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#13 SEPTEMBER / OCTOBER 2006 \$3.00

RELAY

A SOCIALIST PROJECT REVIEW



cities issue

WAR ON BLACK YOUTH * LEBANON
ORGANIZING IN THE SOMALI COMMUNITY * POLICING
CAW CONVENTION * HIPSTER URBANISM

MC



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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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The Socialist Project does not propose an easy politics for defeating capitalism or claim a ready alternative to take its place. We oppose capitalism out of necessity and support the resistance of others out of solidarity. This resistance creates spaces of hope, and an activist hope is the first step to discovering a new socialist politics. Through the struggles of that politics – struggles informed by collective analysis and reflection – alternatives to capitalism will emerge. Such anti-capitalist struggles, we believe, must develop a viable working class politics, and be informed by democratic struggles against racial, sexist and homophobic oppressions, and in support of the national self-determination of the many peoples of the world. In Canada and the world today, there is an imperative for the Left to begin a sustained process of reflection, struggle and organizational regroupment and experimentation. Neither capitalism nor neoliberalism will fade from the political landscape based on the momentum of their own contradictions and without the Left developing new political capacities. We encourage those who share this assessment to meet, debate and begin to make a contribution to a renewed socialist project in your union, school and community. For more information on the Socialist Project check our web-site at www.socialistproject.ca or e-mail us at info@socialistproject.ca.

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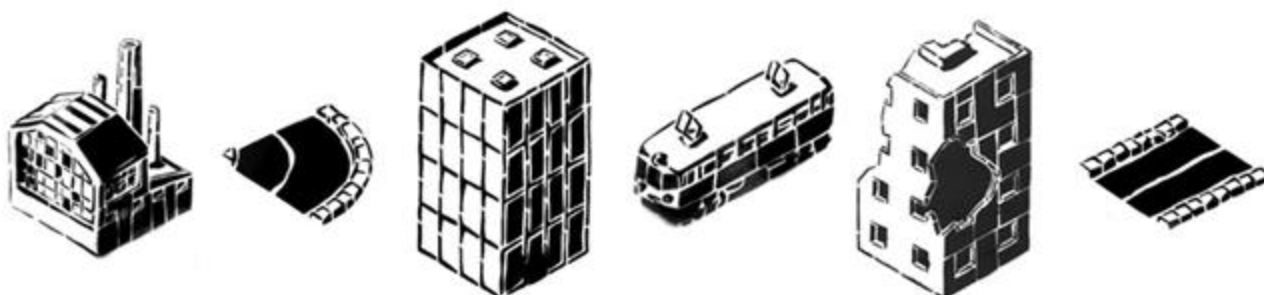
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The Current Middle East Crisis

Herman Rosenfeld

If you read the business press and watch TV news, you'd think that the ongoing Middle East crisis simply reflects Israel's attempt to protect itself against forces that are bent on its destruction.

But the reality is quite different. Israel's actions in both Lebanon and Gaza reflected a clear agenda: to weaken and discredit those who challenge its military dominance and question its legitimacy as an ethnically-based state; to demonstrate its power in a way that terrorizes civilians, (using tactics similar to the blitzkrieg of WW2 Germany and the U.S. "shock and awe" bombing in Iraq); to undermine and destroy legitimate Palestinian negotiating partners, particularly those with a secular and popular base; to create a continuing presence in Lebanon and make it increasingly difficult for a sovereign Palestinian government to exist in Gaza, West Bank and East Jerusalem.

The current war did not start with the kidnapping of Israeli soldiers by Hamas and Hezbollah: it began with Israel's vicious and malicious boycott of the elected Palestinian government and the murder of the Palestinian family on the Mediterranean beach. It is also clear that Israel's massive bombing campaign in Lebanon was planned in advance, with the counsel of the Bush administration.

The Hezbollah kidnapping of Israeli soldiers was carried out as a way of forcing a prisoner exchange with Israel (not the first time this has happened). This was used by Israel as an excuse to carry out its long-planned attack. Its out of control response betrayed its true intentions. True, the rocket attacks on Israel's cities by Hezbollah unfairly targeted innocent civilians and were inexcusable, but these attacks began after Israel bombed Lebanon and increased in response to the Israeli incursions. As well, any objective accounting of dead and wounded demonstrate the unequal nature of Israel's aggressive actions.

Israel's unwillingness to negotiate a long-term end to its ongoing occupation is the fundamental and lingering cause of the current crisis. Israel did everything in its power to undermine the authority of Arafat's Palestinian Authority once it became clear that the PA would not accept Israeli bantustanization of the West Bank, Gaza and Jerusalem; it refused to recognize the authority of the elected Hamas government, working with its close allies in Washington to boycott services and needed popular resources, even when efforts to create a consensus for a two-state solution were being forged within the Israeli prison system.

Israel's unrelenting attacks on Lebanon make it impossible to regularize its relationship with its northern neighbour. Hezbollah is part of the Lebanese political framework – a legitimate political party and social movement, regardless of its religious fundamentalism and refusal to accept the legitimacy of Israel. By refusing to bargain a prisoner release and responding to the provocation of the kidnapping of its soldiers, Israel strengthened support within Lebanon of Hezbollah and exposed its inability to destroy that movement – short of a total occupation of Lebanon. Indeed, today, most Lebanese and most Arabs see Hezbollah as part of the resistance to Israeli aggression.

The Canadian government of Stephen Harper has cravenly fallen into line with George Bush's unwavering support of Israel's policies. This is part of a growing trend of identification with the American administration's strategic goals in the Middle East, demonstrated by the increased military commitment to the *pacification* of Afghanistan. The lack of genuine opposition to Israel's aggression by the opposition parties during the crisis was extremely disappointing, and the backtracking of the Liberals from calls from their own MP's to negotiate with Hezbollah continues their refusal to challenge Harper. Jack Layton needs to build on his newly-found opposition to Harper's Afghanistan mission and extend it to the entire Middle East policy of the Conservative government.

The current situation can only be relieved by the total withdrawal of Israeli troops from Lebanon and Gaza and an end to Israeli boycotts and attacks; the release of elected Palestinian legislators, the unconditional recognition of the Palestinian's elected government and the freeing of all funds and resources legitimately belonging to it; and the end to the rocket attacks on Israel from Lebanese territory.

This is impossible without a larger process of peace negotiations in the area. Central to this, is Israel's unconditional withdrawal from all territories occupied during the 1967 war and after, the dismantling of all settlements, and recognition of a sovereign Palestinian government in Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Israel's principal backer, the United States, must withdraw its unconditional support in order to make this happen.

Here in Canada, we must work with the Canadian peace movement to step up its pressure on the Harper government to end its support for Israel and pressure the opposition parties to demarcate from the Tories. We should also force Harper to withdraw the repressive anti-terrorist laws that threaten our democratic rights and single-out Muslim people in this country. **R**

Can This Be The Last Arab-Israeli War?

Saeed Rahnema

Of all the gruesome and tragic photos of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, one clip remains in my mind; that of an injured boy lying on the ruin of what was his house, raising his hand showing a “V” sign to the camera. Since the boy is so young he may not know what “victory” means. But, seeing his face and his gesture, there is a good chance that he will grow to be an enemy of Israel, maybe a Hezbollah fighter. One wonders why the Israeli leaders do not see this. They should know better than anyone else the processes that have turned tiny organizations like Hamas and Hezbollah into mass-based, powerful political and military forces.



Marchers in Toronto's August 12th demonstration against the Israeli invasion of Lebanon

While Israel was prompted by two separate hostage-takings in Gaza and in southern Lebanon, Israel waged a war as part of its strategy of bringing two regime changes in the region, in Palestine and in Lebanon, which has been longer in planning. And this is part of a larger scheme – in accordance with U.S. strategy – of major regime changes in Syria and Iran. Fully aware of this strategy, and having their own agendas, Iran and Syria, in turn, are directly or indirectly creating problems for Israel and the USA. Syria wants back its occupied territory in the Golan, and the fundamentalist regime in Iran, under its present military/security-backed government of Ahmadinejad, plays the Palestinian card and anti-Zionist rhetoric to divert attention from its internal politics and problems. It used its influence on Hezbollah to fight a proxy war, partly to offset the danger of Iran being attacked by Israel or the United States.

In the past Israel had to deal with Arab states with regular armies. It is now confronted with mass-based irregular armies which are harder to fight. Popular guerrilla armies can easily merge with the population and make it difficult to target them without harming the civilian population, damaging neighbourhoods and infrastructure, and provoking angry public reaction, both domestically and internationally.

The Israeli army, however, has not been bothered about the consequences of this war and counted on the unconditional support of the United States, quiescence of the European governments and the global media. Hence, it waged its hugely disproportionate military operations in Lebanon and in Gaza. A fully-functioning and prosperous country, Lebanon, which had marvelously rebuilt its cities after the disastrous civil war, was reduced to rubble by massive bombardments. Lebanon's infrastructure is gone, hundreds lay dead and hundreds of thousands have been made homeless and turned into refugees. The economy has been brought to a complete standstill. Hezbollah, in turn, using its primitive missiles and mortars, shelled northern Israeli cities and towns and killing civilians, giving more excuses to the Israelis to pound Lebanon.

ISRAELI-U.S. GOALS THWARTED

Israel had the privilege and the world's only superpower's permission to continue the war until it reached the short-term military goal of defeating Hezbollah, and then sign a ceasefire of convenience. It failed to do that. In the process, it further destabilized the region, endangered its own long-term security, and emboldened further religious movements and fundamentalists. One should not forget that the growth of both of these radical religious organizations is partly a product of Israel's hard-line policies of not ending the occupation of the West Bank, Gaza, Golan Heights, and Shebaa Farms, and not moving toward a negotiated settlement and peace.

It is interesting to note that in 2005, Hezbollah, in reaction to the UN demand for disarmament, had in fact agreed to disarm, provided that Israel ended the occupation of Shebaa Farms. (Hezbollah Deputy Leader, Sheikh Naim Kassem interview with *Financial Times*, cited in *Ha'arezt*, 09/04/2005). Hezbollah could in the process become a sort of Hezbollah Lite, merging into Lebanese politics, and gradually losing its influence regardless of the pressures of the Iranians and Syrians. In the same manner, Hamas could have become Hamas Lite had Israel and the U.S. accepted it as a legitimate elected government. Just before the kidnapping

of the Israeli soldier by its military wing (and the prior Israeli kidnappings in Gaza), the political wing of Hamas was favourably considering the joint Hamas-Fatah Palestinian prisoners' demand of recognizing Israel.

There is no doubt that both Iran and Syria have used and are using Hezbollah to further their own agenda. But if the Israeli occupation of Arab lands ends, prisoners are released, and peace negotiations resume between Israel and its neighbours, Hezbollah would have little reason to continue its military engagement with Israel.

CONFLICTS UNRESOLVED

Far from reaching a resolution, a new era of conflicts and confrontations and regime change is being entered into. Chaos, turmoil and suffering in the Middle East – the inevitable results of complete failure of U.S. foreign policies in the region – rising Islamic fundamentalism, Israeli militarism and fundamentalism and increased political suppression, and extremism have created an explosive and dangerous situation.

It is hard to keep hopes for a peaceful solution amidst increased hostilities and polarization. However, those of us who believe that peace is the only choice and that it is possible to achieve, cannot give up. Anti-war demonstrations throughout the world, including in Tel-Aviv, keep this hope alive.

Militarism will not bring lasting security to Israel, nor will religious fundamentalism bring an independent democratic Palestinian or Lebanese state. Without the support of progressive Israelis, no government in Israel would willingly sign a peace treaty. And without a strong peace movement among Palestinians and Arabs apart from their support of the resistance to occupation, the Israeli peace movement cannot achieve much. The Jewish community and pro-Israelis in the West also need to show some sympathy to the sufferings and the inhuman treatment of the other side. Without strong support for peace among Jews outside Israel, the regional movements for peace will not succeed.

Most importantly, without a major anti-war movement in the West and without pressuring right-wing governments, the Bush administration in the U.S. and its allies, including the present Harper government in Canada, will continue their one-sided policy. The Arab and Muslim communities in the West need to do a better public relations job to gain more support and sympathy of the public and fight racism, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. While they rally against Israeli occupation, they should not become cheer-leaders for Islamic radicals, who are seeking an Iranian-style Islamic theocratic regime, with its disastrous consequences for Iran, the region and the world.

One of the most astonishing aspects of this Sixth Arab-Israeli war is that it crystallized the naked global racial/religious divide. No other war in recent times has so clearly displayed the depth of racial division around the world. Western governments, including the present Conservative government in Canada, all expressed sympathy for Israel. Even the killing of eight Canadians by Israeli bombs did not shake Stephen Harper's one-sided sympathy. The global media did not even call this a war. It termed it, instead, a "Middle East Crisis," or "Israeli Campaign." This polarized communities

around the world. This is what extremists on both sides favour.

TALLYING THE CEASEFIRE

Although Israel agreed to the ceasefire, it was not the ceasefire of convenience it had hoped for. The Israeli government realized that it had grossly miscalculated the strength of Hezbollah. First it had hoped that massive bombardments would defeat Hezbollah from the air – it did not. Then it assumed sending troops into Lebanon would do the job – this was not accomplished either. The world outrage over the bombardments of Lebanon, particularly the killings in Qana, forced even the Americans to expedite the ceasefire process. Severe and growing casualties of Israeli troops in Lebanon, and Israeli civilians in northern Israel, as a result of failure of the IDF to silence Hezbollah rockets, forced Israel to accept the ceasefire and UNSC Resolution 1701 before "the job was done."

The Sixth Arab-Israeli war had many winners and losers. Any tally must begin from the people who were killed and their surviving families, and then those who lost their homes and sources of income. Over eleven hundred Lebanese were killed, hundreds of thousands lost their houses and businesses, and a million refugees generated. On the Israeli side, hundreds were killed and injured and their houses and businesses damaged.

Politically, the Israeli government of Olmert and the IDF were big losers. Israel could neither get back its two kidnapped soldiers, nor disarm Hezbollah or kill its leaders. The neo-conservatives in the U.S. (and their allies in Canada), who had hoped this proxy war would send a strong message to Iran's Islamic regime, were big losers too. Their militarist strategy for re-shaping the Middle East to U.S. and Israeli plans received another blow.

Obviously, the big winner of this war was Hezbollah, who now displays its effective presence in Southern Lebanon and distributes cash to people who lost their houses, gaining more support as the saviour of Lebanon and the Arab world. Hezbollah will not be disarmed, and it will be a far more powerful force in Lebanese politics and society. This has made the Islamists in the region, and their often short-sighted supporters in the West happy. The Iranian regime is the other big winner of the Lebanon war. Iran has become even more defiant in the pursuit of its nuclear ambitions, possibly paving the way for further catastrophic confrontations and invasions in the region. The Iranian people, political dissidents inside Iran and in prisons, women, workers and youth, are another of the losers of the war. They are already subjected to more brutality and suppression in Iran.

Despite their gains, however, Hezbollah and Iran also need to take in a few hard lessons. While Israel was pounding Hezbollah, the Arab and the majority-Muslim countries were almost totally silent. Not just the conservative governments who disliked and distrusted Hezbollah's radicalism, but also the ordinary people. Even in Palestine, other than few street demonstrations, there were no mass uprisings and the radical government of Hamas also stayed relatively silent.

No doubt Shia-Sunni sectarianism had something to do with this dismal reaction. In an interview with an Iranian paper, Abdallah Safi-eddin, the Hezbollah Ambassador to Iran, was asked about

this silence and he diplomatically tried to dodge the question. The Iranian regime must be fearful that in case of a war with Iran, it may still be standing alone.

The war had collateral damage for several parties as well, among them being the Israeli Labour party. With a prominent union leader at its helm, many had hoped that the Labour party would

Israel, are pre-conditions for peace and cooperation in the region.

This peace process in turn relates to the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict – the Palestinian issue. Despite past failures of the whole array of peace negotiations, from Madrid to Oslo I and II, to Wye River, Sharm el-Sheikh I and II, Camp David II and Taba, there are components in these negotiations and

memoranda that can be used as the basis for a permanent peaceful solution between the two sides. These include, ending of the occupation and enclosures of the West Bank and Gaza, with minor agreed-upon land swaps based on the 1967 border and dismantling of illegal settlements, creation of a viable Palestinian state, Jerusalem as capital of both Israel (in the west) and Palestine (in the east), an agreed-upon resolution of the right of return of Palestinians, and the formal recognition of Israel by the Palestinian state. The informal Geneva Accord of 2003 points to the fact that actual peace between Israelis and Palestinians is not just an illusion. The question is really if parties involved want it.

As for Iran, although not a party in Arab-Israeli conflicts, but because of connections with Hezbollah and Hamas, and because it has emerged as a most



play an alternative role vis-à-vis Kadima Party's disastrous policy of unilateralism. Amir Peretz, however, grabbed the defense ministry and when the war started he made sure that the world sees him to be as militarist as any other Israeli hawk.

NECESSARY NEGOTIATIONS

Now with ceasefire temporarily in place, all sides of the conflict are pondering the lessons of this latest Arab-Israeli war. With no attempts at resolving the root causes of the problem, this ceasefire will be fragile and will not achieve much. More than ever, direct negotiations and involvement in the peace process on different fronts seem to be the only solutions to the conflicts in the Middle East.

On the Lebanese/Israeli front, the negotiations should involve ending of occupation of the Shebaa Farms, release of Lebanese prisoners and return of the Israeli hostages, disarming of Hezbollah and its merger as militia with and under the command of Lebanese army.

Since no permanent solution in Lebanon is possible without resolving Syria/Israeli conflict, direct negotiations with Syrians, for ending the occupation of the Golan Heights and its return to Syria, and Syrian guarantees for the security and recognition of

influential regional power, it should be involved in direct negotiations to help ease Afghanistan and Iraq problems, and above all find a peaceful solution for its nuclear ambitions. Despite its defiance, the regime has announced that everything, including enrichment programs are open for negotiations. The Iranian government says negotiations first, while the Bush administration says stop enrichment and then negotiate.

No excuse should be given to the oppressive regime in Iran to seek confrontation with the U.S. to divert attention from the serious internal political and economic problems it is facing. Sanctions and invasions will only strengthen the regime and add to the suffering of the Iranian people.

The question is whether the Bush and Blair administrations, the Israeli government and their neo-conservative supporters, including the present Conservative Canadian government, are going to take into consideration the tragic lessons of Afghanistan, Iraq and Lebanon. Or will they want to try their chances in yet another and a much bigger confrontation, and add Iran to their list of disastrous foreign policy failures? **R**

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Neoliberal Urbanism

and the New Canadian City

Greg Albo

Neoliberal globalization has played itself out in the politics of cities over and over again. The internationalization of financial markets, the geographical restructuring of manufacturing, and the consumer debt fuelling retail markets have formed the economic and physical landscapes of neoliberal urbanism. Policy initiatives seeking to privatize water, electricity and healthcare in addition to cuts to social housing and welfare rates have also been political battles over the quality of life in Canadian cities. The resulting crisis of Canadian cities has led to persistent calls by mayors from St. John's to Victoria for a 'new deal.'

CITIES AND CAPITAL ACCUMULATION

As one of the most open economies in the world, it should come as no surprise that globalization has had an acute impact upon Canadian cities. Capitalist development pits urbanization and growth of the world market in a direct and contradictory relationship. This can be seen in Karl Marx's theory of capital accumulation. The opening section of *Capital* points to the tension. The commodity (think any commodity) as a use-value is always worked up from specific resources by the concrete labour of workers situated and embedded in particular communities and social relations. But the commodity as an exchange-value is universal and capitalists seek out the entire world market for its sale. Marx directly links local production and world trade: '*The production of commodities and their circulation in its developed form, namely trade, form the historic presuppositions under which capital arises.*' The particular and the universal, the local and the global, are different dimensions of the capitalist world market.

The dynamics of this capital accumulation directly shape the built and natural environments of the city. The accumulation of capital leads to an intensification and concentration of the forces of production. The mass of fixed capital put in motion by any individual worker increases in its organic mass, technical complexity and value. Simple craft and factory production aided by steam power dominated the 19th century. Today we have robotized, nuclear and fossil-fuel powered, 24 hour-a-day, just-in-time factories consuming acre upon acre of industrial parks. The growth in the army of business professionals defending capitalist interests at every turn has been even more explosive. The former small low-rise offices for lawyers, accountants and bankers have become the massive complexes of office towers for the business bureaucracies that dominate the skyline of the capitalist city.

The growing organizational complexity of capital depends, in

turn, upon a parallel process of 'statification.' As the fixed capital required for factories and offices becomes increasingly intricate, and the technical labour required to staff these facilities also grows, government support for infrastructure, research and development, technical training, financing and regulatory intervention becomes necessary. Government revenues and resources become progressively more mobilized in the interests of accumulating capital for the owners and senior bureaucrats of corporations. This is what is meant by the idea that the accumulation of capital is always a production of space as a built environment. Capitalism is always a process of urbanization. David Harvey has argued that '*it is through urbanization that the surpluses are mobilized, produced, absorbed, and appropriated and that it is through urban decay and social degradation that the surpluses are devalued and destroyed.*'

The politics of urban development occupies a central spot on the political agenda the world over. Cities have come to reflect key contradictions of neoliberalism and capitalist development. The recent UN-Habitat, *State of the World's Cities 2006-07*, reveals social processes of world historical proportions. Half of the world's population of 6.5 billion now lives in cities, and is predicted to grow to 5 billion out of global population of 8.1 billion by 2030. There will soon be 500 cities of over 1 million people. An astonishing one in three persons live in urban slums, as migration from rural areas actually begins to lead to a population decline of people living outside cities. Tokyo is now an urban conglomeration of some 35 million, and it is joined by meta-cities of over 10 million on every continent. The largest urban growth is in Africa and Asia, but North America is – and will remain – the most urbanized continent in the world. Canada is more urbanized than the U.S., with the Greater Toronto Area being Canada's meta-city, with a population often tallied at 8 million. The surrounding urban environment spreads hundreds of kilometres from Oshawa to Fort Erie.

If it is difficult to draw out the implications of the raw numbers on urbanism, the social dimensions of urbanization are also demanding. For example, some 4 million people worldwide die every year from urban air pollution. The ecological implications of waste treatment, garbage, water usage and energy needs are under strain and causing major problems everywhere. The failings of urban transportation and development planning are causing a plague of traffic gridlock for cities everywhere. Commuting times for increasing numbers of workers is extending the length of the work-day back to the worst days of industrial capitalism. Key centres of economic power are also emerging, such as Mumbai, Sao

Paolo and Shanghai in finance and Bangalore and Seoul in information technologies. These reflect new dynamics of global capitalism. Canadian cities are implicated in these same social pressures and economic imperatives.

NEOLIBERAL URBANISM IN CANADA

Neoliberal urbanism in Canada can, in some respects, be dated back to the 1970s when the Federal government abandoned playing any direct role in urban development. Housing policy was re-oriented to increased support for private sector mortgage markets and developers. The provinces also began to push for merger of cities and rationalization of municipal services at this time, hoping to bolster the attractiveness of cities for business investment. Through the 1980s industrial restructuring drastically increased the population dependent on welfare. Manufacturing deindustrialization both downsized workplaces and shifted many industrial plants to lower-tax, lower-unionized 'greenfield' sites and ex-urban regions. At the same time, financialization led to a huge expansion of the speculative activities and bureaucracies associated with the banking and insurance sectors. With the North American free trade agreements and the increasing inter-penetration of Canadian and U.S. capital, these economic developments intensified. Neoliberalism consolidated as the unquestioned policy framework through the 1990s.

The downloading of service provision and responsibilities from federal and provincial governments needs to be singled out. It has been an important policy and administrative tactic for advancing neoliberal objectives. Downloading has served as an administrative mechanism to move from universal non-market provision of social services, with pressure to advance to higher standards, toward market provided services that are both priced and delivered at lower standards for the average user. The objectives of service downloading has been: the lowering of taxes; the withdrawal of government from the market as much as possible; the lowering of public sector employment and wages; the addition of pressure on private sector wages; and the creation of new profit opportunities for business.

Under Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, the federal government began to limit fiscal transfers to the provinces in terms of equalization payments but also the funding of key social programmes. The downloading process accelerated under the Liberals in the mid-1990s with the new Canada Health and Social Transfer (CHST). The CHST radically cut the level of transfers, and in particular withdrew the federal government from directly funding of many social programmes and influencing provincial government expenditures in these policy areas. In turn, provincial governments, freed from federal fiscal constraints and facing increased costs and less revenue, offloaded more programmes and funding responsibilities on to the municipalities. This included their support to cities and their municipal affairs departments.

Fiscal support to the cities thus failed to match the new demands on city budgets. Cities in Canada are largely dependent upon the property tax system, and have little access to other sources of revenue and none to the major sources of revenue in the income and

corporate tax systems. The property tax system, under pressures from business and the logic of neoliberalism, has also seen a decline on business levies and an increase on residential property taxes. By adding to the regressivity of the overall tax system, neoliberals in Canada have sought to fuel a property tax revolt at the municipal level.

The result of downloading and the policy driven tax constraints is that municipal governments have faced intense funding problems. In particular, they have lacked the funds for welfare, transportation, schools and emergency services. In other words, neoliberal policies strapped cities for cash in the main areas of local spending in Canada. The result is that cities have really been hit with mounting problems everywhere you look: lagging infrastructure maintenance; public transit deterioration; crowded schools with facilities shutdown at the same time; community services trimmed; and social polarisation due to cuts to welfare, disability services and social housing. At the same time, police budgets have increased in terms of personnel, new weapons and hardware, and surveillance. This has pushed cities into a fiscal crisis, re-creating aspects of the fiscal disaster of the 1930s in Canada, when services were last downloaded so thoroughly to municipalities.

The fiscal bind and deteriorating urban infrastructure led former Prime Minister Paul Martin to propose a 'new deal for cities.' This was hardly bold stuff: it included some minor sharing of gas tax revenue to support public transport, and recycling →



commitments to social housing and public infrastructure. The quick ouster of Martin from office earlier this year let even these modest proposals fall to the side. The Conservatives under Prime Minister Stephen Harper have said nothing about urban issues, seeing this in strict constitutionalist terms as a matter of provincial jurisdiction. Their voter basis has, moreover, partly been built on an anti-urban agenda. The Conservatives are the central political force maintaining the anti-democratic rural biases of the electoral system at the federal and provincial levels where they have their greatest voting strength. Indeed, the main urban initiative of the Conservatives is law and order, particularly expanding the security state as they seek to align Canadian policy with U.S. views on 'homeland security.' But they also show a willingness to supply fiscal support for the spectacle architecture projects and international events such as the world fair and Olympics that have the backing of business elites, notably in Vancouver and Toronto.

NEOLIBERALISM IN TORONTO

As Canada's largest city, the planning and social disaster of neoliberal urbanism has struck Toronto particularly hard. The cuts of the federal Liberal government were matched by the hard right policies of the Harris Conservatives in the mid to late 1990s at the provincial level. Under Harris, municipalities had to assume greater responsibility for public transit, local airports, libraries, policing, water and sewage, social housing and culture and parks policies. The Tories also pushed through a deregulation of rent controls and urban planning controls over development. While cutting tax rates for the highest earners, Harris also cut welfare rates by more than 21 percent in 1995 and then froze them for the rest of his term and that of his successor – Ernie Eves. While Premier Dalton McGuinty has lifted the freeze, welfare assistance has barely improved. The cuts to social assistance and shelter allowances have directly impacted on cities and their responsibilities for administering many of these programmes. The Ontario government cuts to child care had a similar impact in downloading wage costs, resource centres and special needs programmes onto local governments. Both levels of government have extensively downloaded immigration and settlement costs to cities, a particularly heavy burden for Toronto where the largest portion of immigrants settle. Finally, McGuinty has off-loaded provincial responsibilities of some \$380 million to restore municipal employee pensions and \$870 million for upgrading water supplies on to the municipalities.

An urban fiscal crisis resulting from policy downloading has been a central characteristic of neoliberalism. But it would be wrong to see neoliberal urbanism as imposed on Toronto from other levels of government. Local ruling classes and many municipal politicians, particularly in the political coalition that came together to support both the megacity merger and Mayor Mel Lastman, have favoured neoliberal restructuring. They consistently supported contracting out of public sector work, privatization of city corporations, more market friendly development and rental markets, and a reorientation of city policies toward boosting inter-urban competitive capacities, particularly for financial and real estate interests. This new ruling bloc in Toronto politics successfully broke

the old reform coalition that had dominated city government since the 1960s. Indeed, what remains of the old reform group on city council – mainly representing wards in the inner city core – has accommodated itself to the neoliberal city.

Toronto developments have been characteristic of 'world class cities'. The concentration of wealth on Bay Street and a few residential enclaves has been stunning. It is matched by the spiral of decline that continues everywhere else. From the first 'megacity' Mayor Mel Lastman to the current Mayor David Miller, the list of the failures of the City of Toronto is the same and just as endless: homelessness and the lack of social housing; the endless delays to waterfront revitalization and closing of the Island Airport; one architectural horror followed by another from the deregulation of urban planning guidelines; the lack of a mass transit plan and continual cuts to services; the continued shelving of plans to revitalize union station; the deterioration of city schools and recreational facilities; the fiasco of shipping Toronto garbage to Michigan; the lack of a social policy to address the racialization of poverty; the ever-increasing budgets for a police force that is ever less democratically accountable; and many others.

Several central issues over the term of the Miller council illustrate the grip of neoliberal urbanism. First, although Miller and NDP councillors have been able to deflect some of the rants of neoliberal fundamentalists, the policing pole of addressing social problems is still dominating social policy expenditures. This can be seen in the criminalization of the homeless around City Hall under Miller's watch, and the empty exercise of counting the homeless in order to downplay the levels and needs. Similarly, in dealing with gun violence, it is police budgets that are growing while recreational services in Jane and Finch, Malvern, and others continue to stagnate.

Second, municipal economic policy remains focused on the 'competitive city' model. Public sector cuts are still on the city agenda to maintain promises to keep taxes low. Moreover, Miller supported the steady shift from commercial to residential taxes over the next 10-15 years in order to keep competitive with the 905 district and rival international cities. The waiving of zoning and density requirements in city plans to support real estate developers and bolster urban revitalization, particularly for the housing needs of professionals in the inner city, has become standard fare. Since releasing its major report in 2003, the Toronto City Summit Alliance has acted as key advisory body to the city on various 'progressive' measures to promote Toronto's international competitiveness. The most publicized has been the idea of Toronto as a 'creative city', promoting its social and ethnic diversity and concentration of media and arts, as a means to aid the tourist, high-tech and financial sectors.

Third, the reorganization of governance of Toronto has strengthened executive power at the expense of developing local democracy and popular planning. Miller's initial effort to widen public input into city budgetary policy surely counts as one of the briefest and most minimal attempts at local democracy on record. At the prodding of political elites and the Toronto ruling bloc, he has supported steps in the opposite direction. Even with some amendments, the new City of Toronto Act coming into effect in the fall follows the 'strong mayor' model of concentrating

power in an executive at the expense of council and public input. Similarly, the Waterfront Development Corporation, which is to have oversight of the massive plans for development along Lake Ontario, is an appointed board dominated by business interests, and little transparency over its decision-making or operations.

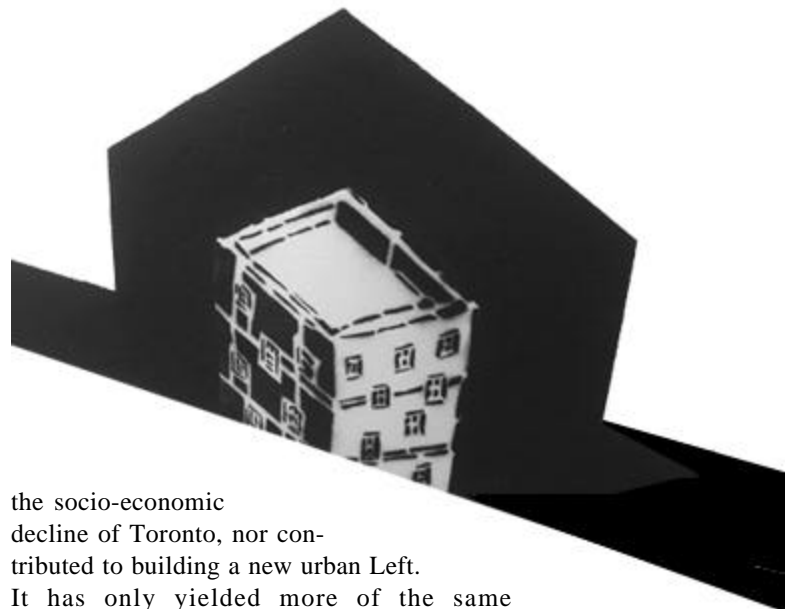
THE LOCAL LEFT

Capitalist development concentrates populations, production and power in cities. This has always posed strategic dilemmas for the Left. The Marxian tradition has focused on the Paris Commune, workers' councils and developing organizational capacities. It has sought the reorganization and decentralization of economic activity. But it has also argued that building up local bases of power and administration had to be connected to projects to transform national state power and to internationalize political struggles and alliances against the world capitalist market. The French writer Henri Lefebvre saw building a new urban space as central to revolutionary prospects: *'A revolution that does not produce a new space has not realized its full potential; indeed it has failed in that it has not changed life itself, but has merely changed ideological superstructures, institutions or political apparatuses.'* An alternate politics depends upon a political capacity to contest the dominant social powers that control existing urban space, but also the ability to command and produce a new space. Such liberated 'red zones' can take many forms in the struggle for a radical democracy. But they cannot be avoided.

In contesting neoliberal urbanism, the Left in Canada has taken up a large number of issues, such as urban poverty, contracting-out of work, racism and migration, defence of public space, and urban ecology. It has largely done so on the basis of individual campaigns of an activist group, the agenda of a Left councillor, or by particular union fightback or organizing struggles. In Vancouver and Montreal (and to a lesser extent Winnipeg) the Left has formed wider political groupings. But these have all been more city-wide electoral pacts than political and campaigning organizations of the Left to develop an alternate agenda for urban space and to contest the capitalist city.

In Toronto, the NDP has a quite loose municipal caucus, and it has been years since a socialist presence on city council making the anti-capitalist case and demanding a more radical local democracy could be identified. The local Left has all but dissolved as an active force contesting local centres of power. The 'Chow-Layton-Pantalone' years of the last decade or so at Toronto City Council have largely been that of an individual alderman attempting to leverage minor social measures out of the latest development scheme and condo complex, negotiating the trimming of municipal services on the least unfavourable terms, and supporting local – preferably green – entrepreneurs and markets.

The obvious still needs saying about the current term of council: despite the mobilization of a large social bloc behind the mayoralty candidacy of David Miller and a number of NDP councillors, the last three years are most notable for how little has changed. This period has been, more or less, one of 'third way' social democracy without anyone calling it as such. The first Miller term has neither offered an alternative to neoliberal urbanism and



the socio-economic decline of Toronto, nor contributed to building a new urban Left.

It has only yielded more of the same neoliberalism, but now wrapped in the corporatist gloss of the Toronto City Summit Alliance and the latest 'pop urbanism' of the creative city movement.

The quiescence of the Left at the local level in Toronto is little different than the disarray at other levels of political struggle. The silence of labour, environmentalists and the social left in criticising the Mayor and city council has been deafening. Miller and the NDP councillors will be supported. But this will be because of even less enthusiasm – and justified fears – of all the rest. While the Left has been dissolving as a political force, the neoliberals and business have been organizing and planning to challenge progressive councillors and push their anti-tax, law and order municipal agenda. The challenge for the Left will be to piece together at least some political agenda on a few key items that can act as a pole in the election and serve as a focal point of mobilization afterwards. Neoliberal urbanism has served an ample supply of issues to be taken up. But can a new urban Left begin to form? **R**

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Time to Assess Toronto's Mayor Miller

Yen Chu

The campaign for Toronto's mayor is underway with this year's municipal election set for November 13th. In the 2003 election, David Miller was the underdog councillor championed by many on the left. This time around, Miller is the mayoral incumbent, with a track record that has left some of his leftist supporters disappointed and others on the left not surprised. Miller's supporters saw his victory as hope for change. Other leftists, however, have always believed that electoral politics is an ineffective vehicle for social change. Furthermore, municipal politics itself has its limitations, as it is often affected by and dependent upon provincial and federal decisions and funding, as well as global events and market fluctuations. But even based on the power and influence that mayors do have, Miller's falls short as a reformer.

Miller's predecessor, Mel Lastman, was a brash conservative who was unapologetic in his aggressive denouncements of both unions and the homeless and in his racism (Lastman once told a reporter that he was afraid of going to Kenya because he worried that he would be eaten by the 'natives'). This rhetoric was matched by equally harmful policies. Lastman pushed for the Safe Streets Act, which gave the police the authority to target the homeless and fine or arrest them for panhandling near bus stops or bank machines. He had a law and order agenda and refused to acknowledge that racial profiling existed on the police force. While sidelining poor communities, Lastman was a strong advocate of development. In his last term, his administration was in the midst of finalizing a deal to construct a bridge from downtown to the island airport. The city was also embroiled in a corruption scandal that Lastman tried to keep behind closed doors.

Miller's campaign platform rested on the promise to scrap the island airport bridge and to sweep out corruption at city hall. The image of the broom came to symbolize Miller's promise to clean up city hall as well as the city. After his victory, Miller succeeded in scrapping the deal to construct the bridge. Some on the left saw the issue of the bridge as a polarisation between those who cared about strong neighbourhood with good environments to those who only wanted to advance the interest of businesses at the expense of the environment and the community. For them Miller belonged to the former.

Others on the left remembered Miller's progressive track record on social issues as a city councillor such as his outspoken criticisms of the police. In 2000, the Toronto Police Association printed Miller's home phone number in newspaper ads in retaliation for his criticisms of the police's Operation True Blue telemarketing campaign, which would raise funds to help the police target their critics. In the previous year, the Police Association revealed that they hired private detectives to investigate municipal politicians who were critical of the police. Miller was

also critical of the Mike Harris government and their plans to fingerprint people on social assistance. But it was a different story once Miller became mayor.

MILLER IN POWER

Miller put his broom to work and established the Clean and Beautiful City Initiative, which involved planting flowers along University Ave and adding more street sweepers to clean the city. However, for anti-poverty groups like the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (OCAP) and the Toronto Disaster Relief Committee, Miller's broom and Clean and Beautiful City Initiative are more than just about sweeping the garbage off the streets: they also included aspects of social cleansing. Just like Lastman, Miller does not want visible displays of poverty on Toronto streets. He and city council approved a ban on homeless people from sleeping at City Hall. In defending his action Miller said public space should not be turned into private space, implying that the homeless were turning City Hall into their private space. It seemed lost on Miller that homeless people sleep on public streets and spaces because they cannot afford private spaces. Also, public space is free and shared by everyone, while private space is controlled and policed. The homeless sleep at city hall at night when there is hardly anyone around. Nor do they prevent anyone from using the space if they had chosen to do so.

The further policing of public space by the city includes city workers fining the homeless who are found sleeping in parks with charges of camping in park without permit. The city is also moving to remove homeless people who live under the bridges of the Gardiner Expressway.

However, Miller has claimed that his Streets to Home initiative have found homes for about 500 homeless people. In April, Miller commissioned a survey on the homeless in order to do a needs-assessment. The



survey has not resulted in much, except now the city has passed a motion to do research into establishing a law to ban panhandling. The limits of both the initiative and the survey have been widely criticised by housing advocates as yet another series of policy failures.

This social cleansing is paralleled by the gentrification and 'condo-ification' happening throughout the city's core, where the professional middle-class has resettled in droves and pushed the working class to the margins. Walking through Toronto's Queen Street district west of Spadina, used bookstores, thrift shops, greasy spoons, used appliances stores, modest restaurant and bars are being replaced by more upscale businesses such as fancy restaurants that sell appetizers for \$15, hip bars crammed with the very fashionable and designer hotels.

The wealth being generated by the financial and speculative industries now dominating the Toronto economy, however, have neither trickled down in the urban core, nor been redistributed throughout other parts of the city. Rather, in the city's poorer neighbourhoods residents face high unemployment, poor housing, lack of services, and inadequate public transit. The increasing gun violence in the city can be attributed to this social deterioration. Much of this can be blamed on the federal government for toughening employment insurance eligibility and benefits, the Harris government for cutting social assistance and downloading social programs, and the federal and provincial Liberals for failing to restore those cuts. Although, the Miller administration has set-up programs such as training schemes as preventive measures (which reports suggest have been dismally taken up by employers), he also boasts of having the largest budget increase for the city's police force. Adding more police officers to neighbourhoods where residents are mistrustful of the police will not solve the problems. The solution starts with addressing social, economic and racial disparities.

If it is true that all levels of government are responsible for addressing social problems, it is nonetheless telling that a cash-strapped city can manage to find more money for the police, but it is unable to hire more building inspectors to crack down on slumlords. If the city cares about safety, then they must also ensure that tenants live in safe housing. Miller and the city has made tiniest possible step towards this by providing a website with information on apartment standards based on status of inspections and orders to comply. But this, along with some construction of affordable housing, is not enough to alleviate the cities housing

crisis. Housing activists have proposed quite feasible reforms that include expropriating property from landlords who fail to maintain their property to standard and the conversion of all vacant property to affordable housing.

Torontonians like to see their city as progressive. But this is more myth than fact. Some American

cities have reforms that have gone further than Toronto and Miller's policies. For instance, in several U.S. cities new developments must include a certain percentage of affordable housing. Certainly, this should not be a substitute for public housing, but it at least provides for some new affordable housing for the working-class in the city core. Also, many cities south of the border have implemented a 'Don't Ask Don't Tell' policy, which means that city workers will not ask for immigration status or share the information with federal agencies. Miller has expressed support for such a policy, but so far the city has not moved to fully implement this.

While some of his supporters may or may not be critical of his social policies, they have been critical of him on issues of governance and development. In an effort to make government more accountable and responsive to residents, Miller held a participatory budget town-hall style meeting. Yet Miller has been pushing for the new Toronto Act, which will include more executive power for the mayor and move budget decisions away from city council. CUPE, the municipal workers union, is working with other community groups to oppose this undemocratic provision for concentrating power to the mayor's office. Miller has also been criticized for supporting the \$255 million Front Street Extension, which will widen the roads near the lake, making the waterfront even less accessible.

If Miller has one thing going for him, it has been his commitment to keeping city services public. This has been the basis of support from some union locals, including those within OPSEU and CUPE. Many are also worried about his opponent Jane Pitfield, a conservative who has said that the city does not need unions and who spearheaded the campaign to ban panhandling. This is an important concern as the most reactionary forces in the city are still looking for a champion – as they had in the last mayoralty election in John Tory and in Mayor Lastman – to push city politics even more pro-business and neoliberal.

ONE MORE TIME: ELECTION 2006

At the end of the day, municipal politics is posing a recurrent dilemma for the left and social justice. As with many social democratic policies, Miller's commitment on public service could be here today, but gone tomorrow. After all, Miller was originally opposed to the Front Street Extension. There are additional reasons to raise concerns: many of Miller's advisors are Tories, as he has sought to build an encompassing coalition that embraces the Toronto business agendas as well; he has taken a strong stance against the TTC union in their efforts to protect jobs; and he shockingly participated in the spring Walk for Israel march in the middle of the crisis in Gaza.

The fight against social marginalization and for local democracy does not start or end at the ballot box. Even basic reforms, such as better housing, are not achieved from the goodness of a politician's heart – it comes from community pressure, mobilization and activism. This has proven the case election after election. **R**

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Keys to the City:

At the end of 2003's hard-fought and uncharacteristically animated civic election campaign, Toronto mayoral candidate David Miller won the keys to the city, largely on a pledge to reverse a City Council decision to construct a bridge to the city's downtown island airport. Miller, whose campaign until then had been lagging behind that of front-runner and ex-mayor Barbara Hall, immediately took the risky position that the bridge and the process by which it had been agreed upon represented everything that was wrong with civic decision-making, and stressed the incongruity between the airport expansion and nascent plans to 'revitalize' the waterfront by transforming it into a residential and recreational showcase.

The Toronto Port Authority, which manages the sleepy little airstrip on an island 120 meters off the shore of Toronto's central waterfront, had hoped to reverse years of money-losing operations by overcoming what it thought to be the airport's biggest detraction: the only means of public access is a five minute ferry ride. In June 2003, City Council had agreed and passed a motion to allow construction of the bridge. Miller called the decision and the bridge: 'irrational', 'a boondoggle' and 'highly speculative.'

Reflecting back on the election, the president of the federal NDP said, "The bridge is symbolic. It speaks to the whole agenda of cities and how the cities want to have control of their own destinies." And following her loss, Barbara Hall was reported to have muttered, "That damn bridge."

David Miller's 2003 mayoral election victory not only indicates that the waterfront has become, if not materially then certainly symbolically, central to his term of office, but also demonstrates how waterfront quays have become places with strategic political, economic, environmental and social value. The waterfront was central to Miller's election victory and – contrary to the continuing complaint that 'there's nothing happening on the waterfront' – has played a major role in city, regional and even national politics throughout his first term of office. The waterfront has become critical for wealth accumulation processes, and control of these processes is a major concern. Cities have long been recognized as prominent agglomerations in economic processes of production and reproduction and, at this particular historical juncture, waterfronts are one of the main sites where this occurs.

Despite its importance for wealth creation, the waterfront has yet to become prominent in this year's civic campaign. While no issues have been particularly controversial in the campaign thus far, the relative quiet on the waterfront issue has resulted from a wide-ranging consensus that has been constructed around both the form and the process by which the waterfront is to be revital-



ized. This is not to say that many inter-jurisdictional and inter-organizational squabbles do not exist — they do and have given rise to interesting, but largely diversionary, public debates (see our January 2006 Relay article) and caused significant delays in planning and development.

However, the over-arching waterfront 'vision', constructed by those who stand to benefit the most from its realization, has won enthusiastic support from politicians of all political stripes. And media pundits, the self-proclaimed guardians of the public trust, continue to fill many column-inches asking why it's not happening fast enough but not challenging the waterfront development 'vision' itself. Where are the voices demanding a diversity of well-paid employment opportunities on the waterfront? Where are the demands for enough truly affordable housing to provide for those without homes and the working poor? What's happened to meaningful environmental protection and enhancement projects — and not just sustainability rhetoric serving the interests of de-

Waterfront Development in Toronto

Jennefer Laidley and Gene Desfor

velopers? In this article, we intend to critically examine the dominant waterfront development vision in order to show why these alternatives and others should be demanded from those who seek to lead the city after November's election.

THE VISION: AN ECONOMICALLY COMPETITIVE WATERFRONT

The dominant vision for Toronto's waterfront is based on a narrative which asserts that cities around the world have entered into an increasingly aggressive and competitive battle to attract the movers and shakers of the knowledge-based global economy. According to a City of Toronto report, *Our Toronto Waterfront! The Wave of the Future* "we live in a highly competitive world where entrepreneurs, skilled workers and innovative companies gravitate to cities that offer the best quality of life", therefore, we must work hard to attract the investment and people that are critical to the emerging knowledge-based economies.

Former Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corporation (TWRC) Chair and recently deposed 'waterfront czar' Robert Fung summarized this position, stating quite boldly that "meeting the challenge and requirements of the 21st century economy is the rationale behind the revitalization of Toronto's waterfront."

Waterfront development, according to this carefully crafted rhetoric, is the new urban panacea for everything from environmental degradation and economic stagnation to the historic disconnect between the city and the lake. But the large-scale transformation of urban space is to be undertaken in such a way and in such a form that the best and brightest knowledge-economy capitalists will take up residence in Toronto, bringing with them not only their entrepreneurial spirit and corporate headquarters but also the possibility, no matter how remote or how far down they trickle, of new jobs and new economic opportunities for Torontonians. This requires a new emphasis on an urban form that provides 'quality of life'.

Organized under the green-tinged rubric of the TWRC's Sustainability Framework and including such seemingly pluralist benefits as 'diversity', 'creativity', and 'community', this "high quality of life," as Fung has said, is clearly framed as "a competitive advantage" which will allow Toronto "to prosper in a global market."

With its vast tracts of largely 'underutilized' and, more importantly, publicly-owned land, Toronto's waterfront is the optimal location for this urban transformation. And this vision is, says the TWRC, a sure-fire winner since so many world-class cities

have already used it and – despite critical analysis to the contrary – have garnered economic, social and cultural success.

The public sector's role, according to this approach, is to spark a 'virtuous cycle' of development by making several strategic, foundational investments. Public dollars will be invested in new infrastructure – transportation facilities, water-related parks and public spaces, flood control, cleaning up contaminated sites and 'renaturalizing' degraded wildlife habitat – on nearly 2000 acres of largely publicly-owned waterfront land. But the actual work of strategically investing public funds has been given over to the Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corporation – a tripartite creature of the city, the province and the federal government intended to exploit a wide range of public powers to advance a profit-driven model, overseeing a \$17-billion redevelopment project over 30 years using an initial public-sector infrastructure investment of \$1.5 billion.

Once improved, this prime waterfront land will be sold to the private sector, which will purportedly develop 40,000 new residential units and 7.6 million square feet of commercial space targeted to the needs of knowledge-economy sectors as well as a variety of 'destination' entertainment facilities to service the international tourism market. In effect, this massive public expenditure – in both money and lands – is intended to produce gigantic private development profit from structures built for elites, with 'trickle-down' benefits for everyone else.

The translation of this dream-like vision into concrete reality has, however, run into many of the tensions inherent in accumulation processes, relating particularly to less-than-enthusiastic support from private sector investors, stressful interpersonal relations and jealousies, rival government agencies jockeying for institutional supremacy, and conflicts with civil society groups. In an effort to overcome these tensions and fulfill the economic promise of waterfront development, Toronto's elites are once again looking to engage the purported catalytic impact of one of this city's most sought after – but consistently unobtainable – prizes, the global mega-event. This time around, their object of desire is the 2015 World's Fair.

EXPO 2015: A GLOBALIZING STRATEGY FOR URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Not long after Miller's mayoralty victory in 2003, as jurisdictional squabbles intensified and prospects for the TWRC's development project seemed increasingly uncertain, a small group of Toronto's place entrepreneurs – apparently blessed by →

Mayor Miller – searched for another approach to move Toronto's fortunes forward. As with bids for the 1996 and 2008 Olympic Games and applications for the World's Fairs of 1998 and 2000, this group has been using the pursuit of global mega-events as a strategy to promote development on the waterfront.

The Expo 2015 bid, as its proponents plainly admit, is yet another attempt to use an externally mandated and regulated event to determine urban development policy for the city, intended to force competing agencies and organizations to work together, attract vast sums of private sector investment, and deliver billions in economic benefits to business in the city.

In a *Toronto Star* editorial on May 8 2006, they write: "Winning the right to host Expo 2015 would prove a tremendous boon to the economy and international image of Toronto. A strong and smart bid for the world's fair could be the catalyst to spark waterfront renewal, refurbish public transit, provide jobs and attract millions of tourists....Local Expo advocates have done their homework. They present a compelling case for having Toronto welcome the world. We deserve our turn to shine and 2015 is the year to do it."

Using a mega-event such as the World's Fair as a prime element in the city's urban development policy is fraught with dangers and should be rejected. Staging Expo 2015 will be the responsibility of a relatively small group of private and non-profit organizations whose decisions are largely beyond the control of elected governments. It is these interests that will be determining public policy and not those of the broad spectrum of people in the city. As such, we expect that hosting Expo will be used for the following: establishing and justifying exceptional measures that alter the city's plans and practices, creating projects that are poorly integrated into broader development plans for the city, diverting local-democratic participatory traditions in the name of getting the job finished on time, enforcing a mean-spirited and punitive approach to non-conformity, and accentuating socioeconomic polarization within the city through the workings of real estate markets.

Furthermore, hosting Expo will require cooperation not only with provincial and federal governments, but also with regulatory bodies, multi-national corporations and other governments from around the world. To have a successful Expo requires coopera-



tion and collaboration to gain support from these bodies. Such support will likely be achieved by compromising Toronto's development patterns to correspond with the interests of global actors. But it is not only altered development patterns that will be problematic, it is also that local political structures will be reorganized and power relations reconfigured. From such a process, we expect that the powers of local decision-makers (politicians, business people as well as community representatives) would be greatly reduced and that Toronto's future will be greatly influenced by demands from global actors. Such a process of rushed globalization in the name of temporary economic benefits and infrastructure legacies will surely not be to the benefit of a broad range of Torontonians.

SEEKING ALTERNATIVES: ELECTION 2006

The upcoming November 2006 mayoralty election provides an important opportunity to re-think what should be happening with Toronto's waterfront. In 2003, Miller won the keys to the city through a bold move that swept away years of special-interest back-room dealings. But his unqualified support for Expo 2015 as an urban waterfront development policy – indeed, his continued endorsement and promotion of the entire competitive vision for the waterfront – simply reproduces the politics of special interest development that is increasingly polarizing the city and concentrating power and privilege into the hands of the downtown development elite.

The quays of the city should benefit those Torontonians who reside outside of the traditional power structures, those Torontonians for whom international investment in the construction of spectacular cityscapes and the promotion of knowledge-based economies only reinforces their disenfranchisement and powerlessness. It's important to have an active waterfront, but also an activist City Council which sees socioeconomic equality – not globalized trickle-down economic development policy – as both its responsibility and its goal. **R**

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Weak policies for strong neighbourhoods?

Ahmed Allahwala

The Toronto City Summit Alliance (TCSA) has probably been the most influential civil society coalition in Toronto during Mayor Miller's first term in office. The overall policy framework proposed by the TCSA has been instrumental in changing social policy discussions and resetting the parameters of municipal welfarism in Toronto. The TCSA emerged out of the Toronto City Summit, a conference held in June 2002, where self-proclaimed 'civic leaders' came together to discuss the challenges the Toronto region is facing at the beginning of the 21st century. The members of the TCSA come from a variety of backgrounds including the private and public sector, labour, voluntary and cultural organizations in the Toronto region. If one looks at the personal make-up of the steering committee, however, it becomes clear that the TCSA is dominated by a globally-oriented corporate elite and financed primarily through private sector fundraising.

In April 2003, the TCSA released the report *Enough Talk – An Action Plan for the Toronto Region* in which it outlined a framework for action for the Toronto region for the coming five to ten years. One could argue that the overall objective of the TCSA's lobbying efforts is to create favourable conditions for globally-oriented local development. Its main policy recommendations are related to:

- 1) a new fiscal deal for cities,
 - 2) investment in physical infrastructure (mainly regional transportation and waterfront revitalization)
 - 3) reviving Toronto's tourism
 - 4) creating a world-leading research alliance
 - 5) investing in people's education
 - 6) making the city a "centre of excellence" in integrating immigrants
 - 7) strengthening the social and community infrastructure of the city
 - 8) supporting the arts and culture
- All social policy recommendations of

the TCSA are framed within a discourse of global urban competitiveness. In this discourse, the notion of social justice is being replaced by the rather vague notion of 'social cohesion'; and the lack thereof is perceived as a threat to the economic competitiveness and viability of a given city-region. Quite tellingly, the TCSA states in its report that "poverty affects us all, not just the poor" (emphasis added). In a similar vein, Canadian political scientist Neil Bradford argues that "only cities that become home to innovation and inclusion will rise to the top in the global age." Even finance capital now seems to worry about the rise in urban poverty. The TD Bank Financial Group, one of the main corporate stakeholders in the TCSA, identifies in its report *The Greater Toronto Area (GTA): Canada's Primary Economic Locomotive in Needs of Repair* the existence of "deep pools of poverty" which threaten the longer-term economic performance and competitiveness of the Toronto city-region.

These shifts in the perception of urban poverty and exclusion go hand in hand with larger changes in welfare state practices in Canada. While the Canadian welfare state has always been ideologically grounded in traditional liberal work ethic norms, there is now a noticeable shift from social rights and citizenship to what is called social investment and human capital development. According to political economist Jane Jenson, the main challenge of this newly emerging regime is to create social cohesion in order to strengthen economic competitiveness. The instrument to achieve equality is no longer redistribution but rather investment in human capital.

What we are witnessing here is a fundamental redefinition of welfare and poverty in the "global city." The increasing integration of concerns about social cohesion and economic competitiveness is part of a larger strategy of cities to increase their "liveability," which means the quality of life

they are able to offer to a globally-oriented and increasingly mobile new middle class. In this burgeoning discourse of the competitive/creative/liveable city, skilled workers are drawn to cities not only because of the economic opportunities they offer, but because of their quality of life, the "liveability" of their neighbourhoods, their diversity and cultural institutions.

One of the major social policy initiatives of the TCSA is the Strong Neighbourhoods Task Force. Heavily influenced by the report *Poverty by Postal Code* commissioned by the United Way of Greater Toronto and the City of Toronto's community agency survey report *Cracks in the Foundation*, both of which identified the increasing concentration of poverty and the lack of community and social services in the inner suburbs of Toronto, the Task Force's own report *Strong Neighbourhoods – A Call to Action* identifies several worrying trends emerging in Toronto: more people now live in poverty than ever before, poverty is geographically concentrated, economic restructuring has broadened the income divide, income support programs have been reduced, social services have not kept pace with demographic changes and need, funding practices make it difficult to invest in neighbourhoods with significant needs, and neighbourhoods lack access to community and public space. But yet again, these trends are not discussed as a social justice issue but in terms of their adverse affects on the city region as a whole. Consequently, the report asks us to "take action now because a single declining neighbourhood has an impact on all neighbourhoods."

For anyone familiar with the recent history of the development of social welfare in Ontario, it is quite surprising that the Task Force's report mentions the dismantlement of the province's post-war welfare regime under Mike Harris in the 1990s →

only implicitly and describes it as if it had occurred in a political vacuum. The report states, for example, that “income support programs have not kept pace with inflation” and that “social assistance rates have fallen by 40% in real terms over the last decades.” Nothing is said about the neoliberal zero-deficit frenzy and the vicious attack on the poor coming from both the federal and the provincial government. Who can forget the federal budget of 1995, the termination of the Canada Assistance Plan and the subsequent passing of the Ontario Works Act? The fact that these fundamental policy shifts – all of which were political decisions – have significantly exacerbated the rise of poverty in Toronto is not addressed in any explicit or systematic way.

The Strong Neighbourhoods initiative is indicative of a larger, international trend towards spatially-targeted social policy interventions and the promotion of the so-called community-development paradigm. The neighbourhood revitalization initiative proposed by the Task Force sees the experience in the United States (Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities) and the United Kingdom (National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal) as blueprints for Canada. Investment in the community and social infrastructure of a particular neighbourhood, financed through tri-partite funding arrangements between the federal, provincial and municipal level of government, and the active integration of the affected communities, is seen as the most effective way to combat social exclusion. Universal social programs are no longer seen as efficient or adequate instruments to fight social exclusion. It is argued that location-specific challenges require integrated interventions through place-based policies.

The promotion of “social capital” is central to the community development paradigm. The Task Force argues that “grassroots approaches to neighbourhood development increase people’s confidence and capacity to participate in the community” so that “a broader and more diverse group of people is able to contribute to local decision-making and engage in the democratic process.” While this is itself a laudable project, the strengthening of social capital to foster democratic participa-

tion falls short of challenging the social relationships of contemporary capitalist societies. One striking characteristic of the social capital debate is the virtual absence of protest movements engaging in adversarial and disruptive political strategies. There is a strong focus on civic consensus both within the community development debate and within the TCSA. The report *Enough Talk* claims that there exists a “clear consensus for action.” This focus on consensual decision-making tends to not only depoliticize local development issues but also to marginalize more critical political forces.

Critics of the role of community organizations within urban economic competitiveness strategies often argue that social

movements have largely been co-opted by the agenda of economic elites. It would be premature, and somewhat unfair, to accuse the social movements and community organizations involved in the TCSA of having been completely co-opted. Although the danger of co-optation is real, the neoliberal funding regime for non-profit organizations established in the 1990s has had somewhat unexpected outcomes. The larger agencies that did relatively well within the new funding environment (those that one would expect to be the most co-opted) have maintained a certain degree of independence and are thus able to be somewhat more critical than smaller agencies and community groups. Within the constraints of the hegemonic discourse of



urban economic competitiveness, it might actually be the larger and more integrated agencies that are in a better position to be critical of current developments, more so than the smaller ones that struggle to survive on a daily basis.

As it is firmly grounded in discourses around economic competitiveness that favour the class interests of the global elites within the Toronto City Summit Alliance, it is doubtful whether this civil-society coalition can provide the space for the articulation of radical claims for social transformation. The systematic subordination of social and political issues under the economic imperatives of globalized capitalism makes this – one could argue – outright impossible. The integration of community-based organizations into the new governance structures of the post-Fordist city opens up real opportunities for the input of progressive policy proposals. Given the overall framework of economic competitiveness in which the analysis is situated, however, co-optation is likely if not imminent.

Overall, the search for endogenous solutions to the socio-economic deprivation of certain neighbourhoods lets external political-economic factors and patterns of systemic racism in Canadian society off the hook too easily. In this kind of analysis, the attention is diverted from the larger social, political and economic context. Factors such as globalization and imperialism, neoliberalism, the rise of the new economy, the gendered and racial division of labour and how they contribute to the rise of spatially-concentrated poverty in Toronto are not discussed in any explicit way. If the economic context of globalized capitalism and the social and political project of neoliberalism are not integrated in the analysis, the recommendations of the Strong Neighbourhoods Task Force will help the marginalized to simply *get by* rather than *get ahead*. In this scenario, marginalized communities will become the managers of their own poverty.

The Strong Neighbourhoods Task Force acknowledges that neighbourhood services and facilities alone are not enough and that they must be complemented by “well-designed social support programs that provide all residents with quality of life and personal dignity.” The main policy rec-

ommendation regarding income security put forward by the so-called Task Force on Modernizing Income Security for Working-Age Adults, another prominent social policy-related initiative of the TCSCA, is to introduce a refundable tax benefit which would consist of a basic tax credit for all low-income working age adults and a working income supplement for low-income wage earners. Whether this would actually amount to more than just a state subsidization of precarious low-paid work or actually have the desired outcome of “empowering” the affected workers remains to be seen. What is clear, however, is that stable and well-paid employment and broad social security programs are important factors in creating strong neighbourhoods. A socialist strategy for strong neighbourhoods must encompass solid social programs at the federal level rather than a patchwork of piecemeal local interventions. Proponents of the “new fiscal deal for cities” tend to ignore that its devolutionary tendencies actually contribute to the neo-conservative agenda of eroding the federal role in redistribution and equalization.

The Task Force’s focus is on “neighbourhood change” and not larger social, economic, or political change. Its concern with social capital and civic engagement as solutions to socio-economic marginalization ignores economic and political restructuring and sexism/racism as the root causes of poverty and exclusion in Toronto. A socialist community-based strategy of neighbourhood revitalization needs to focus on empowering the poor to transform the very social relations that are the cause of their condition of marginality. In addition, a truly emancipatory urban project must envision the contemporary city not as a space of “civic consensus,” but rather one of struggle, dissent, and resistance; a space in which radical political claims for urban transformation can be articulated by a multitude of grassroots labour, anti-racist, feminist, queer, and environmental movements. **R**

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Getting Creative in Toronto...

Not Your Parent's Neoliberal Urbanism!

John Grundy

People from the worlds of business, government and the arts converged this summer on the MaRS Centre in Toronto (the new home for collaborative university and industry research) for the launch of *Imagine a Toronto...Strategies for a Creative City*, a report produced by the Strategies for Creative Cities Project Team. Commissioned by the City of Toronto and the Government of Ontario, the report is the culmination of the Project Team's extensive research into 'best practices' in creative city building. Recommendations made by the Creative Cities Project Team include enhancing creative programming for youth, establishing creativity-based community development projects, providing more affordable work/live spaces for artists, and developing a 'Creativity Convergence Centre' to facilitate collaboration within the cultural sector.

CREATIVE TORONTO UNLIMITED

The report is one of a number of projects to remake Toronto as city of – and for – the 'creative classes.' An initial widely publicized misstep was the hapless Toronto Branding Project, a four million dollar initiative lead by Tourism Toronto (and backed by Toronto NDP Mayor David Miller). The destination marketing agency representing the city's tourism sector contracted an American marketing firm to develop a bold new identity for the city. Extensive test-marketing with focus groups in Canada, Britain and the U.S. resulted in the 'Toronto Unlimited' campaign which was widely criticized as bland and poorly executed.

Other initiatives were also rolled out. The City of Toronto declared 2006 the Year of Creativity and launched the Live With Culture campaign. The heightened interest in culture and 'creativity' is most dramatically expressed in the massive wave of public investment sweeping the city's cultural infrastructure. There are currently about a dozen major cultural infrastructure projects underway aiming to 'spectacularize' the urban landscape, and marking for many the city's cultural renaissance. Another is the announcement of 'Luminato,' a large scale creativity festival beginning in summer 2007. In an effort to make a post-SARS Toronto an attractive tourist destination again, there is at least a creative explosion of city marketing ideas.

Even more imposing than the new trophy architecture being built across Toronto is the rhetoric of creative city advocates. The rousing speeches delivered by members of the Creative Cities Project Team conveyed a grandiose vision of creative city building. They spoke of the dawn of the Creative Age, where commerce and culture are one; where everyone should, indeed must,

aspire to become 'creative practitioners'. We were told that Toronto is on the 'cusp of a creative breakthrough'. As a city, Toronto is 'going for the gold.'

NEOLIBERAL URBANISM

Amid such grand proclamations one could easily forget that the creative city agenda is hardly a stretch from existing neoliberal economic development and boosterist practices. It is essentially a flashier version of the high-road competitiveness model that economic development officials adopted in the early nineties in Ontario under the Liberal and NDP administrations of Premiers Peterson and Rae. At that time authorities began to speak the language of human capital, innovation and industry clustering in growing recognition of the Greater Toronto Area's (GTA) disadvantage in low cost-based competition. Global competitiveness came to be seen as a matter of fostering industry clusters within which human capital would be harnessed in the generation of new forms of innovation and productivity. Add to this formula a prominent role for cultural industries as a site of innovation and middle-class consumption, mix in watered-down neighbourhood regeneration policies to manage the problem of 'social exclusion' and 'at risk' communities, and you have a 'creative city.' These initiatives parrot the editorial pages of the *Toronto Star*. This is the depths to which policy thinking and city development policies have sunk in Toronto.

Perhaps the most remarkable feature of the creative city agenda is the wide network of support it enjoys. The creative city appears to have something for everybody. It holds allure for business leaders disillusioned by the failed promises of slash and burn neoliberalism. Creativity talk appeals to arts and cultural organizations desperate for the funding and legitimacy they were denied during the Harris era. It also appeals to a range of social activists and community agencies eager to expand their community development initiatives. The bitter struggles between these different interests that characterized the neoliberal austerity of the nineties dissolves in the feel good future-speak of creative city advocates. For the Creative Cities Project Team: getting creative floats all boats.

Yet, the continuance of neoliberal urbanism and its hyper-competitiveness quickly pierce the ameliorative façade of the creativity agenda. For all the talk of 'social inclusion' in the report, creative city building remains an elite driven project. Like most urban 'imagineering' exercises, this is urban visioning by decree.



Photos: John Bonnar

Echoes of Thatcher could be heard in the repeated warnings from the report authors that there is no alternative to the creativity strategy: we need to act fast because ‘competitor’ cities are adopting similar plans that may even be more creative than Toronto’s!

The rush to compete on ‘creativity’ leaves little time to consider the dangers of celebrating cultural production insofar as it can be pressed into the service of global competitiveness. Urban cultural development plans are becoming every bit as generic as the rusted-out downtown regeneration projects of American ‘competitor cities’. Nor is there time to question the incessant demand for statistical measurements of urban ‘creativity’ – a demand that American ‘pop’ academics like Richard Florida, and a crowded field of expensive consultants from the Boston Consulting Group and KPMG and others, have serviced most effectively. With the gutting of municipal planning capacities at the provincial and city levels, both the Toronto and Ontario governments have paid handsomely for them all. Indeed, the imperative to measure ‘creativity’ reveals more about the managerial anxieties driving neoliberal urbanism than any indication of a city’s ‘creativity.’ One can only wonder what the next fad in urban economic development will bring.

REAL CREATIVITY CONFRONTS CREATIVE MARKETING

The creativity strategy unfolding in Toronto is not entirely uncontested. The Parkdale Tenants Association recently subverted the City’s cultural development agenda by organizing the “Lord of the Slums Bus Tour” to coincide with the opening of the Lord of the Rings. The Association engaged in the politics of spectacle to draw attention to the declining condition of much of the city’s low rental housing. As one representative stated, “We thought we’d show tourists another side of Toronto that they don’t see in the glossy brochures... The city and the province are

spending massive amounts of money to promote Toronto as a world-class city, but part of being a world-class city is protecting your residents from appalling living conditions.” Recently local artists organized an exhibition titled *Live Without Culture* to lampoon the City’s culture campaign. In Toronto art critic RM Vaughan’s words, the exhibit was meant “to rectify the damage done by the City of Toronto’s misrepresentation of the artist’s life.”

Such creative political actions help to disrupt the apparent consensus behind the creative city agenda. Those struggling for a progressive urban politics must build on these efforts to interrogate, contest and transform the creativity strategy. As it exists, the new City of Toronto creativity agenda further entrenches and enriches neoliberal urbanism. It seeps into all aspects of policy and planning and public spaces. Creativity functions a rhetorical trope that legitimates both old and new forms of inequality. It provides a powerful justification for rewriting urban policy in the image of the so-called ‘creative class.’

The creativity agenda celebrates their fickle consumption-based identity practices while rendering invisible the expanding pool of low wage service workers who serve up the meals and the artistic production for the ‘creative class’ lifestyle. An urban strategy that provides little more to the marginalized than the admonition to become ‘more creative’ is simply unacceptable. A truly ‘creative’ urban strategy would privilege the calls for justice at the heart of progressive social movement politics over calls for increased global competitiveness. That would make for a realized creative city and not one more embrace of the latest fashion in urban planning that has created the development mess that Toronto finds itself in. **R**

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HI PSTER URBANI SM

Deborah Cowen

Hipsters have declared *peace* on Toronto. They have announced their arrival and affirmed their own future to be synonymous with the City's. They recount heroic struggles for livable streets and people-friendly places, struggles that promise to bring better and bolder patios to the people where organic foods can be consumed from stylish and well-coordinated vessels. They struggle for good design against evil, for public spaces for the well dressed though slightly scruffy. Theirs is a struggle for the freedom of designer glasses, cutting edge hairstyles, and yoga for all. Their justice is not just for people; they demand 'doga' for their canine loved-ones. By unspoken but practiced decree, hipsters must all be individual, different, or else membership may be revoked. And, the spaces they frequent are all so different. One after the next, block after block, downtown strips are becoming so hip and so different, lined with very different bars and cafes and art spaces and restaurants and bars and cafes and arts spaces and restaurants and bars and cafes...

Their tales of trials and triumphs have recently been fashioned into founding myths that they offer up to the whole city.* Not just hipsters benefit from their visions - *everyone* does. A hip downtown is a good for all, a universal good perhaps. Despite a self-proclaimed progressive pedigree, the histories they tell aren't of class exploitation, racialized violence and institutions, hetero and masculinist norms and laws, a public sphere hostile to immigrants, queers, workers, and so on. Instead, their tale takes them back to the evils of the car and the modernist city planned in its honor. Their Toronto is one that has oppressed *pedestrians* and unique *individuals*, and instead favored banality and bad architecture. Crafting these narratives of the past donates purpose and pride to their present cause. It makes their current movements right and good. Once the 'storm troopers' of gentrification, who were readily displaced the moment people with financial capital (as opposed to hipsters' 'symbolic' and 'social' capital) bought up the cool spaces, today's hipsters are actively working to institutionalize themselves in the city. They have recently found allies in government and business who see possibilities of accumulation by good design.

We might be wary of their declarations of the coming peace and of the city's salvation. While their guerillas may well be *gardeners*, bringing style to neglected turf in neighborhoods everywhere, hipster urbanism is not a benign force. But is their gentrification of activism actually another kind of war? Wars are typically fought for power over places, and in this sense the hipster struggle for the downtown does not deviate. "Hipster territory" is the prize, as the New York Times suggests in a recent story on the 'transformation' of Toronto's Gladstone and Drake Hotels and surrounds. Indeed, hipster violence is subtle but significant, and easily traceable through the changing geographies of neoliberal Toronto. Hipsturbanism elects young white professionals to "reclaim" the downtown in denial of their own occupation.** It ushers in a future where difference has firm class limits. Trades people are routinely denied parking permits for work vans in the downtown, and while hipsters might never tell these workers to 'move it along' to the inner suburbs alongside other non-profes-



HIPSTER TRAP!!!

drawing by drew, www.toothpastefordinner.com

sional and 'non-creative' labour where they belong, they are nevertheless delighted when 'something' is finally happening with the neighbourhood – (did you know there used to be *nothing* here at all?).

Hipster urbanism sees only the downtown surrounded by 'enemy forces.' Still living with a mythology of inner city diversity and suburban class and 'race' homogeneity at least 30 years expired, hipsturbanists have been overheard recommending that 'we' just *'bomb the suburbs'* and be done with them. The contemporary configuration of the inner suburbs – home to so many of the city's new immigrants, racialized groups, and the precarious workers who clean, feed, and care for the city's citizens - make the class and racist violence of this suburban bombing fantasy obscene.

The glossy maps that accompany the recent book *uTOpia: Towards a New Toronto* give a sense of the designer violence embedded in hipster fantasies of local geography. The maps take us from High Park in the west to Riverdale in the east, extending just above Dupont St. in the north, and south to the islands. Beyond the conspicuous absence of most of the city, the maps also do violence to what they show. Inner city public housing projects have been quickly, quietly and painlessly airbrushed. Cutesy doodles of bunny rabbits in fields, rainbows and unicorns replace the low-income neighbourhoods that have been at the centre of political resistance in the city. One map plows street grids through the modernist 'buildings in parks' of Regent Park, and replaces nasty density with Victorian-esque single-family housing. The symbolic spatial violence of a second map surpasses the first; it substitutes pesky poor people with a big new green park. Hipsters are not oblivious to the need for rent-controlled spaces in advanced capitalist Toronto – their utopian cartography includes 'affordable studios' and 'mixed housing lofts'.

But of course hipster peace is not like other nasty struggles of armed people against people. Hipsturbanists are often adamant in their critiques of more traditional wars being waged at larger spatial scales. *War is so passé, how can they still think like that?*

In fact, hipsters constitute themselves in contrast to an alternative social and spatial project of neoliberalism, one that is more candid about the usefulness of organized violence. The ex-urban (anti)urbanism of 'the 905' offers a competing neoliberal vision of Toronto that is tied to a military-religious complex more popular south of the US border and west of the Albertan one. The outer suburban belt of the GTA is Harper country in contrast to our Miller land. 905 neoliberalism promises big guns, private property, private prisons, and workfare for the people, and in this sense certainly differs from hipster downtownism. But the fact that hipsters invent themselves in opposition to this competing neoliberalism is no redemption for their violent peace. Rather, it gives them a greater evil against which they can see themselves looking even lovelier.

Hipster urbanist claims for a new commons might have potential if they weren't so blatantly exclusive. Their rhetoric recounts some noble promises of public spheres and public spaces. But the gap between hipster rhetoric and reality is wide and growing; its own form of neoliberalism, hipsturbanism may not be the lesser of two powerful evils. Banal, mimetic 'creativity' is their favored medium of creative destruction. Marx and Schumpeter taught us that destruction brings its own creativity, and by the same token, social creativity is also an act of destruction. For people in the path of the creative city it is indeed a very destructive project. **R**

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*See the fascinating discussion about Toronto's lacking mythology and the 'opportunity' this opens for artists and other hip locals in Edward Keenan's "Making a Scene: A bunch of youngish indie-rockers, political activists and small-press literati are creating the cultural history of Toronto" in McBride and Wilcox (eds.) *uTOpia: Towards a New Toronto*. Coach House Press, 2006. More broadly, this book has become an important milestone in the consolidation of hipster urbanism in Toronto.

**A good example is the 2000-2002 exhibit at the Royal Ontario Museum, "Growing Cultures: Immigrants and their Gardens" wherein a young hipster describes how he has 'reclaimed the land' by organic gardening his new property in the gentrifying area of Queen West. The (bloody) irony of the language of 'reclaiming' land is only intensified by the ongoing indigenous land claims on much of Toronto.

Whose Streets? Their Streets!

Middle Class Activists and Public Space

Greg Sharzer

We hear a lot about public space these days. Artists and activists claim to defend it. But a lot of activism is about a particular *kind* of public space – one that conceals deep class divides. Socialists have an entirely different conception, and we need to fight for it.

WHAT IS PUBLIC SPACE?

The Toronto Public Space Committee (TPSC) calls it “a fundamental pillar of a healthy democracy,” a “visual environment” for “freedom of speech” and “a space for concerned citizens to get involved and participate”. It’s anti-consumerist: “We are citizens first, and consumers second”.

Adbusters, the magazine that brought the issue of public space to global prominence, echoes this vision, campaigning against “any industry that pollutes our physical or mental commons.” In his essay *People in The Streets: The Promise of Democracy in Everyday Public Space*, academic Greg Smithsimon adds a political dimension, calling it “a key prerequisite for a democratic society... where we take organized political action, and meet and learn about the society of which we are a part.”

Public space, then, is a place free of corporate control, where citizens come together to build a democratic community. How? The TPSC campaigns against ads on giant billboards and on city property; and for bike lanes, car-free areas and graffiti space.

WHAT’S WRONG WITH PUBLIC SPACE?

Cycling, anti-ads, democracy – what’s not to like? Unfortunately, a lot. The TPSC and its fellow travellers ignore broader, systemic issues of racism, sexism and class exploitation. Take three examples of TPSC campaigns.

1) In February 2005, TPSC spokesperson Dave Meslin called for TTC users to pay five cents more per ride to replace subway ads. Last December the TPSC argued in favour of TTC spending on art rather than repairs; as Meslin said, “If the money is coming from the public, there’d be a more democratic role as to what is art.”

2) In 2002 the TPSC launched “Art Attack,” with activists papering over ads on garbage bins and bus shelters. In response to claims the

ads brought in TTC revenue, Meslin argued, “The public still ends up paying for these services, because every time you buy something, a proportion of the money... goes toward its advertising budget. It’s essentially a privately run sales tax system. We’re paying taxes to corporations instead of elected governments.”

3) Last year they mounted a “Downtown De-Fence Project”, encouraging home-owners to take down their fences, claiming “a fence discourages communication and collaboration. A fence marks private property.”

None of these measures speak to the realities of being poor. Those extra pennies on TTC fares add up; few can pay to choose art over transit service. Big ads on bus shelters may be obnoxious, but not because they’re a ‘hidden tax’ going to corporations instead of the government. If you’re poor, *all* taxes, public or private, are too high. When activism is about “every time you buy something,” poor people can’t contribute – their money goes to pay the rent and feed the kids. Before you can de-fence your backyard, you need to own one.

Essentially, the TPSC promotes **consumer activism** – the myth that consumers have power under capitalism. But capitalism is a system of production; we consume what the capitalists produce for us. As a system of exploitation, capitalism can absorb any challenges that don’t target its profit. Starbucks carries fair-trade coffee; Adbuster’s corporate spin-off, Blackspot Sneakers, is virulently anti-union, as is American Apparel, whose ‘sweatshop-free’ t-shirts come at the price of misogynist ads, a sexist owner and ‘better’ wages. Poor people aren’t exploited through what they buy, but in the brutal, private space of profit-making. Public space is just another rhetoric of the powerful and privileged: like the government and corporate media, it refuses to acknowledge the realities of poor people’s lives.

MIDDLE OF THE ROAD

Public space is middle class. It tries to achieve social peace through civic engagement, yet the middle class is the only class allowed social peace. Public space is space for *them*, a space free not only of corporate ads and fences, but of residual guilt over their privileges. Meslin argues, “Every public institution has a natural advocate that can speak

on behalf of it, except public space.... if they try to privatize the streets, there's no union, there's no organized group of stakeholders." This 'voice of the voiceless' rhetoric is guilty liberalism, for those with no understanding of broader, systemic oppression.

As usual, the privileged get their voices heard. As Smithsimon argues in *The Death of Public Space?*, "white, male, middle class' views on public space dominate the media [and] become generalized understandings of public space." Witness *Eye Weekly's* fawning coverage of the TPSC, while it's shifted hard to the right, dropping its left-wing columnists and attacking OCAP.

Public space has *always* been the purview of the middle class – because it's *their* public space that's withering. The spaces being commodified were always off-limits to poor people, Smithsimon continues:

"the 'widely received' fear that public space has become an endangered species is largely born of the experiences of white, middle- and upper-class... citizens, the very demographic target of such upscale franchises as Planet Hollywood and gated communities. Even today, there are no IMAX theaters or franchised theme restaurants in working class immigrant neighbourhoods."

As soon as public space becomes middle class, it becomes aesthetic. If the TTC would be prettier with art, then why not a whole street? – no matter how low the rents, and how poor the people who lived there before. Public space becomes social cleansing. Last March, *Now Magazine* – local standard-bearer of the petit-bourgeois – attempted a little self-criticism, after it called the renovated Drake hotel a bulwark of gentrification:

the fault does not lie exclusively with the Drake. It starts inadvertently with folks like me moving into work-

ing-poor neighbourhoods to save a little time and money so we can make art. We radically reconfigure the demographics of the space we've invaded, unwittingly making room for corporate ventures to say that locals demand their presence.

Nearby property values have increased 10-fold. It was only a matter of time before investors came in, from the 'Bohemian condo' project, to the offensively-named "Flophouse Chic Investments" that owns the Drake and five other bars along Queen West. The fault lies with capital – but, in which case, why are artists colluding with it?

The public spacers admit their ignorance of deeper issues. *Spacing Magazine*, a spin-off from the TPSC, writes about gentrification:

I find gentrification to be a hard topic to wrap my head around — it deals with the conflicts of class, income, community "ownership," and a whole bunch of complex issues about capitalism. If that last sentence seems jumbled and disjointed, then you can understand what is going on in my head.

SOCIALISM IN ONE CITY

This confusion is regrettable but not new. It comes from a much older tradition called **municipal socialism**, in which activists tried to get local control over businesses and services. Vladimir Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg, leaders of the Russian and German Communist parties, argued this strategy ignored how the capitalist state works with business, at all levels, to enforce market discipline. Lenin scoffed:

The bourgeois intelligentsia of the West... dreams of social peace, of class conciliation, and seeks to divert public attention away from the fundamental questions of the economic system as a whole, and of the state *structure* as a whole, to minor questions of *local self-government*.

When the TPSC supports an uncritical view of citizens as taxpayers, they ignore the deeply regressive tax system that punishes poor people rather than making the rich pay. They imply the state is a neutral body that redistributes wealth equitably, rather than an instrument of capitalist rule.

In doing so, they echo the class peace program of the municipalists. This assumes a truce between labour and capital is possible. But socialists see things differently: society is split between capitalists who exploit labour for profit, and workers who are exploited by capitalism. When workers defend their interests through strikes, demonstrations and collective organizing, they stand up to the capitalists and carry on a **class war**. The practice – or even the threat – of class war is the *only* thing that won union rights, social programs and, in brief instances like the Winnipeg General Strike, pushed aside capitalist power to show how workers can run society themselves. →



Since the public spacers aren't even aware capital and labour exist, they fall squarely on the bosses' side. As Lenin explained, municipal socialism

does not extend and sharpen the class struggle, but on the contrary, *blunts* it... by assuming that local democracy is possible without the complete democratization of the centre... [it] is *conceivable* in bourgeois society only *away from* the high road of the struggle, only in minor, local, unimportant questions on which *even* the bourgeoisie may yield... without losing the possibility of preserving its class rule.

Local democracy becomes what Marxists call **reformism**: political reforms to create a liveable capitalism. The TPSC pales beside the mass reformist parties of Europe in the early 20th century. But they share an outlook, which Luxemburg describes:

It believes that it is possible to regulate capitalist economy... [and] it arrives in time at... the belief in the possibility of patching up the sores of capitalism. It ends up by subscribing to a program of reaction. It ends up in a utopia.

It's fitting that Spacing Magazine's recent book on Toronto was called *UTOPIA*. By refusing to even acknowledge, let alone take sides in the class struggle, public space repeats the reformist mistakes of the municipal socialists.

PUBLIC SPACE AND SOCIALISM

Public space doesn't have to be bourgeois. As Smithson suggests, "Were the public space experiences of other groups taken into account... a very different history would likely emerge." The first public space theorist was Karl Marx. He showed how capitalism began in England by enclosing common lands, privatizing and fencing off land that peasants worked in common. Dispossessed peasants were forced to move to cities and formed the backbone of the new industrial workforce. Private enclosure has been central to capital accumulation ever since.

Marxists care deeply about resisting privatization, and they fight for reforms. But reforms matter *politically*. Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky called them **transitional demands**: they lead workers to organize small victories, feel their power and fight for more. They test the limits of capitalist power.

In the early 1980s, London's municipal government lowered transit fares, making a public space accessible for millions of working class commuters. In Liverpool, the socialist-controlled council built public housing, passed deficit budgets and demanded the government pay for them, mobilizing the city's unions and citizens in the streets. Recently,

Brazil's Workers Party (PB) created a 'participatory budget' in Porto Alegre, where 30,000 people a year debated and voted on spending priorities.

All of these showed the strengths and limits of local reforms. In London and Liverpool, the Tory government stepped in to crush the movements. In Brazil, divvying up a too-small budget gave a democratic gloss to cost-cutting (which cost the PB the city's government in 2004.) It demonstrates Lenin's warning: when municipal socialism is effective, it brings the national state in to crush it. But, as Trotsky suggested, it can also be used to mobilize against that state.

HOW TO FIGHT FOR PUBLIC SPACE

Public space *can* play a key role in fighting the state and mobilizing workers. But it needs to be understood as part of the daily issues of working people, infused with anti-racist, anti-capitalist politics. Here are some possible transitional demands:

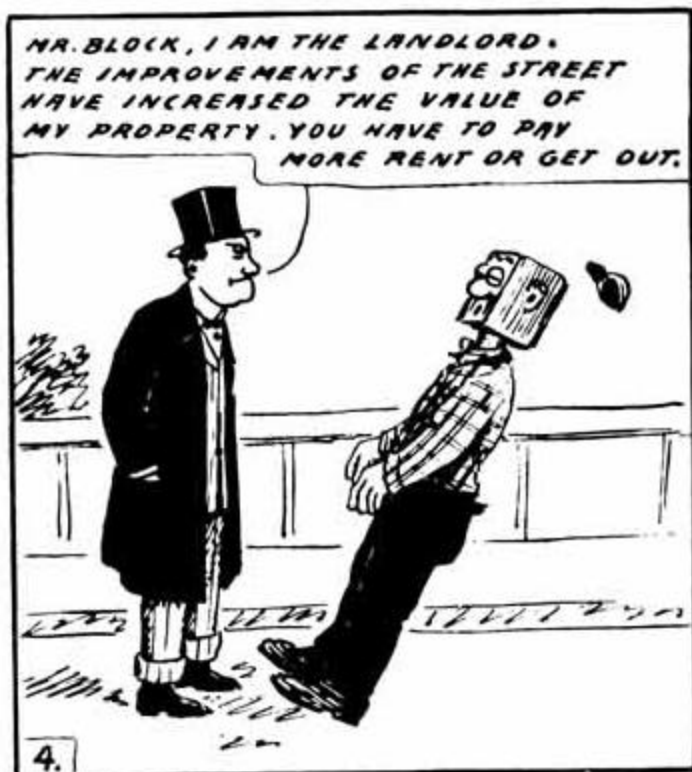
- Picket lines – their right to exist, and their right to be respected by other workers.
- Public schools as safe public space. Toronto activist group No One Is Illegal has defended undocumented school children against immigration officials targeting them in classrooms.
- Fighting Islamophobia. After the recent terrorism arrests, journalists whipped up a racist hysteria about Muslim internet chatrooms being outside 'western culture' and breeding extremism. CTV commented on an arrestee: "Little is known about Nada's husband, but he did post a poem on an Islamic website in which he said he'll soon return to his Lord." The net is public intellectual space that must be defended.
- Fighting police brutality. In the recent invasion of the Jane-Finch neighbourhood, police swooped down in a dawn raid, arresting hundreds of young black men over alleged gang behaviour. Black people have a right to public space free of police harassment.

The middle class has hijacked public space, with its narrow, elitist concerns over art and advertising. But public space is about racial and sexist oppression and the confrontation between capital and labour. We need to turn public space into a transitional demand, one that challenges the state and capitalist power, building working class capacity to fight back. **R**

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MR. BLOCK

HE TRIES POLITICAL ACTION



Organizing Against Hunger and Poverty in the Somali Community

John Clarke

On the last day of March, an office opened in North Etobicoke that represented, for the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (OCAP), a major advance. The location will be operated by a group calling itself OCAP Women of Etobicoke. They are all members of the Somali community who have been drawn into our organization by way of some very practical organizing that has touched their lives.

Toronto's Somali community gives the lie to Canadian 'multiculturalism.' Over 90% of its members live in poverty. Any professional qualifications they bring with them are disregarded. They take low paying, precarious jobs or turn to a welfare system that feels it has a right to humiliate them in return for the sub-poverty pittance it provides. The community's young people can't leave their homes without walking the gauntlet of harassment by cops and private security agencies. Those who have not yet secured their right to live here as citizens deal with an immigration system that has a strange way of 'celebrating diversity'. The Somalis of Toronto experience daily the poverty and racism that awaits 'New Canadians.'

OCAP has had a foothold in the Somali Community for a number of years and we have mobilized on a range of issue it confronts. In the last year, that working relationship reached a new level by way of a struggle around an element of the Welfare System known as the Special Diet Policy.

The Liberal Party in Ontario has, since it came to power, worked to consolidate rather than reverse the Harris Common Sense Revolution. It junked any promises it had made to address the needs of those on welfare and has given begrudged increases of less than the rate of inflation. People on assistance have seen the spending power of their cheques reduced by 40% in ten years and McGuinty has maintained this situation. Hungry people work for lower wages and he is not about to interfere with the 'competitive edge' by raising welfare rates if he can avoid it.

After McGuinty took over, OCAP began to explore ways to effectively press for him to 'Raise the Rates.' Our discussions began to focus on the notion that many things people are supposed to be able to get when they are on welfare are kept from them by the system's bureaucracy. We came across the

Special Diet Policy under which those receiving assistance could get up to \$250 a month per person in food allowance if a medical provider deemed it necessary. Of course, this policy was little known and often refused to those who applied for it but we asked ourselves what would happen if we organized community-based clinics to enable people to obtain the food supplement. We also asked what would be the effect of ensuring that welfare officialdom had to deal with applicants who were organized to act collectively. Finally, we considered what would be the result if knowledge of the benefit were communicated through every available channel to poor communities.

The balance of 2005 was an exercise in finding out the answers to these three questions. We made contact with some dozens of health providers ready to work with us on clinics. In Toronto, over



8,000 people were diagnosed as being in need of the Supplement by this method and clinics were held in range of cities in the rest of the Province. From the start, it was clear that the Somali community, with its extraordinary internal communication and sense of mutual aid, would be at the backbone of organizing to access the Special Diet.

Once the Campaign was underway, the City of Toronto's welfare bureaucracy began a frantic round of initiatives to block access to the allowance. Local policies were written and rewritten almost weekly. Families accessing the Supplement were targeted for

denial as suspect 'multiple entitlements'. Nurse practitioners, dieticians and midwives were suddenly told they could no longer diagnose the need for nutritional adequacy. A round of attempts were made to force people to reapply on new Special Diet forms, even if they had recently been approved to receive the benefit.

OCAP defeated these attacks with an ongoing round of collective action. The Mayor's office was occupied, the head offices of Social Services were taken over, and local welfare offices received mass delegations of people demanding their right to the food supplement. Many communities that face poverty in Toronto responded. A clinic was held in Spanish. A Chinese language radio station requested an interview with one of our Cantonese-speaking members because they were being flooded with inquiries. Vietnamese people developed their own informal network to co-operate in securing and defending the Supplement. But I don't believe we ever had an action in this Campaign where the Somali Community was not the main force involved.

The OCAP organized drive to access the Special Diet reached a peak in October of last year when forty medical providers diagnosed 1,100 people, at a clinic on the lawns of Queen's Park, as being in need of the benefit. As large an impact as we were able to directly organize, however, the informal network in poor communities across Ontario had many times the effect. In 2005, total benefits paid out for Special Diet items doubled in size to \$80 million.

After ten years of trying to reverse the destruction of income-support systems in Ontario, we finally had found a means win back some ground. We realized that Queen's Park would move against us but the transformation of the Supplement from an obscure provision to a well known entitlement was a potential change in the balance of forces and not something that the Liberals would be able to take away without a fight. The drastic cuts to the Policy that came in November did, indeed, spark a wave of indignation and a fight back that is still ongoing. Still, the recent Provincial Budget, with its miserable 2% increase in social assistance rates, shows that that fight will not be an easy one. The strength that was shown by the Somali community and by many other poor people in different parts of Ontario forms the basis for winning it.

The cut to the Special Diet Supplement has not stopped the organizing momentum in Etobicoke. Delegations from the community to local welfare offices to win benefits for families are ongoing. People have organized actions to force the property management company at a major public housing project to carry out maintenance work



that was being neglected. A recent picket of the 23 Division, to challenge police harassment of Somali youth, has emboldened people to the point where cops are being challenged when they come into areas to carry out their intimidation of the community. One mother recently told a couple of cops who were harassing her son: "Our community is safe, apart from when you show up. You're not welcome here." People are starting to stand up and fight back as the situation demands.

The OCAP Women of Etobicoke are a glimpse of the potential for organizing communities under attack. In order to support such initiatives, however, you have to stand on the appropriate side of the line. Union leaderships seeking new, collaborative relations with the Liberal Party, can't be part of this fight. Those who refuse to challenge an NDP Mayor who boasts of the number of cops he has put on the streets are, similarly, out of the running. To work with working class and poor communities under attack, you must be ready to fight their enemies. **R**

John Clarke is a longtime activist with OCAP.

'I'd rather be on stage'

Rinaldo Walcott

Since the Boxing Day death of Jane Creeba earlier this year I have found myself in conversations with journalists, policy makers, various levels of law enforcement, young people and a range of other concerned parties discussing how another 'year of the gun' might be avoided. It just might be that 2005 will go down as a kind of anomaly that never happens again. It is not possible to predict what the summer of 2006 will bring us in terms of gun violence. But it is somewhat possible to predict what our city might begin to look like as those of us who see gun crime as merely an aberration practiced by undisciplined people endorse more and more law and order approaches to deal with it. It is also clear that many of the approaches being taken remain piece-meal and are built more on publicity for ruling parties than on serious investment in people and their communities. It is clear to me that very specific communities and their inhabitants are being pronounced the terrorists within our gates.

Recently, when the Toronto Police raided numerous homes in the Jamestown neighborhood in search of the Jamestown Crips, the writing became clearer on the walls. How do we deal with terrorism in this new post-modern cowboy context? We go to war with it. And it is exactly that, going to war, that I suspect will erupt this summer. Not a war between street gangs, which really means black gangs (whether racially black or not), but between black identified and 'black tainted' (tainted in terms of identifiable forms of dress, attitude and other markers of black popular culture, especially hip hop) people. I would argue that the raid on Jamestown was in fact the first spark of this war.

However, for many of us who lived through a Toronto of the late 1970s and the 1980s we lived in a Toronto that heavily policed black bodies: the many black men killed by Toronto police in that period; the still remaining and not yet fixed evidence of racial profiling; and now allegations by a senior officer of cover-ups concerning complaints about police misconduct in such matters. The Chief offered no apologies to such residents. That, my friends, is a war. Similarly, in the much sensationalized and excerpted DVD *The Real Toronto*, little has been made of the voices of disenfranchised and alienated black youth who point to history of harassment and criminalization. The evidence of gun crime is clear and requires serious solutions but equally problematic are the solutions being offered.

Despite the many social projects and programs announced recently by the province and the City's ongoing projects to involve a larger slice of the citizenry in taking responsibility for the deeper social malaise that has produced this first generation form of violence, much remains piece-meal and short-sighted in these areas. This past winter the province announced with much fan fair The Youth Challenge Fund and named Michael Pinball

Clemons, the Argonauts coach, its Chairperson. The fund targets thirteen communities suffering from the effects of violence; even more recently the province announced another 3 million to faith-based groups to run a series of programs in similar communities.

What is not clear and remains to be seen, but is somewhat predictable give the route the province has taken with The Youth Challenge Fund and the faith-based funding, is that this type of social engineering is most likely to fail in the long term even though it produces seductive effects in the short term. The churches will attract the youth who were already there along with a few others and the terms of The Challenge Fund offer a promise that requires far more than the terms of the fund would allow it to do. In this case such a fund also needs strong and insightful government commitments to real, sustained investment in communities and people; their infrastructure, economic, cultural and social lives. To date not one level of government has seriously offered any kind of assessment of how to bring deeply alienated and excluded citizens into the Canadian family. It is that alienation and disenfranchisement that is so disturbingly present on *The Real Toronto* DVD.

In 1992, after the Yonge Street Riots, Stephen Lewis identified anti-black racism as central to youth alienation – it still remains. In the aftermath of that report a number of short-lived social programs were put into place to stem the alienation. One of those programs at the city level, Fresh Arts, was run out of the Toronto Arts Council. The Fresh Arts program has given this city a significant number of cultural producers: artists, singers, rappers, filmmakers, video makers, etc. In my view what we need are programs that will allow young people to engage with and make sense of the ways in which they can contribute to the culture of their communities and beyond. Such an approach means providing young people spaces where they can offer a critique of culture and society and offer up alternatives. These spaces cannot be ones enlisted to police young people through theology nor through the seductions of a sporting life and its glamour no matter how much such is played down. The truth is that both sports inspired and faith-based programs have failed when applied in the United States. But if the recent raid in Jamestown is any indication it is looking like war will be waged on youth this summer. Such a war, like all wars, will only prove disastrous for our city. But all I will say is "don't blame the youth" – as Devon put it so eloquently over a decade ago in response to police violence – because, as rapper K'naan says, they would rather be on stage. **R**

Rinaldo Walcott is Canada Research Chair of Social Justice and Cultural Studies at OISE.UT.

Don't Ask Don't Tell

Yen Chu

The Toronto District School Board is still in the midst of community consultations over the implementation of a Don't Ask Don't Tell (DADT) policy in all their schools. The policy will mean that non-status students will be able to attend school without fear of being deported and detained. The importance of this policy was made evident on April 27th when federal officials went to a Toronto Catholic high school and detained Gerald and Kimberly Lizano-Sossa and later deported them and their family to Costa Rica in July. In a separate incident, two elementary school children were detained and used as bait to bring their parents out of hiding.

As a result of these incidents, the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) trustees voted to accept a DADT policy in all Toronto public schools on May 24th. In addition to that policy, federal officials will not be allowed into TDSB schools, but will be referred to the office of the director. The DADT policy in schools is just one component of a broader campaign to implement a city-wide policy. The policy would allow non-status residents to access city services such as health, policing, social services and education without being required to provide information on their status. Nor will their information be given to federal officials.

The DADT policy exists in various forms in a number of American cities including Cambridge, Massachusetts, New York, Chicago, Los Angeles and Seattle. The policy in these cities came about through community organizing, but in some cities it is also used as a budgetary measure in reaction to the downloading of costs to cities in enforcing federal immigration laws.

In Toronto, the campaign, which was started in March 2004 by a coalition of community organizations, women shelters, unions and activists including No One is Illegal, OCAP and the CAW, has won some partial victories. As well as the victory at the TDSB, another small step towards a full DADT policy in Toronto came on February 15th when the Toronto Police Services Board agreed to a policy that would prevent the police from asking witnesses or victims of crime for their immigration status. But the board didn't accept the Don't Tell component of the policy. Also the policy has not been adhered to, as there have been reports that police are still asking for immigration status.

Currently, the DADT campaign will be organizing for the upcoming municipal election to make the DADT policy an election issue with city councillors and school trustees. Mayor David Miller had expressed some interest in the policy after his victory in the 2003 election, but has since said that his staff is researching the policy further. The delay in implementing a DADT policy is inexcusable, especially since the Canada Immigration and Refugee Act does not prevent children without status from attending school nor does it require police to ask for immigration status.

As it is, residents without status live with constant fear and uncertainty; they are often exploited and oppressed in the workforce. They often work for little pay and in unsafe working conditions. In particular, women are vulnerable to abuse and sexual exploitation. A DADT policy will be the first step towards protecting and improving the rights of Toronto residents without status, residents who have contributed greatly to Toronto's economic growth and wealth. City services should be based on residency and not status.

While the DADT campaign is at a local level, it is part of a broader anti-racism movement for the regularisation of all non-status residents, the rights of immigrants and refugees and the free movement of people. There are about 20,000 to 200,000 people living without status in Canada. Some have no status because their visa has expired or their refugee claims have been turned down, while others are still waiting for their claims to be processed or for their hearings to take place. Processing of refugee claims can take as long as 29 months or longer. Many immigrants and refugees face an immigration system that is slow, arbitrary, restrictive and one that prefers those that who are wealthy and white. Racism is still at the root of Canada's restrictive immigration and refugee policies, despite the rhetoric of multiculturalism and diversity.

Immigrants, refugees and people without status are not only racialized, but also criminalized. Witness the racist rhetoric around Lebanese-Canadians who were trying to flee southern Lebanon when Israel attacked the region. For right-wing Canadians, Lebanese-Canadians should never be allowed to visit their home country, nor should they be allowed to return to Canada to flee violence. The fight for a DADT policy is also a fight against the discrimination and racism that migrants face in the most multicultural city in Canada. To get involved or for more information contact toronto.nooneisillegal.org. **R**

Yen Chu lives in Toronto.

The Future Face of Policing in Montreal and Beyond:

The Mask of Multilateralization

Hicham Safieddine

Private police, usually referred to as private security, are not new to North America. For the past decade, there has been a proliferation of private security firms that perform the vast majority of tasks normally restricted to public authorities. According to Statistics Canada, there are more private than public officers in Canada today. What distinguishes this growth of private policing is that, unlike health care or education, it is not a two-tier one. Rather it is an overlapping and interconnected web of private and public institutions that share the functions of authorizing and providing policing services.

This phenomenon, referred to by some analysts as multilateralization, has far reaching implications when it comes to questions of accountability, accessibility, and mandate of police bodies as well as the very integrity of the nation state as the sole legitimate user of force. This multilateralization is also expected to strengthen the transnational nature of policing, with multinational security firms making decisions in local settings that are not necessarily in the interest of the population of the cities, provinces or countries they operate in.

It is becoming increasingly hard to distinguish the party primarily responsible for overseeing policing activities. In fact, an inspection of the latest legislative reforms for private security reveal that this multilateralization is a blurry mask for the slow and indirect take over by private security sector of the governance, operation and regulation of the act of policing. In the case of Quebec, the participation of the private sector in dictating the shape and form of private security is clearly delineated in the provincial Private Security Act, which was enacted in 2004. The bill calls

for the establishment of a Private Security Bureau in charge of issuing permits for private security firms as well as regulating the operation of these firms.

The ostensible mission of the Bureau is to “protect the public... by issuing and controlling permits and processing complaints against permit holders, among other means.” However, the Bureau is governed via a board of director composed of 11 members. Only four of those members are appointed by the relevant ministry, while the rest are representative of private security firms. In effect, then, the firms have the dominant voice in authorizing and regulating private security operations, as well as looking into complaints against their own companies, hardly a set up that would guarantee the best interest of the public.

The Bureau is cited by the newly released Law Commission of Canada report as an example of the “oversight” required to complete the process of the multilateralization of policing.

The 2006 Law Commission report, which is a primary source of recommendations for the ministry of justice, also recommends the establishment of a national policing centre “with a broad mandate to foster and coordinate research, experimentation, innovation, and best practices in policing, policing policy and relevant legislation in Canada.” More significantly, and in the same breath, the commission urges that the proposed centre “should foster the widest possible collaboration between state and non-state contributors towards effective policing” to reflect “Canada’s core democratic values.”

With the infiltration of the private sector into the legislated governing structures of policing, the commodification of what has been for decades a public good is likely

to redefine the boundaries of public policing, which might limit the latter's function to the only task that has not been taken up by private policing yet, namely street protests. This will not rule out, as is the case in Montreal, the cooperation of the public and private sector in devising new methods and techniques to reinforce the global vision of a secure and safe city (to those who can afford it of course, locals and tourists alike) with little regard to issues of equity, equal accessibility of public spaces, and justice. In the case of Montreal, the multilateralization of police services could be a last resort following years of declared police reform, which began over two decades ago.

The first phase of this reform, at least officially, was an attempt to change the mentality of police officers in dealings with the community at large. The second phase involved the introduction of community policing as a means of bringing police to a better understanding of the communities they are assigned to serve. Both reform drives have failed to stem the reputation of brutality of police among minority and activists groups.

The Instigation of Fear in Policing Montreal

Montreal is the capital of mass arrests in Canada, says long-time police anti-bru-

tality activist Alex Popovich. For the last decade or so, the Collective Opposed to Police Brutality says Montreal has witnessed more than 2,200 politically-motivated arrests, more than 1,500 of them part of mass arrests conducted by police during street demonstrations. These include 260 arrests during a Quebec student strike in spring of 2005, 371 at the protest against police brutality in 2002 and an estimated 400 prior to demos against the WTO in July 2003.

In a 2005 comparative study of police repression of 1,152 protests between 1998 and 2004 in Canada's three largest cities, Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver, all three cities were found roughly comparable in terms of frequency of demonstrations and arrests. On the whole, however, police in Montreal appear to be the most repressive, followed by Toronto and then Vancouver. One of the telling observations of the study is that protests in Montreal seem to be less about homelessness and other local issues and more about global ones. The study based on that and other factors concludes that the trigger of repression, including the tactic of mass arrest, seems to be less about what the protestors do and more about what the protest is about, who the protestors are and what is the history of their dealings with police.

Popovich says the mass-arrest policies, which became prominent towards the

end of the nineties, came on the heels of a zero deficit, zero tolerance policy pursued by the Bouchard government in the mid nineties. But Popovich points out that a subtle change in tactics and approach to controlling dissent may be taking place in the force.

Initially, mass arrests executed under the "conspiracy", "vandalism", "armed assault" and "unlawful assembly" provisions were followed by lengthy court proceedings that were designed to wear out activists, drain their financial resources, and create criminal records to deter their future participation in political activity. These trials, many of which are still underway, also place considerable cost on police who occasionally appeal court decisions that acquit the accused.

More recently, and possibly in line with the strategy of prevention versus prosecution common among private security, an increasing number of arrests have been carried under a Montreal by-law known as P-6 or the anti-demonstration law, in which violators are simply ticketed and later released.

Popovich says that following the intense wave of anti-globalization protests that swept through Montreal in the late 90's and early this decade, police may not perceive as much of a threat from recent activists and thus resorted to less oppressive means. But another aspect is the →



"Couple of guys named Marx and Engels. Find 'em and give 'em the works."



Will private policing transform jails?

attempt by police to create an environment of intimidation and fear among non-militant activists who might be radicalized under severe punitive measures but simply deterred by financial fines and the experience of an arrest.

By discouraging people from showing up in the first place rather than confronting them with force under the eyes of the media after the fact, the police seem to undermine the very culture of demonstrating and voicing protestation.

Police anti-brutality activist Francois DuCanal, says the adoption of preventative tactics is part and parcel of the increased cooperation between public and private security forces which is also manifested in the “social cleansing” campaigns in downtown: “When, for example, summer festivals take place, the police come and cordons off certain public areas and kick out the undesired elements, in this case the poor and the homeless, and then the private security in charge during the event will make sure that the cleared out area remains as such.”

DuCanal says there are close to 26 new codes used by police officers to deal with the clearing out of sex workers, pan handlers and squeegees from certain areas of downtown. These measures are part of the overall strategy to market cities as globally

competitive zones in an increasingly transnational world.

Lastly, the evolving role of public police and its increasingly intimate relationship with private security in cities cannot be fully understood without an examination of the impact of the culture of counter-terrorism that has become prevalent in North America. The increased involvement of police in “counter-terrorism” operations, called by some “high-gear policing,” has led to the increased militarization of the police as well as contributing to the divorce between security and justice.

Success in these operations is achieved at the cost of sometimes working outside the law and employing community relationships for political infiltration. While this political function of police could stem the tide of privatization, the multilateralization approach could furnish the global capitalist elite fighting this so-called war on terror the perfect set up to further transform policing into a purely security apparatus while preserving its public facade as a government force to serve and protect the people. **R**

Hicham Safieddine is a Montreal-based journalist.

Planet of Slums

Reviewed by Angela Joya

Planet of Slums
By Mike Davis
Verso, 2006, 111pp.

The persistent spread of slums over the last two decades has forced both policy makers and academics to address the causes and factors underlying this expansion. Explanations for slums have often framed the problem in terms of uncontrolled demographic increases, rural-urban migration, the absence of private property rights and wrong government policies. These dubious and ideological explanations, while masking the real causes, have provided support for both IMF and World Bank policy prescriptions for the Third World. Despite the claims of these powerful institutions, their proposed solutions have not proven to be a panacea, but rather have exacerbated the housing problem experienced by the poor and the workers in the Third World.

Mike Davis' *Planet of Slums* aims to debunk the 'common sense' about the rise of slums that have been constructed by international financial institutions (IFIs) and the G8. Davis' book captures the complexity of the urban crisis that has gripped the Third World in the last 25 years. His book links the escalation of the housing crisis to economic development policies and the global shift towards neoliberalism. He does not treat housing problems in isolation from World Bank and IMF policies of economic restructuring and expansion of the private sector in the third world. The first two chapters, which are more descriptive, provide a picture of the crisis of slums in different parts of the world. The rest of the book is more analytical while at the same time contributing to a larger debate on urban housing issues that has been highlighted in the recent conference organized by the UN-HABITAT in Vancouver, British Columbia. Despite the claims of the IMF and the World Bank that the private sector will correct the ills created by large public sectors and government intervention, evidence from the last 25 years of neoliberal policies suggests otherwise. Davis has argued that the very policies offered by the World Bank and IMF have led to an escalation of slums, rather than a reduction of the problem.



With the burden of debt placed on governments, the restructuring of the public sector and the development of the private sector has been the trend across most of the Third World. The process of state restructuring has not only resulted in increased unemployment, but as subsidies were cut it also reduced the ability of the public sector to respond to socio-economic problems. In the case of the housing sector, private sector solutions ranged from encouraging self-help strategies to providing micro-finance through NGOs, none of which resulted in reducing or enhancing the condition of slum dwellers or the homeless.

As Davis observes, "the minimalist role of the national governments in housing supply has been reinforced by current neo-liberal economic orthodoxy as defined by the IMF and the World Bank. The structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) imposed upon debtor nations in the late 1970s and 1980s required a shrinkage of government programs and, often, the privatization of the housing market". In short, the 1970s and 1980s saw a shift to a less interventionist role for the governments in the provision of housing. Both the public and the private sectors encouraged 'improving' and 'upgrading slums', rather than building proper and adequate housing, which would meet the high demand for affordable housing.

By the end of the 1980s, numerous reports on slums issued by UN-HABITAT attested to the failure of neoliberal policies. However, such attestation did not put a break on the neoliberal model of development in the Third World. Thus, in the 1990s, the burden of debt, combined with increased global competition, determined economic policies and housing production. While the World Bank had placed false hope in the 1990s as the decade to correct the failures of the 1980s, the perpetuation of neoliberal orthodoxy and policies ensured that the effects of SAPs continued throughout the last decade of the century. Davis writes that the 1990s, "as *The Challenge of Slums* wryly notes, were the first decade in which global urban development took place within almost utopian parameters of neoclassical market freedom."

In effect, economic development became directly →

The current grim picture of slums is thus a result of capitalist strategies for development in the Third World.

linked to tourism as the newly discovered 'competitive edge' in most of the Third World. The outcome has been increased precarious labour conditions alongside soaring land values. Davis has demonstrated how such a shift in development policy has seriously raised the issue of accessibility to, and affordability of, an adequate living space, whether in Asia, Latin America, the Middle East or Africa. The impact of tourist-centred policies on slums has directly affected the workers and the unemployed who have already been living in precarious living conditions. As Davis highlights, even from such poverty and misery, profits are being made. Whether under pressure from developers or local authorities, or subjected to the imperatives of informal real estate markets, slum dwellers are no longer safe in their shacks. Such has been the reality of privatized land markets. As Davis writes, "flat peripheral land, even desert, has market value, and today most low-income settlements on the urban edge, although often characterized as squatting, actually operate through an invisible real estate market". Highlighting the impact of private sector expansion on slums, Davis argues, "Real estate markets... have returned to the slums with a vengeance, and despite the enduring mythology of

heroic squatters and free land, the urban poor are increasingly the vassals of landlords and developers".

The gentrification and beautification of urban centres has resulted in displacing slum-dwellers while the 'regularization efforts' have led to the creation of private property in land. These policies have exacerbated social segregation, restricting public access to space. Citing Alain Jacquemin, Davis argues that "the confiscation of local power by urban development authorities, whose role is to build modern infrastructures that allow the wealthier parts of poor cities to plug themselves – and themselves alone – into the world cyber economy." As *Planet of the Slums* has shown, whether it is in Zamalek in Cairo, Mumbai in India, or Alphaville in Brazil, the rich enjoy lifestyles similar to any posh neighbourhood in the West – with malls, swimming pools and cafes. At the other extreme, Davis points out that over a million people live in graveyards in Cairo, while the streets of India have become the permanent living quarters for millions more.

Neoliberal policies have also affected construction and urban development. With the private sector as the dominant producer, the only housing built is either targeted towards middle class or high-income earners, while low cost housing is left to the informal market. This raises the question of the safety and standards of informal housing, but in the absence of any other viable alternative informal housing seems to be the only option for the poor. Another outcome of the disman-

ling of state regulations and rent controls has been speculative activity in the land market. Public and state-owned land has often been sold at below market prices to landowners and developers who keep them vacant while forcing market prices to soar and restricting access.

The current grim picture of slums is thus a result of capitalist strategies for development in the Third World. Rejecting World Bank logic, Davis argues, "The commodification of housing and next generation urban land in a demographically dynamic but job-poor metropolis is a theoretical recipe for exactly the vicious circles of spiraling rents and overcrowding that were previously described in late Victorian London and Naples. The very market forces, in other words, that the World Bank currently hails as the solution to the Third World urban housing crisis are the classical instigators of that same crisis."

In sum, Davis's *Planet of Slums* demystifies the false logic of the World Bank and IMF by showing the failure of neoliberal strategies for housing. Finally, Davis has offered an alternative, sophisticated investigative study of slums across the Third World, situating the rise and increase of slums within the context of capitalist policies of development that were adopted by the governments of the Third World. As he ends the book, Davis is faced with a dilemma of social justice and political strategies to improve living conditions for slum dwellers. His dilemma is well captured in the following excerpt from *Planet of Slums*: "The late capitalist triage of humanity, then, has already taken place. As Jan Breman, writing of India, has warned: 'A point of no return is reached when a reserve army awaiting to be incorporated into the labour process becomes stigmatized as a permanently redundant mass, an excessive burden that cannot be included now or in the future, in economy and society. This metamorphosis is, in my opinion at least, the real crisis of world capitalism.'"

Given that slum populations will increase by 25 million per year, Davis asks whether they will be the breeding ground of new agents of revolution and social change. He leaves the answer for his next book, *Governments of the Poor*, a collaboration between Davis and Forrest Hylton, where he investigates the degree of organization and mobilization of the poor.

As a final word, Davis' *Planet of Slums* is an interesting and informative read for both the urban specialist and non-specialist. Beside the flow and ease with which Davis writes, *Planet of Slums* provides a sophisticated theoretical framework and analytical approach to the study of slums and housing. It is a great source of material on housing problems and urban crisis in the global south. **R**

Angela Joya is a member of the Canadian Middle East Socialists Network.

CAW Convention:

much ado about very little

Herman Rosenfeld

Canada's largest private sector union held its triennial constitutional convention on August 15th-18th in Vancouver. In the current context of right-wing attacks by the Harper government, the tension in the Middle East, the ongoing threats to private and public sector unionized jobs, the crisis of the political left and the relative stagnation of union organizing, one would have hoped that the CAW would have used the occasion to debate these fundamental challenges and engage in a rethink of its role in addressing them. Sadly, there was practically none of this.

There were policy papers on politics and organizing. Willy Lambert, a rank and file member, was going to run against union president Buzz Hargrove in the first contested election of the union's top leader in living memory. There was anger amongst a small number of activists over the union's position on the Lebanon war and some hope and initiative on the part of younger members seeking to build support for resolutions calling for new structural openings for youth. But, when all was said and done, there was little serious debate.

The debates on the policy papers were relatively superficial and were rushed through by the leadership. Lambert announced his withdrawal at the nomination caucus the day before the planned election. Speakers from the floor on the Middle East and youth resolutions injected some life into the convention, but were given short shrift from a controlling and dominating chair.

The guest speakers didn't represent any fresh or challenging movements (and Georgetti, the CLC president, was embarrassingly uninspiring). The obligatory video, touting the union's struggles of the past period, was interesting but not very exciting. Looking at the convention from the point of view of the press, it seemed that the only memorable outcome was Buzz Hargrove's public marriage proposal to his partner.

All in all, the role of the convention as a "celebration", trumped efforts to seriously confront real issues and challenges. This is more serious than a lost opportunity to move forward. It reflects a number of major weaknesses that plague the CAW, the union movement as a whole and the Canadian left.

THE ELECTION THAT WASN'T

Willie Lambert's failed electoral challenge to Buzz Hargrove is one example of these weaknesses. Lambert, a bus driver and labour council activist from Oakville tried to raise many of the criticisms that the left had identified over the past few years: the acceptance of concessions; the drift towards corporatist approaches when dealing with the auto sector, that is, basing their

strategy on a common project with business, government and the union; the increasing acceptance of the logic of competitiveness, the separation from the rest of labour (which remains a key obstacle to building a larger movement) and the embrace of Liberal candidates in the last Federal election. But he was unable to clearly articulate these issues. He even ended up opposing the break with the NDP, appearing to be to the right of Hargrove on this issue.

Equally important, while Lambert often criticized the leadership at various policy conferences and CAW Council meetings (and in doing so, stimulated needed debate and discussion) he had no experience as a leader in the union. He lacked a base in any of the union's leadership structures and his influence barely moved beyond a small number of critics. As well, he wasn't associated with any major struggle in any sector in the union. In many ways, his candidacy was seen as a possible lightning rod for protest against the leadership, but not as representing an alternative or threat to Hargrove.

Amongst the stratum of secondary leadership and activists that questioned the direction of the union and Hargrove's leadership – those that have led many of the union's key struggles – Lambert wasn't seen as a serious candidate.

But this raises a deeper problem: Over the years, the leadership of the CAW – preceding and including the Hargrove era – carved out a particular administrative and political niche that made it difficult for the left to challenge it, and discouraged the establishment of an independent organizational presence inside the union. Contributing to this is the crisis of the left and the disappearance of socialist parties and movements.

Through a combination of taking progressive political positions, initiating and leading aggressive fightbacks against employers, pioneering efforts to fight lean production and collaborative workplace regimes and appointing left activists and leaders to the staff, the CAW leaders established themselves as leaders of the left in the labour movement. At the same time, they made sure that they maintained strong central leadership inside the union.

Until the past decade, larger workplaces, particularly the big three locals, had a certain degree of autonomy which served as a challenge to the leadership. In recent years, the leadership has been able to exercise tight control over developments in these key workplaces of the union. And, like in many other unions, the leadership also has closely regulated access to the organization's higher-level elected political positions and appointed staff.

Despite the left orientation, over time this central control inside the union tended to limit democratic debate and discussion, in spite of the number of conferences and public forums →

that the CAW structures provided. This became more acute as the union moved towards a more corporatist and politically centrist orientation. It placed enormous pressure on those local leaders and activists who began to question or oppose the policies of the administration, but still wanted to be able to build a career in the union.

To be fair, today's union activists have no collective experience with running or participating in political campaigns that could challenge the existing leadership. While there have been important political mobilizations (like the Ontario Days of Action), since the debate over concessions and the formation of the Canadian union in the early and mid-1980's there haven't been any real internal *debates* either. Opposition is still seen as somehow being subversive of the union itself, not to mention for individual careers.

The lack of an organized socialist left, within or outside the union, that could have helped develop an orientation and program of action for an opposition (or even for an autonomous left caucus) was also key. Such a left could have formed a space to bring together activists, leaders and members with serious criticisms to use the many democratic structures the union provides. Without this, these structures have atrophied and criticism has been limited to individual complaints or reservations.

This is not to mention the force of the administration's support of the incumbent and opposition to Lambert. Almost every pre-convention forum and conference was asked to "endorse" Hargrove's presidential bid. The president publicly dismissed Lambert's criticism of the GM concessions, claiming that Lambert had no understanding of the need to protect investment since he worked in the public sector. Willie claimed that his local union was threatened with a forced merger with a larger local and there were rumours of pressure being exerted on local unions not to allow Lambert to speak at meetings. Even without this heavy handedness, it was clear to all – including the administration – that Lambert never had a chance.

Lambert's candidacy must be seen in this context: no one from the stratum of tested local leaders and activists was ready to take on the leadership in a public way. Perhaps they would have been willing to rally around distinct issues or resolutions that might have opposed "shelf agreements" or called on the union to develop a campaign against NAFTA. Lambert was the only one willing to run, and it was clear that he lacked a base, not only amongst the rank and file members, but even amongst those that might serve someday as the germ of an organized class struggle and left current in the union.

Given this set of circumstances, it should be no surprise that Willie couldn't find a nominator and ended up pulling out of the race.

TWO DEBATES THAT WEREN'T...

The convention unveiled two new policy documents: *In the Eye of the Storm: The CAW and the Re-making of Canadian Politics*, and *Organize!* The former, articulated the CAW's vision of politics, including a new *CAW Statement of Principles on Working Class Politics*. The latter, committed the union to organizing new members. Neither put forward any new surprises, but did add some new wrinkles: the politics paper restated and defended policies that had been debated and voted on in previous CAW Council meetings during the previous year but used the occasion to articulate a set of principles for the union's future political action. The organizing paper dealt mostly with the union's experiences in trying to bring in new members, while concentrating on the kinds of changes the union would have to make in its culture, approach and structure in order to become more successful in organizing.

The surprise wasn't what was in the documents; it was that the debate was flat, uninteresting and short. The political debate seemed like a faint echo of previous debates at CAW Council meetings although in fairness, many of the same delegates had participated in some of those debates.

Most of the speakers talked about their disappointment with the NDP and the expulsion of president Hargrove from the party. Mercifully gone were most of the plaintiff cries for support of the social democrats, but, save for one comment, equally missing were challenges to the union's dalliance with the Liberals, the hypocrisy of the union's role in the previous federal election, the syndicalist bent of the policy state-



ment and the purposeful ambivalence of the term "socialism" in the document. While the document repeated over and over the necessity of working class political movements to challenge the policies of business and neo-liberalism, there wasn't any discussion about how to commit the union to put this into practice. In an organization where such talk hasn't been matched by any real action, this was extremely important.

Most of all, aside from some appeals to "circle the wagons against the expulsion of our president," there was almost no passion.

The debate over the organizing document was similar. The passionate language of the document was lost. The discussion from the floor lacked the kind of thoughtfulness one would expect from a union that hasn't been able to make major organizing breakthroughs in new or even their traditional sectors – much like the rest of the union movement. One didn't get a sense from the debate that anything much would change.

These documents are certainly worth further discussion and analysis, but the rush to "celebrate" made sure that the convention wasn't the place where that would happen.



....AND TWO DEBATES THAT WERE

In every convention, there are one or two issues that galvanize the interest of the floor and lead to a challenge of the leadership. This year two such debates occurred: one, about a series of resolutions on youth and the other on the Lebanon war.

One local union submitted a number of resolutions to the convention calling for special measures to further the participation of youth, such as mandated youth committees in each local union and the creation of a designated position on the National Executive Board for youth. Young members from a number of local unions came to the convention to convince the delegates to support these resolutions in the face of the recommendation of non-concurrence from the resolutions committee.

In the debate, the leadership furiously opposed the young people who came up to the mike, using many of the same arguments that opponents of affirmative action traditionally use to put down efforts of different minorities to address historic structural inequalities. While it may be true that problems of youth participation in the union won't necessarily be solved by creating new structures, no one talked about the underlying conditions that keep young people playing a larger role. The lack of mass mobilizations of any kind – the struggles that had inspired young people to participate in large numbers during the Ontario Days of Action and the anti-globalization demonstrations – might be a clue to the source of the problem.

Soon after, the convention debated an emergency resolution on the Lebanon war. It had been drafted behind the scenes with-

out any input from the core of union anti-imperialist activists and attempted to steer a “middle” course between Israel and its antagonists. While it was certainly an improvement from the earlier, embarrassingly pro-Zionist public statements coming from President Hargrove, and reflected the genuine desire of the union's National Executive Board for peace, such neutrality is impossible and the resolution ended up justifying Israel's perspective in a number of ways.

The debate really was one-sided. A series of speakers denounced the role of Israel and its history of aggression against the Palestinian people and, in particular, its massive attacks on Lebanon and Gaza. No one spoke in favour of the resolution. Hargrove made a point of cutting off speakers precisely at the five-minute limit and went on to make his own long tirade, defending the apartheid wall and Israel's refusal to recognize or deal with the elected government of the Palestinians. Although many people abstained, the vote was extremely close in the face of one of the few grassroots challenges the leadership endured in the entire convention. The resolution was narrowly passed.

Once these debates ended, there was little left, except the coronation of the president for his final term (Hargrove will be 65 in the midst of his mandate and must step down at the end).

FUTURE CHALLENGES

Conventions aren't necessarily the place where major struggles are mapped out and fundamental issues decided. Particularly in the tradition of the CAW, the Constitutional Conventions, held every three years, are places where celebrations are held and the existing leadership is re-elected, or its nominees are affirmed by the delegates.

But the CAW is facing key challenges and it is hard to see how this convention has moved them along in facing them. The leadership transition will have to begin soon. Investment and jobs remain a problem and the union's response has become increasingly similar to that of the American UAW. (Witness the shocking CAW offer of a six year grow-in of wages and benefits for workers at a proposed new facility at Ford).

The right-wing onslaught goes on and ongoing corporate restructuring threatens other sectors. This union, like most others, has been unable to seriously make organizing breakthroughs. A younger generation of workers expects their union to be more democratic, open and reflective of their needs and aspirations. For all of the talk about taking on globalization and forcing a renegotiation of NAFTA, there is little evidence that the leadership really believes this to be possible (in this, they are no different than the leaders of other unions). The union movement as a whole has shown little ability to mobilize and inspire during the past five years and the CAW is no exception.

Perhaps the union needs less celebration and more serious rethinking of how to really build a political movement to challenge employers as a class. **R**

Herman Rosenfeld is a CAW activist.

Socialism for the 21st Century: A Trade Unionist View

Jean-Pierre Daubois is a long time union activist and socialist who began to work on the production line at the General Motors assembly plant in Ste Therese, Québec in 1977. Later he became an electrician and ultimately became president of the skilled trades at the facility. He worked there until the plant closed in 2002 and then became one of the main leaders of the impressive, but ultimately unsuccessful, mobilization to keep the facility open. Two years ago he travelled to Venezuela to learn more directly about Chávez and the Bolivarian revolution; he has followed events closely since. When Greg Wilpert, the respected editor of Venezuela Analysis wrote an article on 'The Meaning of 21st Century Socialism for Venezuela,' Jean-Pierre was moved to write the following response. Socialist Project reprints it here as part of the international discussions on the evolution of Venezuela as well as questions about our own labour movement in Canada. For Wilpert's article, see www.venezuelanalysis.com

Dear Mr. Wilpert,

I loved your article 'Socialism for the 21st Century.' It is well balanced and points out the incredible achievements of the Chávez government, and also some of the dangers which are coming as much from the inside as from the outside. It is most important to discuss the internal dangers; the future of the Bolivarian movement needs this very much.

I have been to Venezuela myself and witnessed the dangers of the personalization of the revolution around Chávez. Although I am convinced he does not want that, the weight of the political tradition of *caudillismo* in the culture is strong in Venezuela as well as in Latin America in general. Associated with this, as you point out, are the dangers of the bureaucratization of the revolution and the creation of a sort of *nomenclatura* - which again Chávez clearly does not want.

I am working class myself, and have been working in industry here in Canada for almost 30 years (at General Motors). I raise this because I want to expand on what you have perceived as one of the dangers for the revolution - the political immaturity of the working class, which is sadly illustrated by the recent collapse of the UNT convention.

It is not so simple to develop worker controlled industries. Workers have to understand that even if they are freed from bosses pushing them around and pressuring them for productivity, they still have to develop quality and productivity in a socialized economy. It is not clear today in Venezuela if workers are fully aware and prepared to address such issues.

A very good friend of mine is from Chile. He is a political refugee who has been in Canada since 1973. We worked at GM together for almost 27 years and of course he, like all of us, went through the numerous restructurings, rationalizations, down-sizing, and other corporate niceties until our plant was closed in 2002. Through these years my friend lived the craziness of our capitalist system.

Two years ago he left for Venezuela and worked there - not as an intellectual, but as a worker. He was working in small companies, but still he got a sense of the attitudes of Venezuelan workers toward work and productivity. It was a shock to him; he was surprised by the low motivation and low productivity of workers.

The other interesting thing he told me came from conversations he had with a Cuban doctor living near his house in a working class area. He had made friends with this doctor and they chatted quite a bit. One day he asked him: "What do you think of the people of Venezuela?" The doctor had this interesting answer: "Chávez is giving them too much too fast - healthcare, education... it all comes without a fight."

I found that interesting because one of the dangers that you discuss in your article is that of people becoming dependent on authority - the benevolent authority that will solve their problems. This is a passive attitude. I understand that Chávez tries to overcome this situation, but it is there. It is an inheritance from the past, when the old parties handed down favours here and there. It is one thing to condemn such practices; it is something else to extirpate it from people's conscience.

The comment of the Cuban doctor strikes at the heart of the internal political challenges: how to bring about a nation which will take charge of itself without a benevolent state/leader to "take care of it for you." That is the greatest challenge for socialism for the 21st century.

Allow me to make a parallel here. For a long time, I was an elected union rep and participated in bargaining. The union's strategy in negotiations with the Big Three automakers is pattern bargaining, which means targeting the company least inclined to accept a strike and then concentrating on it to establish the pattern collective agreement. That pattern would then be imposed on the other companies. It worked wonders for decades. Workers did enjoy a steady increase in their standard of living: better pay, more holidays, more vacations, better insurance coverage, better benefits in general, better working conditions, etc. And the pattern bargaining strategy allowed it to happen practically without conflict and/or strike. I started in the industry in 1977, and I had a 3-day strike in 1978, 1 week in 1982, 3 weeks in 1996, and that's it.

The consequence (unforeseen probably) was that workers take it all for granted. They think that it is "their absolute right" and that corporations "owe it to them"; that the company is only paying them what they are worth; and that the union does not have much of influence on all that. Basically, what they get is NORMAL and of course MINIMAL, even though as auto workers they earned much more than any other sector of the working class.



In an atmosphere of such complacency, and with a total misunderstanding of how gains really do come about, what do you think happened when GM announced the plant closure? Do you think workers rebelled against the corporation which was about to deprive them of their jobs? No way! The rebellion was against the union, which was supposed to have the power to prevent that (though how you have power without mobilization is unclear). It was the union for not having prevented the closure that failed them. Not the corporation, not globalization, not capitalism and its rules – the union failed them. In other words, the workers had been handed down great gains by a very smart and dedicated union, but the same workers did not understand the first thing about capitalism and why they were "winning" for a time, and then why they were suddenly on the chopping block in that globalized, capitalist economic system.

I know that comparing a union issue in classic bargaining with the Bolivarian revolution seems out of place, but the mechanism of not having to build, piece by piece, your own social conquests and having a benevolent leadership getting it for you is similar. It leads to an attitude of passivity and complacency, and those attitudes are present in Venezuela's working class now.

Chávez, by crafting this catchy phrase "*socialism for the 21st century*" has made clear that he wants to develop something different from Eastern-European, state-run socialism. Chávez has left the debate on "*socialism for the 21st century*" to his people, and debate they have over this, at length.

NOTE: I do not put Cuba in the same category as Eastern Europe. Cuba was and is under constant political and economic boycott and sabotage, and under permanent military menace since day one. Cuba has to protect its advances under enormous pressure and that reality has created some "rigidity" in its political system. But Cuba has nothing to do with the state-run socialism of the former Soviet Union. In Cuba, the revolution did manage to maintain a strong credibility with the people. If they hadn't maintained complete credibility, they would not have survived after the collapse of the Soviet Union; it is as simple as that.

I think that one of the most original things about Chávez is that he wants his people to evolve and to reach toward socialism. He is willing to push in that direction, but ultimately he wishes for the people to have the political maturity to strive for it by themselves, and most importantly to TAKE responsibility for it, too.

In other words, Chávez puts challenges to his people. He points to the "star" to attain, and challenges them to attain it by their organization, conscience and will. That's very rare in politics – forcing your partisans to think about their own attitude and challenging them to act both on society and on themselves, too. →

In several articles by Michael Lebowitz on the debate over co-management and the traps to avoid in implementing it (i.e. bureaucracy, top-down decisions, workers not taking charge) you could read about some of the internal limitations the revolution is suffering right now.

You are right in your article about the internal contradictions. I would only add that workers have not yet developed the maturity for taking charge and that Chávez, I think, is fully aware of this. He is trying to push them, to challenge them. Clearly Venezuela has decades of underdeveloped, corrupted, lazy, grab-from-the-till mentality to overcome.

Your article is helping to put the problem on the table. Chávez has time...for now. The U.S. is bogged down in Iraq; if they were not, they certainly would have undertaken more serious action against Venezuela. This conjuncture allows for a Chávez to develop a project for a different world and for Morales as well to develop his project in Bolivia, but it is only a question of time before more aggression is mounted. In that sense they have to develop their revolutions faster rather than slower.

The future of mankind is at stake here, and I am not trying to be dramatic or to say that Chávez is THE saviour. I am telling you that it is only circumstantial that the U.S. is not attacking with more aggressiveness. We – socialists – need to put before the eyes of the world an example of socialism that cannot be associated with the state-run model of Eastern Europe. That model did not inspire anybody in the working class; that model did not make anybody dream that ANOTHER WORLD IS POSSIBLE. The experience of the Bolivarian Revolution has the potential to generate such dreams in the conscience of millions and millions, and at this point in history we need that desperately, NOW more than later in the century. It is in that sense that the Bolivarian revolution is crucial NOW.

If you remember the invasion of the island of Grenada during Reagan's time, or the Allende experience in Chile, both were democratically elected socialists who were overthrown. Why? Of the many reasons, one clearly is that the U.S. cannot allow socialism to be seen as a democratic alternative. Socialism MUST, for the U.S., be associated with the Stalinist regimes of Eastern Europe.

Talking specifically about Grenada, how this island of 100,000 inhabitants was a threat to U.S. is simple: it was a democratically-elected socialist government that could inspire the poor of the entire continent, and that is not to be allowed by the USA. If they invaded Grenada to prevent it from becoming an inspiration, imagine how pissed they are that Chávez is still alive and well....

The Stalinist regimes of Eastern Europe were not attractive – this is an understatement – for the working class of the developed countries. The Bolivarian revolution, with the ALBA and all of it, has such potential that it is a most dangerous enemy for the USA. This is why I do not hesitate to say that the Venezuela experience is crucial for mankind. It must succeed, and time is not entirely on their side. This is why I am concerned with the collapse of the UNT convention. How come the core of the Venezuelan working class can't organize? What kind of message is this for the enemies? How come the UNT crumbles under bitter infighting, when all of the five tendencies are each claiming to be more *Chavista* than the others? My thirty years' experience in a trade union tells me that this is a sign that the focus of the tendencies is directed toward an internal power struggle more than toward differentiating themselves by their actual accomplishments in the daily struggle of the working class. That is a sign of an organization that lacks solid roots even if they have big numbers on paper.

It seems that "politicking" and bureaucratic manoeuvring is taking charge instead of politics, and that is a bad sign; a sign of political immaturity, a sign that the working class still has to overcome the legacy of the old political system. The leaders of the five factions of the UNT shall, if they are genuine Bolivarians, realize that while they are allowing themselves to commit to infighting, Big Brother is watching...

In solidarity,

Jean-Pierre Daubois

Venezuela Solidarity Groups Join Celebration

John Riddell

A celebration of more than 100 Toronto activists on August 15 showed the potential of united solidarity with Venezuela.

Venezuelan Consul General Mirna Quero de Peña congratulated the four sponsoring organizations on their first joint action, adding, "Stay united in the struggle for revolution and for justice in Latin America."

The celebration, featuring several Latin American and Canadian musical groups, marked the second anniversary of the Venezuelan people's victory in a referendum called by right-wing forces on whether to recall President Hugo Chavez.

The rally was addressed by representatives of each sponsoring organization.

Maria Paez Victor of the Louis Riel Bolivarian Circle stressed the need to support the Venezuelan people's efforts to con-

duct an authoritative presidential election on December 4, despite right-wing efforts to undermine this process.

Carlos Bucio of the Manuelita Saenz Bolivarian Circle added that we should celebrate the outstanding achievements of the Cuban and Venezuelan revolution, together with the ending of the Israeli assault on Lebanon.

Speaking for the Venezuela With You Coalition, Paul Kellogg noted that the outcome of the Lebanon war was a setback for U.S. imperialism not only in the Middle East but in Latin America as well. "For these two movements are totally interconnected. And our side must therefore learn the lesson of unity: the attacks on Lebanon, on Venezuela, on the Six Nations in Caledonia, are attacks on us all," Kellogg said.

"The U.S. and Canadian governments will do what they can to divide us. They will try to stop Venezuela, to stop Morales in Bolivia, to stop Castro and his successors in Cuba. But through our unity, we will defeat them."

Alex Grant of the Hands Off Venezuela campaign referred to the recent demonstration of three million against fraud in the Mexican presidential elections. "The Venezuelan people gained dignity and self-worth from their revolution, and this is spreading across Latin America. This movement is giving hope to the people of the world." **R**

This article first appeared in the current issue of *Socialist Worker*.

Colombia: Between Continuity and Hope

Carlos Torres

On Sunday, May 28, Colombian voters once again elected Alvaro Uribe Vélez with a majority of votes. This establishment candidate symbolizes the continuation of Colombian politics designed to benefit US interests in the region. This is the first time in Colombia's 42 year history of intense politico-military conflict - resulting in hundreds of thousands of deaths and immeasurable destruction - that a president has been re-elected.

According to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees there are more than 3.5 million displaced persons in Colombia, which exceeds the number of Palestinian refugees and is slightly less than the millions of displaced persons in the Sudan. Likewise, Amnesty International's annual report in May 2006 counted 2,750 people in opposition to the regime having been executed or shot *after* the government officially announced the end of paramilitary hostilities. To these statistics we can also add, for their viciousness and cruelty, the deaths of university professors de Andreis in Barranquilla and Jaime Gómez in Bogotá, as well as the last "official" massacre of eleven anti-narcotics police from the specialized DEA corps. The massacre was carried out by the Colombian Army on the orders of the Mafia boss of Cali, and was not included in the above mentioned report.

In Colombia the violence of the state apparatus does not restrain the paramilitaries either. With Uribe they return and the politics of privatization wins; the FTA will be surely be approved by a Congress identified with the interests of the United States. American assistance to the Colombian state already surpasses the three billion dollars dedicated to combat drug trafficking, in spite of the fact that the cultivation of coca plans increased by 26% during Uribe's last term in government.

Colombia is now situated at the apex of tensions between the United States and Latin America. On one side there is a strong, popular and democratizing tendency sweeping across different countries in the region, which topples governments, elects popular Indigenous candidates and questions the control that the White House exerts on the continent. On the other side are political sectors disposed to signing trade agreements, accepting joint naval operations and military missions with confused goals (the fight against terrorism, drug trafficking, etc) can be found.

The ruling elites in Colombia now play the role of catalyst for Washington's politics in Latin America. They are used to provoke the Bolivarian Revolution under different pretexts and in the same

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A New Movement Erupts in Mexico

Nathan Rao

September 4th: For 36 days now, a mass movement has occupied an important part of downtown Mexico City. Before the mass encampment, there had been cascading protests of hundreds of thousands and then millions of people demanding a full recount of the ballots cast in the July 2nd presidential elections, which the right-wing candidate is reported to have won by less than 0.6 percent (or 240,000 votes) of 41.5 million votes cast. The federal elections tribunal (TEPJF) is expected to formally reject opposition calls for a full recount and ratify the right-wing PAN candidate Felipe Calderón, by September 6th at the latest. But this is unlikely to put an end to the present crisis. Despite the full resources of the Mexican state and media being mobilized to attack the movement and discredit centre-Left PRD candidate Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO), the defiant mood remains strong in the streets and in the opinion polls. In an attempt to broaden and structure the movement, AMLO has called for a National Democratic Convention to be held on Mexican Independence Day, September 16th, in the central square of Mexico City. More than a million people are expected to attend this event, to decide upon the future of the anti-fraud movement, which many are hoping to build into a longer-term mass movement for democratization and against neo-liberalism. In the short-term, however, the decisive question is whether the federal authorities will resort to repression to break up the anti-fraud movement and restore “order” to the streets of Mexico City.

What follows is a brief eyewitness report and preliminary assessment of the anti-fraud movement from a Toronto Relay contributor recently returned from a 10-day visit to Mexico City.



“megaplantón”: “better to struggle now than to cry forever after”

I was only able to see a small part of the “megaplantón” (or mega sit-in/occupation), which covers seven kilometres of the central Reforma boulevard and then goes onto avenida Juárez, calle Madero and ends at the central square (Zócalo) in front of the presidential palace and the main cathedral. In all, it must easily cover 10 to 12 kilometres (for Torontonians, this would be like a “tent city” protest occupying University Avenue from Union Station northward past Queen’s Park to Bloor Street: then westward across Bloor Street nearly as far as High Park).

I only saw the segment stretching from the Zócalo to the intersection of Juárez and Reforma. The thing is just massive, and even in the small slice I was able to see it was clear that a wide range of political and social-movement forces are involved. Everyone is focused on the fight against the electoral fraud and support for the Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) candidacy. From my various conversations and readings, it seemed to me that AMLO has emerged as the figurehead of a massive movement for democracy and against the disastrous balance sheet of some 25 years of neoliberalism (sped up after the fraudulent Salinas presidential “victory” in 1988). When I asked how it was possible that AMLO came to play such a role, the radical-Left contacts I spoke with said there were various reasons.

First, AMLO does not want to go the way of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, who won in 1988 but didn’t put up a fight against the fraud and as the years went by squandered the enormous political support he had built up in the country, even after winning the 1997 Mexico City mayoral race. Second, AMLO doesn’t trust

Security Certificates

and the Incoherence of Liberal Law

Harry Glasbeek

Many Canadians are outraged by the powers that the government has given its secret security and police forces on the basis that these repressive measures are needed to conduct the U.S. initiated 'War on Terror'. One aspect of these powers is the increased use of security certificates. While expressions of distaste and disgust for these tools are frequent and many activists are organizing resistance, currently the main hope of opponents rests on the outcome of litigation challenging the constitutionality of the State issued security certificates. We are driven to legalizing our politics, a tactic that suits the State and the capitalism it serves because the hegemonic nature of law normalizes the political power that leads to the unspeakable. What is suggested here is that rather obvious fissures in logic and practice in the legal/political system generally and in respect of security certificates specifically are indefensible except in the sense that they serve the dominant class. It is important to demonstrate that liberal law isn't. This can be done as we organize ourselves to defeat the State terror unleashed by security certificates and the Criminal Code anti-terrorist provisions

Security certificates have a long history in Canada, one that predates our current obsession to use them to construct Muslims as 'the others', as the enemy. Our governments have long internalized the machiavellian insight that to foster hostility against a group and then to attack it is an effective way to get approval for strong and wise leadership. These certificates permit foreign-born nationals to be detained, that is, to be imprisoned, without being charged. A security certificate gives our very secretive secret security police forces the right to have people detained on the basis that the secret police deem them to be a threat. Whether or not the deeming makes sense is to be evaluated by a court not subject to the usual public scrutiny. This is noteworthy because, in a liberal democracy, public access to the processes of law is considered to be a non-negotiable safeguard. Public access ensures that persons accused of having committed 'ordinary' crimes will be treated evenhandedly, with respect and fairness.

Two examples amongst the (regrettably) many available, serve to illustrate the problem. The Toronto Star, 3 July, 2006, reported that a man, who had been in detention since August 2002 and *who had never been charged with an offence of any kind*, was to be deported to India even though a United Nations committee on torture had indicated that the fear that the deportee might be tortured was well enough based to warrant a review. There has been no hue and cry about our monstrous attack on an unconvicted person's liberty and physical safety. Or consider the story of a man from Algiers who has been released after spending

3 years in detention *without ever having been charged with a crime*. He is to be deported to Algiers. The secret service forces' suspicions are the basis for this loss of freedoms.

Whatever happened to our much-vaunted sense of fair play, to the trappings of justice that we cite with pride, to the sacrosanct nature of individual rights that a mature liberal polity, like Canada's, hails as its finest achievement? Whatever happened to Canada's tediously repetitive self-righteous claims that it respects human rights, unlike the countries that need its help, even its military help, to become decent and democratic?

In mid-June, 2006, the Supreme Court of Canada was hearing the arguments raised by three Muslims (no surprise here!) who challenged the constitutionality of the security certificates used against them by Canada's secretive guardians of our freedoms. What was particularly interesting during the hearings was the extent to which the political leanings of the judge were commented on by the media. This public acknowledgement of the idea that judges might have political preferences, that they are not neutered decision-makers, is dangerous to Canada's self-characterization as a liberal democracy under the Rule of Law. While study after study shows that most Canadians intuitively feel that the law and its functionaries favour the rich and famous, normally this does not seriously affect the judiciary's standing as an independent institution, one in which our elemental liberal principles and practices will be defended. In large part this is the consequence of the vast amount of cultural garbage about the independence and integrity of our system of justice. Is there a knotty social or political problem, like deaths due to infected blood samples or water contamination? Appoint a judge to inquire and to report—s/he can be trusted to search for truth and justice without fear or favour!

This portrayal of wise, deliberative, unbiased decision-making is hugely successful because it is supported by the methodology used by the judiciary when settling disputes. This methodology studiously ignores those social facts that raise questions about economic inequality and the power of the few over the many. The evidence allowed and the law brought to bear when litigation is used to resolve disputes systematically ignore social history, class and numbers. The material and social facts that may make it clear that there are fundamental conflicts arising out of our political economy are avoided. Courts of law operate on the pretence that there is a widespread consensus on essential values and that, within our shared understandings, there will be individual disputes that need to be settled by neutral judges. The resulting decisions are said to rest on rational criteria derived from prin-

ciples and concepts that transcend history and the politics of the moment. This effectively obscures the political nature of the courts' decision-making and this, in turn, helps cultural and opinion leaders to present the judiciary as being above the fray, the one institution not corrupted by bribery, nepotism, self-serving goals and the drive for power over the citizenry. **This is the danger of the legalization of politics.**

Manifestly, if the Supreme Court of Canada was to pronounce adversely on the uses made of national security certificates this could have a significant political impact. This is why the journalists were titillated by every exchange between lawyers and judges during the national security certificates hearing.

The government alleges that the security of the State is under greater threat than before and that this warrants a re-balancing of rights. But, precisely because of the adherence to the belief that the Canadian State is a liberal democracy, a belief that is said to be sacred to the judiciary (especially armed as it now is with a constitutionally entrenched Charter of Rights and Freedoms), the starting point of all thinking is that it is the State, enabled by a momentary majority, that presents the greatest danger to the freedoms of individuals. The courts are there to rein in elected politicians, short-sighted and partisan as they are, lest they use their legislative and executive powers coercively. Their arguments for extending government's powers at the expense of rights and entitlements that individuals have won over time must be justified to the judiciary, the non-partisan institution, that is, they must be justified in the realm where liberal democratic *reason* prevails over *political and economic power*. In that realm, the security certificates should be held unconstitutional. If they are not, it will become clear that the judiciary is just another arm of the State that it supposedly oversees and restrains.

The security certificate process assumes that the due process normally accorded to individuals who are suspected of grave and violent criminal behaviour is not to apply if the always-to-be-mistrusted State contends it should not be because, in its unchecked estimate, people are suspected of terrorism or would-be terrorism. Terrorism is, of course, vaguely and widely defined. The State has changed the burden of proof in fundamental ways. First, the crime is defined loosely, a no-no under the tenets of the Rule of Law. Second, *individuals'* thoughts, speech, associations, beliefs, their ambit of activities, may be deemed impermissible, even though they have not yet been found to be criminal by any independent tribunal, a no-no under the principles of liberal law and philosophy that trumpet the right of individuals to do and think as they see fit unless the manner in which they exercise these



rights are explicitly prohibited by a clear and properly passed law. Worse, the use of the certificates attracts instant punishment; the usual overview process is not required to jail suspects. This is contrary everything we do and profess to believe. Consider here Conrad Black's much trumpeted \$500, 000 donation to the new opera house which is to be 'honoured' with bricks or chairs to carry his name. This is as it should be in a legally liberal polity, is it not?

While Conrad Black faces 12 charges of racketeering, money laundering, wire fraud and obstruction of justice, he has not been tried, let alone been convicted, of any of these offences. He may turn out to be a criminal, but he is entitled to be deemed innocent until it is proved beyond reasonable doubt in a properly run court of law that he has committed well-defined crimes. Until then he remains entitled to all the respect and all the rights of a Canadian citizen or, at least, to all the rights and privileges of an English person lawfully residing in Canada.

Why does this respectful open-mindedness not apply to what the Toronto Star called the 17 so-called 'brown skinned home-grown terrorists' (and the 19 before them) arrested with so much fanfare in early June of this year? They were held on the basis of the newly minted anti-terrorist provisions of the Criminal Code and, as yet, nothing has been proved in court against them (as it never was in respect of the earlier 19). The usually tight-lipped secret service police forces were only too eager to disseminate their unproven beliefs about the detained people's menacing conduct and intentions to the press. That press (including the let-us-be-fair-to-the-Blacks Toronto Star) has been falling over itself to publicize these alarming, and alarmingly unchecked, assertions. Of course, the media have provided themselves with a fig leaf by adding the word "alleged" to →

their unquestioning coverage of the arrests, a coverage that always manages to let it be known that, though the detainees are technically Canadian, they are not 'real' Canadians like the pink skinned people of Scottish or English origin who live in this country.

The answer offered by the defenders of the status quo to this carping by chattering espresso drinking critics like me, seems straightforward to them. They respond that, while Conrad Black (who, unlike the men about to be deported after spending 4 and 3 years in jail without being charged or convicted, is out on bail and whose trial and inevitable appeals are unlikely to be resolved for a few years yet) may be found to have committed a crime, or even a dozen crimes, his alleged wrongdoings are not life threatening. They are merely financial finaglings that have gone wrong because he allegedly is an overly exuberant capitalist. They are not intrinsically bad acts. The alleged violent intentions of the 17 are seen as inherently wrongful, unlike the normal benign character of capitalist practices and production which produce toxic air, water, food, and other known harmful commodities for sale such as tobacco, asbestos, and plastics of every type possible. And not to mention that the very act of working for a living results in injury, disease and death for millions every year. This is violence by any other name.

Apparently, if violence is inflicted for profit and governments directly or indirectly get a share of the bootie, liberal law does not see a moral or political problem, even though our physical well-being is, intentionally or recklessly, seriously harmed. It does not think that crimes are being committed. When these endangering substances, goods or methods of production are introduced, they are assumed to be innocent until proven guilty. Asbestos was not regulated until there was literally a mountain of dead people telling us that it was not an innocent substance. The same is true of tobacco and of all the chemicals and equipment used in plants and offices. People need to be injured and die in bunches before we act. Asbestos, mercury, lead, fume exuding smelters, vinyl chloride, chemicals with tetragenic properties, nuclear waste creating processes, all are assumed to be innocent, that is, to remain unfettered, until we have convincing proof that they may be guilty. That proof, of course, is a stack of bodies and horribly degraded environments. More, the entrepreneurs who made the decisions that led to deaths and destruction are rarely held to account even when (as was the case in respect of asbestos and tobacco) they knew long before our governments did, that their products were killers.

So what then are these liberal and democratic values the courts, the security forces, and more seek to defend? After all, the suspicion of a threat to life and limb does not usually lead to liberty-restricting laws. This contrast between security certificates' law and other regulatory laws provides evidence that what is meant when liberals say that they are committed to a liberal polity is that the liberalism protected is primarily intended to serve market capitalism and the well-being of capitalists. That certainly explains the approach to the Conrad Blacks of this world; it makes comprehensible the extraordinary legal kindnesses we extend to asbestos and tobacco producers and to asbestos and tobacco. It also fits with the larger picture.

The nation state, far from being hollowed-out, plays an increasingly coercive role. It governs, with a vengeance and vengefully. It does not regulate corporate, that is, collective capital. It regulates on its behalf. This is what Harris said he would do when he said that his would be the first government "to unregulate, to unlegislate, to ungovern". He and all his clones in all parties since then have done precisely that. Every now and again, the legitimacy of this class war waged against workers and the poor, justified by its claim that it advances the democracy necessarily embedded in liberal market capitalism, comes under greater pressure than usual.

In this context, waging wars on terrorists, foreign and brown skinned ones, usually members of a religion that, historically, has been cast as the primitive/barbaric adversary of our much more civilized religious beliefs, is useful to governments. It aids them to persuade populations to support a status quo of social, political and economic relations that actually does not favour them. It does so by giving them a reason to be afraid of, and to bond against, a common foreign and alien enemy. Of course, the government does not say that is what its goal is. Rather, it avers that its coercive powers are used to ward off a clear and present danger to our way of life. But, the clear and present part of that claim is totally unproven and unverifiable, less well-proven and verifiable than other capitalist generated dangers to our safety. This makes the claim spurious, reinforcing the argument that there is a far more insidiously menacing *raison d'être* for the war on terror.

Once this is appreciated, the security certificates' practices, when put into the context of our normal practices in criminal law and our not so frequently noted generosity toward private harm-causing profit yielding conduct, threaten to undermine the legitimacy of the government's position. The judiciary, conscious that its prestige rests on defending our claimed liberal values, rather than just the government's impoverished view that liberal ideals extend only to safeguard market capitalism and capitalists, is in a bind. That is, it is not the legal logic that ought to inform the decision of the Supreme Court of Canada that sets it a difficult intellectual task. Rather, it is its need to arbitrate the contest between the current political needs of the government and the politics that protect the integrity of the judiciary over the long haul that makes the constitutional challenge a tough problem for the judges.

This, of course, explains the timing of the arrests of the 17 and the amazing flow of information about the evil intentions of the young men (some of them children for the purposes of ordinary criminal law) arrested. It explains the easy access the media had to the arrests and the secret service spokespersons in the aftermath of the arrests. After all, it has been made known by a boastful secret service that, at the time of the arrests the supposed would-be terrorists presented no danger because they were under surveillance and had been so for a considerable period. More, the potential bomb-making powder, three tonnes of ammonium nitrate, was in the possession of the police forces. The security forces, being well on top of the plans of the would-be conspirators (and who, indeed, may have taken part in some of that planning), had intercepted an order of the potentially dangerous chemical and replaced it with a harmless substance. There was no immediate need for an arrest, no more need than there had been at

any earlier time when equally flimsy grounds for detention could have been offered to detain the 17.

The events were timed and staged to create a tilted political milieu for the Supreme Court of Canada when it was to hear the challenge to the constitutionality of the security certificates. As noted, judicial methodology, requiring a court to deal only with the facts and the law applicable to the case before it, could not have regard to political claims made outside the court room. Claims in court by the government that it should be trusted when it said that it needed the powers it had given itself were not likely to be terribly convincing to judges who are historically aware of their need to be wary of abuses of power by the State. But, could even the supposedly virtually “blind and deaf to socio/political dramas” judicial functionaries have remained unaware of the hyperbole surrounding the 17 and of the alarming allegations of the government’s servants? The white noise and heat that surrounded

the arrests of the 17 was intended to influence the Supreme Court of Canada. It was a reminder that, if the Court was minded to trim the government’s billowing national security powers, it should be a minor trim, one with done with nail scissors, rather than garden shears. 17 young people were fodder for the spin doctors in our secretive secret services.

If we use the law to resist oppressions, we must be aware it is only a stratagem. At the end of the day, law is capitalist law. It serves capitalism. When we are forced to use law, we must do so with our forked tongue in both of our cheeks. We should do so as part of a struggle to embed direct democratic practices by unmasking liberal law as the tool for capitalism that it is. **R**

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Colombia... continued from page 43

token contribute to strengthening the consolidation of neoliberal forces that have permeated the political arena of all countries of the continent.

Announcing that the overwhelming re-election of Uribe represents a step backward for the democratizing movements or a relapse for social struggles would also be wrong. It would be better to analyze this situation as a re-adjustment and positioning of social forces that promote change and those looking for a subordinated deal with the Bush government.

Presidential candidate Uribe Vélez won 62% of the votes, but in a context of 55% abstention, the votes did not exceed more than 12 million. It can be said that of 100 eligible Colombian voters, 55 **did not** vote. Of the remainder, 27 voted for the incumbent candidate, 10 voted for the “unity principles” of the Polo Democrático Alternativo (PDA, Alternative Democratic Pole), five voted for the liberal candidate, and three for other candidates, including those who spoiled their ballot.

Without a doubt, the strengthening of the pro-US sector was a factor in the election of Alan García in Peru. The new government should meet with strong opposition, although early signs indicate a more awkward course. Recently, the Peruvian parliament reasserted its commitment to the FTA with the US, dealing a harsh blow to the Comunidad Andina de Naciones (Andean Community of Nations).

Nevertheless, everything has its dynamics and contradictions. The Colombian situation, for the first time in its republican history, is conforming to a convergence of popular and democratic forces that can generate new conditions for the development of a popular proposal from the people as well as for peace negotiations in Colombia (interview with ELN).

The casting of 2,608,914 ballots for Carlos Gaviria, candidate of the PDA and hope, breaks the historical record of the left in some presidential elections. And, in spite of the complexity of the Colombian situation, its’ political scenario is undergoing a transformation. The work of the left and the PDA has become the wedge in the process of transformation, not only through being the second political force, but by constituting a real alternative power in Colombia. The main goal will be to consolidate what has already

been achieved and to expand the support they’ve gained. The left and PDA must better disseminate their program and ideas if they are to become the government in the future, winning local and regional administrations. These are the latest challenges facing this new social-political conglomerate if it is to change the country and win the great battle, peace.

The lesson surrounding the Colombian electoral process shows that events of this nature cannot solve the crisis but can reorder the political and social forces, as well as the conditions for change or for their retreat. The Latin American experience is full of both examples. Hoping for something else is nothing but fantasy and nostalgia. What governments representing popular interests can achieve in the current situation is to generate the conditions or open spaces for social movements and new political formations emerging from this historical conjuncture; to help them develop and strengthen their struggle for change.

It has already been seen that the traditional political parties, whether of the left or right, feel more comfortable in the familiar setting of doing politics through reform rather than change. Experience also demonstrates that a popular and progressive government can do little if it is not summoned and pressured by the mobilization and organization of the people.

The electoral phenomenon scouring the continent could still offer many surprises and political alignments could vary substantially. Upcoming elections in Nicaragua and Venezuela will compliment or condemn the emerging tendencies in Latin America.

On the other hand, the Bolivarian Alternative of the Americas (ALBA) has strengthened with Bolivia’s participation and other commercial exchange projects are advancing in their intensity and range. In this sense, the struggle for Latin American sovereignty and integration does not lose its importance and validity, even among popular movements from countries that align themselves with the Washington consensus. **R**

Carlos Torres, a Toronto activist, was an organizer for the recent Social Forum of the Americas

‘Star Wars’

Alive and Well in Canada

Richard Sanders

Contrary to widespread popular mythology, “Ballistic Missile Defense” is alive and well in Canada. In fact, for many years Canada’s contribution to BMD – a program to improve the tracking/targeting of existing sea and land-based missiles, and create new air-based and space-based weapons – has greatly surpassed efforts by other nations that have, at least, been honest enough to admit their participation.

So, although Canada has not joined the “Coalition of the Willing to Admit Involvement in BMD,” it has long been complicit in creating, designing, researching, developing, testing, maintaining and operating numerous, crucial BMD systems. Billions of tax dollars have been spent aiding and abetting domestic war industries, government scientists and military personnel that are deeply embedded in U.S., NORAD and NATO-led BMD efforts.

Last year’s news of our government’s hollow proclamation against BMD has been repeated ad nauseum by a compliant media and peace movement alike. However, our government never actually did anything to prevent Canada’s further entrenchment in the biggest weapons-development program in world history. Nor have any steps been taken to slow down, let alone halt, these ongoing Canadian examples of complicity in BMD.

BMD was never really about defending us from terrorists and rogue states. This pretext is merely a linguistic shield to deflect attacks from its greatest potential threat, domestic opposition. While BMD weapons cannot shield the US or North America, they

can protect limited areas – like battlefields. This “top priority” Theatre BMD will defend warships, warplanes and weapons so deployed troops can “safely” wage aggressive, foreign wars.

The Trap some called a Victory

Canada’s phoney “no” was a duplicitous, hypocritical PR ruse cleverly designed to hide BMD collaboration, dissipate protests, quell Liberal Party dissent and boost a faltering, minority government. Eager to claim victory, the NDP and some influential peace activists immediately welcomed the government’s “no” without bothering to verify whether it had any substance. Since then, they have continued to spread the false, but feel-good, news that Canada rejected BMD. This trusting naiveté has all but destroyed the opposition to BMD in Canada.

To resuscitate Canada’s movement, we must face the government’s lie and stop living in denial. Until the myth of Canada’s supposed rejection of BMD is thoroughly debunked, Canadians have no chance of slowing down, let alone halting, Canada’s deep complicity in the offensive, BMD weapons program.

What follows is a list of Canadian governmental and corporate involvement with BMD. Most, if not all, of the Canadian war industries involved in the BMD weapons program have enjoyed extensive financial support from our government.

Government:

- NORAD - Since August 5, 2004, when Canada initiated an amendment to the NORAD treaty, we have supported this pact’s BMD mission with money and armed forces personnel.

- Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) - Two days after Canada “just said no” to BMD, then-Foreign Affairs Minister Pierre Pettigrew told CBC radio that Canada supported America’s “missile defense” choice. Furthermore, he said he’d “be very pleased” for Canadian companies getting BMD contracts. For many decades, DFAIT has proudly helped Canadian corporations obtain billions in lucrative, U.S. war contracts.

- NATO - Just weeks after Canada’s fake “no,” the media all but ignored NATO’s announcement that it was building its own Theatre BMD system. Canada was among the handful of nations leading NATO’s decade-long BMD efforts through CAESAR and MAJIC. These programs, to increase interoperability among NATO’s leading military nations, employ Canada’s RADARSAT

satellite data in major BMD wargames.

- Canadian Space Agency (CSA) - The CSA funds Canadian industries involved in militarising space, including BMD efforts. Its crowning achievement was sponsoring the \$600-million RADARSAT-2, for launch this December. Unique technology aboard this space-based radar was developed by Canadian scientists in collaboration with America’s Ballistic Missile Defense Organization. Top U.S. warfighters consider it the “Holy Grail” for future Theatre BMD applications and anxiously await using its targeting functions in pre-emptive, first-strike attacks against alleged missile sites.

- Industry Canada (IC) - This department has handed \$5 billion dollars to Canadian war industries, including some involved in BMD. At a 2004 war industry conference/arms bazaar in Alberta, IC’s “senior investment officer [for] defence (sic) industries” ranked BMD as first among five “strategic business opportunities,” and gave industry delegates the name and email of IC’s “BMD officer.” While Industry Minister, David Emerson (now International Trade Minister), spoke glowingly of BMD’s corpo-

rate benefits. In 2000, he was a director of MacDonald Dettwiler & Assoc. (MDA), then owned by major BMD rocketmaker, America's Orbital Sciences. When Canada's billion-dollar RADARSAT program was privatised to MDA, its data was sold to Pentagon and CIA buyers by another Orbital subsidiary run by retired U.S. military men who'd spent decades promoting BMD weapons.

- Department of National Defence (DND) - A jointly-funded DND-Dutch program has created an infrared, weapons sensor called SIRIUS that firmly wedges Canada's foot in the BMD door. DND wants SIRIUS aboard Canadian warships to ensure deeper integration into the U.S. Navy's AEGIS system, the backbone of America's sea-based, BMD weapons.

- Defence Research and Development Canada (DRDC) - For decades, our government has spent billions funding military sci-

entists developing technologies to fulfil our allies' military needs. At DRDC's six world-class labs, our war scientists work closely with their US counterparts on important BMD projects like infrared sensors, high-frequency radar and RADARSAT-2 data exploitation.

- National Research Council - Scientists like H.C.Liu at this crown corporation collaborate with US BMD agencies on cutting-edge, space-based Quantum Well Infrared Photodetectors that enable BMD weapons to distinguish between missiles and decoys.

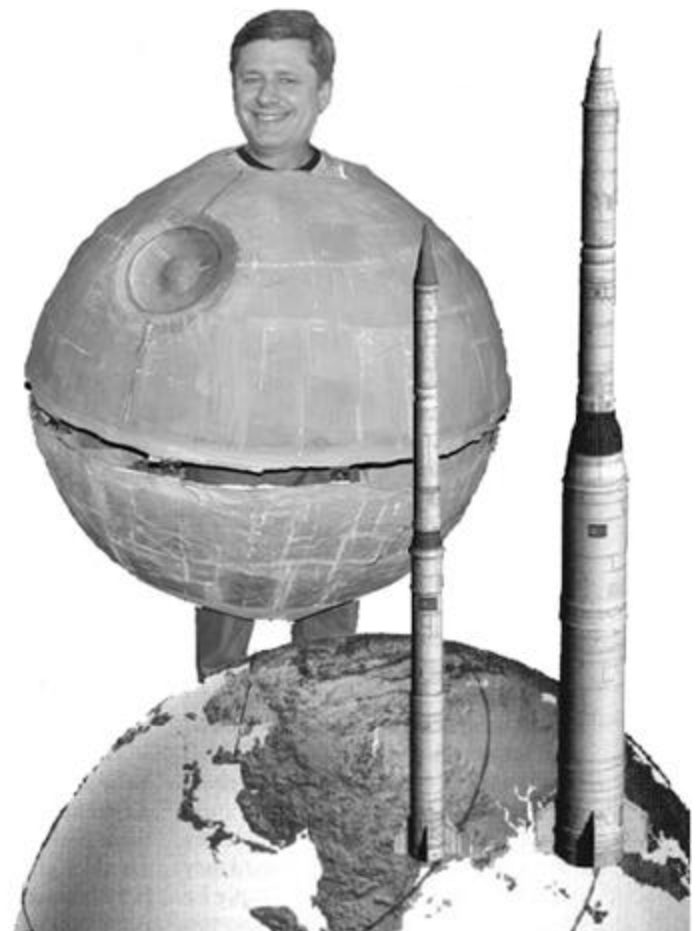
- Canada Pension Plan (CPP) - The CPP still forces Canadians to invest billions in many of the world's top weapons producers, including "The Big Four" BMD contractors: Boeing, Lockheed Martin, Raytheon and Northrop Grumman.

Corporations (The date in parentheses indicates when their BMD work began.):

- ATCO Frontec: Maintains and operates five key BMD SSPARS radar bases in US, Greenland and UK (1999)
- AUG Signals: Radar image/data processing for BMD target detection and tracking (2002)
- Bristol Aerospace: Excalibur and Black Brant rockets for testing Patriot and THAAD BMD weapons (1998)
- CAE: Three simulation products for designing and developing Boeing's BMD weapons (2002)
- CMC Electronics Cincinnati*: Rocket components for testing BMD weapons (1998)
- Cognos: Business intelligence solutions for Boeing, the "lead systems integrator" for BMD (2001)
- COM DEV: Military satellite communications for BMD applications (1997?)
- DRS Technologies Canada: Sirius infrared sensors aboard a number of navies for targeting US BMD weapons (1995)
- EMS Technologies Canada: Electronic subsystems for top global BMD contractors, and SAR antenna for RADARSAT-2 (1998)
- ITS Electronics: Low-noise amplifiers for targeting land-based BMD weapons: EKV and THAAD. (1998)
- Lockheed Martin Canada: VISTA training simulators for US Navy's Aegis BMD weapons (1998)
- MacDonald Dettwiler & Assoc.: RADARSAT-2 for first-strike targeting of alleged missile-launch sites (1997)
- Meggitt Defence Systems Cda.: Vindicator targets to test Aegis BMD weapons (1999)
- NovAtel*: GPS beacons for testing BMD weapons (2001)
- QWIPTECH: Infrared sensors to distinguish between missiles and decoys for BMD targeting (2000)
- Telemus: Simulation devices for designing/testing BMD warhead targeting systems.

(* CMC and NovAtel are owned by Onex Corp. which is run by Gerry Schwartz, a Canadian billionaire who was Paul Martin's top fundraiser.) **R**

Richard Sanders is coordinator of the Coalition to Oppose the Arms Trade. The coalition's website is <http://coat.ncf.ca>



“Bring our troops home now!”

**Call for action on October 28, 2006
End Canada's occupation of Afghanistan**

The **Collectif Échec à la guerre**, the **Canadian Peace Alliance**, the **Canadian Labour Congress** and the **Canadian Islamic Congress** are jointly calling for a pan-Canadian day of protest this October 28, 2006 to bring Canadian troops home from Afghanistan. On that day, people all across the country will unite to tell Stephen Harper that we are opposed to his wholehearted support for Canadian and U.S. militarism.

This October marks the 5th anniversary of the invasion and occupation of Afghanistan, and the people of that country are still suffering from the ravages of war. Reconstruction in the country is at a standstill and the needs of the Afghan people are not being met. The rule of the new Afghan State, made up largely of drug-running warlords, will not realize the democratic aspirations of the people there. In fact, according to Human Rights Watch reports, the human rights record of those warlords in recent years has not been better than the Taliban.

We are told that the purpose of this war is to root out terrorism and protect our societies, yet the heavy-handed approach of a military occupation trying to impose a U.S.-friendly government on the Afghan people will force more Afghans to become part of the resistance movement. It will also make our societies more – not less – likely to see terrorist attacks. No discussion on military tactics in the House of Commons will change that reality. Indeed, violence is increasing with more attacks on both coalition troops and on Afghan civilians.

While individual Canadian soldiers may have gone to Afghanistan with the best of intentions, they are operating under the auspices of a U.S.-led state building project that cares little for the needs of the Afghan people. U.S. and Canadian interests rest with the massive \$3.2 billion Trans Afghan Pipeline (TAP) project, which will bring oil from the Caspian region through southern Afghanistan (where Canada is stationed) and onto the ports of Pakistan. It has been no secret that the TAP has dominated US foreign policy towards Afghanistan for the last decade. Now Canadian oil and gas corporations have their own interests in the TAP.

Over the last decade, the role of the Canadian Armed Forces abroad has changed and Canadian foreign policy has become a replica of the U.S. empire-building rhetoric. The end result of this process is now plain to see with the role of our troops in southern Afghanistan, with the enormous budget increases for war expenditures and “security,” with the Bush-style speeches of Stephen Harper and with the fear campaigns around “homegrown terrorism” to foster support for those nefarious changes. It is this very course that will get young Canadian soldiers killed, that will endanger our society and consume more and more of its resources for destruction and death in Afghanistan. We demand a freeze in defense and security budgets until an in-depth public discussion is held on those issues across Canada.

The mission in Afghanistan has already cost Canadians more than \$4 billion. That money could have been used to fund human needs in Canada or abroad. Instead it is being used to kill civilians in Afghanistan and advance the interests of corporations.

**On October 28, stand up and be counted.
Canadian troops out of Afghanistan now!**