RELAY

JULY / AUGUST 2005

A SOCIALIST PROJECT REVIEW

CANADIAN IMPERIALISM & HAITI * REGENT RENO
ZAPATISTAS * MEXICAN LEFT * WORKERS' MANAGEMENT
POLICING HOGTOWN * BLUE MAN GROUP

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Printed by:
Open Door Press
Winnipeg

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Relay, A Socialist Project Review, intends to act as a forum for conveying and debating current issues of importance to the Left in Ontario, Canada and from around the world. Contributions to the re-laying of the foundations for a viable socialist politics are welcomed by the editorial committee.

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Neo-Liberals win second term:
Four more years of resistance ahead in B.C.

Derrick O'Keefe

B.C. voters gave Gordon Campbell a broken nose in the May 17 provincial election, but for working people and the poor, the bleeding appears set to continue for another four years. The B.C. Liberals lost 12 percent of the popular vote and 31 seats, and required blanket advertising and a big helping hand from the corporate media to hold off a resurgent NDP.

The election campaign and its results reflected resistance to the B.C. Liberal government by an uneven but resilient movement of workers and poor people. They will need to continue to build and strengthen to fight and defeat the worst of Campbell's privatization plans and social backwardness. Outside the electoral arena, the high point of mobilization against the government came in May 2004, with the province-wide support for the Hospital Employees Union workers. To prepare for the difficult years ahead, the labour movement and its allies will have to learn from the election results and these labour battles.

Despite the fact that Campbell has become the first premier to be re-elected in two decades, it is now widely acknowledged by pundits across the political spectrum that he is a political liability. Early on in the election campaign, the press began calling Campbell "bubble boy," as his handlers scrupulously limited his public appearances and visibility. His mug was absent in many campaign ads, which featured shots of B.C.'s beautiful scenery with a soothing voice-over extolling the virtues of the Liberal government.

The results point to the strong possibility of Campbell being discarded, much like the way Mike Harris was dumped by the Ontario Conservatives in their efforts to hold power. In this context, the corporate-led neoliberal agenda will continue to pressure the NDP to move closer to big business and further away from organized labour and progressive social policies. These tactical and ideological pressures pose a real challenge to the establishment of a political and institutional alternative to neo-liberalism in British Columbia.

The results: A reduced majority for Campbell and the Liberals

Wide areas of British Columbia threw out their Liberal MLAs when Vancouver Island returned NDP members to the legislature. East Vancouver and the working-class populated suburbs tossed out a host of neo-liberals. Bastions of privilege and social conservatism, like West and Westside Vancouver and the Fraser and Okanagan Valleys, delivered a narrow majority to Campbell.

The count in the legislature is 46 Liberal seats and 33 for the NDP. The Liberals took 46% of the popular vote, the NDP 41%, and the Greens 9%. Voter turn-out was again low, with about 55% of registered voters getting to the polls.

In 2001, the Liberals had swept 77 of 79 seats on 58% of the popular vote. They proceeded at alarming speed to implement their program, intent on taking the advice of one Alberta advisor who urged them to squash the labour movement "like a bug." Cuts to social housing, disability benefits and social welfare payments followed a massive tax cut that benefited the rich. Teachers were legislated back to work and schools closed. Health care workers had their contracts ripped up while hospitals faced severe cutbacks.

At first, the response by B.C.'s labour movement to this neoliberal assault was very impressive. In the winter and spring of 2002 there were massive rallies in Vancouver and Victoria, with tens of thousands in the streets. Social movement and anti-poverty activists picked up the ball later in 2002, as the Woodward's Squat in the fall of that year galvanized opposition

forces and brought attention to the growing homelessness fostered by government policies.

Last spring, a province-wide movement erupted in support of hospital workers who faced legislated rollbacks and loss of jobs. More than just 'cost-cutting,' the attacks on the Hospital Employees Union (HEU) were a key facet of larger efforts at creeping privatization of the health care system. In many facilities, HEU jobs were replaced with $10/hr. contracts with private firms.

An 'illegal' strike by the HEU protesting this most regressive legislation soon gained province-wide support. But only one day after an inspiring May Day rally of over 5000 people in downtown Vancouver, a series of solidarity strikes and shutdowns were called off after the government and the B.C. Federation of Labour brokered a compromise. From that point on, opposition to neoliberalism started to fizzle as the bulk of organized labour's efforts focused on educating and mobilizing voters for the 2005 election.

The Green Factor

In the wake of the relatively close election results, there has been much debate about whether the Greens 'spoiled' a potential NDP victory. It's not altogether clear, though, whether the bulk of the Green vote is coming from voters to the left of the NDP. Much like their party, candidates, and program, Green voters are located across the political spectrum.

Adriane Carr, leader of the B.C. Greens, finished a disappointing third in her riding, despite having been included in the televised leaders' debate and receiving much more coverage than in previous years. Carr — while not an avowed conservative like federal Green leader Jim Harris – was at pains to position her party in the centre, with the now cliché rhetoric of ending the 'wild swings from left to right' in B.C. politics. The Greens criticized the NDP's opposition to fish farms and the RAV line and the public-private rapid transit expansion in Vancouver that is to be built by Lavalin, the war-profiteering corporation.

The 'Green factor' will not be wished away by this or that slogan from social-democratic candidates. Even though, in Canada at least, they often fall to the right of the NDP, the party will continue to be a factor and a compelling choice for people concerned about the planet's growing ecological crisis.

Will Offley, an independent socialist candidate, did raise the issue of provincial complicity in foreign war as part of his campaign in the working-class NDP stronghold riding of Vancouver-Hastings. An open letter to party leaders from Offley and other community activists pointed to the startling fact that the B.C. Investment Management Company has $4.6 billion of workers pension money invested in 251 companies that are involved in war production:

"What this all means is that every nurse, physiotherapist, floor cleaner and pharmacist in every hospital in the B.C. health care system, every kindergarten teacher, college instructor and university professor, every city worker, garbage collector, computer programmer, firefighter, ferry worker, B.C. transit driver, ICBC employee, B.C. Hydro worker – in fact, virtually every municipal and provincial public sector employee – is involuntarily supporting the U.S. invasion and occupation, because of decisions taken behind closed doors by the B.C. IMC. We demand that B.C. IMC immediately divest itself of these investments." (Read the full statement at http://leftturn.ca/WillOffley/OpenLetter.asp).

This statement debunks the prevailing wisdom that provincial politics have nothing to do with international affairs, and the concomitant notion that B.C. and Canada are in no way complicit in the occupation of Iraq. The effort to expose the military investments of the province is step in the right direction toward re-building a strong progressive movement that should not end with the election.

Shameless media blitz

Characteristic of B.C. politics, the corporate media intervened when the B.C. Liberals needed it most. Despite a 74-seat advantage, Campbell was supported by a shameless media blitz over the last weekend of the campaign. On Friday May 13, the *Globe and Mail* released poll results that showed the Liberals an insurmountable 13 points ahead. The poll has since been exposed as a notorious push poll, as respondents were fed a series of leading questions demonizing the NDP and mirroring Liberal messaging down the campaign stretch. →

Then, over the campaign's final weekend, *The Province* and *The Sun*, Vancouver's two largest dailies (both owned by CanWest-Global) each put out their own equally shameless endorsements of Gordon Campbell's regime. The *Province*'s editorial was particularly despicable, as it featured a full page 'ballot' with a check through the Liberals' box. In their written explanation, the tabloid's editors urged readers to give Campbell another four years, adding that *they* would help to keep him accountable over his second term.

Rounding out this final weekend of manufacturing the consent of British Columbia, the Liberals blanketed the airways Monday night with campaign ads boasting of the *Sun*, *Province* and *Globe and Mail* endorsements. One wonders if these radio spots weren't recorded weeks earlier.

All of this, of course, was pretty predictable stuff for progressives who have watched the big corporate media and a tiny group of pundits dictate the political discourse in this province for decades. Yet the fact is that the overwhelming majority of the public is unaware of the blatant links.

For all of the hysteria over 'big labour's control of the NDP,' few are aware that CanWest-Global has contributed tens of thousands of dollars to the B.C. Liberals. Any and all demands for campaign finance reform should begin with the basic demand that media be banned from contributing to political parties.

So, considering the barrage of free and paid propaganda boosting the Liberals' record, the election results are an impressive rejection of Campbell's four years of cuts and attacks against the province's most vulnerable. In many ways, the relatively close margin signals the likely exit of Campbell as party leader before the 2009 election. In addition to the possibility of a new leader to shore up the image of the Liberals, there will likely be an intensification of the campaign to further defang the NDP of any program that impedes on the prerogatives of big business.

Towards a real alternative to Campbell and neo-liberalism

The ubiquitous Michael Smythe and Vaughn Palmer of the *Province* and *Sun* have been harping on the links between organized labour and the NDP. They are also urging Carole James to "modernize" and "balance" the party. George Heyman, the BCGEU President and the leading labour voice for cutting ties with the NDP, beamed in a television interview that the election results proved that British Columbians wanted a moderate and centrist government.

The results do indicate that hundreds of thousands tuned out the barrage of propaganda and voted according to their own experience of suffering under the Liberals. But platitudes about moderation and centrism — sure to be echoed by a premier posing as "kinder and gentler" — won't undo the cuts and attacks of the past four years, nor the privatization now bound to continue.

For all this harping about those old links with organized labour, one might be forgiven for missing the fact that the 2005 NDP under Carole James is already decidedly moderate and centrist. The party's election program reflected the leader's mantra that "you can't go back in time." There was no promise to reverse the Liberals big tax cut to the rich, no talk of undoing the corrupt and scandalous giveaway privatization of B.C. Rail, nor a commitment to lower tuition fees.

James lists Manitoba's Gary Doer among her political idols, and her advisors certainly include those that would advocate openly a Blairist vision of social democracy. This ideological and programmatic debate will likely come to a head at the party's fall convention, where the issue of union delegates and affiliations is sure to be explosive.

The same forces that handed the Liberals this election are already trying to shape and confine the 2009 campaign while creating an opposition in their image. The Left would be very ill-advised to let CanWest-Global and their ilk shape the alternative to Gordon Campbell.

Of course, the real alternative to neo-liberalism in British Columbia will not be forged by delegates to party conventions, but by the ongoing struggle of those impacted by B.C. Liberal policies. **R**

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Public Housing and Toronto Politics: The Regent Park Story

Stefan Kipfer

For his election campaign in late 2003, Mayor David Miller employed the image of a broom to underscore his commitment to 'cleaning out' corruption at City Hall and 'sweeping up' physical litter in an effort to beautify Toronto. The broom was meant to distinguish downtown NDPer Miller from his predecessor and suburbanite Mel Lastman. After six years of law-and-order campaigns against squeegee kids and 'gangs', financial austerity, two public sector strikes, and development boosterism, Lastman's reign had been discredited by corruption-tainted leasing contracts for computer equipment.

Miller's mayoralty has been responsible for a shift in tone and emphasis, but not a fundamental change in direction at City Hall. Under Miller, the city refused to renew the contract of hawkish police chief Fantino, averted a TTC strike and has so far resisted the Board of Trade's call to centralize power in a City executive committee. Yet police budgets have kept ballooning even as City services are still under a provincially imposed financial crunch. Miller's enthusiasm about encouraging large-scale real estate investment in central Toronto and promoting waterfront redevelopment is even more pronounced (if not necessarily more effective) than his predecessor's.

When in the spring of 2005, Miller's Council majority banned the homeless from sleeping in front of City Hall and refused to set up an affordable housing committee to speed up social housing projects, it became clear that Miller's broom also symbolizes a continued willingness to apply repressive means to sweep away signs of poverty and homelessness from Toronto's most visible public spaces. The sinister side of Miller's broom is exemplified by the almost unquestioned support for the redevelopment and privatization of Regent Park, Toronto's largest and most well-known public housing project, located a 15-minute walk northeast of the city's Central Business District.

From model community to stigmatized project: Regent in postwar Toronto

Built in two phases between 1947 and 1959, Regent Park replaced Cabbagetown, a poor working class area in the east end of Toronto. It was designed in the form of two 'super-blocks' of mid-rise buildings, townhouses and high-rise towers that were taken off the pre-existing street grid and physically demarcated from the surrounding neighbourhoods.

By the 1960s, Regent was home to 10,000 people in 2,000 housing units subsidized through Ontario's 'Rent-Geared-to-Income' system.

For a short two decades, journalists and urban specialists, as well as some residents, heralded Regent Park as a model community. Its orderly physical design and park-like setting promised better housing conditions, but it was also meant to modernize traditional values and encourage nuclear patriarchal family life and 'community' stability, thus removing the social threat of poor people during the Depression years.

Despite its (politically ambiguous) promises, Regent Park, more than any other public housing project in Toronto, symbolized the minimalist and short-lived character of Canada's commitment to public housing. Public housing was intended as temporary solution for a small minority of 'deserving' low-income tenants. Just as in the United States, public housing programs in Canada were more about 'clearing slums' and stimulating economic expansion than improving workers' lives.

By the late 1960s, Regent's honeymoon had come to an end. Neglectful housing authorities failed to maintain the housing stock properly, thus contributing to the drab look of the project. In the public eye of the media and the political class, Regent morphed quickly from a 'model community' into a 'slum'. Once the physical sign of orderly progress, the housing blocks of Regent were now stigmatized as an environment conducive to crime, drug-abuse and poverty.

Starting in the late 1960s, tenants, most often women, organized to press for better maintenance, more democratic housing management, and against police violence. Yet instead of demonstrating a lasting commitment to public housing tenants, federal and provincial governments gradually withdrew from the field. By the late 1990s, the federal government had abandoned public housing and the Ontario government had downloaded financial and administrative responsibility to municipalities.

Between the 1960s and the 1980s, Regent's resident population underwent dramatic shifts. Tighter income ceilings imposed by the Metro Toronto Housing Authority, the recessions of the 1970s and 1980s, and the loss of unionized manufacturing jobs in central Toronto meant that a growing proportion of public housing tenants were very poor, unemployed or welfare-dependent families often led by single mothers.

During the same period, Regent changed from being a largely white, English-Canadian area into an incredibly →

diverse, predominantly non-European neighbourhood. In the view of outsiders and the media, the stigma of living in Regent became increasingly coded in racial terms. This weighed heavily on residents, who despite external pressures struggled hard to maintain a sense of solidarity in the project.

In this context, calls to redevelop Regent Park multiplied since the late 1980s. Architects, planners, developers and social service agencies suggested, often in a paternalistic fashion, that Regent be turned into a 'normal' neighbourhood like Don Vale, the district of Victorian houses and former workers' cottages to the north of Regent, which since the late 1960s became gentrified by well-to-do professionals and renamed 'Cabbagetown' (the name of the former 'slum' that was replaced by Regent Park). These schemes failed – the last one due to provincial funding cuts.

"Normalizing" Regent through redevelopment

After the Conservative government downloaded responsibility for public housing to municipalities and amalgamated Toronto's former municipalities into one City of Toronto in 1998, Toronto's various public housing agencies were merged into one housing authority between 1998 and 2002. Now called the Toronto Community Housing Authority, this authority is the only agency responsible for housing downloaded by the province. It has adopted a business management style, ramping up evictions, contracting out jobs and legitimizing its corporate strategy with tenant participation schemes.

At the same time, Toronto had emerged from the real estate slump of the early 1980s. Encouraged by the City's official plan, which encourages real estate investment in the areas to the immediate east and west of the Central Business District, gentrification and the condo boom reached the southern edge of Regent Park.

In this context, TCHC released a Revitalization Study for Regent Park in late 2002. The City granted the project the necessary planning approvals in early 2005 and the Housing Company has now issued Requests for Proposals for the first phase of reconstruction. The redevelopment plans can be understood as a three-fold – economic, social and cultural - re-colonization strategy.

The financing of the redevelopment project is heavily dependent on receipts from selling and leasing the project lands to private developers, who will be selected to demolish and rebuild housing on the site. Two vast city blocks, which now constitute prime obstacles to the gentrification of the East downtown district, will be re-connected to the private real estate markets. The core of the project is thus to recolonize public lands for the purpose of maximizing land rent. In economic terms, the reconstruction of public housing will become a secondary component of the plan.

One effect of this land grab will be a massive social and ethnic recomposition of the resident population. The majority of housing units on the redeveloped site will be ownership housing. Existing public housing tenants – mostly people of colour households, many women-led – are promised replacement housing but will form a minority on the redeveloped site, where housing density will more than double. Life in the area will be dominated by a more economically privileged and ethnically homogeneous population that can afford to own property in expensive central Toronto.

Regent Park Development: Act I

According to the original plans, all existing 2,087 RGI units were going to be replaced on site, thus comprising 47% of all units after redevelopment. In 2005, the City's planning approvals will allow the Housing Company to replace a third of all RGI units elsewhere in the city, which means that only 25% of all future units on the Regent site will be comprised of RGI units. Since 2002, developers, local ratepayer groups and business associations had been pushing for just such a reduction in public housing units. Now that the plans for Regent propose to dilute the presence of the poor in the area further, conservative opposition to the redevelopment project has subsided.

To complement these social and economic recolonization strategies, the design plans are all about making Regent "look and feel" like a "normal" neighbourhood. Reintroducing a grid of tree-lined streets, combining a few high-rise towers with mid-rise and low-rise buildings, and mixing stores with residences is meant to make Regent resemble "successful" neighbourhoods such as gentrified Cabbagetown and Riverdale and the condo and loft district of King Street West south of Regent. With the possible exception of a few cute plaques and a museum, the physical signs of Regent as a low-income area will be obliterated to make way for the architectural ideals of the downtown bourgeoisie.

Despite the 'colonial' character of the revitalization project, there has been limited progressive resistance to the revitalization plans. In consultation meetings, individual Regent Park residents did voice their fear about losing their housing and their community. Some residents and social service agencies appeared at City Hall to protest the strategy of moving a large portion of replacement housing off the existing site. And a few activists and intellectuals voiced their disapproval in the media. But these voices did not coalesce into concerted opposition. In February, 2005, all but one City Councilor voted in favour of giving planning approvals to the revitalization project.

Why this lack of opposition? As researcher Sean Purdy argued, organizing public housing tenants is an uphill struggle when public housing is numerically marginal, politically weak, socially impoverished, racially stigmatized, and physically neglected, as is the case in most North American cities. In these difficult situations, resident enthusiasm about public housing is limited and it is easier to recruit conservative tenant leaders that are willing to cooperate with the authorities in the hope to secure better housing for themselves or an ethnic subsection of the resident population. In the Regent case, the Housing Company spends considerable energy absorbing potential opposition by micro-managing the project with an elaborate web of internal consultation processes.

What makes the search for alternatives to the Regent Park redevelopment project even more difficult is the 'progressive' aura attached to it by the media, downtown City Councilors, numerous community organizations and many planners, architects, and academics who had been involved in progressive urban reform and housing projects since the 1970s. For these 'reform'-minded groups, most of them Miller supporters, the physical design language of Jane Jacobs and 1970s urban reform applied to the Regent plan - architectural diversity, mixed use, social mixing – is enough to applaud the project. The fact that current plans subordinate the fate of public housing tenants to the overall goal of recolonizing Regent Park is not a point of contention.

What kind of urban future?

In his famous polemic of 19th century housing reformers (*"The Housing Question", 1887*), Friedrich Engels suggested that the bourgeoisie's 'solution' to the housing problem in the capitalist city is not to address its root causes (which lie in social and spatial inequalities produced by capitalism and private real estate) but to "move it elsewhere". The Regent case indicates that, today, the preferred housing 'solution' of the bourgeoisie and its housing 'reformers' is to disperse low-income populations instead of concentrating them in large, homogenous and visible housing tracts, as in the postwar era.

If actually implemented - and this depends in no small measure on a continued real estate boom - the Regent Park revitalization project may have far-reaching consequences. Most immediately, it may help define a 'Canadian' approach to public housing privatization, an approach that looks more benign and is more carefully micro-managed than the more spectacular and uncompromising destructions of public housing stock undertaken in Chicago, Paris and Amsterdam.

The Regent Park revitalization project may impact broader urban change as well. By opening up a vast central city block to private real estate, the project will contribute to an ongoing process of pushing the working poor and the unemployed (many of whom women and people of colour) from the central city to a patchwork of segregated neighbourhoods spread across the metropolitan area (most notably the suburbs built from the 1950s to the 1970s).

This dispersal threatens to make the central city even less hospitable to radical projects. Toronto is already governed by what researchers Christian Schmid and Daniel Weiss call 'metropolitan mainstream': the predominantly white hipsters, gentrifiers, and comfortable professional burghers whose political culture is socio-culturally non-conformist but economically neoliberal and, when necessary, repressive against 'outsiders' such as public housing tenants. Urban political strategies that refuse to wield Mayor Miller's sweeping broom will have to emerge from a range of class-based, gendered and racialized urban peripheries outside the metropolitan mainstream. **R**

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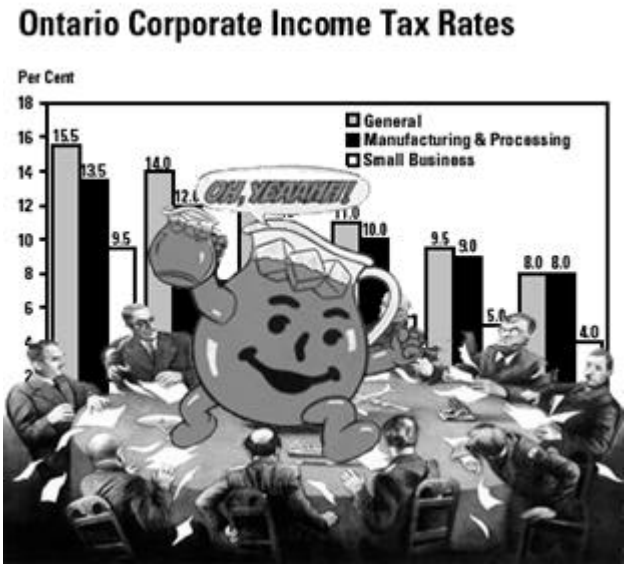
Ontario and the New Competitiveness Agenda

Bryan Evans

Many cheered that October night in 2003, when Dalton McGuinty's Liberals brought eight years of the 'Common Sense Revolution' to a close. In that moment, perhaps tired of the poor bashing, racism, general class war and naked reaction of the Harris-Eves government, we were simply glad to see that particular 'style' of neoliberalism gone. Again, in that moment we forgot that the Conservatives were only one expression of neoliberalism. There are others. The recent 2005 Ontario Budget is a reminder that the destructive logic of competitiveness has other guises. And despite all the punditry that accompanies such events as the introduction of a government's fiscal plan, what was dramatically overlooked was that this budget was much more indeed. It is the springboard of a new competitiveness strategy for Ontario. What the Tories labeled a 'common sense revolution' has been displaced by the Liberals 'modernization' plan.

The Ontario Liberals' competitiveness strategy is based on three component parts: 1) a 'progressive' competitiveness piece which is inspired by human capital theory as a key to comparative advantage; 2) an industrial strategy focused on the auto sector and 3) a privatization program which will see a ballooning of P3's (private-public partnerships) and a withdrawal of the provincial state from the delivery of various public services. Sam Gindin has noted elsewhere that "competitiveness ultimately translates into workers competing against each other and so weakening themselves as a class" (*The Auto Industry*, Socialist Project Interventions Pamphlet, April 2004, pp.3-4). Not that anything different could or should have been expected, the 2005 Ontario budget sets the foundation for deepening Ontario's integration into the logic of capital on a global scale.



As Harris-Eves sought to mimic Thatcher and Reagan, it's no secret that the McGuinty government is enamoured with much of the Blairite and Clintonesque 'Third Wayism'. In opposition and in government his policy advisors have made various forays to the UK to learn as much as possible. This budget is the distillation of that process of policy learning. 'Strengthening Ontario by Investing in People' is the title and theme of this years' budget. Though it is by no means the only theme, it is the one that caught the media's attention. The centre piece of the budget is a $6.2 billion 'investment' over five years in post-secondary education (colleges, universities and apprenticeships) which is characterized as essential 'to build a strong economy in the 21st century" and where 'only jurisdictions with highly educated, skilled and innovative people will attract investments and value-added jobs". Who can be against anything as fundamental as education and skills development? These ought to be fundamental social rights in any society.

The Ontario Liberals don't see this as a social right in any sense. There is very limited commitment to access. What it clearly is is an economic development strategy based on a fallacious concept of comparative advantage and this is where the entire approach begins, as we will see over time, to fail to deliver. Other parts of the world – India, Eastern Europe and China for example - are also rich in 'human capital' and more appealing to the logic of capital; labour is cheap. Yes, we will be competitive, but not just on the breadth and depth of skill and knowledge of the work force, but also on its price.

The other big piece of this budget, which has not received very significant notice, is that it lays out a substantial agenda for privatization and the shrinking of the public sector. The process really began in the autumn of 2004 when Finance Minister Greg Sorbara launched a comprehensive 'program review' of the full scope of the Ontario governments' operations. With respect to this review, Sorbara noted in October 2004 that "inevitably, in this program review, we will stop doing some of the things that we do now in order to be able to achieve our objective

and our priorities". The 2005 budget incorporates the results of that review and beyond. As a result, 15 ministries saw their budgets flattened, shrunk or increased at a rate of less than inflation. Under the rubric of 'modernizing government' the Liberals have stated that "the government must focus on what it does best, such as developing policy and legislation, establishing program and service standards, and assuring quality service. The Province should only be in the business of direct service delivery when it can provide a service more efficiently than anyone else". In other words, watch for a wave of privatizations and quasi-privatizations through contracting out to for-profit and not-for-profit entities. This will by necessity require a substantial centralization of power at the centre of government to allow for greater control and perhaps less opportunity for legislative or other forms of scrutiny.

Relatedly, this is the P3 budget that Harris had set in motion. Plus ca change!. Over the next five years, $30 billion will be invested in infrastructure – schools, hospitals, transportation, universities and colleges, and affordable housing – all things which Ontario badly needs major re-investment in. However, to do so the government is seeking to access public sector pension funds to leverage this capital with private sector contractors who will build, and in many cases own and operate, this infrastructure. The irony is that workers money will be used to put other workers out of good union jobs and replace them with lower wage and more insecure forms of employment.

The third pillar of the 2005 budget is Ontario's return to an industrial policy. There is nothing drastically new in this as there are echoes of the Peterson Liberals and Rae New Democrats, to say nothing of the Davis Tories, in all of this. What is substantively different is that key and profitable sectors of Ontario's economy, particularly auto, are singled out for special public 'investment'. The Ontario Auto Investment Strategy commits $235 million to GM Canada and $100 million to Ford Canada. Additional money is available to other auto corporations as well. In total about $500 million of public money is dedicated to this rather profitable and competitive sector.

The use of the word 'investment' is interesting, as those of us who appreciate plain speaking would simply call these bribes. Premier McGuinty defended his corporate welfare program, saying he'd rather see a healthy auto sector than be too concerned about balancing Ontario's budget. These are substantial contributions, especially considering that there is no formal agreement and no share in ownership or decision-making. A wink and a handshake will suffice in the new Ontario of the 21st century. And yet, Ontario's social assistance recipients can't obtain a 3% increase and public sector workers are settling for 2-3%. The special report on home care McGuinty commissioned in the autumn was delivered in April and remains under wraps on McGuinty's desk. Have any of McGuinty's advisors thought that maybe, just maybe, these profitable corporations may become dependent on these handouts, much in the same way the rich are dependent on their wealth??

It's becoming clear what this governments' priorities are. McGuinty is concerned about the industry's competitiveness and has equated economic development with the auto industry. It seems that what is good for Auto Canada is good for Ontario. Perhaps the Ontario Liberals equate the reeling American auto sector to the one here. The key cost issue confronting the American industry, however, is health care costs. Not so in Canada where much of the health care bill is socialized. Perhaps the barons of corporate America will be demanding that Bush legislate a publicly funded and broadly comprehensive health care system so their industry can again compete! Now that's intervention they can get used to!! **R**

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Canadian Imperialism Helps Smash Haiti for Profit

Kevin Skerrett

The unpalatable truth is that Haiti just does not matter very much.
- Editorial, *The Guardian*, February 17, 2004
(two weeks prior to coup)

Canadian anti-war activists, anti-imperialists, socialists, anarchists, some social democrats, and even some progressively-minded liberals contributed in various ways to building an impressive mass anti-war movement that helped prevent Canada's formal entry into the continuing Iraq war that began (again) in March 2003. Within that movement, it was broadly recognized that the arguments for that war were pretexts for a grab of economic and political power. Even some war advocates were too embarrassed to suggest otherwise, as we had right-wing pundits like Norman Spector in Canada and Thomas Friedman in the US admitting "of course it's about oil", and endorsing it nonetheless.

This powerful bloc of the left has not, yet, coalesced in opposition to Canada's terrible betrayal of Haiti's troubled democracy in its support for the February 29, 2004 coup d'ëtat, which overthrew Haiti's President, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, along with some seven thousand other elected officials. Aristide, his cabinet, and all of these other officials were replaced through a US, France, and Canada-backed "selection" process. Unlike Iraq, the government of Haiti and Aristide himself were elected, and had a clear base of popular support.

Our challenge is to understand why the broad anti-war left has been so silent on this issue, and what might be done about it. There are several obvious important factors. The media has been distorting Haiti's political picture for years. The Canadian media have relied extensively on very right-wing pro-US wire services and sources (Associated Press, NYT, etc.). This has produced an avalanche of State Department-sponsored anti-Aristide pro-coup propaganda, which came to be re-circulated throughout NGO networks as well.

Over 500 people marked the one-year anniversary of Canada's coup in Haiti with a demonstration and march in Montreal on February 26, 2005.

The Haitian communities in Canada and the US were successfully divided, demoralized, and demobilized. So, when violence erupted in January-February 2004, it was not at all clear how the Haitian community itself felt. The left, of course does not simply follow the lead of an expatriate community – the Cuban community in Miami, for example, quite rightly does not set the tone. But when President Aristide was re-instated after the first (1991-94) coup to overthrow him, we were told that he enjoyed overwhelming support both in Haiti and in the diaspora, so when protests against the 2004 coup appeared to be small, many drew the conclusion promoted in the media (and by the US, French, and Canadian governments): Aristide had lost all support. This was wrong, as is obvious now that supporters of the constitutionally elected government are being shot, arrested, and terrorized in a horrifying wave of repression – all overseen by Canadian police and CIDA-paid officials working for Haiti's coup government. Nonetheless, it was a factor in demobilizing and confusing many on the left who might otherwise have raised a voice.

Some attention has been paid to these factors in other analysis of this situation (see www.zmag.org). I would

like to introduce a third factor that also seems very important, but has not attracted as much attention – the economics of the coup. As someone involved in trying to help build an effective solidarity with the Haiti movement - that properly challenges Canada's policy in this country and exposes what is really happening there - there is one dominant reaction I get from progressives who might otherwise be supportive. They ask, with a skeptical eye, "But what is at stake? There is no oil or other obvious economic prize in Haiti." In other words, an intervention in impoverished Haiti cannot possibly be imperial in nature, as there is no obvious source of super-profits – oil, natural gas, a canal – to be won. Ultimately, goes this thinking, "Haiti just does not matter."

Well, Haiti does matter, as an article in *Monthly Review* asserted in its very title last year. And, in this regard, the recent history of Haiti offers us a powerful lesson in contemporary capitalist politics – if we choose to try to learn it. I want to argue here that there is an obvious source of super-profits to be obtained in Haiti, but that it takes a bit of analysis to map out. I begin with a brief examination of the role of the key institutions of neoliberalism in Haiti's coup, and what plans are now unfolding. After a brief consideration of what Canada's business elite might gain from all of this, I offer a tentative conclusion about what model is in store for Haiti's future, and how it relates to the rest of the region.

Neoliberalism in Haiti

The simplified view of Haiti under President Aristide (as well as his successor, Prëval – 1996-2000), suggests that it was Haiti's polarized politics that led to economic and political unraveling. While this is partly true, it is only intelligible in the context of a quite conscious and planned economic attack, begun around 1996 and then intensified with a full-on economic aid embargo initiated by the US upon George W. Bush's "election" in 2000, followed in part by Canada. A significant international aid flow (coming primarily from the US, Canada, and France) of some $600 million and $700 million (US) in 1995 and 1996 was chopped down to some $330 million in 1998, then under $130 million by 2001 and even less in the following three years leading up to the coup. Significantly, as has been outlined in research by Canadian journalist Anthony Fenton and others, a substantial portion of these flows were converted into subversion funds destined to Haiti's political opposition, as well as NGOs, "human rights" groups, women's groups, and others who were either already, or were willing to become, part of a growing anti-Aristide political opposition – joining Haiti's sweatshop business elite that always despised Aristide's left-populist orientation.

It is difficult to underestimate the significance of this financial strangulation strategy. It left Haiti's government with absolutely no room to maneuver, forcing it to try to keep things running on some $300 million (US) per year – the budget of a large Canadian hospital, much smaller than a large municipality. With a partly corrupted (corrupted by whom?) national police force of some 4,000 members overseeing some 8.3 million people, Haiti was slowly ripening for a coup.

But again, the question remains why. We have some idea of the explanation for the US government's embargo on Cuba – it represents at least some sort of model, an alternative political and economic arrangement that has delivered social goods to the mass population – something that US (and Canadian) elites declare to be logically and economically an impossibility. But why was Aristide's Haiti such a threat?

Several moves by the Haitian government under Aristide (during the remainder of his first term in 1994-96) infuriated the US government and created a bipartisan consensus that he and his popular movement were a threat to US interests in the region. First, Aristide demobilized the Haitian army in 1995, which had been the primary tool of political influence used by the US and the CIA for decades. Second, he extended diplomatic recognition to the Cuban government – something that allowed the initiation of a very successful Cuban health care initiative that saw the allocation of over 500 Cuban doctors and nurses to provide primary health care to poor Haitians throughout the country. An obviously outrageous provocation.

Third, and I believe most importantly, President Aristide reversed a previous (perhaps unofficial) commitment to proceed with a massive privatization program, aimed at moving Haiti's valuable electricity, telephone, water, airport, port, and several other state-owned enterprises into the hands of the tiny Haitian bourgeoisie (as well as their American and Canadian corporate friends). While Aristide had made several compromises to neoliberalism – partly in exchange for his reinstatement – a popular mobilization against the privatizations, and parliamentary opposition stiffened his spine and he drew a line in the sand, refusing to proceed. It was at this point on that the aid flows referred to above contracted dramatically.

The details of the political crisis in Haiti that followed have been analysed in some detail, including in the excellent weekly journal Haiti Progres, a vehicle of the Parti Populaire Nationale (PPN). This party had been quite strong critic of President Aristide's from the left – challenging each neoliberal compromise made under US pressure just as it challenged each sign of foreign-financed subversion and destabilization. But when business elite push came to paramilitary shove in the January-February 2004 crisis period, the PPN denounced what they recognized as an obvious US (and Canadian) inspired and directed coup process aimed at reinstalling a client regime that they could work with. Sadly, others on the Haitian "left" (primarily foreign-funded NGOs, but also certain trade unionists and student groups) threw in their lot with a key opposition group (Group 184) and joined their call for →

Aristide's resignation – either not recognizing or not caring about the obvious consequences. Even some Canadian NGOs, with full imperial arrogance, joined this partisan call.

What is important to recognize now is the political and economic result. With Aristide gone, US, Canadian, and French officials worked with Haiti's business elite to put together a client state that would be willing to take orders properly. By July 2004, a major new structural adjustment plan had been drafted, dubbed the International Cooperation Framework (ICF). Even cursory examination of the ICF reveals much about the character of what is now in place in post-coup Haiti.

Some 30 activists with Ottawa Haiti Solidarity converged on the head office of CIDA for a leaflet drop and information picket on May 18 - Haiti's Flag Day.

Structural Adjustment Intensified A Window of Opportunity?

Haiti had already been through years of World Bank and IMF-guided structural adjustment, with basic goods trade and interest rates significantly liberalized (at no small social cost). In the mid-1990s, certain key commodity prices were liberalized as well, a move by the Aristide government that generated some opposition. But the big prizes – the electricity and telephone sectors, and the key public infrastructure in ports, airports, and water – remained in public hands in spite of ferocious US pressure.

For post-coup Haiti, the World Bank's ICF, which the Canadian and US governments not only supported but helped to craft, offers no disguise at all for its enthusiasm for the opportunities presented by what it calls Haiti's "transition" government:

> "The transition period and the Transitional Government provide a window **of opportunity** for implementing economic governance reforms with the involvement of civil society stakeholders **that may be hard for a future government to undo**."

The kinds of "governance reforms" wanted are also made clear in this same document when it turns to a discussion of the health and education sectors:

> **"[Haitian] authorities have decided to strengthen the partnership between the public sector and private providers** while strengthening the regulatory capacity of the public sector. This entails improving transfers to private schools based on transparent criteria and an accountability mechanism, and allowing **public health facilities to sign services agreements with private health insurance agencies especially outside the capital city**."

Here we see the first obvious entry points for US and Canadian multinationals to cash in on Haiti's suffering. First of all, it is worth noting that in Haiti, the health and education sectors are already between 80% and 90% privately provided, meaning many Haitians have access to neither. This document is signaling that those health facilities that are publicly operated will be arranging a first-step privatization by contracting-out the management of the facilities – the classic "public-private partnership" with which Canadian workers and service users are already familiar.

Of course, the real target – the remaining core of Haiti's state capacity – is in the contested electricity and telephone sectors, and the ICF has plans for these as well:

> "Cleanup and modernization of the management of public enterprises in key sectors – EDH (electricity), Teleco (telephone), AAN (airports), APN (ports), and CAMEP (potable water in urban centers), while strengthening the State's regulatory role in key sectors of the economy such as telecommunications, energy, potable water, ports and airports. The accounts of the enterprises weakest in this area will be improved, financial audits and management consulting and training will be provided to each of these enterprises, and management **contracts will be prepared in those cases where private sector participation is deemed appropriate during the transition period."**

Again, just as we have seen in Canada, the sponsors are careful to use gentle euphemisms ("cleanup and modernization") for what has been a ferociously contested privatization program. Those familiar with World Bank/IMF policy prescriptions will understand that "private sector participation" is "deemed appropriate" in pretty much all cases. What is interesting is the injunction to prepare management contracts for these sensitive sectors **prior to** the promised "free and fair" elections – the promised democratic processes through which populations theoretically decide major policy issues such as these.

Haiti as a Model Economy for the Region

When we combine the above evidence from the World Bank with the reality on the ground in present-day Haiti – terrifying repression of opposition, the business elite now hiring private armies to provide "security", possible re-mobilization of the despised Haitian army, and further stage-managed elections – we start to gain a picture of what the imperial powers have in mind for Haiti's future: nothing short of a sweatshop paradise, whereby the price of labour is maintained at its hemispheric low-point, setting a standard against which other workers of the region will be forced to

compete. The recent re-location of production by Canada's Gildan Activewear (a t-shirt manufacturer) from brutal exploitation conditions in Honduras to the post-coup workers' nightmare in Haiti is but one sign of this model's realization. Gildan's Montreal-area facilities are also being shutdown in favour of lower-cost southern destinations – a direct impact on Canadian workers, increasing unemployment, while increasing Gildan's already healthy profit margins. The only remaining challenge is to squelch the rising anti-imperialist opposition – no small task as both Iraq and Afghanistan are demonstrating.

In this light, the universal question – what exploitable resource does Haiti offer that would merit imperial intervention – is answered: labour itself, the ultimate commodity. Equally important, we have transformed Haiti's government from a recalcitrant moderately leftist source of occasional opposition to the neoliberal agenda into a model client that openly and enthusiastically embraces neoliberalism's ugliest features – no small accomplishment given the continuing battle for the FTAA.

Fortunately, in spite of the media spin and the confusion among many in the anti-war movement and on the left, a solidarity movement is emerging in this country that is challenging our government's murderous pro-privatization, pro-coup policy in Haiti. As recent 5-city demonstrations at the end of February (marking the anniversary of the coup) and on May 18 (Haiti's Flag Day) indicate, more and more activists are waking up to the unpleasant reality that Canada's foreign policy has already been "deeply integrated" with that of the US. While these signs of resistance are promising and important, we need much more discussion, more visible mobilization, and more connections being made between the fight against the privatization of Canada's public services and the fight against the privatization of these same systems in poorer countries where the stakes are even higher. Finally, we need to build much stronger cooperation among existing movements working in solidarity with Cuba, Venezuela, Bolivia, Colombia, and the rest of the hemisphere, since we know that their struggle is also ours. For all of these reasons, it is very clear that Haiti does matter – it may very well symbolize contemporary Canadian capitalism. **R**

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For more information on the coup and Canada's role, see www.zmag.org and www.haitiaction.net

The Canadian Corporate/State Nexus in Haiti

Anthony Fenton

Haiti's de facto government will soon announce the appointment of Robert Tippenhauer as its new ambassador to Canada. Previously, Tippenhauer was the President of the first-ever Haitian-Canadian Chamber of Commerce. He says he will be arriving in Canada shortly after the early June visit to Haiti of Quebec Premier Jean Charest. Should the Canadian government accept Tippenhauer's credentials, it will mark Canada's clearest official alignment with Haiti's right-wing elites.

Prior to the Feb. 29, 2004 ouster of democratically elected President Jean Bertrand Aristide, Tippenhauer was Jamaica's honorary consul in Haiti. His ideological leanings were apparent on Mar. 15, 2004, when he "resigned in protest against the decision by the Jamaican government to host former President Jean Bertrand Aristide, which he reportedly described as a 'slap in the face' to the Haitian people." (Radio Galaxie, Mar. 17, 2004)

During a recent telephone interview, Tippenhauer affirmed that he is the uncle of sweat-shop magnate Hans Tippenhauer, who played the role of a Group of 184 "opposition leader" for the corporate media in the lead up to Aristide's removal. On Feb. 24, as the U.S. funded and trained paramilitaries were escalating the destabilization against Haiti's elected government, the Washington Post offered up nephew Tippenhauer's rationalization for the coming coup: "The Haitian people's voice today is very clear; they want Aristide to leave." Hans Tippenhauer, a former member of the Washington establishment's Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), also described the rebels as "freedom fighters," a phrase that would be echoed one month later by Haiti's de facto Prime Minister in GonaVves in front of then Canadian Ambassador to the OAS, David Lee.

Needing employment after resigning his consulate post, Robert Tippenhauer was soon given the prestigious role of directing the newly →

created Haitian-Canadian Chamber of Commerce, which he described as "the link between Canadian investors and Haiti." This link was officially developed in late October 2004, when a delegation of twelve Canadian companies, including procurement giant SNC-Lavalin, joined the Francophonie Business Forum for a trip to Haiti. Tippenhauer said that the meetings, in which Canadian Ambassador Claude Boucher and Latortue took part, "like [Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister] Pettigrew said, were a very important place to meet, to encourage Canadian investors to come down here."

Of the many reconstruction projects that are being created, Tippenhauer feels that "considering the active role that Canada is playing with their lead role in the transition, Canadian firms should have a first look at these projects." On Canada's leadership role, Tippenhauer made the point that Canada had "one the most active ambassadors here." Tippenhauer further lauded Canada's "constant interest in Haiti," stating "the mere presence of these officials is good for us."

Some of the incentives offered to companies like SNC, and Gildan Activewear, who Tippenhauer estimates employ 5,000 people between their independent factory (which is next to Tippenhauer's Dollar Rent-a-Car) and Andy Apaid's factories; Apaid has been Gildan's primary subcontractor in Haiti for many years, according to a Gildan spokesperson.

Asked about specific contracts, Tippenhauer simply affirmed that there are "several discussions, negotiations" going on.

For its part, Ottawa remains mum on the particulars of reconstruction projects. The recent OAS document on the French-led "reconstruction" meeting in Cayenne, Guyana (Mar. 18, 2005) finds frequent references to Canada and notes that Canada has proposed to organize the next ministerial "reconstruction" meeting in a few months.

It's logical that SNC-Lavalin is involved in reconstruction. A maxim of their business objective in the 2004 annual report finds "the ability to win contracts around the world is a good indicator of a successful business strategy." As a sign of the immensity of SNC's global operations in realms of defense, oil, infrastructure, engineering, mining, pharmaceuticals and agribusiness, SNC states that "we won significant contracts in all our sectors of activity and are working on projects of all sizes worldwide. In fact, our backlog increased by 52% from year end 2003, to reach $6.3 billion at year end 2004."

With Haiti as "the latest procurement hot spot" and post-war rebuilding contracts representing a US$200 billion a year business, the Toronto Star (Mar. 23, 2004) cited SNC-Lavalin as a darling on the UN's approved list of vendors. The UN doled out some $813 million in contracts in 2002. The Star cited estimates of some $100 million in potential military contracts annually for operations in Haiti.

Asked about activities in Haiti, an SNC spokesperson would only say that they are involved in "highly confidential negotiations" with the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), to whom she deferred. CIDA media relations officer Regine Beauplan would only state that "CIDA has entered into negotiations with SNC-Lavalin and because those negotiations are on-going, CIDA is unable to provide information."

Fortunately, SNC-Haiti's General Manager, Bernard Chancy, was not so reticent. Contradicting CIDA's statement, Chancy confirmed that CIDA and SNC are well past negotiations on some projects. "In fact there is already one project in activity and another one which is a study project," he said. The project already underway is the Carrefour Railroad, one of two major road-building projects that are listed in the OAS "reconstruction" document.

According to Chancy, CIDA has already contributed $500,000 to the "labor intensive" initial phase of the Carrefour project. "The Haitian government has decided to construct a new road that gets out of Port-au-Prince by the South," said Chancy. This aspect of the project involves constructing one of the streets that will connect the Carrefour road with the new one. The new road, a major undertaking that Chancy says they hope to have completed "before the new government takes over" will not be built without the assistance of SNC-Montreal's team of engineers, who are conducting studies that will "permit the main part of the road to be constructed." For this work, SNC will get a big slice of the additional $8 million that Canada is contributing to the project.

There is scant mention of Haiti in their latest annual report, and yet this recent information reveals that SNC-Lavalin is playing a major role in the pro-coup policies of Canada and the "international community," a community which implicitly excludes the African Union, CARICOM, Venezuela and Cuba for their persistent refusal to recognize Haiti's de facto regime. Fittingly, it was SNC-Lavalin who procured the $20 million contract to build the new Canadian embassy in Port-au-Prince, perhaps the most auspicious harbinger of Canada's "long term presence" in Haiti. When Pettigrew inaugurated the new Embassy in September 2004, there was no mention of SNC-Lavalin, which would rather have their penchant for profiting from war, occupation and colonial policies kept off of the radar.

Protestors in Toronto recently denounced SNC-Lavalin for their role in providing bullets for the U.S. military in Iraq, among other things. SNC-Lavalin also provides 70% of Canada's military ammunition, which has been used in UN and NATO occupations worldwide.

Like the infamous Halliburton in Iraq, SNC is profiting from and encouraging the imperialist project in Haiti and the continued repression of Haiti's masses. **R**

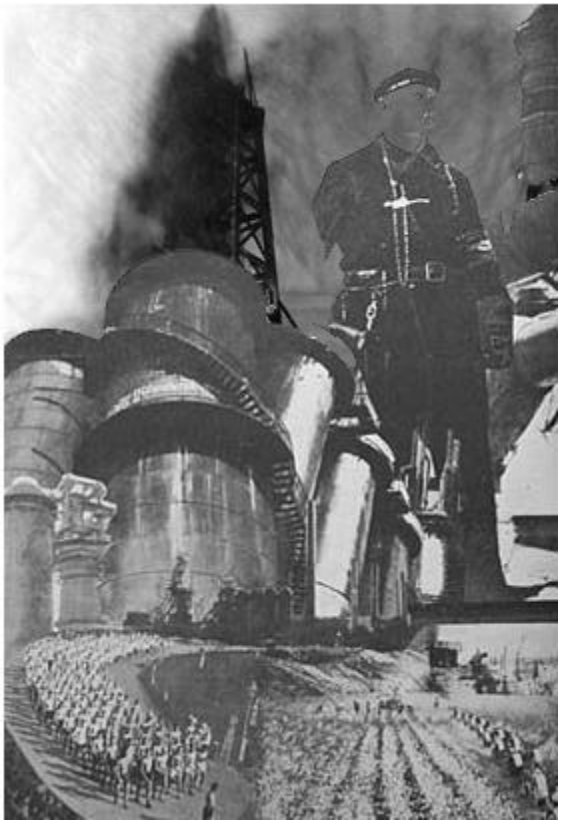
Anthony Fenton is a Haiti solidarity activist living in Vancouver

This article first appeared in the May 12, 2005 issue of Haiti-Progres.

The US invasion of Iraq: Oil, the Mother of all Factors

Middle East Socialists Network of Canada*

Even though control of Iraq's oil resources was not incorporated into the officially declared reasons for the invasion of Iraq, the oil factor was nonetheless one of the primary motives lurking beneath the Bush administration's determination to topple Saddam from power. Long before the attack on the twin towers in New York provided an auspicious ground for the Bush administration to sharpen its sword, removing Saddam from the seat of power was a part and parcel of a protracted deliberation within the US administration to redesign the international order in American image. A blueprint for U.S. global domination entitled "Rebuilding America's Defences: Strategies, Forces and Resources for a New Century" was written in September 2000 by the neo-conservative think-tank Project for the New American Century (PNAC). Calling for the creation of a "global Pax Americana,'' the PNAC document supports a ''blueprint for maintaining global US pre-eminence, precluding the rise of a great-power rival, and shaping the international security order in line with American principles and interests''. This "American grand strategy'' must be advanced "as far into the future as possible'', the report says. It also calls for the US to "fight and decisively win multiple, simultaneous major theatre wars'' as a "core mission''.



While Afghanistan was the first victim of the new "American grand strategy" for the world, Iraq was the main target even prior to George Bush's ascendancy to power. As the PNAC document reveals, George Bush and his cabinet had planned to topple Saddam's regime even before he took power in January 2001. A report entitled "Strategic Energy Policy: Challenges For The 21st Century," commissioned before 9/11 by Vice-president Dick Cheney on "energy security'' clearly identifies Iraq as a major "de-stabilizing influence to the flow of oil to international markets from the Middle East." The report furthermore concludes, "Saddam Hussein has also demonstrated a willingness to threaten to use the oil weapon and to use his own export programme to manipulate oil markets." Based on such reports, President Bush's cabinet agreed in April 2001 that " Iraq remains a destabilizing influence to the flow of oil to international markets from the Middle East'' and because this is an unacceptable risk to the US "military intervention'' is necessary.

Oil definitely plays a major role in the "American grand design" for the world, but more so for the Middle East—and specifically the Persian Gulf region, which contains almost 30 % of global oil production. But it has about 67 percent of the planet's known reserves, and is therefore the only region able to satisfy any substantial rise in world oil demand—an increase that the Bush administration's energy policy documents say is inevitable. The continuous and guaranteed access to cheap oil, which is vital for the economies of advanced capitalist countries, requires securing political control of the area. If the United States succeeds in getting an upper hand to play a permanent role in the Persian Gulf regional security - an objective that the US has been seeking since World War II - it will definitely consolidate its global economic, military, and political supremacy for decades to come.

With its known oil reserves standing at 112 billion barrels, second only to Saudi Arabia, Iraq occupies a very important strategic position in the Gulf region. Since the discovery of oil, Iraq has been a scene of imperialist rivalries for the dominance and control of its vast oil wealth. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Britain directly ruled Egypt, Sudan, and the Persian Gulf, while France was the dominant power in Lebanon and Syria. Iran was divided between British and Russian spheres of influence. After World War I, Britain also got the mandate for →

Palestine and Iraq. With Germany's defeat in the war, its stake in the Turkish Petroleum Company, which had the concession for the whole of Iraq, fell into Britain's hands. Britain's complete dominance, though it had the largest empire among the imperialist powers, was not unchallenged. A declining British empire, unable to compete with other industrial economies, desperately tried to use its exclusive grip over its colonies to strengthen its economy. The United States, as the emerging new superpower and the leading capitalist power, sought an "open door" to exploit the possessions of the waning colonizing powers.

By 1928, two American oil companies, Jersey Standard and Socony (known today as the merged Exxon and Mobil) with active backing of the US government, got a 23.75 % share in the Turkish Petroleum Company, later renamed the Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC). The remaining shares were held by the British, French, and Royal Dutch-Shell oil companies. Britain continued its direct and indirect rule over Iraq in the turbulent period 1925–1958. During this period, growing opposition to colonial rule forced Britain to grant Iraq "independence" in 1932. But Britain managed to continue its colonial rule indirectly through installed puppet kings and regimes.

With the overthrow of national government of Dr. Muhammad Mosaddeq in Iran in 1953 - which nationalized the British Petroleum in 1951 - through a CIA-led coup, the United States signalled its emergence as the new imperial force in the region, gradually replacing the British predominance. The main task of this new gendarme and ruler of the Gulf region was to ensure capitalist expansion, back the interests of U.S. multinational corporations, and suppress any agitation against imperialism and its client states. Since then the United States has steadily increased its influence in hopes of having the Gulf region in its geopolitical orbit and maintaining its claim on the region's most valuable resources - oil. To advance America's interests there has been increasing American investments including direct and indirect forms of intervention, massive arms transfers to allies, and the acquisition of military bases.

After Iran, Iraq was the second country that became the target of direct US imperial policy, when its pro-Western, British-installed monarchy was overthrown in 1953 - the first puppet regime to be overthrown in an oil-producing country. In July 1958 an army faction led by Abdul Karim Qasim seized power in Iraq, executed the king and declared Iraq a republic. Fearing that Iraq might turn communist under the new military regime and worrying about its oil interests, the United States delivered an ultimatum to the new regime by threatening to invade Iraq. In order to corroborate the credibility of its threat, the U.S. stationed its troops in Jordan and Lebanon and did not pull them backed until it got assurances from the new regime in Baghdad that U.S. oil interests will not be jeopardized.

The anti-colonial sentiments of the Iraqi people and their high expectations from the new government posed a growing danger to U.S. interests in Iraq. Under the rising tide of public pressure, Qasim's regime undertook several anti-imperialist measures contrary to its previous assurances. The most important of which were: limiting IPC's concession area by issuing "law 80" in 1961 and the subsequent formation of a new Iraqi owned oil company in 1963; withdrawing Iraq from the Baghdad Pact; ordering British forces out of Iraq; signing an economic and technical aid deal with the Soviet Union; and cancelling the American aid program. These measures proved detrimental not only to the US interests in Iraq, but also to his own regime.

In a temporary alliance of convenience with the Ba'ath (Renaissance) Party, the United States actively backed a successful coup against Qasim's regime. The coup was staged only four days after the announcement of the formation of the Iraq National Oil Company (INOC) to develop the non-concession lands in 1963. CIA agents provided critical logistical information to the coup plotters and supplied lists with the names of hundreds of suspected communists to be eliminated. The first act of the new government was granting more concession areas to the IPC, including the rich Rumaila field, and allowing the IPC to engage in joint oil exploration with the INOC.

The Ba'ath party, which was removed from the government soon after the 1963 coup, returned to power in a 1968 coup. The Ba'ath regime signed a treaty of friendship and cooperation with the Soviet Union soon after it nationalized the IPC in 1972. The Iraqi government turned to Moscow both for weapons and for help in deterring any U.S. reprisals for nationalizing the Iraq Petroleum Company, which had been owned by Royal Dutch-Shell, BP, Exxon, Mobil, and the French firm CFP. During the early 1970s – when oil-exporting countries struggled against the western multinational corporations that had ruled the industry - Iraq was the first Gulf country to successfully nationalize its oil industry. By shunning western powers and developing a close relationship with the Soviet Union, Iraq succeeded in depriving U.S. and U.K. companies from having access to lucrative oil resources in Iraq. Before the nationalization of oil in Iraq, the U.S. and U.K. oil giants held a "three quarter share of the Iraqi petroleum company, including Iraq's entire national reserves".

Saddam Hussein, a strongman of the Ba'ath regime who formally took over as President in 1979, gradually shifted the regime to a more pro-Western policy. As Saddam Hussein later revealed, "the United States and Iraq decided to re-establish diplomatic relations—broken off after the 1967 war with Israel—just before Iraq's invasion of Iran in 1980." Saddam's decision to re-establish ties with U.S. was a calculated measure and in response to such important events and factors as the fall of the Shah in Iran, Khomeini's expansionist ideas and practices, and Iraq's desperate need for advanced technology and goods to implement its modernization policies.

Even though the U.S. and Saddam engaged in a strategic alliance during the Iran–Iraq war, each sought differ-

ent objectives in their newly established cooperation. Saddam's primary intention was to modernize his country and strengthen Iraq's position in the region by replacing Iran as a proxy after the collapse of the Shah's regime, a task that neither Saudi Arabia nor any of the smaller Gulf States had the capacity to perform. A victory in the war would have weakened the regime in Tehran and would have equally given Saddam the needed prestige and public boost in the Arab world to revive the pan-Arabist ideology. Under this scenario, a victorious Saddam would have emerged as the new Jamal Abdul Nasser of the Arab world. Saddam's political calculation not only had dire consequences for the US-friendly states in the region, but was also a direct challenge to the Western countries in so far as the access to cheap oil was concerned.

The culmination of Saddam's political ambition was the invasion of Kuwait, that provided a golden opportunity for the U.S. to escalate its military presence in the gulf region, which eventually led to the first Gulf War. Subsequent to the expulsion of Iraq from Kuwait, rival oil companies in France, Russia and China were in an enhanced strategic position vis-à-vis their giant rivals in U.S. and U.K. to conclude lucrative production sharing agreements with the Iraqi government. During the 1980s and the 1990s, rival oil companies in Russia, France, China and Japan aggrandized their market capacity through acquiring a large potential share of Iraq's oil resources. To counter the economic inroads of rival oil companies in Iraq, the U.S. and U.K. employed the sanction regime as a tool to frustrate these agreements and thus protecting the future stakes of their own oil companies, which had been deprived from having access to Iraqi oil resources.

It is now evident that the Bush administration had no credible evidence that Saddam Hussein's regime possessed any WMDs and/or was in any way linked to the events of September 11, 2001. However, the terrorist attacks on US soil provided the neo-cons in Washington with the most favourable and much needed pretext to implement the "American grand strategy" through the Bush doctrine of preventive war. Toppling Saddam's government and Installing a U.S. client regime in Baghdad would serve American interests in different ways: (1) provide them with permanent military installations in the region; (2) give American and British companies (Exxon Mobil, Chevron-Texaco, Shell, and BP) a good shot at direct access to Iraqi oil for the first time in 30 years; (3) exclude possible rivals from access to the vast Iraqi oil reserves and development projects in Iraq; (4) create lucrative jobs for the oil service industry, including Vice President Cheney's former company, Halliburton, to rebuild and rehabilitate the Iraqi oil industry which had ran down by years of war and sanctions; and (5) if the puppet regime opens the way for the oil multinationals to return, "it is possible that a broader wave of de-nationalization could sweep through the world's oil industry, reversing the historic changes of the early 1970s."

The neo-conservative administration of Bush moved quickly to ensure U.S. corporate control over Iraqi resources, at least through the year 2007. The first part of the plan, created by the United Nations under U.S. pressure, is the Development Fund for Iraq, which is being controlled by the United States and advised by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The second is a recent Bush executive order that provides absolute legal protection for U.S. interests in Iraqi oil. According to Bush Executive Order 13303, "any attachment, judgment, decree, lien, execution, garnishment, or other judicial process is prohibited, and shall be deemed null and void," with respect to the Development Fund for Iraq and "all Iraqi petroleum and petroleum products, and interests therein." In other words, if Exxon Mobil or Chevron Texaco torches Iraqi oil, it will be immune from legal proceedings in the United States.

Bush, with a stroke of the pen, signed away the rights of the people of Iraq and imposed a legal restriction on the political manageability of even an emerging popular Iraqi government in the future. Bush's order unilaterally declares Iraqi oil to be the unassailable province of U.S. corporations. In the short term, through the Development Fund and the Export-Import Bank programs, the Iraqi people's oil will finance U.S. corporate entrees into Iraq. In the long term, Executive Order 13303 protects anything those corporations do in seizing control of Iraq's oil, from the point of production to the gas pump - and places oil companies above the rule of law.

Following the invasion of Iraq, the Coalition Authority abruptly proceeded to implement the neo-conservative strategy of privatizing Iraqi oil resources, which engendered a climate of resentment among Iraqi people. Popular indignation at attempted privatization of Iraqi oil resources →

manifested itself in a wave of demonstration in several Iraqi cities. On May 25, 2005, Iraqi trade unionists and civil society activists will gather at the Oil Institute of Basra for a two-day conference aimed at fighting the privatization of Iraqi oil. The organizers of the conference, the General Union of Oil Employees, are resolutely opposed to the occupation, the former regime and current plans to privatize Iraq's oil industry.

The independent Basra Oil Union has been a powerful force in Iraq's largest industry, representing more than 23,000 workers in the oil industry. It grew out of the South Oil Company (SOC) Union, and now combines ten trade union councils in nine Iraqi oil companies in Basra, Amara and Nassiriyah. The union has organized several demonstrations and strikes since the beginning of the occupation, putting pressure on the Governing Council (GC) to better the working conditions and halt privatization efforts. According to one of the organizers:

"The opinion of all [Iraqi] oil workers is that they are against privatization. We see privatization as economic colonialism. The authorities are saying that privatization will develop our sector and be useful. But we do not see it as development at all; we view any plan to privatize the oil sector as a big disaster." Sovereignty over its oil reserves is key to Iraq's future development. Oil must stay in the hands of Iraqis, because oil is the only national resource that we have which is of great value, and our economy depends on it. The struggle over the control and ownership of Iraq's oil continues.

With growing working class militancy against the privatization of the oil industry, and the fear that privatization would galvanize the insurgency, the Coalition Authority put privatization on hold. The oil industry is a sector that has so far been excluded from the mass privatizations imposed by the Coalition Provisional Authority in 2003 and 2004. An alternative to privatization crusaded by the neo-conservative wing of the Bush administration - but resented by some elements within the oil industry in the U.S. and U.K. - that is being considered by the occupying powers is to cement the installation of a complaisant government in Iraq which would provide preferential treatment to U.S. and U.K. oil companies.

By entrenching its strategic position in the Gulf region through establishing a friendly and pliant government in Iraq, the U.S. would be in a position to not only check the manoeuvrability of OPEC, but also to influence the conduct of the other powers around the globe. The accomplishment of all these strategic U.S. goals necessitates enthroning a powerful pro-US government in Baghdad, which would in turn require a prolonged American military presence on Iraqi soil. But continuation of the military occupation of Iraq by the US provides a legitimate ground for Iraqi resistance. This is the most perplexing dilemma that the United States has confronted in Iraq. **R**

* Middle East Socialists Network of Canada (MESN-Canada) was formed in the early days of this year by a group of socialists in Toronto who aim to engage in political work in Canada around Middle Eastern issues. For further information about the group, please contact CanadaMESN@yahoo.ca

Windsor: The Border, the Corporations, the Environment, and the State Against the Workers

Richard Harding

The year 2005 is proving to be a difficult one for workers in Windsor, Ontario. Official unemployment stands around 10 percent. Many auto and construction workers are nearing a year on layoff and not a few are looking to welfare to make ends meet. While workers scratch to eke out a living, the border issue remains unresolved. The trucks are lined up on Windsor's stretch of the NAFTA highway with no end in sight. Elevated levels of disease among the people of Windsor due to industrial pollution persist. No call has been made by labour, or government to deal with the situation. Workers are living in fear of further layoffs with the financial issues of the Big Three auto companies in the news daily. The media has stoked this fear by reminding us constantly that making demands for improvements in wages, benefits, trade laws, environmental regulations or anything else that would benefit working people will only cause more job losses. In many respects, the Windsor-Detroit region is ground zero in neo-liberalism's capitalism campaign against working people.

The CAW, IBEW, and UA have large numbers of members 'on the books' but not at work and have employed different tactics to deal with the issue. CAW local 200 voted in January to ban the practice among members of working twelve hour shifts while other members are on layoff. The ban has been generally accepted by the membership, though some persist with accepting the O.T. Management continues to canvas for it as well. The tension for workers across the Big Three is all the higher due to this being a contract year. Announced layoffs of 300+ at GM transmission (Local 1973) by this summer, Daimler Chrysler's statement that it "does not owe Windsor anything" in terms of a new product, Chrysler's contracting out of janitorial services, and

continued UAW concessions in the skilled trades have all combined to put pressure on autoworkers in Windsor. It is no secret in Windsor that as auto goes so does the rest of the city's economy.

In the construction trades, the Contractor's Association much vaunted STAB fund may be of little consolation to the number of members on layoff. STAB is workers giving money out of raises and bonuses to the contractors so that they will be able to bid competitively against non-union contractors. Many construction workers are waiting anxiously for the planned expansion of Casino Windsor to get underway, after having been out of work for almost a year. Besides a 'Living Wage' effort to ensure a minimum wage standard on jobs contracted out by the City of Windsor, not much is being done for the construction trades. In fact, the Greater Essex District County School Board is attempting to de-certify the Construction Trades Locals it has been using for years. There is hope that border infrastructure investment, with all the ambiguities this involves, could provide some work and a reprieve from economic hardship.

A proposal for a new crossing to the U.S. was presented to the citizens of Windsor in January 2005. The Schwartz Report, named after its creator New York consultant 'Gridlock' Sam Schwartz, proposes a new bridge to be built between industrial zones in Windsor and Michigan. This bridge would be linked to the 401 and I75 on the Canadian and American sides respectively. The report has gained the approval of the local media, especially the Windsor Star, and the Canadian Vehicle Manufacturers Association (CVMA). It is all the rage among Windsor's ruling elites, reason enough to be circumspect while appraising it.

Some environmentalists have had no misgivings about attacking Schwartz's plan. They see it as a threat to the Ojibway Nature preserve which the project sees as a great place for a truck route (possibly through a tunnel beneath it). The CAW Environmental Council has endorsed the plan and sparks are sure to fly between the opposing groups. The risk to the rare species of plant and animal life that inhabit the preserve has been a major debating point. The entire bridge controversy has been a telling example of what happens when the economic imperatives of capitalism, taking in this case the concrete form of just-in-time delivery of auto parts and the jobs that rely on it, conflict with preserving the environment. I would not put my money on the environmental conservation as the winner of this particular battle.

Another dimension to the Windsor-Michigan border debate is the role that increased border capacity will play in ensuring the profits of the auto companies. While millions of tax dollars have been spent, and millions more will be spent, on a solution to the border backups, not one voice – from the media, local, provincial, federal governments to the CAW – is calling on the auto corporations to come to the table with any guarantees of long term investment in Windsor or Canada. The CVMA admits that the proposed new infrastructure will be beneficial to its members. In a January 12 statement CVMA President Mark Nantais stated: "this plan should assist with streamlining traffic so as to increase the benefits offered under the Free And Secure Trade (FAST) program, of which our members' are the most active participants." He went on to point out that "It is absolutely crucial for the automotive industry to be assured of border crossing reliability and predictability to accommodate just-in-time delivery on both sides of the border." The lack of any mention of obligations that these major corporations have to workers in Windsor, or the rest of Canada, is just another glaring example of how deep the neo-liberal outlook has permeated popular consciousness.

Perhaps questioning the right of capitalists to take advantage of the public purse and the infrastructure it pays for would lead to questioning their right to poison the environment. That Windsor sports some of the highest levels of birth defects, premature deaths, respiratory illness, and cancer (among other maladies) in Canada is a well known fact. The Gilbertson/Brophy report of 2001 on ecology and health in the Windsor area spells out that "of particular concern was the early onset of the elevated rates of many of these diseases and conditions." It adds "that in addition to a variety of local sources of industrial pollution from automobile manufacturing and use, transboundary air and water pollution from Detroit, Michigan, should be investigated as potentially important causes in the Windsor Area of Concern". This shocking linkage has not translated into calls for compensation from corporations or a questioning of the system that demands these sacrifices in the name of profits.

Persistent un-employment, predatory corporations, unclear union strategies, a rabidly pro-capitalist local media, and a poisonous environment amount to a boot on the collective throat of workers on Windsor. Yet, workers in Windsor remain the best hope for a positive change, especially where they are organized into clear-sighted and demanding unions. **R**

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Indigenous Peoples of Mexico and their Struggles for Rights

R. Aída Hernández Castillo

The Zapatista rebellion on January 1,1994 stimulated the growth of a new indigenous movement in Mexico. New organizations were formed throughout the nation, old organizations became more militant, new alliances were formed. There was great support for indigenous rights among the Mexican population which manifested itself at key moments when the government staged or threatened to stage a more direct military offensive against the Zapatistas . With the victory of Vicente Fox, the candidate of the conservative party (PAN), in the July, 2000 presidential elections, new expectations awakened among all Mexicans. It was assumed that the defeat of the Institutional Revolution Party (PRI) would bring about a new era in the political history of the nation and put an end to seventy-one years of party dictatorship. Among the promises made by the elected president were solving the Chiapas conflict in 15 minutes and responding to the demands for justice of indigenous peoples. In spite of Fox's campaign promises, there has been no solution of the conflict in Chiapas and the government continues its low intensity war against indigenous communities through military and paramilitary actions.

The post-revolutionary Mexican state has shown a tremendous ability to appropriate discourses and co-opt organizations of the lower sectors. The ruling elites have been able to tear apart resistance movements through sophisticated co-opting strategies. The appropriation of revolutionary discourse, the reformulation of its rhetoric (through the creation of the symbols and concept of an institutionalized revolution), and of its aesthetics (through a nationalist muralist movement, also institutionalized), are just a few examples of the way in which the State managed to transmute resistance into reproduction of the system. The PAN government seems to have learned from its PRI predecessors how to adopt the discourses of resistance and empty them of their contra-hegemonic content: "Never again a Mexico without you," says President Fox in the presentation of his National Development Plan for Indigenous Peoples. "A new relationship based on respect for diversity and dialogue between cultures," he has declared. At the same time, through a PAN-PRI alliance, Congress passed an Indigenous Culture and Rights Bill which limits the autonomy of indigenous peoples and disassociates their political and territorial rights from their cultural rights. The right to difference and an identity of their own is recognized, but only from a *culturalist* perspective. The indigenous movement has responded to the new rhetoric of difference by countering with its own discourse on autonomy that claims the right to a culture of their own, but does so from a perspective that includes the right over lands, over the use and control of natural resources and over the reproduction of their own political institutions as a necessary component of cultural rights.

For their part, indigenous women have enriched the debate by rejecting any static or essentialist vision of the cultures of their people and have reclaimed the existence of changing cultural practices which are always being formulated and re-formulated. Instead of rejecting the recognition of cultural diversity because of the ways it can be used to oppress and exclude them, indigenous women have decided to fight for the definition of difference itself. They propose defining difference in terms of empowerment rather than of exclusion. Their demands for the recognition of a changing culture are reminiscent of the claims some critical feminists have made of the politics of diversity, that is, not as a strategy of the exclusion of others, but rather of specificity and heterogeneity, and in which the differences between groups are conceived as relative and not defined by essentialist categories and attributes.

The state has maintained a narrow view of human rights for Mexico's indigenous peoples. This has had severe consequences for the indigenous population. Indigenous peoples have been excluded from the rights extended to the rest of the population. They face constant discrimination and live in conditions of extreme economic marginalization. The Mexican State has refused to recognize indigenous peoples as such, while at the same time, it has become fashionable during the current Mexican administration to use a new rhetoric of diversity which emphasizes the existence of a Multicultural Mexico. But this new rhetoric of diversity has not led to the development of an adequate normative framework in which the cultural differences of indigenous peoples are recognized, nor to public policies that promote such recognition.

The pressure of public mobilizations led the government to negotiate with the Zapatistas**.** The negotiations led to an agreement, known

as the San Andrés Accords, in February 1996 to enact a new law of indigenous rights in the national Congress. The legislative proposal was then developed by a congressional commission (Cocopa) composed of representatives and senators of all major political parties with the clear understanding that it was to be subsequently enacted into federal legislation. The proposed legislation was accepted by the Zapatistas, the National Indigenous Congress and the government. These agreements were discussed and accepted by indigenous organizations all over the nation, showing an unprecedented degree of consensus in among Mexico's indigenous peoples.

This legislative initiative held the promise of providing the foundation for building a new relationship between the Mexican state and indigenous peoples. The proposed modification of the legislative framework would have incorporated indigenous peoples as collective subjects before the law and granted them self determination through autonomy, thus enabling indigenous peoples to decide and practice their own ways of social, political, economic and cultural organization; to apply their normative systems for the resolution of internal problems; to secure access to the state justice system through recognition of their specific cultural characteristics; to enjoy rights over their lands and territories, and the natural resources found within them.

However, the initiative's main demands for autonomy were rejected by a majority of both houses of Congress in April 2001. Congress passed a very different proposal known as the Indigenous Rights and Culture Act, which the EZLN and the indigenous movement nationally considered a mockery of their demands and a betrayal of the San Andrés Agreements. The defenders of the legislation argue that the formal recognition of cultural diversity represents significant progress away from the monocultural and homogenizing discourses of the past. But, in fact, it marks the emergence of an official discourse on multiculturalism in which the concept of culture has been stripped of its political and territorial dimensions. It will not bring about a real transformation that leads to social justice for indigenous peoples.

Words and facts: President Fox's promises.

While the President spoke of a new day for indigenous peoples in Multicultural Mexico, the low intensity warfare in Chiapas continued. Although several military stations were dismantled in March 2001 in response to Zapatista conditions for the resumption of negotiations, the overall number of soldiers in the state of Chiapas has not diminished. In some cases, such as in the Garrucha army station in the Ocosingo municipality, the barracks were dismantled but the army units just moved further into the jungle. At the same time, new army checkpoints have been established in the Coast and Sierra regions.

In Highland municipalities such as San Pedro Chenalhó there is one soldier for every ten residents today. Paramilitary groups are still armed, and the few paramilitary leaders arrested when the new government was established walked free on minimum bail after a few months. Death threats against the members of the Las Abejas (an organization of civil society link to the Catholic Church) and against all those considered sympathizers of the Zapatista movement still continue. The weapons used to murder the people of Acteal in December 1997 are still for the most part in the hands of the paramilitary. Diego Hernández Gutiérrez and Antonio López Santis, two of the main paramilitary leaders responsible for the Acteal massacre were freed in along with four other suspects due to "lack of evidence" against them. A few days later, representatives of Las Abejas denounced renewed instances of harassment on the part of the acquitted paramilitary leaders. This panorama is very far from the situation of "normality" that the state and federal government are attempting to convey to investors on their many tours abroad.

However, the removal of troops is not the only promise broken by the PAN government. As mentioned before, the enactment of the San Andres Agreements remains unrealized, even as the new Indigenous Rights and Culture Act masquerades as a response to Zapatista demands. This law known as the Barlett-Ceballos Act to "honor" its main promoters, bears little relation with the COCOPA initiative and even less with the original agreement signed by representatives of the government and the EZLN in San Andrés. The national indigenous movement, through the National Indigenous Congress, has denounced the unconstitutional character of the Barlett-Ceballos Act in various arenas and forums. They point out that it is in violation of the 169th article of the International Labor Organization →

(signed by Mexico) because its contents were not widely consulted with indigenous peoples. In a move unprecedented in Mexican history, indigenous peoples have used legal procedures offered by the constitution to reject the new law. The resources of Protection (presented by individuals) and Constitutional Controversy (presented in this case by indigenous municipal authorities) had not been used to challenge any law since the creation of the constitution in 1917. It was precisely the most marginalized sectors of Mexican society —indigenous peoples from Puebla, Oaxaca, Veracruz, Tabasco, Michoacán, Guerrero, Hidalgo, and Morelos who presented not one but 339 Constitutional Controversies requesting that the new Act be invalidated. The Judiciary, however, fell in line with the Executive and Legislative powers and turned its back on the demands of indigenous peoples ruling that the Constitutional Controversies were "inappropriate" and rejecting them on September 6, 2002.

In spite of all the rhetorical commitments to diversity, indigenous peoples once again found that legislative and judicial struggle were off-bounds to them. They were still treated as third-class citizens. The main arguments in the Constitutional Controversies pre*sented by indigenous au*thorities related to procedural problems, since the new law was written and passed without consulting the sectors which would be affected by it: indigenous peoples.

The Zapatistas and many specialists on indigenous issues denounced the law. The EZLN, a few days after the reform was approved, declared that "If that reform deserves a name at all it should be 'Constitutional Recognition of the Rights and Culture of Landowners and Racists' "(La Jornada, May 18, 2001).Many of the changes made to the COCOPA law initiative are limitations to indigenous autonomy. In spite of the large political mobilizations carried out in support of the COCOPA initiative, its most important demands for autonomy were rejected by the majority in both houses of Congress.

The Indigenous Act that was adopted places a series of barriers on autonomy, as it was conceived in the COCOPA initiative. State legislatures, for example, are given powers to determine the ways in which such autonomy shall be recognized; the collective rights of indigenous peoples to their lands and territories are denied, as is the legal status of their normative systems. Considering that most state legislatures are still under the control of regional caciques (political bosses), autonomy as recognized in item "A" of the Second Article of the new Indigenous Act will be no more than a mere rhetorical gesture, lacking any legal substance that allows its enforcement.

The new act also states in several places that "the Mexican nation is one and indivisible". The ghost of national fragmentation, the fear of the collectivization of natural resources and the disqualification of indigenous normative systems led senators from all parties to pass an act that does not respond to the central demands of the national indigenous movement.

President Fox did nothing to promote the COCOPA initiative. Once he sent the proposed law to Congress, he considered his promises to Mexico's indigenous peoples fulfilled. In fact, he applauded the efforts of his party to approve an Act that betrayed the basic principles of the San Andrés Agreements. The "recognition of cultural diversity" announced by President Fox in his National Program for the Development of Indigenous Peoples is of a commercialized and trivialized sort. It does not include the right to territory, to the management of natural resources, nor to political structures of their own. The PAN's neo-indigenism continues the top-down manner in which the PRI worked with indigenous people. Plans are still imposed from above, a few token indigenous intellectuals are included in the bureaucracy, but there is no effective participation of indigenous peoples and communities in the planning and implementation of development programs.

The governmental bureaucracy that deals with indigenous affairs has actually grown with the creation of new institutions, such as the Representation Office for the Development of Indigenous Peoples (ORDIPI) and the Counsel for the Development of Indigenous Peoples. The word "indigenous" has been added to other already existing institutions, such as the National Direction of Popular and Indigenous Cultures. Relations between the state and indigenous peoples, in spite of all these changes, remain basically unaltered. The only changes have been in some of the officials holding the posts and in the indigenist rhetoric, which now incorporates the language *of business*. The National Program for the Development of Indigenous Peoples (PNDPI), for example, includes a Program for Entrepreneurial Development which expresses the need to create "human capital". But how can we talk about entrepreneurial development of

indigenous peoples, when nine out of ten indigenous workers live in extreme poverty? Research on employment in indigenous regions in 2001 showed that the average income per hour is around $3.05 pesos (0.25 US dollars), in contrast to the average in urban centers, which is $11.50 (one US dollar). The same study also pointed out that 34.2% of all workers in indigenous regions *do not receive any wages, since they work in family agricultural activities*. This number is even more significant if separated by gender: it turns out that more than half of all working women in these regions, 53.4%, *do not receive wages*.

In spite of all the rhetoric about inclusion and the emphasis on consensual processes, the main government initiatives for indigenous peoples, whether they be legislative reforms, development programs or huge projects like the Puebla Panama Plan (PPP), are still being imposed from above and without the participation of the people affected. The solutions included in the PPP to development issues, presented by the PAN government as the panacea to the problems that plague the south-southeast indigenous region, were described by Alejandro Álvarez Bejar in the following terms: "The PPP has been presented as a plan for regional development and is filled with strong rhetorical discourse about 'the need to build foundations of planning and consensus.' However, up until now there has been no mention of anything resembling an agricultural policy (the most important sector in the region), or an environmental policy other than the military occupation of biodiversity sanctuaries —even though this is a region very much affected by irrational oil exploitation, which groups several states in the Southeast within a serious and far-reaching environmental crisis— , or any effort to reach consensus: the indigenous act passed last year literally suppresses any recognition of indigenous communities' legal rights over their natural resources."

These facts seem to indicate that the multicultural policies favored by the PAN government with its new rhetoric and new Indigenous Culture and Politics Act is rather a policy of inequality which continues the trend of the last decades of the PRI's indigenism. The challenge of a true recognition of the human rights of indigenous peoples cannot be reduced to cultural recognition, but must establish the political terms that will serve to facilitate access to all life opportunities. To go beyond the trivialized versions of diversity, multiculturalism must be expressed also in social terms and terms of equal opportunity. These elements, however, are lacking in the new culturalist rhetoric of President Fox.

Final Thoughts

Against the unfulfilled promises of liberal citizenship, indigenous men and women are creating a new concept of *differentiated citizenship* in which participation in the national project does not necessitate the rejection of their own identities. The indigenous movement faces the challenge of the new multiculturalist rhetoric of a State that has appropriated their discourse on diversity and emptied it of any real meaning. The commercialization of ethnic diversity, ethnotourism, or folklorism transformed into symbols of diversity has gradually contributed to the realization of the basic concept of multiculturalism as a process of the creation of the principles for the equal recognition of the other's culture. But the construction of a democratic project and a Multicultural state that recognizes the human rights of indigenous people as individuals does not eliminate the importance of the recognition of their collective rights as peoples in respect to land, the use and control of natural resources and the shaping their own political institutions. If these collective social, political and economic rights are not included, the multiculturalism of the PAN government will amount to just another set of policies and rhetoric that once again justifies inequality in the name of cultural diversity. **R**

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The Zapatistas in Power:

More than a Movement, Much More than a Party

Leandro Vergara-Camus

Eleven years after the uprising in Chiapas, the achievements of the Zapatistas are still not widely known, and their political strategy has not been seriously assessed. To some extent, this is due to the different interpretations of their controversial strategy of seeking not to "take state power" but "simply changing the relations of power".

For Marxists, the state is an alienated form of power, which is experienced by workers as an external power over them. A social revolution, if it aims at profound social changes, implies transformations in this form of power. The Zapatista experience of autonomy is the re-appropriation of power by the people through the creation of a new form of popular sovereignty. Rather than "taking state power", the Zapatistas are replacing it with a genuine form of popular power, organized around different mechanisms, principles and objectives.

In many communiqués since 1994, the EZLN has mentioned the necessity to organize a national Constituent Convention to write a New Constitution, where a new relationship with indigenous people, although crucial, was but one aspect. The other major component should be the transformation of the relationship between the rulers and the ruled that could become the basis for non-capitalist relations. Zapatista local and national strategies have been oriented at creating the conditions to reach this goal. Unfortunately, this Zapatista strategy has not been given serious consideration by the Mexican left. Much of the Mexican left has been more preoccupied with either narrower demands or electoral politics.

The support of entire indigenous peasant communities is the most important political advantage of the EZLN. After the uprising, the EZLN consolidated and expanded its presence in Chiapas. It has expanded geographically, having a presence in regions where it was unknown or not yet consolidated before 1994. However, as a result of 11 years of low intensity warfare and profound neoliberal crisis, the Zapatista movement has also lost part

of its social base in some communities. How the guerrilla movement decided to organize this power is what makes the Zapatista experience so interesting. Rather than participating in already existent local institutional power structures or re-enforcing the power of its military hierarchy, the EZLN has encouraged the creation of new autonomous structures of self-government, parallel and alternative to the official state structures.

Self-governing Autonomous Communities

These experiences of Zapatista indigenous autonomy first started in December 1994, when Zapatistas took over official municipal offices, created their own autonomous municipalities *in resistance* and organized them around a network of communitarian assemblies and councils. By the middle of 1995, various experiences of autonomy, with different degrees of consolidation depending on the local support for the EZLN, were at work throughout the region. Autonomous municipalities took over state services such as education, health, development and justice. Today, autonomous municipalities train their own community educators, develop their own education program, using their own curriculum and pedagogy, as well as their own view of Mexican history. In the area of development, instead of deepening market dependency, productive projects focus on self-subsistence, diversification of production, and the reduction of the use of chemical pesticides.

From the perspective of indigenous rights, these experiences of autonomy fall clearly under the umbrella of the continental struggle to reclaim rights to self-government for indigenous people. For the indigenous Zapatistas, this struggle means an end to their cultural and political subordination and a strengthening of indigenous culture and practices. However, this is not the sole meaning of autonomy, it also means the construction of structures of self-government within civil society, which can be a first step in what Subcomandante Marcos called the "autonomization of civil society". This refers to the development of forms of popular power alternative to the state, i.e. structures of popular sovereignty organized democratically for and by the poor, and clearly identified with an anti-neoliberal revolutionary project. In

order to protect this experience of popular self-government from external interference and develop its autonomous capacity, the EZLN has decided to commit to a strategy of resistance. Autonomous municipalities refuse state funds and those funds that they receive come from member communities and Mexican and international civil society.

In 1997, President Ernesto Zedillo called for a military offensive on these autonomous communities in order to dismantle them. The army and the state police carried out low intensity warfare on Zapatista communities that included the training and proliferation of paramilitary groups. But in every autonomous municipality that was dismantled, a new one emerged a few months later. These official military attacks only stopped when Vicente Fox, complying with one of the EZLN's conditions to resume negotiations, pulled the army out of certain positions. However, Zapatistas, especially where they represent a minority, are still subjected to political harassment from other organizations, which have taken advantage of Fox's strategy of avoiding the issue of Chiapas.

By August of 2003, the Zapatistas decided to broaden autonomy by creating a higher level of popular sovereignty: the *Juntas de Buen Gobierno* (Good Government Council, as opposed to Bad Government which refers to the state). These councils consist of regional decision-making bodies, which coordinate the activities of many autonomous municipalities. The creation of the JBG helped consolidate the political authority and legitimacy of the EZLN over broader geographic areas and will help improve the coordination of the different efforts involving Zapatista communities and municipalities. The JBG have become the higher political authority in Zapatista territory. They have also become spaces of conflict mediation and resolution for Zapatistas, non-Zapatistas and anti-Zapatistas alike. Even the government of Chiapas has to sometimes consult with the JBG before carrying out activities in Zapatista territory.

The Mixed Results of the Zapatista National Strategy

Since 1994 Zapatista national strategy has had a number of objectives. First, the constant objective has been to maintain a national solidarity network that can provide support at times of confrontation with the Mexican government. The second objective has been the formation of a broad opposition front to defeat the party-state system and its neoliberal policies and contribute to the re-foundation of the nation. The third objective was the construction of a new type of political organization inspired by zapatismo that would orient its actions towards the organization of civil society.

In carrying out its national strategy, the EZLN has had two important allies: the Partido de la Revolución Democrática (Democratic Revolution Party, PRD, the most important left-wing party in Mexico) and civil society. Due to the Zapatista position of rejection of state power and institutional politics, the relationship between the EZLN and the political society has never been very smooth. Until 1998, the EZLN attempted to build bridges with the PRD. It maintained a position of "sceptical support" towards it and electoral politics at the national level, but argued that with the military presence and political repression there were not the conditions for democratic and free elections in Chiapas. Throughout that period the PRD denounced the government's strategy in the conflict and pushed for the recognition of the San Andrés Accords on indigenous rights to autonomy signed by the federal government and the EZLN in 1996. Since 1998 however the EZLN has gradually distanced itself from the PRD, as the latter became more and more integrated into institutional politics. The EZLN, echoing the criticism of many sectors of the left, accused the PRD of over-pragmaticism, clientelism and electoralism. The final rupture of the EZLN with the PRD came in 2001 with the approval in Congress by the PRD of Fox's indigenous law, which does not comply with the content of the San Andrés Accords.

It is in civil society (especially in Mexico City) that the EZLN has found most of its support. It has accomplished this in part by organizing two national plebiscites, five forums or encounters, sending three delegations of grassroots Zapatistas to Mexico City and all regions of the country. In the long run the idea is to mobilize and organize sectors of civil society to develop, at the minimum, a counter power to the state and, more ambitiously, forms of self-government.

Trying to go beyond mobilization, the EZLN has also called for and sponsored the formation of political organizations that could capitalize on this support and orient it towards the transformation of the Mexican society. Nonetheless, the EZLN has not been successful in the creation of political organizations, even those where PRD activists participated. Of the →

Convención Nacional Democrática (1994), the *Movimiento de Liberación Nacional* (1994-1995), *the Convención Nacional Indígena* (1996 to present) and the *Frente Zapatista de Liberación Nacional* (1998 to present), only the national indigenous organization can be said to have some political capacity.

With the failure of all its organizational attempts, the EZLN has reverted to its sporadic and spontaneous relationship with sectors of civil society (students, NGOs, unions, etc.). This support does not seem to have diminished within the general population, although it seems to have diminished among intellectuals of the left. A march of EZLN's commanders from Chiapas to Mexico City in February-March 2001 was greeted enthusiastically by hundreds of thousands of people along the route, re-confirming the support that the Zapatista have among indigenous people, peasants, workers and sectors of the middle class.

The Zapatista Dillema: Local Revolution in an Era of National Pragmatism

The Zapatista struggle is carried out in a radically different context than ours. The exercise of trying to seek lessons for Canada from that experience does not make much sense. However, the achievements and limits of the Zapatista experience oblige us to rethink revolutionary change. Is the "conquest of state power" a necessary step in any revolution that seeks to transcend capitalism? Can revolutionary change be carried out without confronting the power of the state? Are the concrete experiences of empowerment and the development of spaces outside the market, which have an impact on the everyday lives of people and build alternative forms of social engagement more important? The Zapatistas have drawn answers to these questions from their own conditions of struggles and past experiences.

An assessment of the 11 years since the Zapatista uprising is impossible before first taking into consideration the conditions in which the EZLN operates. There are at least four obstacles to the Zapatista national strategy. First, beyond its strong support in Mexican society and great sympathy at the international level, the EZLN, as an organization, has relatively limited resources to reach out to other organizations. Its reliance of the image and discourse of Subcomandante Marcos has been an enormous asset in this regard but, for many reasons, Marcos no longer has the audience he had in the first years of the conflict. Second, because of the context of militarization, the EZLN has had to work in a quasi-clandestine manner. The Zapatistas are impeded from getting involved directly with other social and political organizations. They communicate with the broader movement mainly through communiqués published by *La Jornada* (most important left-wing national newspaper) or through events they organize. Third, the Zapatistas have been seeking to build an alliance with actors that have very different goals. The EZLN is a revolutionary movement, which seeks profound transformations to Mexican society. At this point, the great majority of the political organizations are not seeking revolutionary change. Most of them represent specific sectors of society who mobilize for the democratization and modification of state policies. This is *the most* important impediment to the Zapatista strategy. Finally, with Vicente Fox from the *Partido de Acción Nacional* (PAN) winning the presidential elections of 2000 and opposition parties ruling various states, many see in the democratization of Mexico an unfavourable context for a revolutionary movement. For millions of Mexican, the prospects for a better future still depends on what happens in the realm of electoral politics and not on their participation in a revolutionary movement.

In this context, the experience of indigenous autonomy is one of the major achievements of the Zapatista rebellion. These experiences of self-government have been gradually building alternative structures of popular self-government, in the context of a hostile environment of militarization and continuous political harassment. The major pending issue is women's rights and emancipation. Although women's rights and women's political participation in the movement are on the Zapatista revolutionary agenda, this is the area where the Zapatista experience has yet to make substantial headway. Although some women have become commanders, the great majority of women still face patriarchal structures within communities that impede their liberation.

As for its relationship with civil society, the EZLN has been very successful in maintaining the spontaneous support of broad sectors of the Mexican civil society but has not been able to organize it. The EZLN has been much less fortunate in its relationship with political parties. As a result of the failed attempts to unite the forces of the left, the Zapatista movement decided to focus on its internal development by consolidating its capacity of resistance through the autonomy and self-subsistence of its communities. Under the conditions I have highlighted, which include a real possibility of returning to a situation of low intensity warfare, this is not an easy task. In rejecting collaboration with the state, a great portion of the financial resources of the Zapatista autonomous municipalities come from national and international solidarity networks. This is where, we, in the North, can have an impact and help this process of popular self-government survive and grow. **R**

If you wish to contribute to support Zapatista communities, you can do so directly by logging in to www.ezln.org, or contribute to the fundraising campaign of Latin American Bolivarian Circle Manuelita Saénz of Toronto in support of education in the Ricardo Flores Magón autonomous municipality. Info: leandro@yorku.ca or bolivarian_circle@yahoo.com.

The Mexican Left:

Current and Future Challenges

Alejandro Alvarez Béjar

The Mexican Left, as the left worldwide, faces a crisis of redefinition in the face of the aggressive militarism of the US and the neoliberal restructuring of the world. Mexico stands between two contrasting developments, the domination of the military-religious right in the US and the social eruptions in Latin America against neoliberalism through leftists forces in national politics. In addition, Mexico is experiencing a deepening political crisis. This article will explore the character of the Mexican left as a way of opening up dialogue rather than passing summary judgments on one or another political force, personality or movement. We will do this through exploring some basic questions about the character of the Mexican Left and current debates within it.

1. Composition and Character of the Mexican Left.

The Mexican Left is composed of a broad spectrum of social movements, political formations, cultural associations, non-governmental organizations, parties, labor unions, producers' organizations, residents' groups, indigenous associations, personalities and even state and local governments, maintaining a varying presence within different institutional areas.

It could be said that we are something less than a party but something more than a movement, that the Left is, in this broad sense, a major cultural current existing on a national level as a political tendency which defines itself as opposed to the capitalist system, corporate government and the excesses of authoritarianism, of hereditary power, and economic, political or social exclusion and which also has a wide-ranging experience of struggle, while not being organically articulated as a single force.

The most delicate problem facing the Mexican Left today is that neo-liberal discourse has left many ex-communists, Trotskyists, Maoists, *Guevarists*, and even social democrats without faith in their own ideas, ashamed of their statist background and lacking the ability to reformulate projects of social change The combination of a political climate dominated by the corporatism of the old ruling party, PRI [Partido de la Revolución Institucional, Institutional Revolutionary Party], with the limited presence of an organized Left has led many observers to the false conclusion that "the Mexican Left does not exist".

The traditional left groups which maintained international links have practically disappeared as such in Mexico, or are dispersed around the country with little or no organizational or political significance (i.e. communists, Trotskyists, *Guevarists*, anarchists and many other '-ists' who left behind them a legacy of dogmatism, sectarianism and ultra-left tendencies). There are also some partisan groups that survive as semi-statist forces such as the Partido de los Trabajadores (PT, Workers' Party), with formally left ideology but financial resources coming from former president Carlos Salinas´s group. All of these ingredients, mixed with PRI-style corporatist tendencies, nationalism and statism have complicated the development of a critical and self-critical reflection on the political task of the Left in terms of the masses.

It's necessary to approach this complex task with an attitude of "open dogmatism" as proposed by Daniel Bensaid in Europe. That is, we need to engage in a re- evaluation of the political culture which is our common heritage, and we need to preserve our principles and those key ideas that retain validity and abandon those which have been proven wrong. We need to resist the facile adoption of fashionable notions (of the 'we need a modern Left' kind), while avoiding the temptation of dogma (such as, 'we are Marxist-Leninists and if only our strategy was truly applied….")

This broad left is the basis for the left-wing character of particular regions of the country, and especially of Mexico City itself, a character that has been heroically maintained in an environment of savage neo-liberalism, largely thanks to the common historical legacy of democratic struggle of the student and popular movements of 1968 and 1971.This broad left character of many social movements and some regions is also a result of the role of the left in subsequent struggles: to gain social self-representation in a number of spheres, such as universities and unions; in the development from below of new popular organizations such as the neighborhood assemblies that sprang up in *barrios* following the 1985 earthquake in the face of government inaction; citizen activism movements; in the formation of national alliances for popular struggle against neoliberal policies; in the electoral struggles, and so forth.

These successes of the left are the result of the combined efforts of all the players in the social Left and not the result of one line or tendency**.** The broad left also deserves credit for the critical social awareness in the →

country towards neo-liberalism and the process of economic integration embedded in NAFTA. On the other hand, it is not surprising that the processes of political and social advancement in the democratic struggles of the Left have lacked regional coordination and have developed unevenly in terms of institutions, political milieu and strategic approaches

2. What are the principal current reference points for the Left?

The PRD (Democratic Revolutionary Party) and *Zapatismo* are still the major axes of reference , though not exclusively so, of the broad left that we've just described.

The PRD is formally a national political party but in reality only has influence in various regions, and is far from having a country-wide presence. It carries little weight in Congress, even though it runs the government of one of the largest cities in the world and also governs four other states (Baja California Sur, Zacatecas,Michoacan and very recently Guerrero). As well, it has some degree of representation in numerous municipal councils.

The PRD is currently experiencing a triple crisis: a crisis of credibility, a moral crisis and an organizational crisis. Its 'political realism', its practices of political patronage and its pragmatism in alliances have blurred its status as as a Left party. The most discrediting matter, however, has been the corruption around party financing. The videos of leading party members receiving money from corrupt businessmen to finance their electoral campaigns have been paraded on national television, immersing the party in "scandal politics." These sleazy activities reflect both the old PRI-ista traditions of an important part of the leadership and their political opportunism (and pragmatism). This corruption scandal has been a powerful weapon in the hands of the political and media establishment in their efforts to discredit the party and demoralize the rank and file. The organizational crisis reflects the power struggle between factions in the context of the charismatic leadership of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas and a lack of respect for internal established procedures within the organization. These two factors have led to differences being fought out through the arbitration of Cárdenas, rather than through democratic procedures. As well, the predominance of paid professional over voluntary activism also has undermined internal democracy.

The PRD itself was formed after the Presidential election of 1988 was stolen by the PRI. Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, son of Mexico's most popular and reformist President and himself a member of the PRI, broke with that party and ran for President for the National Democratic Front, an alliance created and supported by left-wing and nationalist mass organizations. The PRI manipulated the results and stole the election for Carlos Salinas de Gortari. Cárdenas decided to limit the protests to a symbolic level and began the building of a new electoral party, the PRD, which had tremendous energy and the support of much of the left. He had great moral authority initially and has subsequently run and been defeated for President twice more under the banner of PRD (1994 and 2000).

Though he himself seemed to be one of the best candidates for uniting the Left, beginning with the *nomenklatur* of the various PRD factions, he fared poorly in the 2000 elections and has not done well in public opinion polls since then. These polls have consistently demonstrated the weakening of his position after having been Mayor of the Federal District without a significant project for change in the city as well as oscillating to the left and right on such delicate matters as energy reform, NAFTA, and even the causes of the decline of the PRD.

Even more significantly, as 'moral leader' of the PRD, he lost political stature and public confidence when he failed to vigorously fight the impeachment of Andrés Manuel López Obrador, Mayor of Mexico City, a process (the impeachment) which can only be described as an assault on the citizens of the Federal District. His failure to lead and organize a defense of the most important PRD government in the country, instead launching his own campaign for nomination as the presidential candidate of the PRD just as the struggle for impeachment was intensifying, led many to wonder if he was in league with Fox and Salinas in order to replace López Obrador as the PRD candidate for President.

López Obrador, as Mayor of Mexico City, has built popular support for himself among the older generation in both the city and the surrounding countryside through the creation of a pension program. As well, he has developed support among informal workers from popular barrios, and recently also in the middle classes — who resent the neo-liberalism that has impoverished them — through the promotion of progressive social policies in the areas of health and education.

Hence the accusations of 'populist'. But on other key issues for the city, he has been clearly pro-business and presented very little of an 'alternative' with regards to the concerns of ecologists, human rights activists and feminists. Examples of this include: the building of a second tier for the main beltway for automobile traffic while the subway system's budget has been capped; the adoption of Giuliani's 'zero tolerance' policy to improve personal security at the cost of violating individual rights; the shelving of the investigation into the death of Digna Ochoa (a human rights activist who was murdered) in the face of grave inconsistencies in police procedure; the failure to promote neighborhood organization as a means for democratic citizen participation in city affairs; the impetus towards restoration of the Historic Centre of the city only in terms of the business-led privatization program which among other things has led to to the expulsion of the Mazahua Indian women who are traditionally street vendors there, etcetera.

His pro-business emphasis is skillfully kept discreet and only vaunted in 'obvious successes' such as the beltway second tier and the restoration

of the Historical Centre of the City. This discrete alliance with big business has contributed to the view that he runs a boom government that promotes public works in the midst of economic paralysis. And, in spite of the corruption scandals of key people around him, he is viewed as basically honest, is critical of the voracity of the banking system, expresses sharp but minor criticisms of some aspects of the neoliberal model and moreover has run an essentially austere government in a country accustomed to the excesses of imperial presidents, and which, above all, is in solidarity with the poor.

It must not be forgotten that, at the same time, he counts on the support of another sector of powerful businesses who defend him, partly because they have benefited from many of his initiatives in the city. For all these reasons, in the governance of the Federal District the PRD and its governor accumulate virtues and defects which are scrutinized at national and international levels, given the importance of the city. López Obrador pursues a charismatic leadership, which has snatched the political initiative from Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas and from the PRD and casts himself as a 'a governor both center-left and nationally viable'.

The other main axes of reference for the Mexican left is Zapatismo. While the Mexican government seeks to define Zapatismo as a local phenomenon restricted to "a few municipalities in Chiapas", it is, in fact, an extremely complex, multi-faceted movement. It is, at once, a left-wing group, a rebel army (EZLN), a government of localities and regions (in Chiapas), a social movement that plays a national role and part of an international social movement (in tacit alliance with *anti-globalization* activists). Zapatista self-governing communities that claim local or regional autonomy within the national state exist in numerous localities (especially the councils called *Caracoles* in various municipalities in Chiapas, such as San Pedro Michoacán, General Emiliano Zapata, Libertad de los Pueblos Mayas y Tierra y Libertad). The Zapatistas have been an important

national voice (for indigenous rights) communicating, at one time via the ANIPA (the National Indigenous Association for Autonomy) and at another through the CNI (National Indigenous Congress. They showed great capacity to evoke national mobilizations, as in their dramatic march for indigenous rights in the Spring of 2001 but the attempt to build a national organization, the Frente Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, proved unfruitful up until now.

Zapatismo has stopped flaunting itself as the armed alternative – though without giving up being so – in order to emphasize its roots as an indigenous social movement, to emphasize its moral rather than its military might and to put forth a strategy of rebellion rather than one of power. The strategy aims at creating alternative community-based collective governments controlled from below without seeking to win control of the national government through the ballot box**,** even though some communities have voted in national elections. They call for changes in the means of production rather than relying on state distribution policies for fighting hunger and poverty.

The *Zapatistas* declare themselves against the present model of accumulation and systematically condemn the manifest violence of neoliberalism and social exclusion, just as they condemn the violence of Mexico's dirty war against social movements and the great variety of means being used to attack opponents of the regime.

The Zapatistas argue that this dirty war was initially defended in terms of Cold War ideology and the Mexican state's nationalist ideology, which condemned left-militancy as a betrayal of the country. With particular intensity after January 1, 1994, The government has carried out policies of 'preventative' militarization of great tracts of the country and the strengthening of paramilitary groups as a counter-insurgency tactic. In addition to these coercive strategies of control, the Zapatistas point to the government's efforts to create divisions through policies of 'social aid' that result in the breaking down of the social fabric of the poorest and least-developed communities, which are those where the *Zapatistas* find their base.

Zapatismo redefines politics as self-management, self-government, as a way of remaking relationships between peoples, and rejects the view of politics as 'political marketing', although paradoxically they perhaps have had their greatest successes in the cultural sphere and through the clever use of media communication.

Recognizing the value and the limitations of both these players vindicates the argument that bridges can and must be built between these →

two great axes of the Mexican Left, the PRD and *Zapatismo*. The strategic meeting points in their resistance to neo-liberalism should be highlighted, while clearly indicating the points on which they will not back down – and without setting one's hopes on the gloss of charismatic leaders.

3. Is the Left's social base principally civic or class-dependent?

Neoliberalism has increased social fragmentation, marginalization and pre-existing inequalities in Mexico. This has led to a growth of militancy and social demands to which the government has responded in an authoritarian and repressive manner. State violence has become a dangerously easy way of responding to popular discontent.

This situation of growing social tension is the context for our attempt to understand the social base of the two major political formations discussed above. The social base of the Left is urban and multi-class. It ranges from sections of the middle classes to wage-earning workers and parts of the industrial proletariat, to micro- and medium-sized business owners (reflected in neighborhoods, universities, schools, markets, the media, cultural organizations and civic associations) as well as groups of indigenous peoples and agricultural workers (based in the main areas of indigenous population and among agricultural workers from the northeast, south and southeast of Mexico).

In many cases the character of these movements is more class-based than specifically urban-civic in origin, though not all class-based tendencies are openly left-wing, but are combined with other elements such as nationalism. This combined class/nationalist ideology is strong in key sectors of the social movements against neo-liberalism, movements that had important mobilizations in 2003-2004. These instances of popular resistance to neoliberalism took place in the countryside as well as the city. The breadth of the rural mobilizations were impressive but their fragmentation allowed the government to play groups off against each other. In the cities, there were important union struggles in defense of social security, collective contracts and public ownership of strategic utilities. These workers' struggles saw a variety of convergences among different unions and movements and the development of some elements of a common program for future struggles.

The social movements of these last two years have been – in the countryside – openly against neo-liberalism (NAFTA) and – in the city – against privatization and the dismantling of the welfare state or against neo-colonial mechanisms such as the NAFTA. These movements have periods of ebb and flow and some even disappear, with political parties sometimes filling up these spaces. But while, as in other latitudes, they have very limited effectiveness in achieving social demands, they have helped to distill notions of solidarity and even new ways of thinking about social alliances.

4. What is at the centre of current debates on strategy and tactics?

As in other parts of the world, one of the key tensions in Mexico is the relation between parties and movements, but also between elections and direct social responses. There are currents on the political left who insist that the strategic option for the left is electoral. They feel that the central task is the building of a broad 'modern' Left by which they mean essentially an electoral, parliamentary organization that would negotiate and manuever within the framework of the existing system. It would seek high visibility as an alternative national reference point and be prepared to make strategic alliances with whomever necessary (the PRI itself in some states and cases, the PAN in other states and on other relevant issues such as to defend the vote, to fight fraud, or simply voting as a form of civic resistance).

There are others on the Left who assert the need to concentrate on strengthening, as far as possible, the political and organizational articulation of the exploited and excluded. They are concerned that the struggles for governmental power or influence lead to the blurring of the policies and the compromising of the demands of the Left. They want to focus on rebuilding the social movement organizations and energizing social struggle through direct action for its claims.

This debate connects with the debate concerning the choices to be made in the face of neo-liberalism. Some seek to bring down capitalism here and now, while others argue that this is impossible and that the task of the Left is to set limits to the voracity of the dominant classes. This debate is heavilly influenced by a fatalism about changing the basic structures of global neoliberal domination. This acceptance of fashionable neo-liberal theses as irrefutable truths leads them to feel that there is nothing to be done but "open up the energy sector" in order to modernize it, to individualize the pension system "to overcome the social security crisis", "update" the educational curriculum (in a neoliberal mode) to be congruent with the new international situation,. Finally, there are those who simply advocate giving neo-liberalism a human face by developing policies for fighting poverty.

A second, more complex and sometimes coded debate goes on in the tension between direct action and legal struggle. As an armed force, the *Zapatistas* surprised even the federal government when they turned their energies toward an open and mass mobilization in support of the Law on Indigenous Rights and Culture, which sought to implement the basic points included in the San Andrés Agreement. While the Zapatista march and rallies were successful beyond anyone's expectations, this essentially legal strategy partially failed as Congress voted for a different law than the one demanded, but the Congress was deeply delegitimized. This strategic failure was not the result of using open and

legal struggle but of the collusion of the entire legislative apparatus against *zapatismo* to demonstrate Congressional unity in the face of an armed force that they felt could lead to balkanization or the creation of special legal status for ethnic groups above the national legal system. Similarly, the reaction of the Judiciary, which pitilessly threw out constitutional law suits brought by a number of indigenous communities against the new Law, did not prove that litigation itself was useless but rather confirmed the complete subordination of the Supreme Court to the schemes of the incumbent president. The failure of the legal strategy came out with a political victory for Zapatismo. Fox´s credibility began to shrink.

Another issue among the left revolves around the question of historical memory and responsibility for past crimes of state repression. The 1968 Committee on behalf of Democratic Freedom, has been demanding reform of the judicial system in order to end governmental impunity and to establish the responsibility of government officials at the highest level for the crime of genocide during the 'dirty war' that followed up the repressions of 1968 and 1971, with a meticulous reconstruction of historical events and careful judicial argument. Legal responsibility for these crimes against humanity has been established and such high-ranking figures as former President Luis Echeverría, Mario Moya, Luis De la Barrera and Miguel Nassar Haro have been indicted, taking advantage of the creation by President Fox of the FEMOSPP (Special Attorney for Past Social and Political Movements), but there are those who even now believe that it is naïve to trust a bourgeois legal system (as if that were the position of those supporting a legal struggle), that the Special Prosecutor itself is merely a distracting ploy and the indictments against the perpetrators of genocide worthless because "we know they won't do anything to them." The special prosecutor was not a gift from the government but a demand achieved by struggle from below that the new government of "democratic change" felt compelled to accept. In their fear that these legal proceedings will sow illusions about the state, these left critics fail to see the importance of historical memory and the fight against impunity as a struggle to build a obstacles to a new mass repression. (Legality is not a static space but a result of struggle). Furthermore, impunity is a political cancer that corrodes social life and reinforces the culture of authoritarianism in Mexico.

5. Are the internal divisions and contradictions more significant than the points of agreement?

The biggest tension in Mexico is between the party Left and the activist Left, between parties and social movements. But that distinction has blurred somewhat as many of these movements have been 'corporatized' by the PRD, others semi-corporatized by the state and/or the PRI, and surprisingly, by the PAN as well, which has sought to play its own games with the indigenous peoples and with agricultural workers' organizations.

The Mexican Left also suffers from a poorly-structured political life whereby the culture of charismatic leadership, rather than democratic processes, prevail. This type of leadership doesn't seek allies but followers who give total adherence to emblematic figures. This is the case with the leadership both of Cuauhtemoc Cárdenas and López Obrador within the PRD, but, unfortunately, also seems to be true in the case of Subcomandante Marcos. He has distanced himself from the ANIPA because it doesn't share all the views of the EZLN. As well, he exaggeratedly discredits some of those who were his 'consultants' at a given time but who possess and exercise their own beliefs regarding other conflicts and in other spheres.Though rhetorically there is an acceptance of the Zapatista notion of fighting for a world in which many worlds will fit, the world of the Left in Mexico has not so clearly accepted the goal of integrating this variety of voices in its practice. This will continue to be a strategic objective to be attained.

A second tension concerns the importance of participation in the electoral process. A wide range of social sectors believe participation in national, state and local elections is manifestly necessary and important. However, for the strongly indigenous and popular sectors, the 'excluded' as defined by Bartra, participation is not always seen as necessary or significant.

There is not much hope for the Left to unite around a single candidate, party or coalition for the 2006 elections. Given this fragmentation of the left along with the PRI's old mechanisms of corporate control and clientele politics, it is likely that the PRI will regain the presidency, though perhaps with an economic program of moderated neoliberalism in order to defuse the social tensions which have accumulated in both the countryside and the city.

The Left has to pay much more careful attention to the current correlation of forces and seek common ground, treating differences with much greater maturity. Failing this, the Left may be atomized, overtaken, decapitated or socially minimized in the coming period of history when its role is so crucial. The Mexican Left has to be more and different than both the "Left" party that exists today on the one hand and the variety of social movements on the other. It has to embrace both electoral and political action and social struggle in a combined, participatory, democratic and creative manner. **R**

Toronto – Mexico
January – March 2005

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Hogtown:

The Politics of Policing

Reviewed by Doug Williams

Canada, 2005
Directed by Min Sook Lee

Let me state at the outset that I'm in favor of really biased film documentaries. Have your say and let them howl! Michael Moore is a wildly successful champion of this approach; the creators of The Corporation and Supersize Me his fellow travelers.

This new bluntness of purpose is long overdue. For years, particularly on television, we have endured journalistic, "balanced and objective" documentaries, in which all sides are given equal time, with special indulgence for apologists and reactionaries. Result: the institutionalization of political ambivalence, which helps affirm the status quo, wear down progressive movements, obviate critics and demoralize the viewing public.

Min Sook Lee's beautifully biased documentary Hogtown:The Politics of Policing, suffers from the effects of this journalistic tradition, but manages to transcend them. Her film exemplifies the documentary sub-genre that says: "Give the scoundrels enough rope and they'll hang themselves." And hang themselves they do. Sort of.

At the Hot Docs premiere I attended, Lee explained to the audience that, at its inception, the film had been about how the 2003 municipal elections would alter the Toronto political map. But she realized that conflict was the key to good storytelling and focussed on the Metropolitan Toronto Police Department's request (spearheaded by Julian Fantino) for more funding. A budget shortfall of some $344 million, a lion's share of the budget already marked for policing, and statistics which show that Toronto crime rates are actually falling, do nothing to stop Chief Fantino from whining about his need for a helicopter "because all the other cities in Canada have one."

Lee shows the workings of the Toronto Police Services Board, a politically-divided body that acts as civilian monitor and governor of the metro police. Sparks fly between the Board's committed liberals and baldly pro-police councilors. Some critics have accused the film of "preaching to the converted". Indeed, the lines are clearly drawn and it's hard not to sympathize with the liberal members, most notably Councilor Pam McConnell, who stand their ground in the face of fierce opposition (and, they claim, outright intimidation).

The Rightists red-bait the liberals ("*Socialists!*") and are offended at any criticism of their beloved police. These guys are straight out of a Costa-Gavras movie - the mealy-mouthed sycophants, the slimy aristocrats and the porcine redneck commie-bashers - but it's not a movie, it's a documentary: these people are the real thing. What might have been boring procedural blossoms into a compelling look at the forces at war within the Board and the beleaguered folks who try, each day, to brake a determined Right's mad rush towards a police state.

As Lee said, the course the film ultimately took was decided midstream, and she hinted that cultural bureaucratic intransigence made production difficult. The film is good and she deserves real credit for the dogged work that yielded over 100 hours of video footage. The audience - with the exception of some surly late arrivals who formed a beefy phalanx across the back row - cheered and hissed at all the right moments.

But, for the politically-conscious viewer, Lee missed the bigger picture and a more interesting story: that of the resistible rise of Chief Julian Fantino. The Police Board battles in Hogtown could have been a chapter in the tale of a very ambitious politico whose influence may be far from over.

In keeping with the nightmare of the Rightist revolution of the past two decades, Fantino enjoyed unprecedented - almost daily - access to the media (I wrote to CityTV to suggest they rename themselves *FantinoVision*). The Chief played on his own sad-sack inarticulateness to invite sympathy for the police at every turn. The more egregious the police bungling - of unsolved crimes, gang violence, murdered children - the more visible was the avuncular Fantino. He posed as a little guy, pleaded for the public's help, bemoaned under-funding, and commented on an appalling array of political issues.

Fantino joined in a bad cop-bad cop *pas-de-deux* with police union head Craig Brommel. Brommel distinguished himself, early on, by initiating a campaign whereby support for a police union charity got you a nice sticker you could affix to your windshield, possibly rendering those with unsullied view of the road guilty by omission. As the police phoned thousands of residents soliciting funds, the atmosphere in Toronto became truly scary. Were there lists of those who refused? What was really going on here? It was an unprecedented campaign of intimidation.

Almost without opposition, the pair succeeded in legitimizing the police's right to express political views - an extraordinarily dangerous development, even by bourgeois civil standards. Brommel often "skirmished" publicly with The Chief, but it's indicative of the depth of their differences that Brommel's first question, in his new role as radio talk-show

host, to his first guest, Julian Fantino, was "So, when ya gonna run for mayor?"

But allegations of Mob ties and rampant police corruption helped bring the Fantino juggernaut to a halt - and Lee records the scandals' impact on the Police Board. The TPSB declined to renew the chief's contract. Not even a last-minute, suspiciously opportune arrest of a drug dealer at the CNE by Chief Fantino himself (with hardly a skeptical voice raised in the media) could save him.

Hogtown doesn't cover the bigger story, but it's a crowd-pleaser, nonetheless. Hungry for political films that reflect a growing anxiety about life in Toronto, the boisterous audience of students and film buffs gave the liberal TPSB councilors a standing ovation. The only exception was that squad of off-duty gentlemen in the back row, who sat stone-faced and silent, as the crowd cheered. **R**

Nice Jazz if You Can Get it

Review: Andrea Kuzmich with Bernie Senensky.
Ellington's Music Café, Toronto, April 23, 2005.

Schuster Gindin

Andrea Kuzmich doesn't look like a jazz singer – she is one. Harold Arlen, Rogers and Hart — she sings the definitive *My Funny Valentine*. Her carefully chosen repertoire of standards is delivered with a wit, intelligence and warmth that make the songs fresh and contemporary. How does she do that?

The label usually applies to singers who put on a retro evening gown and step onto the stage as if they are in a movie from the 40's. No matter how good the voice, the interpretation is derivative. It's the President's Choice version: Memories of Jazz. Kuzmich is not impersonating a jazz singer, she embodies one – she is authentic.

Kuzmich transcends an historic duality. In my experience, there have been two types of female vocalists singing jazz. One is cool, detached, sings scat and subjugates the lyrics as she imitates an instrument. Then there is the torch singer – when she sings that she's nothing without his love, and she'll die if he leaves her, you believe she will. Andrea projects an underlying strength within her musicality. She will not die if he doesn't love her – she can be immersed in the emotions of a song without drowning. She is sincere yet unsentimental. You hear the relish in her voice when she sings *come here, come here*. And when she tells you there's *a trick with a knife she's learning to do*, you believe her. You know she's experienced the range of emotions in love and sensual intimacy; she's not expecting to always be happy. But take it while you can get it, and savour every minute of it. She does.

She sings confidently, expansively and with an uncynical joy and intelligence. She is not showing off her vocal instrument, she is presenting the song. Her voice is engaging, clear with a slight husky timbre. Her harmonic sense is daring, adventurous. Her love of the lyrics she chooses is obvious in her articulation; she sings with an effortless enunciation which allows us to understand every word. Her sense of rhythm is inventive and complex, and always in the service of the song. She plays around with tempo in a meaningful way which enhances the lyric. For example, in *Nice Work If You Can Get It* the daydreamy descriptive lines are slow, then the refrain is double time. Rhythmically sure and melodically true, she can confidently pitch her note anywhere surrounding the one the composer wrote and make it intriguing, exciting, compelling. Arrangements are complex and intelligent but not belaboured; they have an easy, relaxed sophistication.

Bernie Senensky is a subtle, droll accompanist. He tosses in a hint of calliope *when it's a Barnum and Bailey world* comes up in ***Paper Moon***. A descending run suggests percolating in a charming song about coffee (mandatory — Ellington's is a coffee house, after all). Inventive, always with a light touch and a great sense of structure. His portable KORG organ was clearly a pleasure to play. Between a walking bass with his left hand which sounded like a real upright bass, his complex harmonic right hand, and her shaker for the percussion section, they could have been a quartet.

There is no recording – the bittersweet quality of live performance is that when it's over, it's gone. But they'll be back. Watch for the next time. **R**

Documentary About Jewish Left Veers Right:
A Review of *Not In My Name*

Matt Fodor

Canada, 2005
Directed by Igal Hecht

The promotional blurb for *Not In My Name* –a film that premiered at the Toronto Jewish Film Festival, May 13, 2005— states:

"Can a North American Jew criticize Israel? Are Israelis ready to challenge the occupation? This extensive exploration of left and right political activism is bound to provoke. Some progressive Jews call on Israel to stop speaking in their name. Complexities and contradictions. Jews against Jews. Families divided. Interspersed is disturbing footage of the aftermaths of bombings. It may make you angry. It may make you think."

With this dramatic promotion, filmmakers Igal Hecht and Talia Klein sought to appeal to the Left as an audience to their documentary narrative about anti-Zionist Canadian and American Jews. Indeed, the film opens with scenes from pro-Israel marches in Toronto and New York. Appearing on the margins of these pro-Israel marches are a host of different activists and political groups. Women Against the Occupation, for example, bravely hold signs that are critical of the occupation. We see them being heckled and screamed at by the marchers. One Zionist from New York proclaims that these women are supporting "animals" and that they are "just as bad as the Arabs." From there, the audience is introduced to a few young and articulate anti-Zionist Jews residing in Toronto. They speak of their debates with pro-Israel family members. They practice Jewish customs in a non-traditional way.

Despite its initial illusion of balanced coverage of opposing perspectives on Israel, *Not In My Name* sides with Israel and de-legitimizes the perspectives of those who seek to criticize it. The debate between supposedly the left-liberal Harvard law professor Alan Dershowitz (author of *The Case for Israel*) and the radical leftwing Norman Finkelstein (author of *The Holocaust Industry* and *Image and Reality of the Israel-Palestine Conflict*) is exemplary. The film tokenizes these authors as representatives of reasonable and unreasonable Left Jewish perspectives. Clips of Dershowitz giving his "progressive" case for Israel at the University of Toronto are juxtaposed with images from a Finkelstein interview set in his modest Brooklyn apartment. For this film, Dershowitz is clearly the debate's victor.

In one segment, Finkelstein discusses *The Holocaust Industry*'s argument that Zionists exploit the Nazi holocaust to shield legitimate criticism of the military abuses of Israeli state. From there, the narrative depicts Finkelstein problematizing the Zionist tendency to equate all criticism of Israel with "the new anti-Semitism" only to set him up for humiliation. After Finkelstein states "the idea of anti-Semitism in Canada is laughable," footage of the "worst anti-Semitic attacks in Toronto in decades" is flashed before audiences. The narrator conveniently points out that these anti-Semitic attacks in Canada occurred just after Finkelstein made his statement.

The film's de-legitimization of Finkelstein and support of Dershowtiz doesn't stop here. Asked by the interviewer for a reference to one of his claims about Dershowtiz, Finkelstein searches his library and isn't able to come up with anything. To further discredit Finkelstein's intellectual merit, the narrative jumps to a smug and supposedly reasonable Dershowitz, who states: "When he [Finkelstein] stops lying about me, I'll stop telling the truth about him."

Characteristic of general media distortions of the so-called radical Left elite, the film represents Finkelstein and his young anti-Zionist followers as privileged, comfortable, and middle-upper class citizens. They are depicted as fortunate diasporic Jews that can enjoy the soft benefits of metropolitan city life by ignoring the hard realities of Palestinian suicide-bombings and Jewish struggles to overcome global anti-Semitism.

Surprisingly, *Not In My Name*'s reductive caricature of Finkelstein and advocacy for Dershowtiz is recognized by a review of the film in the Right-wing *Jewish Tribune*. Here, Finkelstein is regarded as "a controversial historian who has written that the Holocaust has been exploited by the Jewish establishment. While the idea has certain merit, Hecht is more interested in the vendetta Finkelstein has been carrying on against Harvard University law professor Alan Dershowitz" (March 21, 2005). Indeed, Finkelstein's critique of Dershowitz is warranted. His "vendetta" against Dershowitz is inspired by a belief that Dershowitz's argument for Israel depends on a Joan Peters' *From Time Immemorial*, a widely discredited book that denies the existence of a native Palestinian population. Furthermore, Finkelstein's scholarly record challenges the film's intimation that this Jewish intellectual's work is complicit with the forces of anti-Semitism. His work on reparations for holocaust victims has been praised by Raul Hilberg, dean of historians of the Nazi holocaust (and author of *The Destruction of the European Jews*) and as well as a number of living Nazi camp victims. Because these details paint an image of Finkelstein and the radical Jewish left that goes against *Not In My Name*'s

political agenda, they are excluded.

Nevertheless, the film's attack on radical Left criticisms of Israel continues throughout. A pro-Palestinian alternative seder held in Toronto is juxtaposed with footage of a 2002 suicide bombing which has been dubbed as the "Passover Massacre." A young Jew at a left-Zionist summer camp in Ontario uses the term "colonialism" and "racism" to describe Israel during a brainstorm. A non-Jewish anti-Zionist activist in New York, tells us that "most labor leaders are Jewish" (not true) and "Zionists" (certainly, the AFL-CIO has been very pro-Israel).

The lesson of this film is clear: anti-Zionists and anti-Semitic extremists have hijacked the Left. Or, as Hecht tendentiously puts it: "My Left has been hijacked by extremists and by anti-Semites and by racists who have finally found an opportunity to de-legitimize and really attempt to destroy the state of Israel. Leftist Jewish filmmakers applaud them and praise them and put them on pedestals, as if they're gods, these Leftist Jews who choose to criticize Israel" (April 21, 2005). The lesson taught by Hecht: by criticizing Israel, the radical Jewish Left does not speak in his name. Dershowitz certainly does. **R**

Challenging the Anti-Union Agenda of The Blue Man Group:

An Open Letter to the Blue Man Group From a Member of the Community

Robin Breon

On March 31, 2005, Canadian Actors' Equity Association, the Toronto Musicians' Association (Local 149 of the American Federation of Musicians), and the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (Locals 58 and 822) announced the launch of a consumer boycott of Blue Man Group tickets and a website protesting (www.bluemanboycott.com) Blue Man Group's anti-union production tactics. Blue Man Group Productions is preparing to open a production in Toronto at the newly-renovated Panasonic Theatre (formerly the New Yorker Theatre). Blue Man Group producers have repeatedly ignored the unions attempts to negotiate contracts specifying base pay, benefits and defined working conditions with Canadian Actors' Equity Association (Equity), the Toronto Musicians' Association (TMA) and the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE) Locals 58 and 822. The joint consumer boycott in order to pressure the producers to negotiate fair and equitable contracts with artists and technicians

In response to this boycott, Blue Man Group Productions paid for two anti-union advertisements in the May 28, 2005 editions of *The Globe and Mail* and the *Toronto Star*. A critical response to these ads by Toronto theatre critic Robin Breon follows.

The full page ad that appeared in the *Toronto Star* and *The Globe and Mail* (28/05/05, "An Open Letter to the Community from Blue Man Group"), bought and paid for by the Blue Man Group, employs an anti-union agenda that is as old as the hills. Attack the leadership, attempt to divide the community and intimate your employees in order to avoid signing a union contract.

The ad specifically attacks "the theatrical union leadership's attempt to create controversy" because three Toronto unions, Actors Equity, the Musicians Union and IATSE (stage technicians), have exposed the Blue Man Group's attempt to conduct business outside of the generally accepted collective agreements these unions administer within the Toronto entertainment industry.

Quoting further from the ad, the Blue Man Group maintains they are "a unique organization" whose employees are "collaborative contributors" and that "no other business models support the kind of creative company that we have developed." Gee whiz! On the face of it, you'd think they're some kind of non-profit cooperative that regularly distributes profits equally among all of its employees rather than a multi-million dollar corporation that is bound and determined not to sign a collective agreement. The self-congratulatory tone in the ad goes on to say that Blue Man Group has "hired Canadian actors and musicians, a Canadian crew, as well as Canadian management and support staff."

Well congratulations, Blue Man Group! It has been almost three decades now since the bus and truck companies (originating mainly from the U.S.) have ceded this territory to home grown Canadian talent. It is very clever of Blue Man Group to recognize the trend. It is disturbing to note, however, that recently a number of touring companies emanating from the U.S. are increasingly →

non-union operations that are exploiting young talent and undermining wage and working conditions standards set by union contracts.

Christopher Blanchenot

Taking an egalitarian stance, Blue Man Group continues to observe that: "It is an employee's choice to join a union - not an employer's place to requires it" while going on to condemn the "theatrical union leadership's questionable rhetoric and coercive tactics." If there was ever an example of questionable rhetoric and coercive tactics, the ad in last Saturday's *Globe* and *Star* is a great example. If there is any pro-union sentiment among the 70 Canadians employed by Blue Man Group, they had better keep their opinions to themselves because their employer is clearly on record as being against any move toward unionization.

With one final pat on the back and a nod to "our history", Blue Man Group concludes that without any agreement "with a union or association" their organization has offered "competitive benefits" with "superior job security, conflict resolution, employee development, and health and safety committees in each of our theatres - and we do so by choice." Let's be clear about this last bit. Blue Man Group does so not "by choice" but because a standard and a protocol has been established over many years by the unions and employers involved in the arts and cultural heritage profession and because some of these protocols are now established in law and are recognized as standard jurisprudence.

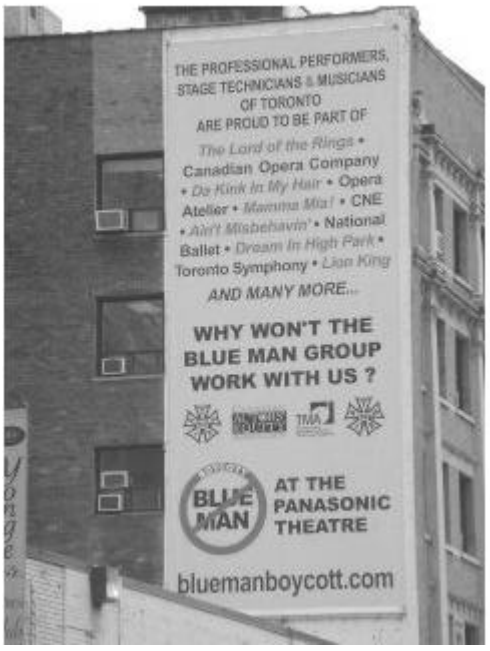
An interesting U.S. parallel to what is occurring in Toronto is in the city of Las Vegas. Las Vegas is a heavily unionized town whose economic lifeline is the hospitality industry and all of the attendant entertainment venues that go with it. Our own Canadian success story, Cirque du Soleil, has no less than four shows running concurrently in four separate venues in Las Vegas and all of them with unionized performers, musicians and technical personnel. There is, however, one hotel - Luxor Las Vegas - that has adamantly refused to provide a unionized work environment for its employees and subsequently is not patronized by many organizations that meet in Las Vegas for their for conventions and conferences. The entertainment offering at Hotel Luxor? Why, it's the Blue Man Group!

My own professional experience in Toronto has been mainly rooted in demonstrating for small, non-profit companies that have regularly employed equity actors and union musicians. I can attest unequivocally that "the theatrical union leadership" to which the Blue Man Group refers has always been fair, accommodating and supportive of our endeavours.

It is also just slightly ironic that the "theatrical union leadership" these Blue Men are so eager to pillory is a woman. Susan Wallace is executive director of Canadian Actors' Equity and has been leading a consumer boycott that has rapidly taken on a national focus as "the Wal-Mart of the arts". A demonstration and informational picket line is being planned for Blue Man Group's opening on June 19th in Toronto.

Strangely, the lengthy text of the Blue Man Group screed is anonymously signed, concluding simply with "Sincerely, Blue Man Group". I suggest that in the great Canadian tradition of debate and discussion, that the Blue Men come out of hiding, take off the greasepaint and meet the community personally. We'll rent a hall (union of course), put together a panel and invite the community out to hear both sides of the issue. Or are these Blue Men afraid that in doing so their true colours might be revealed? **R**

Robin Breon is a freelance arts and cultural writer and a member of the Canadian Theatre Critics Association. For more information on the struggles of unionized Canadian cultural producers against Blue Man Group, visit bluemanboycott.com



Christopher Blanchenot

Locked in Place:

State-Building and Late Industrialization in India

Raghu Krishnan

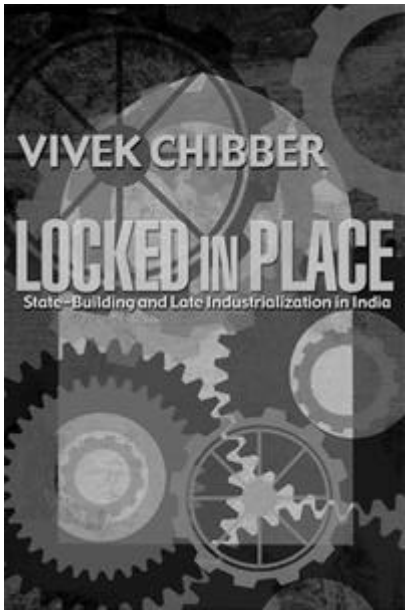
Vivek Chibber, Locked in Place: State-Building and Late Industrialization in India

(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

Given the dominance of neoliberalism today, it is an assumption in most quarters that state intervention in the economies of the post-war era was an utter fiasco. This argument is taken as even more self-evident in the case of the countries of the capitalist periphery or "Third World". We are told that state bureaucracies held back dynamic entrepreneurs (actual or aspiring capitalists) leading to the failure of these countries' "socialist" development projects. India is regularly cited as a classic example of this kind of failure. It is common to refer to these countries as "emerging economies", suggesting that they are all finally "emerging" from darkness into the holy light of neoliberalism, capitalism and civilization itself.

In response to these arguments about failed state-led development projects on the capitalist periphery, many on the Left have pointed to the example of South Korea, whose development record is unquestionably superior to that of India and most Third World countries. Their point hasn't been to make excuses for or romanticize the repressive, pro-American post-war regime in Seoul. However, they have argued that, far from being a neo-liberal success story, South Korea is a good example of successful state-led development, where the state was able to dominate the local capitalist class and steer it in the direction of industrialization and related investments in infrastructure and technology. They have attempted to "resurrect the state" in the face of the neo-liberal anti-statist onslaught.

Vivek Chibber thinks this is wrongheaded, but not because he has any sympathy for neo-liberal dogmas. He argues thatt India did not fail to develop because the country was too "socialist" and therefore held back the country's dynamic entrepreneurial elite. South Korea also did not have a free-wheeling capitalist class operating in



perfect conditions of competition and free trade. But he contends it is equally wrong to attribute it success to the existence of an obedient capitalist class at the mercy of an all-powerful developmental state. In both cases, he argues, it is essential to examine capitalist behaviour, and the precise balance of social forces determining this behaviour, to understand how the "developmental state" could succeed in one instance and fail in another.

Chibber's key argument is that, while the South Korean state did indeed play a critical role in Korea's industrialization, it did not do so by imposing a command economy on local capital, but rather, by entering into an alliance with it. By the mid-1960s, a path of export-led industrialization (ELI) opened up to the South Korean capitalist class thanks to the regional strategy adopted by Japanese capital, and thanks to the preferential treatment accorded to both countries by the USA in the context of the Cold War. The South Korean capitalist class was prepared to accept what Chibber calls "disciplinary planning" from the state, because it needed such discipline and coordination in order to take full advantage of the opportunities created under ELI.

No such option of ELI existed for India following Independence in 1947. Indeed, India did not figure prominently in the economic or political strategy of any big imperialist power and insofar as foreign (largely British and American) MNCs did enter India, they did so on entirely different terms than those of the Japanese in South Korea. They were interested only in carving out shares of the domestic Indian market and specifically excluding technology transfers and export schemes through Indian tie-ups and local suppliers. As well Western markets did not open to India in the same way that American and Japanese markets were open to the South Koreans. India therefore had little option but to adopt some form of industrialization through import-substitution (ISI), which local capitalists exploited to the full to secure subsidies and special treatment from the state while resisting interventionist efforts aimed at improving their productivity and steering their →

activities in the direction of overall development plans.

In one stroke, this argument undermines the widespread view on both countries' divergent paths. In the face of the neo-liberal onslaught, "statists" often point to South Korea as an example of what progress can be made when the state gives itself the necessary tools to impose a path of growth and development on the bourgeoisie. In fact, even after the Park coup in 1961 and subsequent moves towards greater efficiency in the administration, the state was unable to secure better economic results from an uncooperative capitalist class, as all concerned continued to be mired in the import-substitutions industrialization (ISI) model common to most of the developing world at the time. It was only when the option of ELI opened up later in the decade that the state and capitalists were able to work out a mutually satisfactory arrangement.

In the case of India, it is the neoliberals who have had a field day pointing to the abject failure of a rigid and corrupt bureaucracy to produce results in an economy where, moreover, the principal capitalist firms were reputed to be all in favour of state planning in the interests of the nation. In fact, it was capitalist intransigence (and the complicity of their supporters on the right of the Congress and in the bureaucracy) that prevented left-wing elements of the Nehru-led Congress Party from setting up more interventionist and disciplinary mechanisms. Indeed, Chibber argues, the ISI model made it rational for capitalists to strike such a defiant posture. While they had an interest in securing maximum resources from the state, they had no interest in abiding by any kind of disciplinary regime aimed at improving their productivity and directing their activities into specific areas. After all, they were shielded from the rigours of competition in foreign markets, and did not require a disciplinary state of the South Korean variety. They wanted full freedom to capture sectors and markets abandoned by British firms, and to enter new areas of their choosing.

It was therefore not a matter of, in one instance, a more effective and streamlined Korean state imposing a successful path of development on a "paper tiger" local capitalist class and, in the other, of a bureaucratic and corrupt Indian state holding back a dynamic entrepreneurial elite. In this way, Chibber punctures what he calls "the myth of the developmental bourgeoisie".

Indeed, Chibber's work is free of the schematic approach that takes the existence of a "progressive national bourgeoisie" (or wing thereof) as its starting point. He examines in detail the actual choices and internal dynamics of the capitalist classes of these two countries, and is able to relate them to general observations about capitalist behaviour. He lays out in great detail the jockeying of the leading lights of the Indian bourgeoisie in the final days of the freedom struggle against the British and in the years immediately following Independence.

He gives particular attention to the "Bombay Plan" put out by representatives of the leading industrial houses and often provided as proof of their openness to state planning and intervention. Such an interpretation is sorely misguided, Chibber argues: from the start the Plan was hostile to disciplinary planning and State involvement in profitable sectors of the economy, and the positive approach to "planning" was a crafty political manoeuvre made during the heady days of mass mobilization from the Quit India campaign (1942) through the post-War labour upsurge, to head off any further radicalization propelled by labour, the Congress Left (Congress Socialists) and the Communist Party (CPI). Proof of this is the bourgeoisie's rapid backtracking from even the tepid talk of "planning" immediately following Independence, the demobilization of labour and marginalization of the Congress Left.

Chibber's research has led him to pay almost exclusive attention to the industrial bourgeoisie. Based on the available empirical evidence, he has concluded that its choices and reactions are vital to understanding the policy options available to developmental states. Symmetrically, in relation to the Indian case, he has shown that it is the corresponding action and reaction of the industrial working class that ultimately determines what can or will happen to a given state's development project. This is quite a remarkable reconfirmation of the classical ap-

proach for "late developers" laid out by Trotsky in his famous "theory of permanent revolution": as in Russia in 1905 and 1917, due to combined and uneven development, the outcome of the clash between the industrial capitalists and proletariat, although both small in relative terms, shapes the overall political and social dynamic in these countries on the periphery of the main capitalist centres.

Chibber does not explicitly refer to the need for outright social revolution. But it emerges that short of such a revolution that overthrows the existing state and replaces it with institutions and mechanisms rooted in the ongoing mobilization and politicization of labour and its allies, capital will always enjoy what Chibber calls a "situational advantage" (its ability to use its social and personal influence within ruling parties and state institutions) and "structural power in the political economy" (as ultimate arbiter over whether investment and production take place or not). Among other things, this places the debate around state control of finance in a new light: quoting Keynes, Chibber points out that when business confidence is dropping, "trying to use finance as a lever […] is like pushing on a string." While capital clearly emerged victorious from its clash with labour in the 1940s, capital was still handicapped in public eyes by its disastrous performance during the War (hoarding, skyrocketing prices, etc.) and its ongoing reliance after Independence on state protection, supports and intelligence. State "planning" bodies were therefore trapped between an inability to impose any kind of policy direction on capitalists, and the ongoing need to play a significant role within the economy. While there is nothing sentimental about the book, a tragic flavour nonetheless surrounds the fate of individuals (such as Nehru himself) and state bodies caught in this trap – the more tragic since it was in many respects a trap of their own making. Chibber uses the sorry fate of the Indian Planning Commission to capture this untenable state of affairs.

While South Korea is an exception to the rule of post-war economic development in peripheral countries, India too has always been an anomaly of its own kind: with its larger domestic bourgeoisie and greater margin for manoeuvre in relation to the imperialist centres than the vast majority of Third World countries outside the "socialist" camp. Since India's decisive turn to liberalization in the early 1990s and the crisis that hit South Korea and much of East and Southeast Asia in 1997, it is worth examining whether the age of both South Korean and Indian "exceptionalism" is now behind us. Whatever their many respective faults, both countries were able to carve out some autonomy for development within a world order much more tolerant than the present one for such experiments in the countries of the periphery.

That being the case, Chibber is vague about what specific lessons can be drawn for the present from this important study of post-War India and South Korea. In both cases, while the capitalist classes have studiously avoided freeing themselves from state supports, in the era of neo-liberal globalization they have even less inclination and need to submit to any kind of disciplinary regime aimed at achieving economic development with social justice. Although Chibber ends on a rather upbeat note, pointing to the southern Indian state of Kerala as a possible model, given ever more entrenched imperialist opposition to technology transfer and protectionism in the countries of the periphery, it is not clear at all that labour mobilization in favour of a regime of disciplinary planning carried out *by a capitalist state within a capitalist economic framework* could lead to a durable alliance between state planners and capitalists or that such an alliance could post the kind of miraculous results seen in South Korea from the mid-1960s onwards.

In an essay in the 2005 *Socialist Register*, Chibber extrapolates from his book's core arguments and warns the Left against returning to a schematic vision in which it would once again pin its hopes for development and empowerment on a strategy oriented towards a hypothetical "progressive national bourgeoisie". In recent years, the crude and failed neo-liberal prescriptions of the "Washington Consensus" have fallen out of favour in a number of Third World countries, and masses of people are looking for alternatives, most notably in Latin America. In this context, Chibber's book can also be seen as a compass for understanding some of the major political questions of today's world, in addition to being a fascinating look into the key debates of the immediate post-war period. **R**

Raghu Krishnan lives in Toronto. He is a supporter of the Socialist Project.

Co-Management in Venezuela

Peter Graham

The 3rd Internacional Encuentro (International Meeting) in solidarity with Venezuela was organized this year around a series of workshops including issues such as agrarian reform, local citizen participation, housing, education, the role of the media in society, the role of Indigenous people and people of African descent, and the role of women in social change. These workshops took place in various cities throughout the country during the 13th to the 16th of April, the third anniversary of the attempted coup against President Hugo Chavez. Along with over a dozen international observers and several hundred Venezuelan workers, I was a delegate to a workshop in Caraboba on co-management and the role of workers in the management of companies, which was organized by the new Union Nacional de Trabajadores (UNT), Venezuela's main union federation.

I can't give you an easy definition of co-management. Although some people attending the conference used the terms co-management, self-management and workers' control interchangeably, most attendees viewed the concept of co-management as a more advanced idea than workers electing a representative onto a corporate board, but something less than workers' control or self-management, where workers control the means of production.

At the opening of the workshop, Marcela Maspero, a leader of the UNT, noted that within her federation there exist several differing viewpoints about co-management and that the conference would be a chance to hear them. While I was unable to ascertain the ins and outs of the four or more factions present, I witnessed an exciting, diverse, and free and open discussion.

From the beginning of the Bolivarian process, which was initiated with the election of President Hugo Chavez in 1998, there have been several factory occupations in Venezuela and the establishment in some places of some forms of worker cooperatives. Even though the idea co-management is part of the Venezuelan constitution, it is only in recent months that discussion about changing the relations of production in a more systematic way has begun. Indeed, the Venezuelan Labour Minister commented to the delegates, "We're between two waves, leaving the old model and entering a new one." One unionist described this time as the beginning of the "leap forward - to build the revolution within the revolution."

The workshop began with a speaker from Invepal, a paper-mill which has been occupied by its' work force. It was an appropriate way to launch the discussion because by being the most public example of co-management in Venezuela, Invepal is under a lot of scrutiny by the workers movement, which seems determined to draw a balance sheet from what has happened so far. (Readers interested in the history of Invepal occupation, should look at venezuelanalysis.com.)

The Venezuelan state owns 51% of Invepal's shares, and the co-op association owns 49%. The workers have the legal right to purchase the remaining shares. Under the law, neither the state nor the co-op can transfer their shares to a third party. While initially calling for the mill to be fully state-owned and under worker control, from the discussion in the workshop, there now seems to be growing support for having the ownership to be entirely under the control of the workers. Many delegates expressed concern about this, because according to Venezuelan law all co-ops are exempted from taxes. In other words, the state, or through it, the people, are contributing financial resources to help keep the mill in operation, but it is by no means certain the mill will contribute any of its profits back to the state. At the conclusion of the Caraboba workshop, the international delegates were given a tour of Invepal. As was obvious to many, the plant requires a lot of investment.

As I mentioned earlier, in addition to Invepal, there are a number of other firms under a form of workers' control in Venezuela. For example, co-operatives have been established in some hotels which had gone bankrupt. These are now owned entirely by workers. This is occurring throughout the service sector and newly established co-operatives are being used as a means to combat unemployment, with thousands of jobs being created every month.

But, many delegates at the conference made the observation that the capitalist system seems to be consuming these new co-ops. Many saw co-ops as creating new forms of exploitation while at the same time reproducing the capitalist hierarchy they were designed to replace. "Our co-management has nothing to do with the social democratic or Yugoslavia models. Those found new ways to exploit workers. Let's not let them [the capitalists] trick us," said one worker.

There are clearly some entrepreneurial aspects to co-ops, Michael Lebowitz, a well-known Marxist academic from Canada, stressed in a presentation on the experience self-management in Yugoslavia. Unless kept under control, there is a tendency to reproduce capitalist relations, both in the way the work process is organized and by the growth of inequality. As Lebowitz related, a popular saying in Yugoslavia about the inequities that developed within the working class was: "It's not

what you do, it's where you do it."

It was clear from the three day event that many union leaders believe the co-ops must be revolutionary; and to be revolutionary, the "popular sector" must be helped. Venezuela is a country where most people live in poverty and depend on the "informal" sector for their survival. It was repeatedly argued in the discussion, that co-management is not only about improving the standards of living of the workers in their respective place of employment, but for those in the surrounding neighbourhoods as well. Many existing experiments of co-management have tried to integrate the surrounding community by organizing regular neighbourhood meetings and by providing physical space for civil society groups and medical clinics in their facilities.

The problems of a co-op system of plant management can be clearly seen when one looks at Venezuela's state-owned electrical company, which is now experimenting with these ideas. Workers in such a co-op could unreasonably increase their incomes by raising rates, but a worker-controlled company must also take into consideration the consumers of electricity, the needs of all Venezuelan workers, ensuring there is an affordable and reliable supply.

From the discussion, it could be seen that deficiencies in the existing co-op model in some plants have led to some union hostility towards it. One union leader, referring to a recent, "Alo! Presidente!" television broadcast about co-ops, stated: "How dare they threaten us with co-ops… turning them into shock forces against the revolutionary movement." "Turning state companies into co-ops is another form of privatization. We're not trying to convert the workers and people into petty capitalists." ("Alo! Presidente!" is a weekly television programme where President Chavez speaks to the people about current problems.)

There were fears expressed by some delegates that the motives of some pro-management types in favour of co-ops and co-management, is to utilize

these structures to get rid of the unions. Workers at the conference saw unions as necessary for the revolutionary process, or at least this stage of it. The Invepal experience, where the union had been disbanded upon the plant's transformation into a co-op, increased these concerns. Everybody agreed that co-management couldn't undermine collective bargaining rights – and the right to strike must be ensured. The labour minister, when she spoke towards the conclusion of the conference, seemed to agree, declaring "unions, now more than ever before, have to be alert to violations of workers rights."

There was an assumption by many, that the trade unions, which have a vital role to play in the co-management process, must be democratic. And in order to build the movement for co-management, they said, it is necessary to have a strategy towards the large percentage of workers yet to be unionized. The retired, unemployed and others must be also part of the union.

Various speakers expressed the view that unions are vital in helping develop revolutionary class consciousness. Part of this education will be more formal, they said, such as in institutions to assist workers in learning administration and management skills; and factory reading circles where workers may learn about Marxism and debate the theoretical content of workers self-management. But the most important educational component was seen to be the experience of co-management itself, where people learn how to govern. This idea seemed quite different from what was presented by the presenter who spoke on the experience of co-management in Cuba, where workers – 45 years after the revolution – are apparently still going to school to learn how to co-manage.

While the absence of the state in co-ops was lamented by some, there also were fears also of the possibility that where the state takes over from capitalist owners, the state might at some point come to represent the interests of the capitalists. Many voices were critical of a kind of state capitalism developing, that is, a capitalism that disguises itself through the formation of state-owned companies. And there is also worry by many, that in co-managed firms, the state is increasingly deciding who the management will be. This has led to tension in some areas between some unions and the state.

One speaker posed a question for the audience: "In our revolution, do we have a problem with bureaucracy?" The crowd responded with a loud "Si." For some, the idea of co-management is seen as a way to confront elements of the bureaucracy in the state that are seen to be holding the revolution back. There was talk of an "alliance between the new and old bureaucrats," →

those who view the state as their "property". It was noted on a few occasions that some of these bureaucrats and managers wear red shirts and caps, the now ubiquitous emblems of the Bolivarian Revolution. There were ideas raised by some speakers about socializing power away from the authorities, and implementing co-management in all state owned institutions. Such calls for a revolutionary restructuring of both company and government were very popular. "Let them stop telling us the state is above society acting neutrally, blah, blah, blah. That's the fairy tale they told us in the Fourth Republic," said one union leader (The Fourth Republic denotes the regime before Chavez.)

The greatest response from the audience came when a union leader declared the "deepest experience of co-management was during the coup," when many workers in his area of Venezuela occupied their factories. "We were the state," he proclaimed. "After the coup we fell back." The feeling in the hall was electrifying. Workers rose to their feet to express approval. After this speech the conference room almost emptied. Despite repeated efforts by the organizers to usher workers back inside, many remained outside discussing the speech. Few people remained to hear the discussion on the topic of cultural workers which followed. This outpouring, spoke to the power workers experienced when they were forced to take things into their own hands during the coup and the bosses strike.

Several speakers expressed concern over "certain pressures and social classes developing within Chavism." For me –and I'm sure this is true for many observers of the Bolivarian Revolution — the constellation of forces in Chavez's political party (The Movement for the Fifth Republic, MVR) and in the military, who no doubt will have a voice in determining what ultimately will happen with co-management, remains opaque. And the workshop did not help me with this. There were some criticisms of the government, and even of President Chavez, but there was unanimity that this process of co-management could only move forward because of the space the Bolivarian Revolution has created for it.

With chants of "No co-management, no revolution" throughout the conference, the sentiment in the room was that co-management, in the words of one unionist, was "just a first step, that self-management is the real aim." "We want co-management for self-management," said another unionist. Speakers seemed split about how soon such a transition would take place. "We don't need co-management, we need worker's control," was one pole of the debate, and sentiments such as "There is not yet the necessary movement to accomplish what we want" and "We have to be cautious and make sure what is born is born well," marked it's opposite. The representative of Invepal said that there is a fully horizontal structure at the plant with no bosses, but details of this provided to the delegates, were limited. This may have had a role in prompting the many calls from delegates to ensure that co-management allows maximum participation at all levels, everywhere in the company.

In the interim, there is pressure among workers for the ideas of co-management to be extended into other spheres in society. Initially only a part of the state sector was up for official discussion, leaving aside the oil industry, for example. That is now on the table for discussion.

A representative of a thousand workers occupying and operating a plastics factory in Brazil said at the conference: "To hear the discussions and issues here, they're so far advanced. You're facing new problems that hopefully we'll face one day." I think everyone in the international delegation felt the same."

Many Venezuelans alternately call their revolutionary process Bolivarian socialism or 21st century socialism. Canadian socialists should study this process as it unfolds and give our solidarity to the Venezuelans, as they fight to move from capitalist management to workers management, and from a representative democracy to a participatory one. **R**

The following resolution was presented to the Canadian Labour Congress convention in June by the Vancouver and District Labour Council, who had sent a delegation of 18 members to Venezuela for the 3rd Internacional Encuentro. The resolution will now go before the CLC executive, where it will most likely be adopted.

SOLIDARITY WITH VENZUELA

WHEREAS the Chavez Government in Venezuela was elected in 1998 with 56% of the vote, and,

WHEREAS the legitimacy of this government has been reaffirmed by the recent national referendum, and,

WHEREAS the Oligarchy in Venezuela have repeatedly attempted to undermine the Government by means of attempted coup, sabotage of Venezuela's oil industry, capital strike and recall campaigns, now,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Canadian Labour Congress give its full support to the progressive trade unions and social movements in Venezuela who support the reform program of the Chavez government by:

1) developing effective links with the progressive trade unions and social movements in Venezuela
2) facilitating an exchange program between these organizations and the Canadian labour movement.

Stumbling from Algiers to Caracas:

An Introduction to Workers' Control

Peter Graham

With capitalist forces threatening to recapture power, the president told his supporters: "Certain people would like to turn the wheel backward, but I say to them, every time a danger arises, we shall speed up the revolutionary process." The revolutionary process did appear to be speeding along. State-owned grocery stores were opened to provide low-cost food to the majority of the population and newly organized worker-managed firms began producing food to supply these stores.

The president was Ben Bella, who came to power in 1962 as Algeria's post-colonial leader. Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez is repeating some of Bella's words and actions. Since coming to power, Chavez has slowly started to establish state-owned industries and has created openings for workers control. While social struggles are never repeated in the same way, looking at the successes and failures of Algeria's experience with workers control may help us to understand the challenges that lie ahead in Venezuela.

Workers' control

Beginning with the establishment of worker cooperatives during the short-lived Paris Commune of 1871, socialists have looked towards workers control as part of the revolutionary process. Since that time we've seen workers control in Russia during 1905 and again emerge for a period after 1917, in many European countries during and immediately following the First World War and Spain during the 1930's. During the second half of the 20th century workers control again made appearances in European countries. It was in this post-war period that workers control first came to the developing world, with occurrences in Iran, Latin America and North Africa.

In its initial occurrence, workers control - one of the most organic aspects of revolution - is usually a defensive move to maintain employment in extraordinary circumstances. After the overthrow of the Shah in Iran, for instance, many enterprises were closed as a result of economic turmoil and business owners fleeing the country. Workers filled this vacuum by occupying and operating the abandoned properties. Many working in enterprises still operated by private or state interests followed suit. Once seizing power in a workplace, workers have a vested interest in ensuring against their workplaces returning to the old model.

The degree of control exerted by workers can vary greatly. Some experiences have amounted to little more than electing directors, while others involve control over every aspect of what is produced and how this is accomplished. Workers may act through delegates, who can in practically all cases be recalled, or decisions can be made more directly. The production process and work hours are seldom changed. This is because experiences of workers control have usually been brief.

Workers control is more than just about controlling an enterprise, as it extends into the broader economy and the state. Though self-management may arise spontaneously, federations are often established with other self-managed firms where wider economic and political demands are formulated.

The Rise and Fall of the Algerian Model

When Algerian independence was won in 1962 after a long struggle against colonialism, workers seized companies abandoned by French owners. The new government soon accepted self-management, autogestion as it was called in Algeria, as an integral part of socialism. Decrees allowed the government to take over enterprises vacated by colonialist as well as those causing public disturbances in its method or management of production. This later device was used mainly by the Union Generale des Travailleurs Algeriens (UGTA), who by calling strikes in enterprises could force their nationalization. The state retained ownership of self-managed workplaces, but perpetual management was ceded to the workers.

The workers and their union played the most important organizational role in establishing self-management, acting as a lever to drive the Algerian government in the direction of autogestion. Viewing self-management as necessary to prevent a new Algerian bourgeoisie from controlling the economy and as a means for combating unemployment, the union also saw the political content of autogestion as creating a workers' democracy that could be used as a force against authoritarian tendencies in the ruling party. The union was instrumental in publicizing government decrees and monitoring company directors for abuse of their positions.

There were different degrees of workers control in Algeria, but in most firms a general assembly of workers elected a council, which in turn appointed a workers management committee. After initial elections →

few enterprises ever had subsequent votes, so that in many cases a small slate governed the workplace indefinitely. The organization of production stayed largely the same as it had under the colonial regime, leaving old patterns and hierarchies intact.

Although the union condemned firms that were no more than profit sharing schemes, workers were motivated by opportunities to improve their living conditions. Many worker and state controlled firms deemed their revenues insufficient for increasing wages. Even successful firms were reluctant to give workers a share of profits. In one instance, the director of a self-managed laundry called police to prevent the workers from forcibly redistributing profits amongst themselves.

From the get go, companies considered to have 'national importance" were restricted from self-management. Despite calls of the Congress of Petro Workers for autogestion in oil, workers control was never allowed there. Restrictions on autogestion grew as it came to be seen as a threat to the hegemony of the state. The ruling party, the National Liberation Front (FLN), castigated the union when it defended its right to strike in a "socialist country."

Less than a year after independence the state tried to take over the UGTA. Upon stacking the union's convention and installing a government-dominated leadership, a statement was issued declaring that the unionists would now "mobilize their energy, devotion and technical skill in the service of the nation through the rapid and conscientious execution of the orders of the party." This split the new official leadership from the base of the union. At the next union congress, two years later, the workers were able to elect a new leadership.


"Here's a good one- a worker in Shanghai asks, What about self-management?"

Even before the government's assault on the UGTA, offensives had been launched against opposition parties, including the Revolutionary Socialist Party and the Algerian Communist Party, which were banned. Many tendencies within the ruling party itself were suppressed. But Algerian President Ben Bella went too far in his attempt to consolidate power and undermined his own base and legitimacy. Instead of increasing his power over the military, the military unseated him. The military continued the process of regime consolidation and many unionists began to suffer arrest. Having long favoured traditional nationalization over autogestion, the army turned the largest companies under autogestion into state enterprises, with only the ability to consult retained by workers.

Overwhelmed by a torrent of assaults from the government, the leaders of the union became more and more reluctant to criticize the state and were to become as resented as their government-backed predecessors. Soon all the leaders of the revolt against French colonialism were in exile, prison or hiding. The elected union leadership was again ejected in a congress packed by the government. Once again, it was reiterated that the task of unions was to support the government: "The leading bodies of the trade unions have been under the influence of elements imbued with out-of-date principles based on a narrow concern with wages and working conditions and class struggle," said the General-Secretary of the FLN.

Problems of the Algerian Model

The case of Algeria is one of many instances where workers control has been defeated by struggles for power at the centre of the state and party. Even "progressive" states can find the expansion of democracy inherent to workers control as antithetical to their quest for a monopoly on power, raising tensions with the expansion of control and democracy at the centre, a particularly with any authoritarian tendencies in the party. When self-management first appeared in Algeria, state-controlled enterprises may not have been a viable option due to the country's limited and unreliable bureaucratic infrastructure. As the state bureaucracy grew in size and confidence, it sought to extend its influence. In Venezuela as well, it appears that the inadequacy of the state's machinery precludes centralization along a Soviet model for the present.

The developing indigenous bourgeoisie was a major cause of autogestion's demise in Algeria, not through subverting the government as the entrenched capitalists have attempted to do in Venezuela, but by influencing it. Although there may be

some sectors of Venezuelan capital seeking to influence the government, more relevant to co-management in Venezuela is the parallel to the new grouping of bureaucrats who came to the fore in Algeria.

By controlling broader economic policy and the relations between self-managed enterprises, this strata - largely French-trained administrators from the old regime - were able to expand its power while simultaneously sabotaging the self-managed sector. This development was not unknown at the time: "This new form of capitalism has created a new social division; one which corresponds to its bureaucratic complexion. This is the separation between those who actually produce and those who manage."

For workers control to succeed, it has to advance to encompass a larger and larger percentage of the economy. This didn't happen in Algeria. An employment survey found 44,000 workers in state firms, 40,000 in private and only 15,000 engaged in self-management. Self-managed workplaces usually involved small enterprises and represented only a small portion of industrial production. Stunted by strong competition with the private sector, both foreign and domestic, self-managed firms were at a competitive disadvantage against their well-capitalized competitors.

This disparity increased as large-scale private investment was sought for state firms, while self-managed firms had difficulty getting access to any credit at all. With limited access to credit, Algerian self-managed firms were unable to upgrade their production equipment. Venezuela, with its major banks in private hands, will have to act soon to avoid a credit blacklist for self-managed firms, especially in this period, where self-managed and private firms compete.

Algerian technical and administrative staffs were much better paid in the private sector than in the state and worker-managed sectors, creating another competitive disadvantage for self-managed firms. Invepal in Venezuela has experienced this problem. While workers waited for production to restart, the administrative staff left the company. While rival sectors of production are inevitable as Venezuela begins its process of co-management, workers must pressure the state to lessen these disadvantages.

As much as 80% of Algerians were peasants and unemployed was high. The government was able to play this

grouping off against the autogestionaires, contributing to the workers isolation. To peasants, the workers in autogestion were depicted as a privileged stratum. The workers were unable to counteract this image, especially since autogestion enterprises could be reluctant to allow new members. Seasonal workers for instance, a large portion of the agricultural workforce, were excluded from the benefits of autogestion. Clearly, Venezuelan workers must continue engaging with their neighbourhoods and expand efforts to work with activists in the barrios, where Venezuela's poor majority live.

While the Algerian military cemented the demise of self-management – even contracting an American firm to study reorganizing the socialist sector - it remains to be seen what views the Venezuelan military have. During the Portuguese revolution, where worker-controlled enterprises were also created, the military - who had sparked the revolution in the first place – also helped set the path to capitalist restoration.

Towards Workers Control of a New Type?

Looking at the Algerian experience, it is clear that participatory workplaces depend on a participatory government. Algeria, where the FLN had a monopoly on institutional politics, is quite different than Venezuela. Though having a ruling President, there is no coherent ruling party, allowing competing organizations and masses of people to influence the outcome. While there was an apparent lack of democracy in the FLN, there is plenty of room to operate inside the Chavista movement.

Workers control has generally occurred in periods of revolutionary upsurge, with either the old ruling class or new regimes of oppression capturing initiative within a few years. Venezuela's move to co-management is unique; having begun to move towards co-management after the Chavez government had been in power for six years.

Co-management seems to perfectly fit the state's present interests. While not yet prepared to confiscate private means of production, workers and the state are able to both have a better financial picture of these companies, while gaining the necessary knowledge and experience to run these companies should control of the means of production change. But the hostility of private capital demands that the Chavez government either retreat or take offensive action.

It can't be predicted when the situation will move from seizing companies who have economically failed to those that are profitable. In Chile, the Allende government was pressured by a wave of factory seizures to accelerate its controlled and phased strategy for socialism. Although the dynamics are different, it's likely that Chavez will experience some disequilibrium to his phased strategy for socialism. Venezuelans must ensure that workers management continues its advance. **R**

Marxist Theory in Practise

Julie

"Ideology" was a term introduced to me in a grade eleven English class by Mr. Gamble, the best teacher I ever had. Ideology has been churning in my brain since I first read Marx in high school.

I was the kind of student who doodled in notebooks while the teachers talked. I was a "C" student who just managed to scrape by without putting any effort into things. School was a joke. I thought I had read everything worthwhile already. The local librarian confirmed this when I was twelve. She said that I was too old for children's classics. "Teen literature" left me unimpressed and I was not ready for the adult section. I remember coming home from the library in tears. My mother told me that the librarian was wrong. Mom had tons of good books for me to read. "Try Sydney Sheldon" she said with maternal confidence. For a few months, I took y Mom's advice and read Sydney Sheldon, Danielle Steele and my dad's favourite author: Wilbur Smith. I read every book in our house until I felt like I'd reached the end of literature. All of this was horribly depressing. So, I doodled in notebooks and cut myself with razor blades. I thought the deep purple bruises on my skin looked pretty.

Things got a little better for me when I took an English class with Mr. Gamble in grade 11. The first novel we read in class was *Cabbage Town*. It was about the depression in Canada and the struggle of workers to unionize. Reading this book, the world began to make sense to me. The world was so totally unfair! People were being exploited. Why had I never noticed this before? It wasn't just me who felt cast aside. How could I ever have been selfish enough to be depressed? Mr Gamble assigned 15-minute presentations on something that interested us in the book. I chose Karl Marx. I immersed myself in a bunch of "Marx for dummies" books. I read as much as I could of *Das Capital*. My fifteen-minute presentation turned into a week-long session of me explaining Hegel and Marx and surplus value and everything that I felt was important to my mostly bored classmates. I was at the top of my game, on top of the world. Reading Marx signalled my first manic episode.

My enthusiasm for all things socialist was hard to curb, tied in as it was to mania. I volunteered at the local anarchist bookstore, and history class became a new favourite. I read an entire text-book on art history and decided that this was how I would figure out the problems of the world. Obviously, political art was the solution. We just had to figure out how commodification corrupted it and then start to imagine an alternative aesthetic. My fellow bookstore workers made fun of my Marxist way of understanding the world, implied that I was a hypocrite, and told me that going to University to study art history was so "bourgeois."

Feeling guilty about my privilege, I stopped working at the bookstore and started to do volunteer work with teenagers with physical and mental disabilities. I also had a part time job at a dry-cleaning shop. At the cleaners, I worked the cash, tagged dirty clothes and chatted with the customers, most who lived in the upscale neighbourhood where the store was located. Occasionally, I had to nip downstairs and pick up items that hadn't been brought up yet. The basement of the dry cleaners was full of steam and heavy fumes. All the men were shirtless and the women's clothes were soaked in sweat. It was cramped and dark and very difficult to breathe. One year in the summer it was voted the hottest place in the city to work. The people who worked in the basement were not allowed to come to the front of the store where I worked. They had to leave through the back door, because they were so dirty and smelly from all their work. "No good for the customers to see" my boss would say, as he reprimanded their occasional foray upstairs to the peanut dispensing machine.

At a work Christmas party, we had a gift exchange, a secret Santa thing. We were not supposed to spend more than five dollars on our gifts. I can't remember who I had to buy for or what I bought them, but I do remember what I received: a china doll with a face that smiled and cried at the same time A woman named Shelly who worked as a presser had pulled my name out of the hat, and given me this gift. Shelly had been through drug abuse and physical abuse by boyfriends. She was one of those tired looking people that you could tell wasn't going to last long at that job, or any job. She was too thin, too tired, too used up to be only 22 years old. Shelly barely knew me, but she had somehow understood how I felt. After the Christmas party, I wandered into my comfortable middle class home and thought about Shelly returning to a small and dingy apartment somewhere. What did giving that doll to me mean to her? We were all paid $5.50 or so an hour. Was this doll worth a whole days work in that sweaty, smelly basement? Maybe fifty dollars didn't mean the same thing to Shelly as it did to me. Maybe it meant nothing at all and that was the point.

In the years following my work at the dry-cleaners, I took some wrong turns. I forgot all about Karl Marx and how socialism could help me fix the world. I couldn't even convince my Dad to vote NDP when Ed Broadbent was the head of the party! All of my friends confused Karl with Groucho (" you know, what's-his-name- Marx—that guy that Julie likes)". The bookstore people seemed pretentious and Mr. Gamble wasn't my teacher anymore. One of my friend's parents recommended that I read Ayn Rand's *Atlas Shrugged*. I was really confused.

But I did manage to get good marks, thanks to Mr. Gamble pointing out some basics about writing. So off I went to University to study art history. Instead of art, I discovered the rest of the world and rarely went to class. I worked in bars at night and had wonderful conversations with interesting people. I got mediocre marks, but what did I care? Life was about meeting different kinds of people, with different backgrounds and seeing if you could connect. And the great thing I discovered is you always can, as long as you have a common language. So I got rid of all my wordiness and tried to talk and act like the people in the bar.

I lost my waning enthusiasm for art history one night after getting plastered with Dana Williams and Glenna Matoushe, two well-known native artists. They told me that the theories I was learning at University had nothing to do with them and their struggles. I still have a canvas that we painted together. On top of the abstract background, I wrote the word "art." Dana painted a big "F" in front of it.

I barely graduated from university without the sense of having learned anything. I wandered from job to crappy job, from breakdown to breakdown. It's 10 years later now and I'm back to school and ready to learn with a lot of work and life experience behind me. This time I'm studying communications. I've come to terms with my diagnosis as bipolar. But University is a strange place without the benefit of drugs and the perspective of bar patrons. There's no one to tell me if it's all bullshit. And Karl Marx doesn't really live here. It seems that Marx is regularly misunderstood or forgotten by most people working here. I wish it weren't so. All of the smart professors in the world should work to make the world equal for everyone in it. Statements like this get laughed at by most people –especially academics— as "too simple." I don' think they are simple at all. "Equality" should be the starting point for all the theoretical problems that academicstry to solve. Marx understood this. I miss Marx and I want him back in my life. I want to find a place for us to hang out and work on some really big problems like how to make television democratic and how to unionize and radicalize waitresses. I want to think about the world to change the world. **R**

Remembering Gunder Frank

Mel Watkins

Andre Gunder Frank was one of life's originals, intellectually and politically. The world is a less interesting place without him.

Nowadays most political economists are not economists. Gunder, already trained in Keynesian economics, did graduate work in economics at the University of Chicago, even being subjected to monetarism under Milton Friedman, and unusually, and to his everlasting credit, became a radical economist cum political economist.

His first widespread fame came with his seminal article article on "The Development of Underdevelopment" in Monthly Review in 1966, It established Gunder as one of the founders of the dependency theory that was a major intellectual advance of the 1960s. Gunder drew on his Latin American experience and wrote to inform students of the then-called Third World - though always insisting on the importance of historical factors, of time and place, in defining dependency. It was read by some of us in Canada and helped me in my slow but sure move leftward from liberal Keynesian economics.

Its direct application to Canada, as a rich developed country, was admittedly problematic. Cy Gonick, the University of Manitoba economist who had founded Canadian Dimension as a kind of Monthly Review North, said Canada already had, in Innis's staple theory, its own indigenous dependency theory. But Frank was helpful in exposing the down side of dependent capitalism - making Canada what Kari Levitt called the richest industrialized underdeveloped country and setting the stage for the transition from the old political economy of Innis and his school to the new political economy of neo-Innis and Marx.

Frank was even more relevant in helping us to understand the dark side of capitalism as I learned when I began to work in the 1970s on how resource development by the settler economy had contributed to the underdevelopment of the economies of aboriginal peoples. Frank's denunciation of dual economy versions of modernization theory, which was part of his 1966 article. underlay the critique by the Dene in the Northwest Territories before the Berger Inquiry a decade later of what a big-inch gas pipeline would do them.

All of which was as it should be, since when Gunder published that seminal 1966 article he was a visiting professor at Sir George Williams University in Montreal →

(now part of Concordia.) Gunder claimed his reward was that he was denied re-entry into the U.S. until 1979. For his readers, for activists, it was a price worth paying.

The times changed and so did Gunder. His scholarly writings - which, it must be said, are simply prodigious - moved from dependency theory to world-historical political economy.He saw his own work and that of others as Eurocentric. The opening sentence in his 1988 review in Studies in Political Economy of Tom Naylor's Canada in the European Age 1453-1919 reads "Both the author and his book are enormously erudite and enlightening" - high praise from someone who rationed it carefully - but he then goes on to wish that Naylor would rewrite the book in world-historical terms. Neither Naylor nor anyone else has taken up that challenge.

As an economic historian, I confess that few things have given me more pleasure than Gunder's deflating of the pompous Eurocentric Harvard economic historian David Landes, puffed up with conventional wisdom about the wealth and poverty of nations, in a public debate.a few years ago. (Google Frank and you'll find it.) Gunder was on to the dark side of globalization well before that dreadful word came tripping and slithering off everyone's tongue.

It must be said that Gunder had his own dark side. Like others of us, perhaps more so than most, he had his personal demons. Sometimes it showed in a kind of mischievousness that could be very exasperting to behold. He was known to fly into invited lectures and conferences and announce that he had nothing to say though he would entertain questions. Once I arrived at an international conference in New Zealand where Gunder was the keynote speaker. On his arrival he told the organizers that they should ask Watkins to give the keynote address rather than him. I reminded Gunder that he had always taken the position that he understood capitalism much better than I, a mere Canadianist, did, so how could he let me be the keynote speaker at such an important conference. He allowed that he would have to do it.

We all deal with our anxieties in our own way. Perhaps Gunder just needed someone to tell him that he was the better, the best - which he was - and assure him that he could and must go on.

A decade or so ago when Gunder was first diagnosed with cancer, he flew to Toronto for treatment. I visited him often in the hospital. The prognosis was not good. I was struck by how candid and courageous Gunder was, keen to get back to his writing. He beat the odds for longer than might be expected.

He was a tough and committed intellectual to his core. I had not seen him for a while and was saddened to hear of his death. **R**

Dependency Theory and Canadian Capitalism

Gregory Albo

The theory of dependency that formed in the 1960s played a more crucial role than any other conceptual framework in developing a critique of the world market supportive of liberation and anti-capitalist movements in Africa and Latin America. The general theme of dependency theory can be captured by the idea that the economic surplus that is generated in post-colonial societies is appropriated by foreign interests and domestic elites in a way that reinforces a pattern of economic backwardness. Andre Gunder Frank's writings, in particular, emphasized the way that metropolitan countries imposed export-oriented capitalist development in basic commodity production that actively produced underdevelopment in satellite countries.

Andre Gunder Frank

This theme cut across his most significant books: *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America* (1969); *Latin America: Underdevelopment or Revolution* (1970); *World Accumulation, 1492-1789* (1978); and *Crisis in the World Economy* (1980).

Dependency theory (and Frank himself with his frequent visits to Canada and his long stay in Toronto later in his life) came to play a not insignificant role in Canada and Quebec as well. Indeed, dependency theory provided a key theoretical orientation to the 'left-nationalist' politics that formed the 1970s Waffle Movement in Canada. It was contended that Canadian dependency in the world market was conditioned by a truncated industrial structure over-reliant on raw materials exports at the expense of a developed manufacturing sector, extensive foreign ownership dominating an independent national capitalist class, and the role of political satellite to a

dominant US imperial centre. Robert Laxer's *Canada, Ltd.: The Political Economy of Dependency (*1973), Cy Gonick's *Inflation or Depression* (1975), Wally Clements, *Continental Corporate Power (1977)*, and Pierre Fournier's *The Quebec Establishment* (1978) being some of the best known texts applying aspects of dependency theory to Canada.

The dependency theory that Gunder Frank helped develop, and that many turned toward in the examination of the particularities of Canadian capitalism, did much to cut through the cant of liberal modernization theory. Apart from neoliberals, no one would dare say today that capitalism will inevitably foster economic development or democratic independence. These theories still have much to offer in the way of critique of contemporary neoliberal globalization. It should be no surprise that many dependency theorists have been at the centre of anti-globalization resistance, both in Canada and beyond. But an adequate theory of the class dynamics of capitalism and the forces of imperialism shaping the inequalities of the world market has had to move beyond dependency theory. So, too, have the political strategies for re-forming a viable socialist politics and a programme for democratic sovereignty in today's complex world order. **R**

Greg Albo teaches political economy at York University.

Letters

My oldest child is five now, and in less than two months will graduate from senior kindergarten, (heaven help me if I mistakenly say kindergarten). To help him and to evolve us into the latest generation, our family finally bought our first computer. It didn't take me long to realize that I had to master the mouse before the computer would co-operate. I also realize the mouse in computer terms is aptly named.

In high school and then in college it was literally beat into our heads that in order to be successful you had to be honest, work hard and believe in that famous line, "build a better mouse trap and the world will beat a path to your door". I believe big businesses love the line about building a better mouse-trap. You can work hard, keep the assembly lines moving, dream about building that better mouse trap……..the only problem with this whole concept is big business keeps building a better mouse. When Mr. Ford developed the assembly line a new generation of work began. Supervisors were deemed a necessary evil and thus the worker-supervisor struggle began in earnest over on time delivery of parts and assembled vehicles. Workers were given quotas that were expected to be met; excuses or downtime were not acceptable, thus a newer game of cat and mouse began. As the years went by, new inventions were introduced, in fact they were demanded by supervisors with the only goal to reduce manual labour and increase production. Fast forward to the modern day and big business truly has mastered the latest mouse. By clicking the mouse a supervisor has instant access to the production numbers of each individual. Uptime, downtime, break time, all the time recorded automatically for accountability. The entire human element has been taken out of the thought process. I spend more time arguing production numbers with supervisors who only see the final tally as the latest God to worship. The units of production per employee have steadily increased ever since that first assembly line was created. Lean production has taken over the auto industry with the line workers suffering the greatest casualties. Supervisors keep telling me that robots don't call in sick or take holidays. The last time I checked they don't buy vehicles or auto parts either.

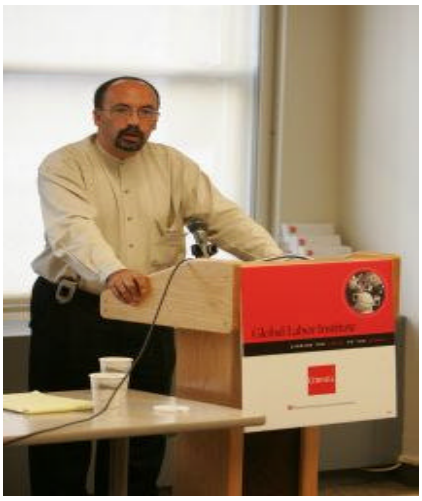
The mouse was an interesting choice to name a modern piece of technology. I'm guessing snake and rat were close seconds.

Mike Van Boekel

The writer is a full time union representative at Cami Automotive in Ingersoll. He also farms in Oxford County and has been battling mice and rats at both locations for 15 years.

The Crisis in American Labour: What's Missing from the Debate

An evening with Bill Fletcher Jr



Wednesday evening, July 13th
7:00 PM
Steelworkers Hall, 25 Cecil Street, Toronto

Fletcher is a veteran trade union and socialist activist and educator in the US, with an intimate knowledge of the American labour movement. He currently heads the TransAfrica Forum

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