the deterioration of the labour market is continuing. Another 47,500 full-time workers were laid off in June, although other part-time jobs/self-employed jobs were created. Overall, 454,000 full-time jobs have disappeared since last October.

The proportion of Canadians forced to work part-time or become self-employed is increasing rapidly. Since October 2008, the number of Canadians working part-time increased by 84,000, now representing 19.5% of the workforce, up from 18.6% in October 2008. The number of self-employed Canadians increased by 37,000 in June only, and self-em-

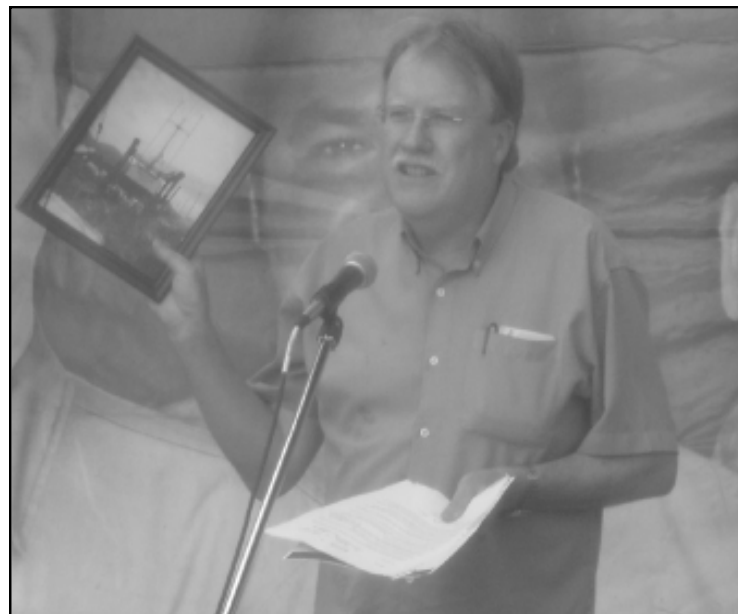
ployment is up 1.5% since last October.

The unemployment rate of 8.6% is now at the highest level in 11 years. The StatsCan figure of 1,592,000 unemployed workers has risen by 440,000 since October 2008, a jump of 38.3%.

The manufacturing sector continues to be disproportionately hit by job losses. In June 2009, another 25,700 jobs in manufacturing were eliminated, bringing the total losses in this sector to 567,000 since November 2002.

The jobless rate for workers aged 15 to 24 is also rising rapidly, reaching 15.9% in June 2009. The summer labour market for students is much worse than in 2008; 43,000 jobs usually performed by students aged 20 to 24 years old have disappeared during that time. ●

CCFA Moncada Day raises \$2300 for Cuban Five billboard



Members and supporters of the Canadian-Cuban Friendship Association (Vancouver) enjoyed the fine weather at their annual picnic to mark Moncada Day on July 26. The event raised over \$2300 to display a colourful billboard on Vancouver Island calling for freedom for the Cuban Five prisoners in the United States. Among the speakers was Jim Sinclair, president of the BC Federation of Labour (above). Photo: K. Cariou

Pregnant women targeted for layoffs

Update/OSSTF/CALM

Once upon a time, employers in Ontario were able to fire women who became pregnant. But that was in a dark and distant past - a time before the Ontario Human Rights Code made such discrimination illegal and ended it forever.

Wrong. In fact, the Toronto Star reported that the Ontario Human Rights Legal Support Centre has noted an "alarming surge in cases of pregnant women being fired..." This includes women right across the job spectrum, from senior managers to minimum wage workers.

The centre says the trend began last fall but increased dramatically as the economic recession deepened through the winter. While some employers are upfront telling a woman straight out that she is being let go because of her pregnancy, others are using layoffs, restructuring, and job performance to cover their tracks. Some try to provoke pregnant women into quitting by making life at work more difficult, such as making arbitrary changes in shifts, refusing time off for doctors' appointments, or cutting hours or redirecting work. A similar discriminatory trend in firings and layoffs has also been seen for new mothers, injured workers and people with disabilities.

The costs of these human rights violations are significant. Not only is there the immediate loss of income, there is the reality of trying to find new employment and getting re-established, often starting again at the bottom with no seniority. This is difficult at any time, but especially so in the midst of an economic downturn. Losing a job also means a pregnant woman loses access to benefits such as pregnancy and parental leave, sick leave and health benefits. If she doesn't have enough hours before giving birth, she may also lose access to maternity and parental Employment Insurance.

There are also important social and personal costs as these situations frequently leave the person feeling degraded, helpless and angry. ●



EDITORIALS

About that "bumpy ride"

While public attention is focused on the vagaries of the Canadian weather, warning signals keep flashing about an impending fall election. The Harper Tories are happy to read the recent crop of news reports about the "end of the recession", to be followed by a "bumpy ride" to recovery. This is a classic case of counting unhatched chickens, based mainly on "data" such as consumer confidence - which unsurprisingly reflects the desire of the corporate mass media for a return to economic normalcy. In reality, the capitalist world remains mired in the worst downturn in industrial production and international trade in decades.

Part of this bigger picture is that some two to three million Canadians remain unemployed, depending on one's choice of statistical evaluation. Of those, less than half have access to EI, and the level of unemployment benefits in Canada is far below the average for other OECD countries.

And yet the Harper Tories remain determined to leave Canadian working families in the lurch. The Ignatieff Liberals let the Tories off the hook in June, agreeing to take part in a committee to study this issue. But the work of the committee is already stymied by the categorical statement of Tory MP Pierre Poilievre that his government will never agree to proposals to reduce the number of hours employees must work before qualifying for insurance payments.

For hundreds of thousands laid off in recent months, EI benefits will soon start to run out. A cynic might wonder if Mr. Harper hopes to force a fall election before the reality of this unemployment crisis become fully apparent in mid-winter. Whatever the case, the job of the labour movement is to step up the campaign to expand EI access and benefits. For many, it will soon be a matter of life and death.

New and improved?

Wow - talk about not getting it. Even as demands rise for tighter restrictions or outright banning of "conducted energy devices," Taser International has announced the "Revolutionary New Multi-Shot TASER Device With Precision Shaped Pulse Technology."

People's Voice was one of the lucky recipients of this news on July 27. At first we assumed it was a tasteless joke - this came via email, after all. But it turns out that the "Next Generation TASER X3" has indeed been unveiled at the annual Taser Conference in Fountain Hills, Arizona.

For those still struggling to understand why Canadian, U.S. and British police (and others around the world, no doubt) often use Tasers as the weapon of choice to incapacitate people, the details of this upgraded device are startling and appalling. The first new form of Taser since 2003, the X3 is capable of firing three cartridges without reloading, using "a revolutionary Pulse Calibration System(tm) to constantly monitor and calibrate electrical output to provide more consistent effects on the target and to provide enhanced safety over the current proven and widely accepted TASER(r) technology."

Think about that for a moment. For years, long before the RCMP killing of defenceless Robert Dziekanski at the Vancouver Airport, the top guns at Taser called these weapons safer than anything this side of oven mitts. But now, "the most sophisticated handheld weapon ever developed" will improve effectiveness and safety? Even with the capability of attacking three victims, not just one?

Somehow, this reminds us of TV ads which extol the "new, improved flavour" of Chewy Bits. Usually, this is a subtle admission that the old Chewy Bits were wretched.

And so it is with the new improved Taser. The original product should be banned, and police forces are simply not to be trusted with a new version that can attack three times as many people.

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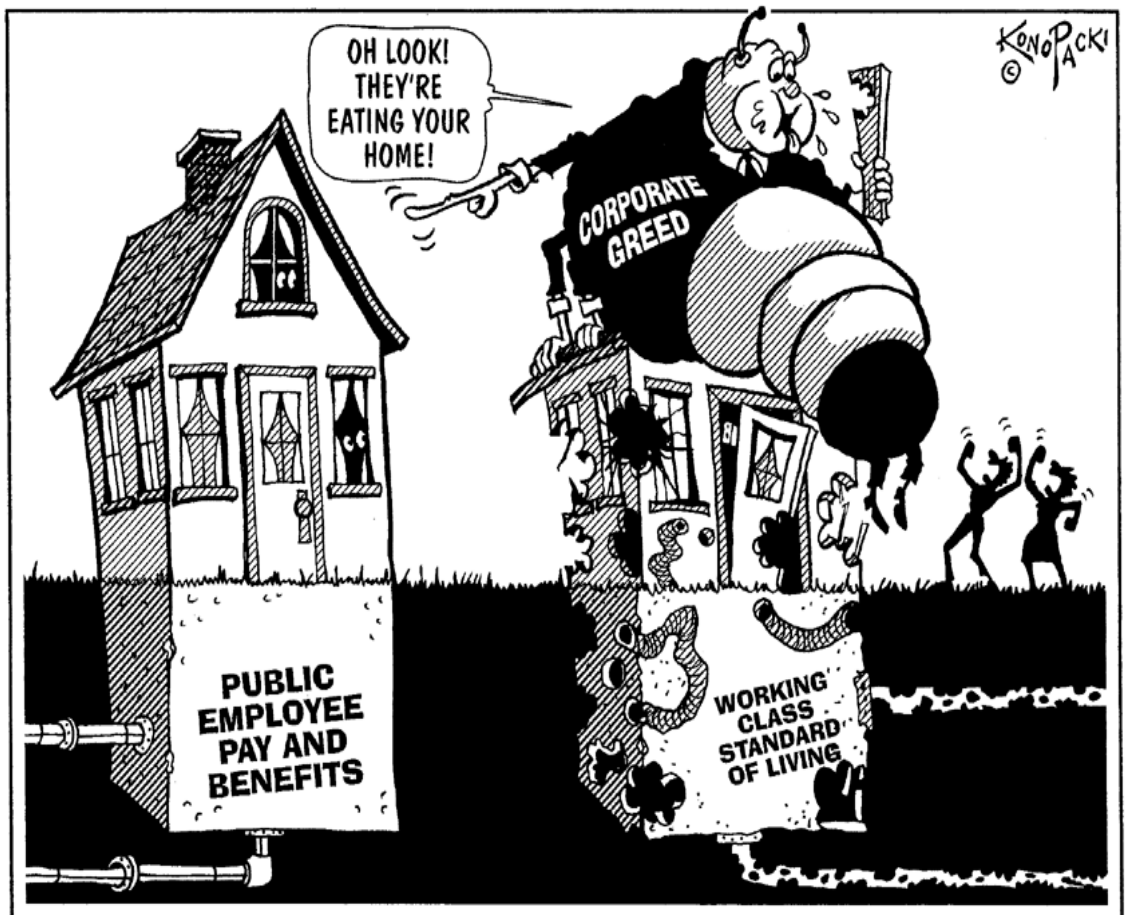
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LETTERS

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706 Clark Drive, Vancouver, BC, V5L 3J1 or
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Letters to the Editor

NDPer urges unity of progressives to win change

In the July issue of People's Voice, Liz Rowley made the case for People's Coalition from a Communist perspective. It is fair to ask where New Democrats and other leftists stand. Keep in mind that while I am a New Democrat, I do not claim to speak for the party, or other party members. I can, however, speak for myself.

While proud to be a New Democrat, I am not as active in the party as I once was. I believe members of my generation who have been in the centre of party activity since the 1980s must step back and let younger members assume leadership. We can still be involved, but in supporting rather than leading roles. Furthermore, there are still a wide range of causes in which we can and should be active if we truly care about bringing about progressive change.

In Alberta, there have been suggestions to unite the opposition parties. It is suggested that the NDP and Greens to each run about 10 to 15 candidates for the legislature, while Liberals run about 60 candidates. Then, if voters do not see how cynical and opportunist this strategy is - or how New Democrats must compromise principles and values and abandon commitments to workers and the environment - perhaps the Tories may be defeated.

Join with the Liberals? No thank you! While Alberta Liberals say they are not the same as federal Liberals, or Liberals of other provinces, I will buy ocean front property near Red Deer before I believe that line. With one or two exceptions, Liberals in our legislature are as conservative as the Conservatives. In other provinces (notably British Columbia, Quebec and Saskatchewan) Liberals have built alliances with Conservatives to defeat progressive parties. Further-

more, remember that federal Liberals in government were responsible for severe cuts to Employment Insurance and CBC, and selling off crown corporations to private profiteers. For example, as a crown corporation, Canadian National served Canadian needs in all areas of the country, not just where they could earn a profit. As a private corporation, branch lines have been closed while the railway has expanded into the United States - much easier to ship our raw resources off to be processed in the United States and then ship them back at higher prices.

During the late 1980s and early 1990s, the NDP made the mistake of compromising principles in the hope of being more "respectable" and achieving power. This robbed working people of an effective voice in halls of power and, NDP governments, led by men like Bob Rae and Ujjal Dosanjh (now Liberals), failed miserably. The record of many Labour and Social Democratic governments around the world is not much better. I believe part of the problem is that they immediately became comfortable in power and forgot who put them in office.

Therefore, a people's coalition is our only solution, but it must be more than a movement seeking election to parliament and provincial legislatures. I agree a People's Assembly (Rassemblement Populaire) must be formed, including New Democrats, Communists, progressive Greens and others to run candidates for parliament, provincial legislatures and even local councils. However, there must be action outside of legislative assemblies to press governments of all parties to implement a progressive agenda. This means labour, farmers seniors', youth, students, LGBT people, community action groups, peace groups, and activists for public

health care and education must work cooperatively toward shared goals. Some people will get involved in peaceful street action and protests. Others, like me, prefer to use the pen (well - the computer) to make arguments and put pressure on those elected to serve us, as well as combat the negative propaganda and deceptions of the social, political and business conservative establishment (along with their stink tanks such as the Fraser and C.D. Howe institutes).

New Democrats and Greens must not believe Liberals who would love to assimilate the progressive left into their ranks and then carry on the same agenda as the Tories (with perhaps less harsh rhetoric). Only a dedicated and united democratic, socialist left dedicated to progressive social and ecological values will make change happen - and then only if it is working on all fronts rather than merely depending on those we elect to government.

Wayne Madden, Edmonton

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CPP Reforms - punishing workers who retire early

By Larry Brown, National Secretary-Treasurer, National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE)

Our federal government, the uber-specialists in spin, have spun out some changes to the Canada Pension Plan (CPP) that were described in glowing terms as enhancing fairness and allowing employees greater flexibility. One newspaper dutifully, if incorrectly, talked about a "sea change" in CPP policy.

What the changes really mean, unpacked from the spin, is that employees in Canada that want to retire early are going to be hit hard by a further reduction in their CPP benefits, a reduction that will last the rest of their lives. And workers will be heavily induced to continue working even after reaching 65.

It is abundantly clear that the level of CPP benefits is too low. It is equally clear that for over six million Canadians, without workplace pensions or RRSPs, the CPP is their only real source of retirement income.

Rather than address this issue, the proposal coming from the Harper government is to tinker with the rules so that in fact CPP payouts

would be driven even lower for some workers, workers with the temerity to retire earlier than 65.

These would be disguised reductions, hidden by the fact that workers would be able to start collecting CPP at 60, and still work and make payments into the plan.

But any employee in Canada hoping or planning to retire before 65 should know that the decrease in CPP pension payments will go

labour voices

from a current maximum 30% decrease at the age of 60 to a maximum 36% decrease. That is, for employees who work to 65, their pension would be 36% higher than if they were to retire at 60, a very heavy inducement indeed to keep on working.

The 36% reduction will last the rest of their lives. This works out to an extra 6% lost for early retirement - a 16% increase in the permanent cost of early retirement.

That's not the end of it. Workers who want to retire early will also have a heavy inducement to work at least part-time after that. For every year they work they will

get back some of that retirement penalty. And even at 65 workers will be encouraged to keep working. If they work until 70 the value of their CPP will keep increasing by an elevated amount.

Who benefits from these changes, which are so obviously aimed at inducing most people to work until at least 65 and preferably longer? Well, some employees who want and are able to work past age 60 will appreciate the fact they'll be able to do so while collecting (greatly reduced) CPP benefits. But the biggest benefits go to employers.

Employers will face a lot less pressure to recruit younger workers, or pay older workers a fair wage. Under either of these announced changes, from ages 60 to 70 a person can receive CPP and keep working. That employee will already be receiving a CPP payment, needing less employment income. This will benefit employers because they will feel even less inclined to pay reasonable salaries to seniors still working.

The net effect is that seniors would be subsidizing their employers by using their CPP benefits to supplement their lower incomes. Meanwhile, the pool of workers available to employers would be considerably larger than

it is now, when retirement at 60 is a reasonable option.

No wonder the most enthusiastic endorsements of this new idea have come from employer-oriented think tanks. It's a potentially lucrative gift to employers from their older employees.

The Harper government has also cloaked these changes in the rhetoric of "responding to the current economic crisis." Yet the fact is that these changes will not occur until 2012. So how does this help people today who don't have a workplace pension, who don't have adequate CPP benefits, who

don't have private retirement savings or have seen them recently hammered by the stock market meltdown?

Some countries have openly increased their normal retirement age, allowing for public debate on the issue. In Canada, where spin is everything for our federal government, they are using CPP changes to increase the pressure on workers to stay in their jobs till at least 65, and calling it "progress, flexibility and fairness."

Look past the spin, and the result is less employee choice about when to retire. ●



The water crisis: the most urgent threat

By Maude Barlow/Council of Canadians/CALM

The water crisis is perhaps the most urgent ecological and human threat of our time and the first-and most devastating-face of climate change.

More children die each year of water-borne disease than war, HIV/AIDS and traffic accidents combined. In their recent World Water Development Report, 24 agencies of the United Nations confirmed what those of us working in the field already knew: that the global water crisis is getting worse by the day and threatening millions more people every year.

The problem is that we humans have seen the Earth and its water resources as something that exists for our benefit and economic advancement rather than as a living ecological system that needs to be safeguarded if it is to survive. We have polluted, diverted and displaced so much water from where it is needed for a healthy hydrologic cycle to function, that whole parts of the planet are drying up.

We are just beginning to understand the devastation of this drying to the ecosystem and other



species as we humans continue to rob the Earth of the water it needs for survival. The human water footprint surpasses all others and endangers life on Earth itself.

The path to a sustainable water future is difficult but clear. First, water must be seen as a common resource that belongs to the Earth and all species alike. It must be declared a public resource that belongs equally to all people, the ecosystem and the future. It must be preserved for all time and practice in law as a public trust and a human right. Clean water must be delivered as a public service, not a profitable commodity.

We must efficiently manage our water for the common good, encourage social control mechanisms that put decision-making back in the hands of communities, and always remain vigilant against persistent power inequities. The global North must do far more to unburden the global South from the yoke of debt that prevents many poor countries from fulfilling this obligation. Justice, not charity, must light our way forward.

Second, we need to assert once and for all that access to clean, affordable water is a fundamental human right that must be codified

in nation-state law and as a full covenant at the United Nations.

A United Nations right-to-water covenant would set the framework for water as a social and cultural asset and would establish the indispensable legal groundwork for a just system of distribution. It would serve as a common, coherent body of rules for all nations and clarify the right to clean, affordable water for all, regardless of income. Such a covenant would establish once and for all that no one anywhere should be allowed to die or forced to watch a beloved child die from dirty water simply because they are poor.

Finally, watersheds must be protected from plunder, and we must revitalize wounded water systems with widespread watershed restoration programs.

Simply put, we must leave enough water in aquifers, rivers and lakes for their ecological health. This must be the priority: the precautionary principle of ecosystem protection must take precedence over commercial demands on these waters. This means that we will have to abandon the "hard path" of large-scale technology-dams, diversions and desalination in favour of the "soft path" of

conservation, rainwater and stormwater harvesting, recycling, alternative energy use, municipal infrastructure investment and local, sustainable food production. Living in and with nature instead of over nature is our path to a water-sustainable future.

As a crucial next step, nature must be seen as having inherent rights beyond its use to us. Most Western law has viewed natural resources as the property of humans. We need new laws to regulate human behaviour to protect the integ-

rity of the Earth and all species on it from our wanton exploitation. As Martin Luther King said, the law may not change the heart but it will restrain the heartless. Rivers have rights to flow to the sea.

None of us can live on a dry planet. ●

(From remarks to the United Nations General Assembly, April 22, 2009. Barlow is the Senior Advisor on Water to the President of the UN General Assembly and National Chairperson of the Council of Canadians.)

Agribusiness profits up, but seasonal workers still exploited

Directions/UFCW/CALM

Profits in the Canadian agriculture sector have jumped a second year in a row while workers in the field continue to be one of the most exploited labour forces in Canada-including the more than 22,000 farm workers here every season from abroad under Canada's Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program.

Statistics Canada reports that farm sector total net revenues increased for the second consecutive year to \$3.3-billion-up \$1.3-billion from 2007.

"That's a 63 per cent jump in revenues, yet wages for most farm workers remain the lowest in Canada," says UFCW Canada president Wayne Hanley. "The system is set up to keep these workers powerless."

Through the eight farm worker support centres across Canada operated in 2008 by the Agriculture Workers Alliance, UFCW

Canada support staff handled more than 40,000 inquiries. This year there are nine centres in operation.

"SAWP workers have no say about their pay or working conditions. That is strictly left up to the government and the farm lobby," Hanley says. "It is the same story for all farm workers in Ontario and Alberta because their Charter rights continue to be violated by provincial bans on farm unions."

Field workers in Alberta are also excluded from the protections of the province's workplace health-and-safety regulations. Only token protections exist in Ontario, where farms receive a provincial safety inspection about once a decade.

"The blatant discrimination against agriculture workers has to end," Hanley says. "It means billions in profits for the agriculture industry at the cost of workers' health, safety, and workplace rights." ●

didyouknow?

"The world's supply of fresh water is running out. Already one person in five has no access to safe drinking water"

BBC News



In defense of the movement of Iranian people for democratic rights and freedoms!

Editorial from Nameh Mardom, central organ of the Central Committee of Tudeh Party of Iran, July 6, 2009 (excerpt)

It is now more than three weeks since the presidential election was held in Iran, in which Mahmud Ahmadinejad, the candidate of dark-minded and anti-people forces, was claimed as the winner, through extensive vote rigging and fraud, and the broad and organized intervention of military-security circles at every stage of the election process. The protest of the popular movement of our nation against this outrageous fraud in recent weeks has been one of the most extensive campaigns of the anti-despotic struggle in the past three decades.

Millions of ordinary citizens, including the working people, the middle strata of society and supporters of democracy and human rights in Iran poured into the streets and, through their peaceful and nonviolent demonstrations, demanded the annulment of the election outcome and the holding of a new and fair election. People around the world witnessed an unequal battle on their TV screens, between masses of people on one side and the military and paramilitary forces of the regime on the other. As a result of the shooting by the regime's security-military forces, at least 20 people were killed and hundreds were wounded.

Also, launching one of the broadest assault operations, the regime's mercenary hit squads arrested more than a thousand activists of the protest movement, prominent figures in the election campaigns of the reformist candidates, activists of the students' and women's movement and pro-reform journalists, and sent them to the torture chambers. The forced confessions of these torture victims in front of TV cameras are now being used to frame some of the leaders of the reform movement and even individuals who at one point were considered among the "inner circle" of the regime.

Similar confessions to these were planned and executed during the 1980s against a number of leaders of our party and other dissident and political organizations in the country to subdue the progressive and popular parties and ban them. Recent events remind us of the gruesome and bloody suppression that was inflicted on our nation by the dictatorial 'regime of the Supreme Leader' during the 1980s, and which culminated in the "National Catastrophe" in which thousands of political prisoners, including a large number of the most prominent intellectuals, writers, labour movement leaders and activists, patriotic military officers, activists of the women's movement and many others, were massacred.

In recent weeks, the genuine and freedom-seeking popular movement of the Iranian people and its heroic struggle for democratic reforms has been the centre of world public attention and has enjoyed solidarity from across the globe. Few people can be found

that, having witnessed the brutal confrontation of the military-security forces of the murderous ruling regime with the unarmed and hopeful people of Tehran and other cities of Iran, would not support the women, youth and working people who bravely defy the troops of ignorance and dark-mindedness.

The reality is that the 'regime of the Supreme Leader' and its installed government have wasted away a large part of the natural and human resources of Iran in the past four years by employing anti-popular and reactionary policies. Iran, a country rich in oil and gas, has been plunged deeply into poverty, social and economic crisis, prostitution and corruption. The adventurous foreign policy of the regime has forced Iran into unprecedented international isolation and, given the current balance of power in the world, has put the political sovereignty and integrity of Iran under serious threat from the war-mongering circles of imperialism.

It is clear that, given the state of the people's struggle and also the focus of the world on recent events in Iran, no political force can remain impartial and neutral concerning this situation. One must either stand in support of the people's struggle or stand by a regime that is politically, economically, socially, ideologically and culturally reactionary, backward-look-



Students on the roof of a university building, protesting the Iranian regime's attack on democracy.

ing and anti-people.

...The political position of all progressive, left, democratic and pro-reform forces in Iran is aligned with the defense of the genuine movement of people and total condemnation of the policies of the regime. Even the supporters of the regime have split under pressure from the undeniable realities of recent developments and as a result of witnessing the enormity and extent of the popular movement; and sections of them have seriously criticized the performance of Ahmadinejad's administration and admitted that a change in direction of the development of the society is necessary.

World-wide, the vast majority of progressive and democratic forces, including communist parties, have stood beside this popular uprising. They have expressed their support for the broad campaign of protesting women, youth and masses, and have condemned the bloody suppression of the protest movement.

Regrettably... some forces in

the world have fallen into the calculated and cunning trap of the ruling regime of Iran, which is desperately trying to characterize this genuine popular struggle for peace, democracy, human rights and social justice as a move influenced by foreign machinations. The disbelief and scepticism of some forces towards the genuineness of this popular movement, and their belief that the slogans and demands of this marvellous uprising of the Iranian people is under the influence of the foreign powers, first and foremost stems from their inflexible and dogmatic

Regrettably... some forces in the world have fallen into the calculated and cunning trap of the ruling regime of Iran, which is desperately trying to characterize this genuine popular struggle for peace, democracy, human rights and social justice as a move influenced by foreign machinations.

perception and their lack of a comprehensive and thorough understanding of imperialism and the anti-imperialist struggle. Also, it can not be ignored that such stances, rather than being based on knowledge, are reflections of the lack of awareness and knowledge of these forces, their narrow perception of the true nature of struggle and also the deceitful and populist slogans of the ruling reli-

ous reaction by certain political forces in those countries to recent developments in Iran.

One of the issues that became clearly obvious in recent weeks was the impact of such relations on the stance of countries that, in the final analysis, will act within the narrow framework of their own national interests. For a variety of reasons, although not ideological, Iran has close relations with some of the Latin American countries and with Venezuela in particular. These include trade and economic agreements. Due to their progressive and independent policies,

most of these countries are threatened by the United States and its allies. Therefore, it seems natural that they should look for allies around the world in order to break the imperialist blockade. Furthermore, Venezuela's position in the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, OPEC, is similar to that of Iran. Therefore, it is only natural that, from the standpoint of inter-governmental relations, Venezuela and other such countries in Latin America would hold positive views toward the ruling regime of Iran.

The progressive forces of Iran and the world view the resistance of these countries against the imperialist plots as an esteemed struggle and support it. However, to us and to other progressive forces of the world, the national and anti-imperialist struggle of these countries does not mean that we can approve of their contradictory diplomatic positions and their give-and-take dealings with... the 'regime of the Supreme Leader'. The progressive and democratic forces in Iran can not withhold their concern and discontent about the positions of the official authorities of some of these countries, and in particular those of the government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, in support of the Iranian regime and its flagrant confrontation with the popular movement. Because of their trade and diplomatic relations with the Islamic

When the Islamic Republic of Iran finds imperialist interventions to its advantage, it formally and extensively collaborates (as has previously done so) with US imperialism and its allies.

Republic of Iran, these countries are unfortunately closing their eyes to the realities of recent developments in Iran, and in practice are standing against the popular movement in Iran. While appreciating the difficulties that Venezuela has in protecting itself against the attacks of imperialism and its political decision to have trade and economic dealings with the ruling regime of Iran and its reactionary president, we advise the leaders of the Venezuelan government to shun inappropriate and shallow

speculation about the nature of the present developments in Iran, not to misrepresent it and not to doubt the authenticity of the popular movement of our nation.

The ruling regime in Iran (and its government led by Mr. Mahmud Ahmadinejad) neither has the power to play a role in the struggle against imperialism nor are its policies in line with this. The conflicts and disputes of US imperialism and its European allies with the Islamic Republic of Iran are about dividing their spheres of influence in the Middle East. Today, the Islamic Republic of Iran considers itself a powerful country in the region and demands its own special advantages and sphere of influence. When the Islamic Republic of Iran finds imperialist interventions to its advantage, it formally and extensively collaborates (as has previously done so) with US imperialism and its allies. The crucial and vital collaboration of the Islamic Republic during the military aggression of the United States against Iraq and Afghanistan and its occupation of these two countries are two revealing examples of this. The leaders of the Islamic Republic of Iran have admitted that they collaborated with the American forces and their allies during the military aggression of the United States against Afghanistan in 2001 and, for example, permitted US fighter jets to use Iran's airspace in order to launch attacks on strategic targets inside Afghanistan.

Also, in preparation for a military strike against Iraq in 2002 and 2003, US-supported forces, such as the "Iraqi National Congress", headed by Ahmed Chalabi, operated via Iran's territory at the western borders of the country, with the financial support and full knowledge of the United States. The official representatives of the regime at the Munich Security Conference in February 2009 made a formal public statement addressed to Javier Solana, chief secretary of the EU and responsible for EU Foreign and Security Policy, Joseph Biden, Vice-President of the United States and Robert Gates, United States Secretary of Defense, declaring that if the interests of the Islamic Republic were protected, Iran would be willing to take a role in the political stabilization of Afghanistan and to cooperate with imperialist plans.

The extent of "opposition" of

the 'regime of the Supreme Leader' in Iran to imperialism is similar to figures such as the reactionary Bin Laden, the fascist dictator Saddam Hussein and Omar Bashir, president of Sudan, the extent of whose compliance and interaction with imperialism is dependent on their short-lived interests. It is a fact that these forces, regardless of their fleeting problems with some imperialist plans, have acted in uni-

Honduran Oligarchy: "The War is Against Chavez"

July 10, 2009, by Ricardo Daher - Aporrea (from Venezuelanalysis.com)

The Honduran de facto government and private media insist on denying the coup d'état and say that they accept the mediation of Costa Rican president Oscar Arias, but exclude any conversation over the return of Zelaya to the presidency.

At the same time they sustain that they are the spearhead of a "war" against the "dictatorship of Hugo Chavez."

The daily newspapers, *Heraldo*, *Tribuna* and *La Prensa*, lead the way in defending the coup d'état and repeat, almost in the same words, the accusation against the Venezuelan president for his supposed interference. They also promote the withdrawal of Honduras from the ALBA accords, because they claim, "it has only benefited the left."

The headlines of these newspapers and the declarations of the current leaders of the State are a copy of the anti-communist manual of the press campaigns in the decades of the sixties and seventies in the last century.

With contrived arguments, the Honduran media promotes a campaign accusing the Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez of interfering in the country and provoking the confrontations last Sunday near the surrounds of the Tegucigalpa International Airport, when 200,000 people waited for the return of the constitutional

president.

By extension, they sustain that the UN and the OAS are manipulated by Chavez, and that the presidents of Argentina, Cristina Fernandez, of Paraguay, Fernando Lugo, of Ecuador, Rafael Correa, of Nicaragua, Daniel Ortega and the Honduran president himself, Manuel Zelaya, also obey the orders of the Venezuelan president.

Even the highest authorities of the Catholic Church have joined the campaign.

The Honduran oligarchs continue ignoring the demand of the people for a return to institutionalism and to allow Zelaya to finish his term. "We have communicated with president Arias to tell him that we are prepared for any dialogue, always and when it is not for the return of president Zelaya, but rather when it is to hand him over to the justice tribunals," Roberto Micheletti, the defacto president, said. He insisted, "we are not going to negotiate anything, we are going to dialogue." "We are clear that everything that has happened here was within the framework of the law and the Constitution of the Republic, here what there was, was a constitutional situation," the dictator concluded.

At the same time, the de facto president continued naming new authorities in the cabinet and substituting governors and mayors. Legislator, Mauricio Reconco, of the Liberal Party, defended the legality of the overthrow of Zelaya,

and said, "we know what was done was best, if not we would have been in a worse situation," he said. Immediately he went on to attack Chavez, "in this moment we are seeing internationally that Honduras has shown it is a country that has put a block in the path of Hugo Chavez. The war is no longer against ex-president Zelaya, but against Hugo Chavez."



Honduran civilians berate Army soldiers in an armoured car near the presidential house in Tegucigalpa on the morning of the coup against President Manuel Zelaya.

"It is lamentable that in organisations such as the UN and the OAS, Hugo Chavez continues to have strength and power, he has chess pieces - such as these presidents, Correa, Lugo, Kirchner, Mel Zelaya and Daniel Ortega - who he ma-

noeuvres at his whim," he concluded. Cardinal Oscar Andres Rodriguez, after defending the coup d'état and criticising the protests calling for the return of the constitutional president, attacked the Venezuelan president: "We totally reject the interference of the Venezuelan president, we are a small but sovereign country, since he came to insult us in the month of August, that Mister has been trying to put his hands in here, he should leave us in peace, he should dedicate himself to governing his own country".

Meanwhile, the rightwing movement Generation for Change, continues holding mobilizations in support of the coup, as they did previously against president Zelaya, and

they repeat the same arguments of the old rulers. Luis Colindres, one of the youth leaders said during an event on Tuesday, that a dictatorial system exists in Venezuela, and that "if Zelaya Rosales returns the same thing could happen in our country."

The Retired Officials of the Armed Forces Association mobilized together with the "youth" of the Generation for Change. At the same time as they defended what they claimed was a legal presidential substitution, they criticised the OAS, which they considered to be biased in favour of Zelaya and through a communique condemned the intervention in internal affairs by said organization. ●

End the Coup in Honduras! Canada Must Act Now!

One month has passed since the June 28th coup d'état in Honduras which drove elected President Manuel Zelaya from office and into exile, installing one of the coup leaders, Roberto Micheletti as "Interim President" in his place. And yet despite street protests and general strikes inside the country, and unanimous international condemnation, including Honduras' suspension from the Organization of American States (OAS), the coup leaders remain in control.

Canada and the other imperialist states - the United States in the first instance - were forced at first to publicly disassociate themselves from the coup. But U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and the Harper government in Ottawa are refusing to insist on the return of Zelaya to power, and economic trade and aid grants continue to flow. As one commentator said recently, "if the Obama Administration really wanted to end the coup, they could do it with one phone call!"

Indeed, the claim that the U.S. government was not intimately involved in the coup holds no water. Most of the Honduran army command and other high state officials were trained in the U.S. (including at the notorious "School of the Americas"); the U.S. military/intelligence apparatus knows everything that goes on in Honduras and other weak, neo-colonial states in the region; and the U.S.-sponsored, terrorist ex-Cuban mafia based in Miami have extensive ties with the Honduran oligarchy, including involvement in the

lucrative drug trade.

Imperialism is playing an elaborate shell game: making verbal pronouncements against the coup but privately applauding the coup leaders and shielding them from real concerted international pressure, thus giving the putschists time to snuff out domestic resistance and consolidate their unconstitutional grip on power.

And the reason is simple: Honduras is a training ground to work out new tactics to depose socialist, anti-imperialist and other progressive or left-leaning governments in Latin America under present-day conditions, compared to those of

Statement from the Central Executive Committee, Communist Party of Canada, July 2009

the 1950s, 60s and 70s when U.S.-backed and engineered coups proliferated across this Hemisphere.

President Zelaya lost favour with the Honduran ruling class and its U.S. backers when he began to embrace more independent and pro-people policies, came out strongly against the privatization of Hondutel and other public utilities, expanded diplomatic, economic and political relations with Cuba, Venezuela and other progressive states, and then moved to join the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA). When the oligarchic circles within the state (the Honduran Armed Forces, the court system, and the Congress) concluded they had lost

effective control over Zelaya, and that a mass constituency of workers, peasants and the poor was beginning to take shape, they decided the time had come to act.

The Communist Party of Canada joins with labour, progressive and other democratic organizations in clearly and unambiguously condemning the coup d'état in Honduras and demanding the immediate reinstatement of President Manuel Zelaya, and the arrest and punishment of the coup leaders. We also demand that the Government of Canada condemn the regime's brutal attacks against workers, youth and other progressive Hondurans opposing the coup d'état, and demand that the coup leaders immediately surrender power and restore the democratically-elected President to his rightful office, without conditions. These demands must be combined with the following actions:

- * halting all direct and state-supported aid programs to Honduras that benefit the oligarchy;
- * ending diplomatic relations with Honduras and declaring its Ambassador to Canada persona non grata;
- * imposing comprehensive economic, political and military sanctions against Honduras

Nothing short of these measures will suffice, if Canada's words are to be matched by real deeds. We remain confident that the Honduran people, with the support and solidarity of the people of the world, will succeed in overturning this coup d'état, defeating this and other machinations of the oligarchy and its imperialist backers! ●

CLC demands action on Honduras

Letter from CLC President Ken Georgetti to PM Stephen Harper, July 21, 2009

On behalf of the 3.2 million members of the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC), I am writing to urge the Canadian government act immediately to sever all diplomatic and economic ties with the unconstitutional government of Honduras, until democratically-elected Manuel Zelaya is reinstated to his rightful position as President of the country.

We are very concerned with Canada's equivocal response to the overthrow of democracy in one of the poorest nations in the Americas. On June 28, while governments throughout the world expressed outrage at the coup d'état conducted by the military in Honduras, Canada was the only government in the Americas to not demand President Zelaya's immediate and unconditional reinstatement. Instead, at the Organization of American States (OAS), Canada suggested President Zelaya delay his return. Also, Canada did not withdraw its ambassador, as did the majority of all other governments in the Americas. Nor did Canada follow the example of the World Bank and the Government of the United States, by cutting loans and some aid.

The Canadian Labour Congress, along with our partner organizations in Honduras and in the hemisphere, is closely monitoring events in Honduras and we look forward to seeing improvements in Canada's actions on this file. Specifically, we are requesting Canada make a clear statement that it does not recognize the unconstitutional government backed by the military, by cutting off diplomatic ties with Honduras. We request the government cut all bilateral aid to Honduras and the Export Corporation loans to Canadian companies operating there. You must make it clear to those companies that it cannot be "business as usual" with this disruption of democracy. The military overthrow of a democratically-elected government must not be allowed to stand, as it could set a dangerous precedent.

Canada should follow the position of the rest of the members of the OAS, insisting the mediated talks lead to a restoration of Manuel Zelaya's presidency. Once this takes place and democracy is restored, and those who have committed crimes are brought to justice, Honduras will need support of all governments and civil societies in the region to begin a process of national reconciliation. Ideally, this will identify mechanisms to ensure that the hopes and aspirations of all Hondurans are addressed in a peaceful, respectful and democratic manner in the future. ●



GLOBAL CLASS STRUGGLE

French workers threaten to blow up factory

Workers at collapsed French car parts maker New Fabris threatened on July 12 to blow up their factory if they did not receive payouts by July 31 from auto groups Renault and Peugeot to compensate for their lost jobs.

New Fabris was declared in liquidation in April, so the workers stand to get no redundancy money, although they are entitled to draw state unemployment benefit. The workers are occupying the New Fabris factory at Chatellerault, near Poitiers in central France. They want Renault and Peugeot Citroen to pay 30,000 euros (\$41,800) for each of the 336 staff at the factory, or some 10 million euros in total, in return for its remaining stocks of equipment and machinery.

"The bottles of gas have already been placed at various parts of the factory and are connected with each other," CGT trades union official Guy Eyermann told France Info radio. "If Renault and PSA refuse to give us that money it could blow up before the end of the month."

The company is the successor to Fabris, founded in 1947 and put into liquidation in 2007. It was later acquired by ZEN of Italy which is headed by Florindo Garro. ZEN SpA, based in Albignasego near Padua, makes cast iron parts for vehicles. Garro controls other metal firms in France such as Rencast and SBFM that also have financial difficulties.

Some French workers have adopted militant tactics in the economic crisis, including "bossnappings" where managers have been held hostage in their offices.

All-China Federation visits WFTU HQ

On July 8-10, a numerous high-level delegation from the All China Federation of Trade Unions, headed by Sun Chunlan, Vice-Chairwoman and First Secretary of the ACFTU, visited the headquarters of the World Federation of Trade Unions in Athens.

This is the first such high level visit since 1965 when the ACFTU withdrew its affiliation from the WFTU. The ACFTU is the largest trade union in the world with 210 million members.

The delegation held "significant discussions on issues of common interest" with a numerous WFTU delegation led by its General Secretary, George Mavrikos and Deputy General Secretary Dr. Elsadig Ali.

The discussions were marked by mutual respect and commitment to intensify efforts for:

- Strengthening of democracy, transparency and proportional representation at all levels of the International Labor Organisation (ILO).

- International trade union cooperation for peace, ending war conflicts and the right of every people to determine their present and future.

- Intensifying of efforts to strengthen the World Trade Union Forum of Beijing, to be established as an important event for the world working class and the international trade union movement.

- Exchange of bilateral visits and contacts aiming to protect workers and their rights in time of international economic crisis.

- Mutual respect between the two



organizations, both for issues of common approach as well as for issues where there are different views.

While in Athens, the ACFTU delegation also met with the President of Greece and with the Minister of Employment and Social Security, as well as with other trade union and political contacts.

The leadership of the World Federation of Trade Unions considered the visit a "very positive" event to further strengthen the relationship between the two organizations.

Women workers speak out in Honduras

On July 21, the Honduran Women's Collective (CODEMUH) issued a statement to expose the situation that women maquila workers are experiencing in their country:

"Workers are being forced to participate in so-called 'Marches for Peace' [pro-coup demonstrations]. In some companies, workers are selected from high-producing work-groups, groups that achieve their quotas. Workers are not asked whether they want to participate, and in at least one case, the administrators of a cooperative are being forced to participate. Employers are also insulting the anti-coup demonstrators, saying they are trouble-makers who want to harm participants in the 'Marches for Peace.' This is a perverse statement on the part of the manufacturing sector, since the demonstrations of resistance from the Honduran people include workers' families and friends. The manufacturers' cynical intention is to be the protagonists of a conflict which will maintain the divisions between the impoverished people of Honduras. This in turn will increase violence between people, and increase the nearly-absolute power of the Honduran State.

"We also want to clarify that male and female maquila workers who have been forced to participate in the 'Marches for Peace' have not received a penny for their

participation. In fact, there are companies that are forcing workers to make up the day on the Saturday after the march, and promising to pay them overtime on that day. That overtime pay never appears - so not only are these workers obliged to participate in marches for the bourgeoisie, but they have to work an extra day.

"The workers living through this, just to keep their jobs, feel powerless and sad. They do not agree with these activities organized by the employers. We call on maquila workers to stop accepting when they are told they are *maquileras* but to call themselves workers. We have to reclaim our class identity. As well, we call on maquila workers to resist being taken to the 'Marches for Peace'. Workers cannot be fired for refusing to participate. This is an abuse by manufacturers - you have not been hired to fight in the streets for their interests, but to work in their factories.

"Women are human beings, not machinery, and employers are using their patriarchal capitalist power to oppress the workers. Jobs yes, but with dignity! Women want peace, but an inclusive peace where impoverished people enjoy the full respect of their rights at home, at work and in the street - without coup d'états, without unexpected electricity cuts, without censorship of television and radio channels sending out information to the people, without curfews, without the suspension of our fundamental human rights in the absence of any authority.

"This conflict has really given us the opportunity to see the true colours of our leaders. Who votes on Election Day? Who elects our leaders? Isn't it enlightening to see their true colours and to remember the power we have?"

"We are for tenderness, beauty, hope and sisterhood between human beings. No more violence against the women and men of the Honduran people."

Korean strikers defy police

Hundreds of sacked workers from South Korea's Ssangyong motors continue to clash with police as they resist efforts to end a two-month long siege at the company's main factory. Up to 600 workers have been occupying the paint shop part in the factory, about 70 km south of Seoul, in protest against massive job cuts that are part of a restructuring plan.

Gas, water and food supplies to the plant were cut in mid-July, but the protesters, armed with high-powered slingshots and other makeshift weapons, have refused to move. The protesters have stocked up on enough food and other necessities to hold out for a considerable time. Electricity to the plant has been left on to keep paint at the factory fluid. Around 3,000 riot police have been deployed to the factory, and on July 22 police helicopters dumped tear gas onto the plant in an effort to force the sacked workers to leave. On the same day, an extra deployment of 100 police commandos joined the security forces already

at the plant to lead a possible raid of the occupied buildings.

An officer with the provincial police said, "We're fully ready to move in, but haven't set the timing because a lot of flammable material, such as paint and thinner, is scattered in the paint shop."

Lee Chang-kun, a spokesman for the union leading the protests, said the occupying workers would resist if police launch an assault and suggested such a fight could turn bloody. "If police decide to move in, then it would mean that they don't care even if dozens die," he said.

Ssangyong, which specialises in sport-utility vehicles and luxury sedans, said the factory occupation had cost \$196.5m in lost revenue. The protest began on May 21 and has paralysed production at the plant, adding to the problems faced by a company that was already in court-approved bankruptcy protection.

Brazilian labour group to support Sudbury strikers

Sudbury Northern Life newspaper reports that a Brazilian labour group has signed a "strategic partnership" with the United Steelworkers of America to support workers in Sudbury and Port Colborne in their negotiations with Vale. CUT (Central Unica dos Trabalhadores) Brazil includes those who work for Vale in Brazil.

"With the current international financial crisis, workers don't need to pay for a crisis they didn't create," said Artur Henrique da Silva Santos, president of CUT Brazil. "A multinational that has \$22 billion of cash flow, and shows a \$13.2 billion in profits in 2008, while supposedly caring for its

image as a socially responsible company, doesn't need to squeeze workers and their communities."

John Fera, president of United Steelworkers Local 6500, said it's great to have the support of CUT Brazil. "They're having the same kind of fight that we are," he said.

Members of CUT Brazil visited Sudbury in 2007 as part of an international conference of unions with members that work for Vale.

Bahrain construction workers unite

Since April of this year, ten construction unions affiliated to the General Federation of Bahrain Trade Unions (GFBTU) have been meeting regularly to discuss the establishment of a national sectoral union for representing 80% of the work force in Bahrain. The Building and Wood Workers International (BWI) and the GFBTU recently conducted a two-day seminar on Building a National Sectoral Construction Union in Bahrain.

For the past three years, BWI has been working with the GFBTU to assist the construction unions to advocate the rights of migrant workers in Bahrain and organize and integrate migrant workers into the trade union structure.

The seminar included presentations on the impact of current global financial crisis on the construction industry in the Gulf and specifically in Bahrain. Crecentia Mofokeng, Regional Representative of the BWI Africa Region, spoke on the struggles of construction unions in South Africa, highlighting the recent successful strike conducted by more than 70,000 construction workers working on stadiums in preparation for the 2010 World Cup.

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

Send me information on the Communist Party of Canada



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Liliany Obando trial set for August 27

From the U.S.-based Campaign for Labor Rights

In August 2008, Liliany Obando was arrested on trumped up charges by the Colombian authorities for "managing money for a terrorist organization", and "rebellion." She was arrested on the basis of emails allegedly found in a computer belonging to FARC Commander Raul Reyes when the Colombian military bombed a FARC camp in Ecuador that was working out details for a prisoner release.

This "evidence" has been widely discredited. The Colombian Police Captain, Ronald Hayden Coy Ortiz, who oversaw the initial investigation of the computers has said under oath that they contained no emails, only Word documents which are easily manipulated. The international police agency, INTERPOL, said the evidence could not be authenticated and "did not conform to internationally recognized principles".

Liliany was arrested the same week that a report was released that she authored detailing the murders of more than 1,500 members of the FENSUAGRO rural

farm workers union by the Colombian military and paramilitaries.

Liliany goes to trial on August 27. Her defense team feels confident that it can show that the money she raised was legitimate and traceable and went to the rural workers union. (Many Canadian trade unionists and solidarity activists are familiar with Liliany's work on behalf of FENSUAGRO during her visits to this country.)

However, the second charge "rebellion" is particularly worrisome. As Carlos Cuevas, speak-

ing for the International Network in Solidarity with Colombian Political Prisoners has noted, "Trade unionists get charged with rebellion. Community organizers get charged with rebellion. So it's a very difficult situation when the government creates legislation that criminalizes dissent."

And as Liliany's lawyer, Eduardo Matyas noted, the charge of "...Rebellion is very difficult to defend. The charge is highly political - not really a legal matter." The best defense to such a politi-

cal charge is a political defense - the mobilization of international opinion denouncing these sham charges and demanding Liliany's freedom.

Liliany's case is especially important because she was the first person to face trial in what is called the "farc-politica" process. This process is being used to investigate, intimidate and marginalize a variety of unionists, journalists, academics, and opposition political figures.

Her case will set an important precedent: if she wins, then the whole "farc-politica" house of cards will come falling down. But if she loses, then her loss will represent a whole new level of repression against dissent in Colombia.

The Campaign for Labour Rights is urging organizations in North America to support freedom for Liliany Obando. A resolution can be found on the Web at www.clrlabor.org/wordpress/wp-content/lilianyresolution.pdf.

The Campaign is also seeking short handwritten letters protesting the political nature of this case and calling for Liliany's freedom, which will be turned over to Liliany's lawyer. Letters should

emphasize the discredited "evidence" against Liliany, and the reality that the case is a thinly veiled attempt to widen the repression of dissent in Colombia. Such letters should be sent to "Liliany Defense Letters," c/o Campaign for Labor Rights, 1247 E Street SE, Washington, DC 20003.

Finally, contributions are needed to support Liliany's two children, a 5 year old girl and a 15 year old boy. There are some 90 women political prisoners being held with Liliany, many of them in the same condition, with children struggling to get by.

You can make an online contribution by going to: http://nicanet.org/?page_id=341. Scroll down and mark the option that says "Other: Enter Name" and in the space provided, put "Lily Obando". Cheque or money order contributions made out to the Alliance for Global Justice can be sent to: AFGJ/Lily Obando Fund, 1247 E Street SE, Washington, DC 20003.

For more information, see the July issue of *People's Voice*, or visit the Campaign for Labor Rights website: www.clrlabor.org/wordpress. ●



Liliany Obando during a visit to a trade union office in Australia. (Photo: The Guardian, Australia)

Manuel Zelaya: "Democracy has a price and I am prepared to pay it"

Excerpts from an interview with Honduran President Manuel Zelaya Rosales, conducted on July 19 in Managua by Giorgio Trucchi, for the Regional Latin American Secretariat of the International Union of Food, Agriculture and Hotel Workers World Wide.

Giorgio Trucchi: The de facto government is totally isolated on the international plain and is facing a strong and tireless internal resistance from grassroots movements. Despite that, it is carrying on with a totally intransigent attitude. The question arises - is this just a matter of insensitivity, or are they placing their confidence in support from foreign actors?

Zelaya Rosales: They are like wild animals from the jungle who cling to their food. They think Honduras is their personal ranch. They're a group of ten families who want to consolidate their economic wealth and privileges. Their fear is groundless because no one is trying to get at them. Nevertheless, they believe that democratic development will [badly] affect them and so do not accept democracy.

Giorgio Trucchi: (You have) said that sectors of the United States extreme right supported and continue to back the coup. Are you convinced the involvement of those sectors?

Zelaya Rosales: These people have made public demonstrations of their support to the coup, including US senators and members of Congress. Mr. Otto Reich is the former Under Secretary of State for the Western Hemisphere and he came out in support of the coup. Many people in the United States have done the same. Hence, there is proof and evidence that ex-presi-

dent George W. Bush's hawks are behind this coup.

Giorgio Trucchi: What importance has the grassroots, social, and union movement had in blocking the progress of the coup?

Zelaya Rosales: They are protagonists in defence of democracy because they think that democracy is an instrument that enables them to make social conquests. They are combating the coup and won't give up until the effects of this attack against the Honduran people and against democracy is ended. The coupsters are defying the world and we have to set a precedent before it is too late.

Giorgio Trucchi: From the optic of grassroots movements.... there are two elements that cannot be negotiated: rejection of amnesty for the coupsters, and going ahead with having a fourth ballot box [in the coming elections that would consult voters about whether or not a constitutional reform process should be undertaken], and the installation of a Constituent Assembly. What do you think about those points?

Zelaya Rosales: It would be ridiculous to award a prize to the coupsters for carrying out a coup. I think the position of the social movements is to seek a solution to the conflict, but without any prizes or pardons for committing penal and common crimes. At the same time, I think that the seven points put forward by [Costa Rican] President Oscar Arias speak about political amnesty but not for ordinary and penal offences. Regarding social reforms, I think that finding a new strategy to carry on with these reforms must be part of a broad process of discussion throughout Honduran society. Social reforms should not be ended,



Montreal protest against the coup in Honduras.

nor should the peoples' rights to participation [in political decisions] be blocked because they are constitutional rights. In that sense, Oscar Arias's points were not discussed in their breadth because the coupsters do not accept restitution of a democratic system. They want a de facto regime that is lawless; they want to maintain it with violence. We cannot accept that.

Giorgio Trucchi: It's been said that there are two basic elements in trying to find a solution to the conflict: the position of the United States and the role of the armed forces. What's your opinion on that?

Zelaya Rosales: Today we sent a letter to President Barack Obama, respectfully asking him to stiffen measures not only against the repressive state, but also against those individuals who conspired and carried out the coup. We hope a quick response so that the measures undertaken will really restore a system based on law and order. If that does not happen we are all in a precarious situation, not just myself - a victim of a coup for defending soci-

ety's rights - but the whole population. I believe that President Obama not only has diplomatic mechanisms to exercise pressure, but also has other strong resources that I hope he applies; and also other countries in Latin America [should do the same].

Regarding the armed forces, if they are going to be used to carry out coups, then logically we have

to evaluate their role. However, I believe that, in this case, it was the high command that ordered the coup. The officers and the new generation that is going to receive blood-stained armed forces do not agree with this coup.

Giorgio Trucchi: Is it getting close to the moment of your return to Honduras? Aren't you afraid of being arrested or assassinated?

Zelaya Rosales: I have no fear. But I am taking precautions and being careful. When life demands, you have to live with a sense of effort and of its rewards. Sometimes sacrifice is necessary to bring about social conquests, and I am ready to make the effort for people's liberty, democracy, and peace.... I am going to risk everything and the world is taking the same risk with my return. I've said that if there is an assassination General Romeo Vasquez Velasquez will be responsible for my death. ●



Anti-coup rally at the White House in Washington, DC.

Paying tribute to Captain Hugh Mulzac

By Norman Faria

Many working seamen from the Caribbean area signed on ships and came to the US when their vessels docked there. The majority who settled undoubtedly contributed along with other immigrants in building up that nation. One was Captain Hugh Mulzac, a merchant marine captain who was born in 1886 in Union Island, part of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, in the Eastern Caribbean. He emigrated to Baltimore in 1918.

Mulzac was an important person in the early US civil rights struggles of "people of colour" which included Hispanics, Asians and native Indian ("Amerindian") peoples. He was the first African-American to obtain a Master's License. This was the rank of Captain which qualified him to skipper an ocean-going cargo ship.

More importantly, he was a leader in obtaining better wages and working conditions for seamen of all races. Captain Mulzac, who today has a Vincentian Coast Guard vessel named after him, assisted immeasurably in opening the doors for a more equitable and just working environment in the merchant marine service. This was in the early 1940s when the only jobs at sea for ethnic minorities were cooks and stewards - in contrast with today when many large

US navy and "cargo boats", as islanders refer to merchant marine vessels, are captained by non-white officers and also women.

Captain Mulzac's early days in the US were frustrating. The US cargo boat (and liner) was much larger than today. He got a job as a Mate (second in command) on the aging tramp steamer *Yarmouth*, belonging to Marcus Garvey's all-black owned and crewed Black Star Line. That line went on the rocks in 1922 because of institutional opposition to the firm's owners, Garvey's United African Improvement Association. Captain Mulzac went back to cook and steward jobs whenever they came along. It was hard as he had a wife and four children to support.

At that time, the seamen had a fairly democratic system where they were hired through the union halls. The late Guyanese President Dr. Cheddi Jagan witnessed this when he was studying in the US in the 1940s and praised it. Captain Mulzac got involved with the National Maritime Union (NMU) through a Communist Party USA leader in Baltimore, Al Lannon.

There was a democratic dimension to this trade union which was formed in 1937 in the hectic labour upsurges of the period by Joseph Curran (1906-1981) an early progressive who later took reactionary positions.

Part of this dimension was its

multi-racial policies. Both black and white seafarers were apparently treated equally by the labour body. Such a remarkable progressive outlook for the conjuncture (some of the seamen's and waterfront workers' unions were led by corrupt Mafia types even before the 1950s of Marlon Brando's movie *On the Waterfront*) did not extend to the hiring practices of most shipping companies. The NMU's Vice-President was a black Jamaican seaman named Ferdinand Smith who, like Captain Mulzac who was probably a member, was sympathetic to the CP. The party was then very influential, being active in other civil rights campaigns such as demanding release of nine black young



Captain Hugh Mulzac

men (The Scotsboro Boys) accused in 1931 of raping two white women.

It was easy for Mulzac to support multi-racialism. Not because his grandfather, who once cultivated cotton on Union Island, was white. A sensitive man, Captain Mulzac undoubtedly observed the injustices and discriminatory practices against people of colour in the US at the time. There was a shameful racist incident when the young (aged 21) Mulzac tried to attend church when his ship called at Wilmington, North Carolina. He was refused entry because of his colour. His involvement, which he always defended as his democratic right in the great traditions of the US, with the "white" CP and the union channeled this hatred of racial discrimination along a constructive trajectory, working for the unity of all the races.

While the work of Captain Mulzac, Smith and other outstanding individuals are noted, there were, in fairness, other fronts on the civil rights campaign. The NMU for example supported the meeting between President Roosevelt and black railway porters union leader A. Philip Randolph, who demanded a Fair Employment Practices legislation which led to defence industries (such as the ship building firms) hiring more people of colour.

In October 1942, as the USA

got more involved in the Allied effort to defeat Hitler's fascist regime, Captain Mulzac was given command of the freighter *Booker T. Washington*. At first, in keeping with the times where crew on both naval and cargo boats were segregated, the authorities wanted to assign only a black crew to the ship. Captain Mulzac refused to sail with what he called a "Jim Crow" arrangement. As he wrote in his autobiography, *A Star to Steer By*: "I wanted the most experienced crew the NMU could supply". For Mulzac, this meant a mixed race crew.

The *Booker T.*, carrying vital war supplies such as tanks, aircraft and ammunition to the European front, made 22 successful round trips across the North Atlantic. Partly by skill and partly by luck, those on board managed to avoid being torpedoed by the German submarines. The subs sunk hundreds of other cargo boats with the loss of many equally courageous and hard working sailors as those in the navy. The efficient operation of the ship was a model for others to emulate.

In 1947, after the war ended, the ship's owners laid up the vessel. Captain Mulzac was out of work. Then 61, he tried his hand at painting maritime scenes and also started a wall painting business. At this time, the anti-democratic and anti-left current in US politics known as McCarthyism unjustly blacklisted Mulzac along with many others for their involvement in progressive and democratic causes.

For example, Mulzac ran as a candidate for President of the New York City borough of Queens under the American Labor Party ticket. He lost but received a relatively high 15,500 votes. The New York based party was much like the social democratic Labour Party in the UK and later the Caribbean islands, though the left like the CP urged people to support it.

For this and other perceived indiscretions, he was blacklisted and his Master's license revoked. He could not get a job when the Korean War broke out, because he was deemed a "security risk". He fought back and in 1960 a federal judge restored his license along with others. He was then 74, but was able to find work as a night mate. He died in New York in 1971.

I had read Mulzac's fascinating book during the 1980s, kindly given to me by Vincentian Renwick Rose (now Coordinator of the Windward Islands Farmers Association) and I in turn gave it away to the office of the National Union of Seamen (NUS) in Barbados. While I was in New York last September I tried to get onto any of Mulzac's relatives for an interview, but time ran away from me and I couldn't reach them.

We must remember the example of Vincentian-born Captain Hugh Mulzac. Not only because of his sterling pioneer work in the US civil rights struggles, but to remind us that immigrants to all countries are good and beneficial additions especially in the area of integrating among the receiving people and working with them for a better all round society. ●

(A former seaman on the *Geest Line*, Norman Faria is Guyana's Honorary Consul in Barbados. Responses can be sent to nfaria@caribsurf.com)

1.02 billion people are hungry

FAO/CALM

World hunger is projected to reach a historic high in 2009 with 1,020 million people going hungry every day, according to new estimates published by the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization.

The most recent increase in hunger is not the consequence of poor global harvests but is caused by the world economic crisis that has resulted in lower incomes and increased unemployment. This has reduced access to food by the poor, the UN agency said.

"A dangerous mix of the global economic slowdown combined with stubbornly high food prices in many countries has pushed some 100 million more people than last year into chronic hunger and poverty," said FAO director-general Jacques Diouf. "The silent hunger crisis - affecting one sixth of all of humanity - poses a serious risk for world peace and security."

Many of the world's poor and hungry are smallhold farmers in developing countries. Yet they have the potential not only to meet their own needs but to boost food security and catalyse broader economic growth. To unleash this potential and reduce the number of hungry people in the world, governments, supported by the international community, need to protect core investments in agriculture so that smallhold farmers have access to seeds, fertilizers, technologies, infrastructure, rural finance, and markets.

Whereas good progress was made in reducing chronic hunger in the 1980s and the first half of the 1990s, hunger has been slowly but steadily on the rise for the past decade, FAO said. The number of

hungry people has increased in all regions except Latin America and the Caribbean.

This year, mainly due to the shocks of the economic crisis combined with often high national food prices, the number of hungry people is expected to grow overall by about 11 per cent, FAO projects, drawing on analysis by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Almost all of the world's undernourished live in developing countries. In Asia and the Pacific, an estimated 642 million people are suffering from chronic hunger; in Sub-Saharan Africa 265 million; in Latin America and the

Caribbean 53 million; in the Near East and North Africa 42 million; and in developed countries 15 million in total.

Unlike previous crises, developing countries have less room to adjust to the deteriorating economic conditions, because the turmoil is affecting practically all parts of the world simultaneously. The scope for remedial mechanisms, including exchange-rate depreciation and borrowing from international capital markets for example, to adjust to macroeconomic shocks, is more limited in a global crisis.

The economic crisis also comes

Iranian people's democratic movement....

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son and coordination with 'Satan' in his most vicious plots against the interests of nations.

The economic and social policies of the ruling regime in Iran have nothing in common with genuine anti-imperialist struggle. All the economic data reveal that the government of the IRI has been adamantly following and implementing a comprehensive plan dictated by the IMF and the World Bank.

Today, from the standpoint of the class base, the forces that are ruling our country are associated with the grand mercantile bourgeoisie and bureaucratic capitalism, which has grown within the deeply corrupted state apparatus. An unemployment rate of close to 20%, an inflation rate of 25%, millions of Iranians living below the poverty line, who account for about 15 million people as admitted even by the regime's officials, together with widespread corrup-

tion and prostitution in the society, are all logical results of the regime's policies. Extensive privatization, the executive order of the Supreme Leader for moving towards elimination of Article 44 of the constitution [that defines the economic system of Iran as consisting of three sectors: state, cooperative, and private], which is one of the achievements of the popular revolution of 1979, the brutal attack on labour organizations and trade unions, deterioration in working conditions and the violation of the rights of the working people, are all aligned with the policies of the theocratic 'regime of the Supreme Leader'. The leaders and activists of the trade union movement are being tortured in prisons. Communists and true left forces are banned and under the most repressive measures.

Can any true anti-imperialist force have such anti-people and reactionary characteristics?

Our answer to this question is

negative. Bearing in mind the natural complexities and intricacies of the current developments in Iran and avoiding drawing crude and simplistic conclusions, we must stand together with the communists, the left, the democrats and progressive forces of Iran and, in a united manner, keep the flag of support for the movement of the Iranian people raised, the movement in which the widest strata and classes of Iran's society have participated.

The support of broad sections of progressive and left forces and the world communist and labour movement for the struggle of Iranian people, i.e. workers, women, students and youth, writers, religious-national forces, and especially the forces in the communist-workers' movement of Iran, is a powerful manifestation of the worldwide anti-imperialist and internationalist struggle of the world workers' and communist movement. ●

Sudbury miners strike....

continued from page 2

chases passed a huge part of the Canadian economy into foreign hands, allowed access to cheap Canadian energy, and gave control of iron ore and precious metal mining to South American, Eurasian and U.S. capital.

Vale owns six mines in the greater Sudbury area, a refinery in Port Colborne, Ontario, two mines in Manitoba, and the very rich Voisey's Bay mine in Newfoundland/Labrador. They have made more profit in Canada in the last two years than Inco made in the last ten years of ownership. They have launched what can only be described as an attack, not only on the Steelworkers

in Sudbury and Port Colborne, but on the communities that depend on the wages and benefits of these workers for economic sustenance and stability.

Under the guise of the current economic crisis, Vale has attacked the "Nickel Bonus", which is important to even out the effect of world market prices that dictate the level of mining activity or layoffs, directly affecting the yearly income of miners. Vale demands concessions on contracting out, and introduction of a two-tier pension program - including switching to a defined contribution plan that would become a money maker for the company and condemn retirees to lives of

dependency on international finance capital, the architects of the present global crisis debacle. Vale wants to interfere with the Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) by refusing to roll it into the base hourly rate annually, thus effectively freezing wage rates so the COLA becomes a transient add-on that does not affect pension programs, holiday pay, overtime rates or any other program that is based on wages.

All this sounded familiar to the striking civic workers in Toronto and Windsor, where municipal administrators must have attended the same labour relations classes as the corporate yap dogs of the global neo-cons. Vale offers the Steelworkers contracting out, two-tiered wages and pensions, using the global crisis as an excuse to attack future generations of our youth, weaken our unions, ruin our economy and run with the profits to offshore low wage enterprises and "money as a commodity" financial investments.

The municipal leaders attacking CUPE workers offered the same cup of hemlock. But here there is no surplus value, only acquiescence with the neo-liberal agenda that impoverished our cities in the form of tax cuts to the corporations while cutting transfer payments to the provincial and municipal governments. The recipients of the tax cuts include the foreign based monopolies like Vale. So the monopolies prosper at the expense of the municipalities (where 90% of our population lives), while municipal leaders react to a poverty of government funding by attacking the wages and pensions of public sector workers. Not satisfied with super profits and low taxes, the monopolies attack private sector workers for a double whammy of profit to invest in the global financial casinos.

Sudbury miners, whether the CAW descendants of the Mine Mill and Smelter Workers or the presently embattled Steelworkers, have a reputation for standing firm in the face of adversity. The militancy of these workers, the massive support for their leadership and their ability to rouse the entire community, can win against Vale and can recruit global solidarity with international labour. Vale is a foreign corporation trying to impose its agenda on Canadian workers.

A Steelworkers victory in Sudbury and Port Colborne will have a strengthening effect on all public and private sector workers standing against the same drive to impose two-tiered injustice for the future generation and a demeaning loss of quality-of-life for the present. In the environment of a vicious attack on Ontario Autoworkers and the foreign-rigged tragedy of Hamilton Steelworkers, the working class in Ontario very badly needs to win.

The Ontario Federation of Labour cannot remain relatively passive. It must lead a massive campaign to recruit public support for these strikes. The OFL should welcome, without conditions, the re-entry of the CAW, whose militancy and organization could be a decisive factor in the emerging solidarity and labour unity. ●



New murals decorate Russian Hall in Vancouver

The Federation of Russian Canadians will hold its next convention over the August 8-10 weekend at the Russian Hall in Vancouver's historic Strathcona neighbourhood. The Hall, which is home to the annual People's Voice Banquet every June, has been newly repainted with beautiful murals by internationally-known artist Richard Tetrault. Three of the outside walls depict elements of the Hall's cultural history. Seen above is Ed Pedersen, caretaker of the Russian Hall, on the west side of the building. A special Convention banquet and cultural programme will take place on the evening of Saturday, August 8; tickets must be ordered by August 1 - call Diane at 604-881-2007 for full details.

Mohammed Bashir (Mike) Mirza

March 15, 1927 - June 23, 2009

It is with great sorrow that the members of the Harry Hunter Club in Hamilton, Ontario, must say goodbye to our dearest comrade and friend, Mike Mirza.

Our comrade was a veteran of the British Army where he served in India and the Middle East in the war against fascism prior to Indian independence. Mike eventually immigrated to England where he met his wife Lorna Christine. He worked in the British automotive and aviation industries and was active in organized labour prior to coming to Canada in 1960. Shortly after arriving in Canada, Mike joined the Communist Party and gained the respect of all who worked with him. He was an active and proud member of the Teamsters Union and a legend on every picket line, peace and social justice demonstration for almost fifty years in the province of Ontario. He gave unstintingly of himself in the working class struggle and never faltered. Everywhere Mike went he added strength and historical clarity to whatever was the struggle of the moment. His ideology and dedication were a constant example to us all.

Mike is survived by five sons and one daughter, nine grandchildren, and his sister, Dr. Saira Mirza. He is predeceased by his wife of 45 years, Lorna Christine, and two brothers and one sister.

Most of us have never known the Hamilton Communist Party without Mike Mirza. He will be missed for a very long time. ●

What's Left

Victoria, BC

Hiroshima Day, Thur., Aug. 6, Women in Black Vigil for a world without war, noon-1 pm, on Government St. below Tourist Office. Lantern ceremony, Craigflower Park/Kosapsom, Saanich, lantern making 7:30 pm, words and songs of peace at 8 pm, sponsored by Victoria Raging Grannies, Physicians for Global Survival, Council of Canadians, Victoria Nikkei Cultural Society. Call Rosa 250-665-7788.

Surrey, BC

Annual People's Voice Walk-A-Thon, Sun., August 9, starts 11 am at Bear Creek Park, near parking lot at 140 St. & 88 Ave. For details see ad on page 2 or call Harjit, 604-543-7179.

Vancouver, BC

Russian Hall Banquet, Sat., Aug. 8, with delegates to convention of Federation of Russian Canadians, call 604-881-2007 for tickets and info.

Memorial for Nat Sherlock, celebrate the life of our late comrade, who was the head mailer for Pacific Tribune and People's Voice mailer for many years, Friday, Aug. 14, 12 noon, 706 Clark Drive. Call 604-255-2041 for info.

Under the Volcano, 19th annual festival of art and social change, visit People's Voice & Communist Party table at the Info Fair, Sun., Aug. 9, 12 noon-

6 pm, Whey-Ah-Wichen/Cates Park, North Vancouver.

Left Film Night, at the Centre for Socialist Education, 706 Clark Drive. Sunday, Aug. 30, 7 pm, **MILK**, starring Sean Penn. Info: 604-255-2041.

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

Hiroshima Day, Thur., Aug 6, Lantern making 7:30-8:30 pm, ceremony 8:30 pm. Memorial Park. Information: 775-8178 Peace Alliance Winnipeg, Project Peacemakers, Manitoba Japanese-Canadian Citizens Association.

Let them stay! Support U.S. war resisters, Sun, Aug 9, 7 pm at Crescentwood Fort Rouge United Church, 525 Wardlaw. Panel discussion and screening of *Sir! No Sir!*. Panel includes war resister and author Joshua Key. Info War Resisters Canada Winnipeg www.resisters.ca.

Hamilton, ON

Solidarity House classes, at 779 Barton St. East (parking at rear). Wednesdays 7-9, Introduction to Spoken Spanish, \$10 suggested donation - bring your dictionary! Saturdays 12-2 - *Das Kapital*, video & discussion.

Forestry in crisis: "Wake up Harper!"

CEP/CALM - When 4,000 forestry workers from across the country, marched to the prime minister's office in June, they left a symbolic alarm clock to alert Stephen Harper to the suffering of forestry communities.

Canada's largest forest union says the government's announcement of \$1 billion for environmental improvements in the pulp and paper industry changes nothing for forest workers.

"It won't save any mills or prevent further job loss," says Communications Energy and Paperworkers president Dave Coles, noting that 55,000 jobs have been lost in the industry over the last two years. "This money cannot be used to lower the price of the production of pulp and make our industry more competitive with the U.S."

"In the short term, mills will still close because in order to take advantage of the subsidy, they must invest in capital," he says. "This is cold comfort to our members whose employers are on the verge of bankruptcy and who were hoping for some reassurance from the federal government about the security of their pensions."

The industry needs loan guarantees to keep viable mills open and help the industry restructure and a serious proposal to address the pensions issue. There are 300 forestry-dependent towns in Canada.

People's Voice deadlines:

September 1-15 issue: Thursday, August 13

September 16-30 issue: Thursday, Sept. 3

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

REDS ON THE WEB

www.comunist-party.ca

www.peoplesvoice.ca

www.ycl-ljc.ca

www.solidnet.org

2010 Olympics under increasing criticism

By Kimball Cariou

The 2010 Winter Olympics set to begin next February in Vancouver and Whistler are coming under sharper criticism from a wide spectrum of public opinion. Residents of Whistler, for example, are increasingly alarmed at the whopping tax bills which will accompany their town's brief moment in the international spotlight.

But the most volatile situation is in Vancouver, where the promises of more social housing, improved recreation facilities and other improvements which were used to gain public support for the bid are fading faster than Jamaica's hopes for a bobsledding gold medal.

It appears likely, for example, that the social housing component of the Athletes' Village - already cut drastically by the NPA-dominated City Council during its 2005-08 term - will be fully transformed into expensive condominiums. A new strategy to use the profits from this shift to build low-income housing could take years, while thousands of Vancouverites remain homeless.

Many such concerns were summed up in a recent statement from the Council of Canadians, which "views positively the Olympic goal of friendly international competition between athletes who excel in their respective sports" but raises alarms at "the increasing evidence that these worthy aspects are being overwhelmed, if not totally supplanted, by an 'Olympic industry' focused on real estate development and massive corporate marketing opportunities."

In particular, the Council of Canadians "believes the February 2010 Olympic Games in Vancouver and Whistler will leave a negative legacy contrary to the goals set forward during the application and approval process to host the games. There is now no doubt that the Vancouver Organizing Committee (VANOC) and its affiliated partners will fail to meet their commitments with regard to the environment, social programs and fis-

cal accountability."

The Council of Canadians is working with activists who are highlighting the negative aspects of the 2010 Games, which are being held on un-ceded First Nations territories and are providing mining, resort, real estate and energy developers with opportunities to expand projects on indigenous territories throughout the province.

"As well," says the CoC, "we are concerned that the civil liberties of local communities and those who have a critique of the Games are being undermined by an unnecessary security presence. The security budget for the games has ballooned to \$1 billion, while security and law enforcement agencies have identified protest groups as the most significant threat to the Games. Over 4,500 Canadian military troops will

"We are especially concerned that the 2010 Olympics are providing a prime 'green-washing' opportunity for corporations involved in the most egregious threats to the survival of humanity and the earth through their active participation in the privatization and commodification of water"

- Council of Canadians

be deployed to the 2010 Vancouver Olympics-twice the number Canada has in Afghanistan."

Civil liberties groups, anti-Games activists, social movements, and Coalition of Progressive Electors members of Vancouver City Council have all condemned the threat to privacy and protest rights arising from the installation of new surveillance cameras and draconian security measures, including constant harassment of protesters months before the Olympic flame is lit.

Large areas around Olympic-related sites will be turned into "security zones", with anyone seeking access subject to intrusive search procedures. Residents of Whistler, site of the nordic and downhill venues, already live in a "security zone," and hikers and mountain bikers are finding wilderness trails in that area blocked by mysterious military operations.

"As an organization focused on global justice," says the CoC, "we

are especially concerned that the 2010 Olympics are providing a prime 'green-washing' opportunity for corporations involved in the most egregious threats to the survival of humanity and the earth through their active participation in the privatization and commodification of water and massive environmental degradation exemplified by the exploitation of the tar sands. A Worldwide Olympic Partner, Coca Cola (also a sponsor of the Torch Relay), is notorious for depleting groundwater in areas of India and Latin America with scarce water resources. Furthermore, Coca Cola is a leading promoter of water commodification as one of the largest producers of bottled water in the world. The Council of Canadians is actively promoting bottled water bans in communities across the country, and has grave concerns about the impact of Coca Cola's sponsorship on public water infrastructure support in Vancouver and Whistler.

"EPCOR, an Official Supplier for the games, has been working to privatize the water utilities of municipalities across the country, including BC. Epcor tried to bid on the privatization of waste water treatment in Whistler in 2006. The bid was successfully overturned as a result of efforts by the Council of Canadians and community members in Whistler.

"General Electric, another Worldwide Olympic Partner, is a major financier of private power projects in BC, including the enormous Bute Inlet proposal through its subsidiary Plutonic Power. The Council of Canadians has taken a stand against private power projects in British Columbia through the 'IPP' model.

"The Royal Bank of Canada and Petro Canada, both National Partners for the 2010 Games, are directly involved in the Alberta tar sands, one of the most environmentally destructive projects in the world. The Royal Bank is a major financier of tar sands projects and is also a sponsor of the Torch Relay. Ironically, their ad campaigns for the relay ask



These dancers were part of a 2008 demonstration at the Vancouver Art Gallery against privatization of control of BC rivers. Under the new Vancouver bylaws, such protests will almost certainly be prevented in many areas of the city during the 2010 Winter Olympics. (Photo: K. Cariou)

individuals to make a 'green pledge' by volunteering to carry the torch. The Council of Canadians is campaigning for no new approvals in the tar sands and a halt to any development infrastructure designed to increase the capacity of tar sands exploitation.

"Dow Chemical is also an Olympic sponsor. Currently Dow is suing the Government of Canada for \$2 million, through NAFTA's Chapter 11 investor-state dispute process, as part of a challenge to a Quebec ban on the use of lawn pesticides. Dow claims that the ban has amounted to an unfair expropriation of Dow's Canadian pesticide business. The Council of Canadians has long campaigned against NAFTA and Chapter 11's harmful impact on public regulation.

"At a time of economic crisis when federal, provincial and municipal governments should focus on public projects that create a lasting positive social and economic foundation the 2010 Games appear set to leave a legacy of social and environmental destruction and massive debt that will hobble our ability to make positive change and respond to the serious challenges facing communities across the province and the country."

Vancouver City Council has now passed a large package of new bylaws supposedly "necessary" to facilitate the Games. The bylaws create extensive areas in which the City can dictate massive security screenings and curtailment of free expression.

As the BC Civil Liberties Association pointed out, "In a sorry effort to mask the rest of the bylaws' failings, Council deleted one blatantly unconstitutional provision which would have allowed the removal of signs on city streets that 'promote an idea.' The fact that this provision made it through to Council's rushed hearing on the matter shows how little care went into reading and thinking through the whole thing."

Robert Holmes, President of the BCCLA, notes that "Vancouver City Council has passed a bylaw saying that anyone who causes a disturbance that affects the enjoyment of an Olympic event commits an offence. When the crowd booed the hapless judging of the skating competition in Salt Lake City in 2002 that saw the Russian team wrongly given gold when the Canadians deserved it, they were

voicing freely their opinions. Under Vancouver's new bylaw, at VANOC's behest, the police will be expected to arrest anyone who does likewise. That is simply wrong. We deserve better from our elected officials."

At the same meeting, Council refused to confirm that political speech, banners and signs will be permitted along the Vancouver leg of the Olympic Torch relay.

When Council purports to empower itself with laws prohibiting persons causing a "disturbance or nuisance" on city land, says the BCCLA, "there's a pretty good bet that while pro-Olympics screaming and wailing at whatever decibel will be given a pass, everything else, from criticisms of bad calls by Olympic judges to criticism of some participating countries will find themselves declared a 'disturbance'. These bylaws exempt signs 'celebrating' the Olympics from sign prohibitions, so it's not rocket science to figure out that this is going well beyond the stated purpose of protecting the commercial interests of licenced sponsors."

The new bylaws allow the City Manager to make additional rules at whim, without accountability or oversight. Assurances that such decisions will protect citizens' rights appear to have no legal weight. The BCCLA notes that "these laws are ripe for constitutional challenge for violation of freedom of expression, association, assembly, security of the person and the right to be free of unreasonable search and seizure."

COPE councillors Ellen Woodsworth and David Cadman cast the only two votes against the bylaw, citing its implications to civil liberties and freedom of expression. Their questions focused on the timeline and locations of street closures, whether the changes were developed with a reading of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the unclear procedure for dealing with free leaflets and newspapers, how "creating a disturbance or public nuisance" compares to the Criminal Code, and what the City is doing to ensure freedom of expression along the torch relay route.

According to Woodsworth, "it is crucial that we have a clear timeline and a sunset clause and that all bylaws are reviewed by the COV legal department to ensure they comply with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms." ●

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