



RELAY

#7 SEPTEMBER / OCTOBER 2005

A SOCIALIST PROJECT REVIEW



SUPPORT AMPARO TORRES * AFL-CIO SPLIT * LIVE 8
ZAPATISTA TURN * TORONTO'S BEACHES * HEALTHCARE
NEW LEFT PARTY IN GERMANY * CLC CONVENTION





Editors:

Peter Graham
Tanner Mirrlees

Advisory Board:

Greg Albo
Carole Conde
Bryan Evans
Matt Fodor
Jess MacKenzie
nchamah miller
Govind Rao
Richard Roman
Pance Stojkovski
Ernie Tate
Carlos Torres
Elaine Whittaker

Printed by:

Open Door Press
Winnipeg



About Relay

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.

Relay is published by the Socialist Project. Signed articles reflect the opinions of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the editors.

About the Socialist Project

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 socialistproject@hotmail.com.



Subscribe to Relay

\$15 for an annual subscription of six issues. Please send cheques payable to Socialist Project.

PO Box 85
Station E
Toronto, Ontario
M6H 4E1

RELAY II CONTENTS

September/
October #7

2005

The City of Toronto Act: The Fix We've Been Looking For?	Karen Wirsig	4
What Will You Take With Your Coffee?	Anne MacMeekin	6
The Battle Against Healthcare Privatization	An Interview with Natalie Mehra	8

Labour

Reflections on the CLC Convention	Dan Crow	11
Unions After NAFTA	Dan Crow	12
The Question of Working Class Power	Bill Fletcher Jr.	14
Ambiguous Victory: The Ford Strike of 1945	Ron Drouillard	18
Working Class Anniversaries: Celebrating Potential	Sam Gindin	20

Culture Front

Water Conspiracies	Matt Fodor and Samantha Fodor	23
Lakeside - Art Looks at Toronto's Beaches	Elaine Whittaker	24
Live 8 For G8	Tanner Mirreles	26

Reform and Revolution

Fighting for Reforms Without Becoming Reformist	Robin Hahnel	30
Democratic Economies	Greg Albo	31

The Zapatistas

The 6 th Declaration of the Selva Lacandona	Richard Roman	35
Zapatista Turn: One Step Forward	Phil Hearse	36
Thoughts on the Zapatistas	Fred Rosen	39

Life in the Palestinian Bantustans	Adam Hanieh	40
Occupied Haiti is Bleeding – International Resistance is Growing	Kevin Skerrett	43
Human Rights Denied: The Case Against Amparo Torres	nchamah miller	44
The War Continues: Solidarity with El Salvador's FMLN	Peter Graham	45
Promoting America's Strategic Interests With CAFTA	Peter Graham	47
The Left Party in Germany	Frederick Peters	50

The City of Toronto Act: The Fix We've Been Looking For?

Karen Wirsig

It's difficult to find people who oppose new powers for the City of Toronto. Social democrats and conservatives and everyone in between are jumping on the new deal bandwagon, whose main feature these days is the proposed City of Toronto Act. The proposed Act would give the city more say in how its affairs are governed; it would recognize the city as an independent order of government, with an official "seat at the table" in discussions with the province and the federal government; and it would allow the city final say on a number of things, from planning issues to new user fees, as long as those decisions did not contradict provincial legislation or policy.

"Neoliberals like the proposed act because they believe it can be used to discipline decision-making in the city."

Giving the city more authority is a pretty easy sell after a decade or more of policies that relied on demonizing the city, downloading services, and creating financial hardship for the municipal government. And, more importantly, left services for tens of thousands of the most vulnerable people in Toronto – but also for everyone who lives in the city – in a state of decline and disarray.

What will the City of Toronto Act actually fix for the people of Toronto? Will it build public housing that is affordable for the lowest-income Torontonians, so many of whom are

homeless? No. Will it put an end to the real estate speculation that displaces low-income, working class people from central-city neighbourhoods? No. Will it improve the lives of low-income people – the majority of whom are women, people of colour and recent immigrants – living in neglected pockets across the city, and especially in the older suburbs? No. Will it put an end to the Toronto region's destructive growth pattern, spurred at the outer edge by public subsidies for single-family housing built on green fields that require unending and extravagant public spending simply for staples like roads, sewers and waste management? No.

Neoliberals like the proposed act because they believe it can be used to discipline decision-making in the city. They like the idea of allowing city hall to levy more user fees by charging residents for specific services, believing it will ease their property tax burden. But what business groups – most notably the Toronto Board of Trade – want most is for the Act to require a new method of running city hall, where the mayor and a small executive committee make the vast majority of decisions. They think a strong executive will stop a rise in business property taxes and ease the way for policies, such as contracting out of city services to the private sector, that are unpopular among Torontonians and the majority of the councillors who represent them. The 'strong mayor' model also has the support of Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty, the *Toronto Star*, and even the so-called alternate weeklies in Toronto, all in love with fashionable theories of the 'entrepreneurial city' and the 'creative class'.

Neoliberals have come to under-

stand that cities like Toronto are an important platform for investment of capital. Capitalists used to be satisfied enough with a system in which provincial and federal governments were responsible for most of the decisions that affected the economy. But those governments screwed up when they underestimated the impact of their transportation and fiscal policies on cities. Business owners have been complaining about 'gridlock' in the Toronto region since the late 1990s. They are also petrified that they are on the hook, through their property taxes, for such a broad range of social services in Toronto, a situation that intensified after the downloading exercise in 1997.

Social democrats have been convinced – by this history of downloading and these same fashionable theories of a new urbanism to support competitive businesses – to give the City of Toronto more power. They are equally tired of fighting and competing for resources with unsympathetic political rivals beyond the city's borders. Many social democrats – and this stretches from those at Council to MPPs and MPs from Toronto, including Jack Layton – see Toronto as an island that can be saved only if it can control its own destiny. This belief is misguided.

The City of Toronto act would certainly decentralize government, but the current discussions suggest it would do nothing to de-concentrate power. Twinned with a so-called strong mayor system, the project would, in fact, make it easier for the interests that already control much of city politics – including real estate developers and big property owners – to get their way.

Canada's central government sup-



ported the development and expansion of Canadian cities in the postwar period, even if there wasn't an explicit 'deal for cities' or an articulated urban policy. On the one hand, funding health care, welfare, unemployment insurance, post-secondary education and housing looked after the well-being of an increasingly urban population. On the other hand, road and highway construction and mortgage insurance propelled their physical expansion, setting the stage for the unwieldy and socially polarizing urban regions we live in today.

For several decades – even with the so-called yoke of the province around their necks – the governments of Metropolitan Toronto managed to come up with some progressive and often ground-breaking programs of their own in areas such as public health and recreation.

The situation soured considerably during the 1980s real estate boom, when skyrocketing rents and a decline in good-paying industrial jobs resulted in mass development of low paid service jobs and large numbers of homeless. The municipal governments were also hit hard in the early 1990s by the economic recession. Unemployed workers turned to welfare, which was partly paid by the municipalities, while many employers went belly up or moved away and stopped paying property tax.

But real trouble came with decisions by the federal and provincial governments beginning in 1993. They stopped funding social housing and

made massive cuts to welfare spending. Ottawa also cut back on funding to support newcomers to settle. The province stopped funding public transit in the late 1990s, making way for a string of fare increases and an inability to expand service adequately.

During that period, racism and misogyny helped spur the demonization of the city as a bastion of lazy welfare cheats, pregnant women who spent their food money on beer, gangs and crime.

“The city is now often seen for its potential to attract investment and for the attractiveness to affluent people of its central-city living.”

The notion, promoted by government leaders, police chiefs and the media, helped pave the way for the destruction of equity and social programmes that had helped make life more tolerable for poor and working class people, people of colour and recent immigrants.

The City of Toronto Act won't improve much of anything for the people who have lost so much over the last 15 years. The city is now often seen for its

potential to attract investment and for the attractiveness to affluent people of its central-city living. The daily lives of poor and working class people, people of colour and recent immigrants in the central city are probably now more precarious than ever in the city's history.

The city's success – its competitiveness, in neoliberal terms – is very much predicated on its capacity to sweep the evidence of poverty and inequality under the proverbial rug, mainly by pushing even more low-income people to relatively hidden pockets of the city. That will be the ultimate outcome of the city-driven redevelopment of Regent Park, the country's oldest and largest public housing development in the east end of downtown.

Mayor David Miller, while publicly opposing the move to a strong mayor system, has largely adopted the neoliberal line on a competitive city. He has even thanked the Toronto Board of Trade for its support of a new deal for the city.

By all indications, a new City of Toronto Act would do nothing but facilitate the current pattern of unequal development and polarization of wealth. With increased power to 'make decisions for itself,' and with fewer people at the table to make them, a more powerful City of Toronto may well prove an obstacle for a progressive urban future in Canada's largest city. **R**

Karen Wirsig is an activist and writer in Toronto.

What Will You Take With Your Coffee?

Anne MacMeekin

I formerly would go to Tim Hortons for coffee, etc. every day, often twice. I easily spent a minimum of \$100 a month. However during a 3-year period of cyclical layoffs at my workplace, I began making coffee at home and became increasingly uneasy about my commitment to my Tim Hortons habit. Going to Tim's is a habitual ritual that is performed by millions of Canadians daily. Before being condemned as a hypocrite, I can still occasionally be spotted sporting the brown paper cup, but it is quite infrequently. I generally park my car and walk into the store now. I am not boycotting them, although the coffee is better at Krispy Kreme, but I think there is some value in analysing Tim's.

Tim's has altered the cultural, social and physical landscape of Canada. Similar to the golden arches of McDonald's, Tim's signs dot both cityscapes and the countryside with surprising regularity. Gone are many of the roadside diners and coffeehouses, as they have been replaced with the predictability of a homogenous menu and experience. In the past, people gathered at coffeehouses and soda shops to chat, socialize and learn about community issues. Yet the culture of Tim's is one of convenience. We drive-thru, rarely venturing outside of our vehicles or interacting with anyone within. Now we simply grab our purchase and leave to go about busy lives. We rarely get to know the employees or customers of Tim's, resulting in a shortage of "community" – the sharing of ideas and concerns. We remain strangers, their lives never intersecting with ours beyond the transfer of a paper cup from their hand to ours.

The paper cup and paper bag has indeed become part of our culture. Nowhere else in the world do people go literally everywhere with a paper cup of coffee in tow with the exception of Americans who appear to have an affinity for Starbucks. In Europe I was struck by the fact that no one carried take-out coffee cups with them. Even in the

street markets, beverages were served in ceramic cups that were returned to the vendor upon completion. I noted that coffee and tea time were valued moments to sit, relax, read a newspaper or meet people. It seems like an art lost to many Canadians.

There is something very appealing about the paper cup of coffee. I can not identify it, however I suspect that the wax affects the taste of the Tim's coffee because it tastes different in a ceramic mug. People like the paper cup but our environment doesn't. Very few municipalities have the technology to recycle the cup and plastic lid. If you see litter on the street curb or roadside, chances are it is from Tim's. Few people bring a reusable mug along with them to spare the extra waste and unfortunately, a limited number of stores offer a price incentive for providing your own mug. I have learned that stainless steel mugs tend to last the longest, for I once made the mistake of purchasing a Tim's plastic mug that leaked within a month – add it to a mountain of Tim's landfill.

One of the other environmental concerns is the fact that the stores generally have a drive-thru window. Cars idle day and night in long line-ups. In cities where it is illegal to idle a vehicle for more than 3 minutes, the drive-thru window remains acceptable no matter how long the customer waits. Under the Kyoto Protocol, Canada has made a commitment to reduce its carbon dioxide emissions that contribute to global warming. While passenger vehicles only account for a portion of transportation contributions to global warming, we know that they are a significant factor in the creation of smog. Troubling is Tim's complicity in encouraging vehicle idling rather than discouraging it. They do not provide enough parking and their choice of location are often not pedestrian-friendly. The fact that we feel compelled to drive somewhere merely to purchase a beverage attests to a shift in our social behaviours and a general apathy toward the environmental strain that Tim's represents.

The economics of Tim's are a cause for pause. The owner/operators choose to pay minimum or similar wages while constantly yielding massive profits. Women and young workers often seek employment with Tim's because of a lack of other work opportunities. Working there is no longer a stop on the road to a better job, but a long-term employment reality in our rapidly expanding service economy. It translates into the inability for those workers to become financially independent and of course low wages do not build the Canadian tax base nor local economies. We know that minimum wage is not a living wage therefore Tim's is often just one or two or three jobs held by their busy employees.

In February, 2004, the Ontario Liberal government made good on one of its election promises and blessed minimum wage workers with a raise of 30 cents, which brought it up to \$7.15 at that time. A friend mentioned during that time that the price of a large cup of coffee at





Tim's had increased by 6 cents. Upon an in-depth investigation (okay, I actually just went into a store and asked an employee), it turned out to be fact. I also heard that the price of other items increased as well, however I did not check. From observation, I think it is safe to say that the large cup of coffee is one of Tim's most popular items. Working in pairs to serve the customer efficiently, the average team serves at least 20 to 25 cups per hour. Even though the employees were earning a combined additional 60 cents per hour, the store would be bringing in an extra \$1.50 per hour on the coffee alone.

That amounted to quite a tidy profit at their employee's expense, while the consumer conveniently blamed the workers and government for the price increase. A gratuity is rarely forthcoming although a small tip of a quarter for a coffee and a snack seems fair to me. Tips are not a responsible answer to the fact that servers are underpaid but would be welcome all the same. Add in the stress of health and safety concerns: I have witnessed unsafe practices within Tim's stores of many employees behind limited counterspace, where scalding coffee pots are slung around and slippery floors on which workers skate in grease. These workers are overburdened between demanding managers and impatient customers.

Another trend in Tim's economics is the downsizing of their products. Where customers only consume a certain amount and Tim's corporation can't take anything more from their workers, cheapening the quality of the product has been an option for increasing profit margins for shareholders. Most of the foods are no longer baked onsite but arrive in trucks, frozen to be warmed as needed. This practice has drawn criticism from homeless shelters and soup kitchens which previously relied on random donations of extra food as a gesture of Tim's good corporate citizenship. There is little room for social responsibility donations of day-old products in this "just-in-time" system of food preparation. Certainly the corporation has also succeeded in downsizing its workforce from a couple of bakers per store into leaner mass production bakeries.

Some have commented that the quality and taste of the coffee has deteriorated recently. Although I would not be surprised, I can't make a comparison because the organic coffee I make at home has always tasted superior to Tim's coffee. While Starbucks in North America has been the

target of pressure from consumer and environmental groups to sell Fair Trade coffee, Tim's has escaped criticism on so many issues such as the quality of their coffee and their immense purchasing power of the world's second widely traded commodity. We have not questioned whether the coffee farmers are earning enough to sustain their farms and Tim's role in driving prices down.

Tim's has also avoided scrutiny of their anti-union practices. Even though there are two unionized Tim Hortons stores in London, the corporation has successfully thwarted attempts to organize other locations by keeping employee turnover high and full-time employment scarce. I am again reminded of how Tim's has affected our social conscience – while the unionized workers in London endured a 6 month strike, my union set up roving information leaflets at secondary locations which were non-unionized stores. So intent on getting their coffee, customers regularly yelled obscenities and threats at picketers who slowed their progress to the drive-thru. Some of those using their cars as potential weapons were our own union members. The solidarity of the working class can sometimes hinge on whether we have had our caffeine fix for the morning.

In addition to the reasons above, I am critical of the culture of Tim's in Canada because it typifies the nature of the capitalist market. Find a niche product or service that people can become reliant upon, then market and expand it aggressively, regardless of the consequences. If it is such a great corporation then why must they constantly advertise for new employees?

Am I asking you to stop getting coffee at Tim's? Absolutely not. It appears that coffee is as addictive as any other substance that isn't healthy for us. What I am advocating are aggressive union organizing drives so that employees have the ability to challenge their bosses' profit-driven power, plus their unsafe and anti-environmental practices. I am also asking you to question the culture of Tim Hortons. So you can imagine my dilemma – I sometimes run late, forget to turn on the coffee maker, feel lazy or tired and I stop in at Tim's. And then I carry around my paper cup like so many good Canadians. **R**

Anne MacMeekin is a member of CAW Local 88 and is the Co-chair of the CAW Flying Squad (Ontario Chapter).

The Battle Against Healthcare Privatization

An Interview with Natalie Mehra

Natalie Mehra has been coordinating the Ontario Health Coalition for several years. The OHC has been at the centre of taking on the Ontario government's plan for hospitals – Public-Private Partnership (P3) – privatization, contracting-out and funding Medicare with her partners in the major unions. This summer, and the coming fall, will be witness to major efforts by the OHC to take back the latest efforts of the Government of Ontario to make market inroads to healthcare delivery, following the last budget of Finance Minister Gregory Sorbara. The fightback is partly occurring through referenda in communities across Ontario, a lawn sign campaign in Toronto, and numerous other lobbying and mobilization efforts. Socialist Project interviewed Natalie in August.

THE HEALTHCARE CRISIS

Socialist Project: The Medicare 'crisis' seems to be a never-ending Canadian saga. Where do you think the limits and problems of Canada's healthcare system reside?

Natalie Mehra: The Medicare 'crisis' has developed as a result of external forces pushing privatization and increased growth/profit. These forces have used a seductive mix of tax cuts and deficit fear reducing the availability of public services, combined with individualistic notions of 'choice' ironically to pay for services to promote public support for privatization, while using their power within government to win market-access. This is a global phenomenon. But the problems with the public health system have also developed as a result of incoherence within the system. Domestic policy decisions have weakened democratic control, contributed to the adoption of market mechanisms and trends within the public/non-profit system, turned over large sections of the non-profit/public health delivery system to for-profit providers, failed to address the core determinants of health, and failed to create a progressive model for managing demand and delivery. While our democratic systems and popular resistance have to some extent preserved the public system, the take-over of our democratic institutions and structures by corporate interests and the erosion of or lack of existence of democracy at every level of policy making – from legislatures to within health institutions and social service agencies themselves – has contributed to the weakness of the current system.

There are really two major external assaults on the public health system in Canada. These are to some extent led by



Natalie Mehra speaking at a rally in support of healthcare

different people and some different interests, but which are also much linked. Both are supported by an increasingly large and consolidated global private health industry which is seeking new markets for growth and profit. The first is the attack on the public insurance system. This has been led by people associated with the private insurance industry, physician-specialists who want to extra-bill and the Conservative Party (federal and provincial). The second is the attempt to create a health delivery system made up of private for-profit corporations which would be largely subsidized by a large public insurance system, but which would also seek the ability to extra-bill as an additional revenue stream. This second force is led by the private health delivery industry, and several prominent Liberals and large sections of the Liberal and Conservative Parties (both federal and provincial). In the past, there has also been some NDP support for privatization of delivery systems, such as the laboratories in Ontario. More recently, the NDP has adopted a clearer policy position supporting public delivery of healthcare.

Canada's public health system was created as an effective if incomplete public insurance system through the Canada Health Act, but without a coherent system of health delivery. At the time, the private health delivery industry was in its infancy smaller, poorly organized and not consolidated. Health delivery systems grew as they were funded

– first public/non-profit hospitals and doctors who worked on an entrepreneurial basis, later an ad hoc homecare and long term care system and community health and social support systems. Although some treatments and emerging technologies have been not covered by the public insurance system, on the whole, the Canada Health Act and overwhelming public support has quite effectively protected the bulk of hospital and physician services from private health insurance. But health delivery systems have not been as successful. Worthy of mention also, is the effective drive of the for-profit pharmaceutical industry to create demand and increase prices. Now drugs and medical supplies, both totally private and for-profit – not human resources – are the fastest growing costs in hospitals and in the health systems of every province. We also have increased demand for technology – diagnostic scans etc. – which place demands on resources that have been constrained through years of tax cuts and deficit-fighting. A vision of public non-profit care delivery – that focuses on prevention, the determinants of health, the causes of disease and illness and that promotes human care – has been desperately needed and missing. Democratic governance models and protections are also absent. A cultural shift in the practice of physicians is needed – both in their payment systems and in the way that they deliver care. Some progressive steps are being taken on this, but at an excruciatingly slow pace. Ultimately the for-profits have out-organized the progressive forces in the health system and the deepening privatization and areas of cost escalation reflect that.

SP: As in most areas of social policy these days, a lot of the proposals being put forward to revamp Medicare come from the political Right and neoliberalism. What are the concrete problems posed by the marketization of healthcare provision and the privatization of hospitals?

NM: The marketization of healthcare provision means the adoption of market trends and methods within public and non-profit providers, the privatization of the ownership and the operation of health services, and the downloading of care to unpaid caregivers or out-of-pocket payment systems. Of course the market imperative of profit and growth maximization is in conflict with the interests of patients and careworkers/caregivers. The endless search for increased revenue streams by for-profit providers increases unnecessary demand (witness the pharmaceutical industry), duplication of expensive equipment, escalating prices, new user-fees and service charges, two-tiering and resource redirection to advertising etc. In fact, the private health industry is a case study in inefficiency. The copying of private industry trends within health institutions means escalating executive salaries, and downward pressure on wages and working conditions for careworkers, modes of work that are less safe and less humane and the attendant reduction in the value of human care. Ultimately for-profit healthcare costs more, placing competing demands on finite resources and →

About the Ontario Health Coalition

The Ontario Health Coalition is a network of more than 400 organizations representing hundreds of thousands of individuals in all areas of Ontario. Our primary goal is to empower the members of our constituent organizations to become actively engaged in the making of public policy on matters related to healthcare and healthy communities. To this end, we seek to provide to member organizations and the broader public ongoing information about their healthcare system and its programs and services. Through public education and support for public debate, we contribute to the maintenance and extension of a system of checks and balances that is essential for good decision-making. We are an extremely collaborative organization, actively working with others to share resources and information. We are a non-partisan group committed to maintaining and enhancing our publicly-funded, publicly-administered healthcare system. We work to honour and strengthen the principles of the Canada Health Act.

Our members include over 50 local health coalitions; women's groups such as the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, the Older Women's Network, Immigrant Women's Health Centre, Voices of Positive Women; seniors' groups including the Ontario Coalition of Senior Citizens Organizations, Canadian Pensioners Concerned, CAW retirees, Alliance of Seniors to Protect Social Programs; low income and homeless peoples' organizations including Low Income Families Together, Food Share of Metro Toronto, Ontario Coalition Against Poverty; health sector unions such as CUPE, OPSEU, SEIU, USWA and CAW; service providers; social service organizations; workers' advocacy organizations; health professional associations; ethnic and multiracial minorities; the Ontario Federation of Labour; and other organizations such as the Canadian Council of South Asian Seniors (Ont.), Ontario Coalition for Social Justice, Medical Reform Group, Social Planning Councils, Native Women's Resource Centre, Aids Action Now, Birth Control and Venereal Disease Centre, the Canadian Federation of Students (Ontario division), Oxfam Canada, the Ontario Nurses' Association and the Injured Workers Resource Centre, among others.

We are linked to the Canadian Health Coalition and provide provincial coordination of community-based health coalitions.

Check out www.ontariohealthcoalition.ca for information about ongoing campaigns.

leading to a shrinking of the scope of services covered under the public health system. This is fundamentally a question of equality. Those most impacted are women, marginalized communities, the poor, those with chronic conditions or disabilities and the elderly – all those who are less able to compete for scarcer health services and upon whom the burden of unpaid caregiving falls.

POLITICAL CHALLENGES

SP: The recent court ruling in Québec has opened a huge range of new issues, and seems to provide a legal foundation for two-tier healthcare and privatization. What is your view of the ruling and what seem to be the implications for this ruling in other provinces such as Ontario?

NM: The for-profit health industry is now advertising for people to launch challenges in other provinces. It is very likely we will see a court challenge in Ontario. We also see that the campaign to privatize has become more emboldened. Our fight remains the same, but will intensify.

SP: When elected in Ontario, the McGuinty government announced to a lot of fanfare more funding for health and an end to privatization. What have they actually done and has this ended privatization by stealth?

NM: We have effectively won, for now, the halt of the creation of private for-profit clinics. This fight, however, will continue to require our attention as there are many forces in the government that support such privatization. Unfortunately, the provincial government is attempting to move ahead with privatization of hospitals through P3s, and a movement of services out of hospitals into clinics (so far, non-profit). Also, importantly, the government is moving forward with plans to rationalize and regionalize the service workers in hospitals into large companies that will contract services for multiple hospitals across their regions. This will add to the pressure to reduce the wages and working conditions for those workers, and will be ripe for for-profit privatization as it unfolds. Finally, the government is restructuring the entire health system to be delivered through competitive bidding (ie. market-style) systems by region through what they are calling

Local Health Integration Networks (LHIN). These bodies will undoubtedly promote more privatization of delivery and we will have to fight that.

POPULAR MOBILIZATION

SP: Tell us something about the impressive community mobilizations of the Ontario Health Coalition. How is it linked to national campaigns, what specific initiatives are now being developed in Ontario, and do you think this mobilization is developing popular understandings and political capacities that extend beyond the health care issue?

NM: We have worked hard to organize at a community level and as broadly as possible. We pair, at every level in the organization, patient interests and those of careworkers/

caregivers. We have created an infrastructure of over 70 local health coalitions along this model and routinely organize mass outreach and organizing efforts to move thousands or hundreds of thousands of people to express support for the public health system and progressive reform. During the Romanow hearings, we did this through a province-wide door-to-door campaign that reached ½ million households. Regularly, we hold protests, media initiatives etc. Currently, we are organizing



plebiscites in every community in which the government intends to introduce private P3 hospitals. The first plebiscite in St. Catharines yielded over 13,000 votes, all but 200 opposing the privatization of the hospital. In its wake, the province announced a public hospital for the community. It is our belief that the most significant force we can muster to stop privatization is that of working people and patients.

It has been encouraging to watch and experience myself, the deepening political analysis, strategy ideas and belief in what we are capable of through the activities of the coalition over the last half-decade. The local coalitions carry some of that to other struggles in their own communities. But centrally, I do not see the emergence of many large organizing or mobilizing campaigns, despite the fact that we have proven time and again it can be done without many resources. This culture of organizing and resistance must be broader, deeper, better organized and much more active if we are going to successfully defend the gains that we have made and if we are to win more. **R**

Reflections on the CLC Convention

Dan Crow

From June 13 to 17 the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) held its convention in Montréal. The most interesting event was the election for president between incumbent Ken Georgetti and Carol Wall, a long time activist promoting changes that would encourage greater grass-roots involvement in the labour movement, as well as building ties between labour, unorganized workers and progressive groups within the community.

For me, the convention began on the night before the opening of the convention, at the CUPE caucus. At the meeting all of the candidates for elected office were given a chance to speak (something that was not true of caucuses for all unions). Basically it was the slate of four existing officers (Georgetti, Hassan Yusuff, Barbara Byers and Marie Clarke Walker, the latter three running uncontested) and Carol Wall. During his time, Georgetti got a very cool reception from the room, whereas Wall was interrupted by applause on 3 occasions, a clear sign of what the rank-and-file of CUPE thought of the existing president.

After the candidates left the room, Paul Moist (national president of CUPE) outlined the reasons behind the CUPE executive's endorsement of the slate. Part of the explanation lay in the belief that despite the long delay, CUPE and the CLC had been able to find a resolution to the problem of raiding of CUPE locals, most notably in British Columbia. Part of the rationale was Moist's assertion that a vote for Wall was merely a protest vote destined to be wasted, and that a CUPE endorsement of Wall could result in alienation from Georgetti, and thus from the CLC.

In the end, the CUPE executive met with significant backlash from the membership. The critique of the endorsement of the slate was threefold. First, Georgetti did little to prevent a "rogue local of the IWA" from raiding the Hospital Employees Union/CUPE in British Columbia. For CUPE to endorse a candidate that was incapable of preventing this raiding seemed counter to the interests of the union. The second critique was a more general complaint that the existing leadership is taking the labour movement in the wrong direction, into the backrooms and the boardrooms, to lobby cabinet ministers and executives while the movement itself is sorely in need of renewal. The third was based on the logic of

throwing votes away on protest candidates. To endorse a candidate simply because he has a chance to win is, as I put it at the time, "the same logic that elects us goddamned Liberals."

Georgetti, predictably, won the election on the Thursday. The leadership of almost all unions endorsed Georgetti's slate. The only major exception was CUPW, which allowed Wall to use its room as her campaign office. Some large unions, including the CAW and USWA, did not even give Wall an opportunity to speak at their caucuses, although Georgetti was given such an opportunity. And, to be sure, Carol Wall was something of an unknown to most of the delegates, which gave Georgetti the advantage of incumbency even if his profile amongst the membership has been incredibly low. Yet Wall received 37% of the vote, not bad for a campaign that was only six weeks old. The general assessment has been that most of Wall's support came from the public sector unions. Still, after speaking with a member of the balloting committee, it appears that there was support for Wall from all unions including those in steel and auto.

Beyond the election, speeches by guests were mixed. Jack Layton received applause in all the appropriate places in his speech, but it was completely predictable and came off a bit flat. Gilles Duceppe, who was also given a spot, was better, but in a mixed crowd didn't go over that well. In fact, while Duceppe spoke, one delegate walked around the floor waving two Canadian flags. As he was leaving, a small group sang 'O Canada' at him in the hall outside the convention floor. No one from the podium spoke against these actions, although before Duceppe spoke, Georgetti did mention in passing that the CLC supports the right to self-determination for Québec. The best speaker, by far, was Stephen Lewis, whose socialism of the heart still makes for a great speech at a union meeting.

All in all the convention itself was a bit of a disappointment. A variety of perspectives were heard on all votes, but there didn't seem to be a lot of energy on the floor, and there weren't many highly contentious issues dealt with. Good resolutions were passed, relating to problems of raiding, privatization, media concentration, and limits on rights to organize and collectively bargain. Debate from the floor on individual resolutions, however, usually had two basic criticisms, "the resolutions don't go far enough" and "there's no plan of action." There are still good ideas being put forward, and the CLC maintains its importance in developing and implementing these ideas. But there was a sense that members on the convention floor wanted a clear direction, and more opportunities to participate – perhaps through reinvigorated labour councils as Carol Wall's campaign advocated. **R**



Unions After NAFTA

Dan Crow

At the heart of the political project that is neoliberalism is the push to break the back of unions and the working class more generally. The downsizing of the state and social expenditures, the flexibilization of labour markets and the extension and expansion of property rights and markets, all hallmarks of neoliberalism, were intended to diminish working class organizational capacities, bargaining power, and claims on a greater share of surplus value. Workplace restructuring, state restructuring, even the marketization of public space are all rooted in undermining workers past gains (regardless of how limited these gains truly were). The extension of “free trade”, most notably through NAFTA, should be understood in this context.

Workers in all three NAFTA countries have faced common pressures, and diminished capacities. Wages and job security have been eroded as workers have been forced to increase competition amongst themselves (both within each country, and across North America as a whole). But the origins of these downward pressures predate NAFTA. The trade deal itself cannot fully explain the extent of union decline.

The origins of the decline lie in the economic turbulence of the 1970s and 1980s. The post-war era of relative economic stability had come to an end by the early 1970s. Capital, in an attempt to reassert stability took aim at workers and their organizations. The first line of attack was economic restructuring, including plant shut downs and movement of production to lower union density locales in the southern U.S. (and in part to northern Mexico). The strategy of downsizing has clearly been kept in the arsenal of capital, as the recently announced layoffs at General Motors will attest.

Capital mobility and plant closures were coupled with the development of flexible manufacturing, contracting out to non-union plants and new management techniques intended to co-opt unions. In addition, service sector employment, traditionally a difficult sector to organize, began to make up a larger proportion of the labour market.

Tied to the long slowdown is a turn toward labour market flexibilization, and away from the kind of job and income security that was expected (by some workers at least) in the post-war era. State run supports for workers – in the form of unemployment insurance, workers compensation and social assistance – have been decimated over the past twenty years. In addition, Canadian labour laws have been changed to make organizing more difficult, and the U.S. National Labour Relations Board (NLRB) has given its endorsement of union busting strategies. In Mexico, massive privatization of state owned enterprises has had a similar effect of diminishing union density and organizational capacity.

It is in light of economic decline and labour market flexibility that we should understand the internationalization of capital and NAFTA. NAFTA gives mobile capital an advantage over relatively immobile workers. Alongside the pressures noted, threats of plant closures have pushed unions into highly defensive positions. In effect, competition has been thrust downward onto unions as they scramble to help owners maintain productivity and profits in the hope (and in the end it is a blind hope) that jobs can be saved even if conditions of work deteriorate.

In North America, neoliberalism (and NAFTA as one element within the project) has been terribly successful at containing labour. Unions across the

continent have been hamstrung, even decimated in some parts. Union densities have been declining across the continent. In Canada density has declined from a high of 40% in 1983 to 30% today. In the U.S. the long decline of density began shortly after 1955 when density hit its highpoint of 31.8%. Today it stands at a paltry 13.5%, and shows no sign of improving. In the face of privatization of state assets, and the further development of low wage zones where union busting is the norm, density in Mexico has declined by more than 10% since the mid-1980s.

In the face of declining organizational capacities unions have fallen into highly defensive positions, losing much ground. The propensity to strike (one measure of unions’ willingness to fight back) has been diminished. In the 1970s Canadian unions struck three times more frequently than today. In the USA, large-scale strikes have virtually vanished, with only 29 occurring in 2001. Mexico, of course, is different in many respects. Strikes in Mexico have always been circumscribed, in most cases made illegal. Official unions, tied to the structures of authoritarian corporatism, made little attempt to change this, as the power and privilege of the leadership rests on closer ties to the state than to rank-and-file members.

In response to the decline, unions have become extremely defensive. Canadian unions are certainly in the best position to resist downward pressures. Still, even the unions most vocal about not taking concessions have been pushed onto their heels. The CAW, which left the UAW in opposition to concession bargaining, has entered into plant level partnerships with management in an attempt to save jobs. And the CAW’s deal to push for government subsidies to keep jobs, a doomed strat-

egy at best, further ties the union to the employer and competitiveness.

This is not to suggest that defensiveness is unique to the CAW. All unions are on the defensive. Public sector unions fight a rearguard action against privatization – a noble goal, but one that, at best, maintains workers in a precarious position. In the most egregious example of partnerships and defensiveness, the UFCW agreed to open collective agreements with Loblaw's mid-term in order to take concessions. The rationale was Loblaw's fear that competition with Wal-Mart would mean store closures and job losses. Rather than mobilize workers against concessions, the union came to an agreement behind closed doors and brought it to the membership as a done deal.

In the U.S., where unions have been exceptionally weak since the late 1970s (when the long decline picked up its pace), the trend could be no better. Strike rates are down, partnerships are the norm, and the AFL-CIO's promise of increased emphasis on organizing has failed to provide a reinvigorated membership base. To be fair though, the SEIU did manage to organize 75,000 homecare workers in California in 1999. Certainly this is a victory, but not enough to increase the rate of unionization. And the SEIU itself, under Andy Stern, has maintained a top down bureaucratic structure that stands in the way of real union democracy. Again, it would be wrong to pin this all on the SEIU. All unions, be they UAW, Teamsters, USWA or others, have found themselves entering into partnerships, and maintaining old tradition of bureaucratic business unionism.

Mexican unions are in the worst condition, owing primarily to the history of authoritarian corporatism. Many of the official unions actually supported NAFTA in the hopes that it would bring jobs to Mexico. To some extent it has, especially in the maquila zones. Yet NAFTA, along with previously existing neoliberal restructuring programs, also led to massive privatization, decimating public sector unions. In the maquila

zones, where there has been a dramatic increase in employment, Mexican unions have been able to "organize". Yet this "organizing" entails entering into agreements with employers before factories even open, signing agreements that do little more than cover basic employment standards. Often workers do not even know that they are covered by a union contract.

Not surprisingly, the weak state of North American unions has meant that international solidarity has not progressed very far. The North American Agreement on Labour Cooperation (NAALC) was negotiated at the insistence of the Clinton administration in an attempt to appease fears of American labour that jobs would rush south of the border. In principle, the agreement was intended to ensure that the labour laws of each country were enforced. It was believed, by the overly optimistic, that the NAALC would provide a venue for unions in all three states to join together, cooperate, and fight against attacks on labour standards. The complete lack of any real enforcement mechanisms, however, has meant that unions have largely ignored the NAALC, and the agreement is, for all intents and purposes, useless.

Union coordinated strategies have not been developed to a significant degree either. Many unions, like the CAW, UAW, USWA, and CUPE, have developed international solidarity committees and caucuses. The UE in the U.S. has developed some significant ties



with the FAT (a small independent union in Mexico), but again, these overtures have not meant a sustained and vibrant international solidarity movement. At the moment capital has taken hold of "internationalism" to use it against workers who are led to compete with one another in defensive attempts to protect jobs. This, of course, must change. The challenge to continental neoliberalism must be fought internationally. Yet the strength of working class internationalism can only be based on strong labour movements at the local and national level. Unions must find a way to fight neoliberalism at home as a necessary (although not sufficient) condition to fighting it at the continental (and global) level. **R**

Dan Crow teaches at Brock University and is an activist in CUPE.

The Question of Working Class Power

Bill Fletcher Jr.

Bill Fletcher, Jr. speaks to the Canadian Auto Workers Conference, Toronto, Canada, 13 July 2005

Good morning President Hargrove, leaders, and members of the Canadian Auto Workers. I wish to thank you very much for inviting me to speak with you today. This is a great honor and I have been looking forward to this opportunity.

If all goes according to some plans, by the end of July, the U.S. trade union movement will fragment. These may sound like strange words, but when I say “according to some plans,” I am quite serious. It has become clear over the last several months that there are forces operating on both sides of the so-called debate within the AFL-CIO who have no interest in a resolution of the dispute outside a split. While cooler heads may prevail, and a compromise may be reached, a personalized fissure has been created that may never be repairable.

Having said this, it is important to qualify these remarks by noting that the so-called debate underway is a peculiar one, radiating far more heat than light. Precisely because THE issues that should be debated are largely not on the table, there is an argument via proxy – an indirect discussion with certain assumptions hidden within it that are slowly and curiously unfolding, making it that much more difficult for observers to fathom what precisely is underway.

Both sides recognize, to varying degrees, that the U.S. union movement is in crisis. What seems to divide them, leaving aside personality, is whether to place greater emphasis on organizing new members vs. changing the political equation in the United States in order to make organizing more possible (in other words, electing more Democrats or other officials who are pro-the-right-to-organize). Within the context of this

difference is the question of what sort of AFL-CIO is necessary, including whether an emphasis should be placed on what we call “core jurisdiction” (focusing unions on either their traditional basis or on those areas where they are prepared to make a major commitment of resources) vs. so-called general unionism; and, the compression of the numbers of unions affiliated to the AFL-CIO into fewer, more focused unions.

On balance, I think that the proposals advanced by the Service Employees

result in a split. I will stay away from any psychoanalysis with regard to the players in this debate. Suffice it to say that the situation is deeply complicated and far from being entirely about what seems to be debated. That said, there is a reason that this debate started where it did that speaks to a very fundamental weakness in the U.S. trade union movement.

The debate essentially started, and I daresay ended, with structure. Structure should, however, follow function. If that is the case, then, in thinking



International Union (SEIU) are not bad, and some of them, I believe, would help with movement growth. Yet, there remain two things stuck in my craw. First, that these differences are mainly differences in relative emphasis, rather than what I would call splitting differences. In other words, based upon what is being debated, I do not see the principled need for a split, irrespective of the rhetoric of the hour. Second, and more importantly, the differences that are being debated are actually not the ones that should be the starting point for any exchange, let alone one that could

through the future of the U.S. trade union movement, we should be asking ourselves certain very important questions prior to getting to structure, let alone contemplating a split. These questions include, but are not limited to:

- What is our analysis of the current domestic and international situation in general, but specifically, the situation facing workers?
- What changes in the economy and in the process of work have taken place that affect workers, but also

affect our abilities to organize, mobilize, and be effective?

- How do we understand the evolution of the U.S. political state? What does this mean for workers and their unions?

- What do we mean when we speak of power for workers?

- What other social movements, whether progressive or reactionary, are rising or declining?

- How have U.S. unions practiced trade unionism over the last fifty years? In what manner were there changes if any at all in this practice after Sweeney took over in 1995?

- What has worked and what has not in the last ten years? Do we have any idea as to why?

- What do we need from a federation of unions? Specifically: how should it make decisions? Who should be included? What is its role in electoral politics and legislation? What is its role in organizing? What is its role in member education and mobilization?

- How do we change power relations in the United States? What does this mean at the national and local level?

- What is the nature of international working class solidarity in the twenty-first century?

- What are the organizational and structural implications of all of this for the union movement?

These questions are not being asked. It is interesting, however, that many of us outside the top layers of the union bureaucracy, or outside the union movement entirely, are posing these questions. It feels like hollering into a dark cave. All we get back is an echo. While the leaders involved in this debate seem to feel that what they are saying is particularly profound, the

arguments of both sides have failed to ignite a sense of excitement at the base. Rather the response seems to be more of disengagement, curiosity, fear, and sometimes anger.

So, what then is the problem? Why has this debate evolved in such a mediocre manner? I suggest to you that it has to do, fundamentally, with the ideological premises of U.S. trade unionism, going back at least as far as Samuel Gompers. We have, in the United States, a movement that believes that the most that it can ever be is a junior partner to capital. That is what is fascinating about the current so-called debate. Even the more “militant” of the oppositionists conceptualize a special relationship with the enlightened wing of capital rather than any serious vision of working class power.

While some people may say that a vision of working class power is utopian, I would counter by suggesting that it is essential and completely relevant to our current conditions. Most of today’s union movements in the global North were shaped by the development of the so-called welfare state. They were shaped largely by the politics of the Cold War, in one manner or another, and in a situation where segments of capital believed that they needed to create an arrangement, a so-called social contract, with the organized section of the working class. In the United States, I must say that the leaders of organized labour cannot accept that this environment, this context, no longer exists.

Let me give you an example of the lack of an accurate analysis of the current situation. A very prominent and progressive union leader made the statement that U.S. organized labour needed to be more bipartisan, politically speaking. My question is simple: what does that mean in 2005? While I can absolutely understand and agree with the view that there should not be dependency on the Democratic Party, in the CURRENT situation, what does it mean to be bipartisan when there is a Republican Party out to cut the throats of the working class generally and →

The U.S. Split and Canadian Unions

The split within the AFL-CIO has not gotten all that much attention amongst labour and social activists in Canada, yet it is crucially important for two reasons. First, whether the American labour movement revives or sinks even lower is fundamental to how hard it will be for activists in Canada (and around the world) to make any progress. Second, the Canadian labour movement has nothing to be glib about in watching the crisis in American labour.

While our levels of unionization remain significantly higher than in the U.S., our capacity to lead a social movement that can shape the social agenda is currently at a frighteningly low level and this is reflected in the virtual irrelevance of our own national labour centre.

In both the U.S. and Canada, the issue at the heart of the problem is the one Bill Fletcher identifies: the lack of a vision that can be the foundation for a unionism independent of employers and a class-based politics that reaches beyond the logic of capitalism. The American labour movement, for all its weakness – in fact, because of its weakness – has been forced into a process of self-reflection that will continue, however uncertain and unfocussed this may be. The Canadian labour movement, in this regard, has some catching up to do. That we could begin from a higher organizational level and on the basis of a richer recent tradition is all the more reason to start such a debate now – before we have sunk to the despairing depths of our American counterparts. **R**

unions specifically? Is this simply a throwaway point, or could this leader honestly believe that there is an environment that would promote bipartisanship?

Gompers' views came to mean that the working class could not speak in its own name. Rather than class politics,

u n i o n s
a d o p t e d
"special inter-
ests" politics.
The task of
the union was
to defend the
interests of its
m e m b e r s .
This narrow
view of trade
unionism has
affected eve-
r y t h i n g ,
ranging from
i n t e r u n i o n
cooperation to

"Not so fast, comrade. The job of the union leader is to represent the interests of the working class. Sometimes those interests are not identical to the interests of our members."

the building of alliances with community-based organizations.

Let me expand this point for a minute. A few years ago I helped to arrange a visit by several SEIU leaders to South Africa. I suggested to SEIU President Andy Stern that U.S. trade unionists might have a few things to learn from our South African comrades. The trip was fascinating and quite exciting. During the trip there was an interesting exchange between the SEIU leaders and several South Africans from a union known as the National Education, Health and Allied Workers Union (NEHAWU). We were discussing electoral politics, if I am not mistaken, and one of the SEIU local union leaders made the statement that "the fundamental role of the trade union leader is to represent the interests of our members." Well, in the United States this would not be a surprising statement, yet in South Africa there was an interesting response. The NEHAWU representatives said something to the effect that "Not so fast, comrade. The job of the union leader is to represent the interests of the working class. Sometimes those interests are not identical to the interests of our members."

You could have heard a pin drop. It

was striking precisely because what the SEIU local union leader articulated would have sounded quite rational and responsible to most U.S. trade unionists, but the South Africans were challenging the traditional, Gompersian framework of trade unionism. I recognized immediately that this was a clash of world views, because the SEIU local union leader, along with his other SEIU comrades, did not offer any further comment.

Now, I am not at all picking on SEIU. It is one of the more progressive unions in the United States. That said, it still operates essentially within the paradigm established by Gompers. This has become all the more clear in the current debate where there is no hint of a unionism linked to social transformation, but rather there exists a unionism focused almost exclusively on collective bargaining power.

Let us be clear. At a point when trade unions are under attack by both capital and the U.S. state, and when we are losing collective bargaining power, not to mention the actual right to collectively bargain, re-articulating the need for collective bargaining power is important, but it is in no way revolutionary, and it is certainly not enough to address the current crisis faced by the working class.

Both sides, however, are trapped in this ideological quandary. Neither side recognizes the relationship between neoliberal globalization and U.S. foreign policy. International trade agreements are treated in isolation from U.S. threats to the sovereignty of nations. The so-called war against terrorism is never directly addressed, despite its impact both on civil liberties and democracy in the United States, as well as military globalization internationally. And, with the exception of the organization U.S. Labor Against the War (and those affiliated with it), there has been a reluctance to condemn the illegal war and occupation of Iraq.

In the immediate aftermath of September 11, 2001, the AFL-CIO believed that President Bush would grasp the moment and make peace with the U.S.

working class. They believed that Bush would somehow mutate into Franklin Roosevelt and treat the new situation as something akin to a Second World War environment. This did not happen. Not only did it not happen, but the leadership of the AFL-CIO was completely paralyzed in the face of the onslaught launched on the U.S. working class, seemingly out of fear that working class resistance would be construed as support for terrorism.

So, what will happen? If there is a split or fragmentation, in this environment I suspect that there will be calls, and some actions, toward new organizing campaigns. I suspect that central labour councils will very much be hurt by the split, some hurt mortally. The acrimony will more than likely continue for quite some time. If there is a compromise, everything will depend on the terms of the compromise. If there is a commitment to pursuing an internal debate about the real issues, we could see some significant changes brought about in the U.S. union movement. If, however, the compromise is more akin to a cease-fire, then it will only be a temporary respite.

What, however, needs to be done? Well, unfortunately, none of the top protagonists have actually asked me this question, but since I am among friends, I will offer a few thoughts.

Let's have the debate that needs to happen, using questions such as the ones that I proposed earlier. Let us use those questions and a movement-wide debate rather than simply a debate among the leaders to identify the actual unities and differences within the movement. Let us experiment with different forms of organization in approaching the organizing of the twenty-first century workforce. And, here is my priority: let us engage in a discussion that focuses on the question of working class power in the United States.

I am not speaking about bargaining power alone. I am talking about the creation of an agenda and a means of actualizing that agenda that is worker-centric. That agenda needs to be linked to a strategy that understands that unionization, as important as it is, is simply not sufficient to transform a society. Progressive trade unionism must be linked to a progressive political practice. Thus,

we must supersede Gompers and his famous statement that “we have no permanent friends, no permanent enemies, only permanent interests.” By “we” Gompers meant the unions, and not the working class, but leaving that aside, the working class must have STRATEGIC friends, and must recognize its STRATEGIC enemies. It is precisely for this reason that current discussions about so-called bi-partisanship ring so hollow.

I wish that I could ask you, Canadian trade unionists, to shake some sense into the heads of U.S. trade unionists. Unfortunately, this is not the case, since, much like a substance abuser, one has to hit bottom and realize, on one's own, that something must change. For the U.S. trade union movement, the intoxicating “substance” has been the U.S. Empire. It has served as the narcotic of choice that has confused us and seduced us, and ultimately, paralyzed us. This “substance of choice” has so confused us, that we misread structural discussions in the union movement for discussions of strategy, largely out of fear and myopia regarding the critical questions of our time. And, we try to craft a vision for the future, without any

accountability, let alone understanding, of the past.

Here is my final point. In a recent blog exchange, a colleague chastised me for not recognizing that the SEIU, et al.'s proposals are the best solution for the U.S. trade union movement



because they will make it easier for our movement to organize. My colleague missed the point: the resurgence and reformation of organized labour is about more than increased will to organize, as important as that may be. It is about inspiring hundreds of thousands, if not millions to a cause. In the 1930s, that

cause was symbolized by the uniting of the effort toward organizing the unorganized with the battle for democracy. I actually think that the cause is much the same, only it is a 21st century variant that looks at organizing the unorganized linked to the battle for consistent democracy with a vision of power for workers in society.

Technical changes in the existing trade union movement, even with the best of intentions toward increasing organizing and political action, will only result in a shinier version of an archaic machine. I hope that our leaders can see through the haze created by both Gomerism and U.S. Empire to realize this to be the truth. **R**

Bill Fletcher, Jr. is a long time leftist labour and international activist. His writings are widely published in books and periodicals. He currently serves as the president of TransAfrica Forum, a Washington, DC-based non-profit educational and advocacy grouping. This column does not necessarily represent the viewpoint of TransAfrica Forum or any other organization with which the author is associated.



Afterword: Bill Fletcher on the Split in U.S. Unions

The split in the AFL-CIO was the culmination of a great UN-style debate within the U.S. labour movement. The real issues that needed to be debated were not. Instead, the debate on how to rebuild working class capacities was derailed from the very beginning.

It became clear leading up to the Convention split in July that the stated differences were not differences at all. Leaders of the Andy Stern SEIU and James Hoffa Teamsters ‘Change To Win’ coalition could not clarify their reasons for leaving in such a way that had clarity and credibility. Instead, they reiterated the need for change, that there were differences, and so on. Little in the way of substance was stated.

We found ourselves witnessing a factional dispute between union affiliates that in no substantive way engaged the

membership of the union movement (with the exception of often heated commentary on various websites and blogs). The membership of the movement was informed of positions, but not asked for their opinions and participation in re-making the American labour movement.

For those of us active in the movement, we have now found ourselves in a situation where there is little enthusiasm for the positions of either the AFL-CIO or ‘Change to Win’ leaderships. There is a great fear that we could witness a spiralling out of a common movement, as each union aims to protect its own parochial interests and no one is thinking about the union movement, let alone the working class, as a whole. If there was ever the need for a clear and unapologetic Left presence and voice in the U.S., and in the U.S. union movement in particular, it is now. **R**

Ambiguous Victory: The Ford Strike of 1945

Ron Drouillard

The 60th anniversary of the Ford Windsor 'Ninety-Nine' day strike of 1945 is a tremendously important time to honour those involved and their contributions to the successes of the Canadian working class. But it is equally important to re-examine those achievements by analyzing the key provisions of the Rand Formula that have ultimately affected all workers in Canada. (This has special personal significance because this incredible historical event took place in my very own city and involved members of my own family on soil that I step on almost on a daily basis).

The Rand Formula takes its name from a ruling by Justice Ivan Rand in 1946 that provided recognition and a certain level of union security for workers and organizers. But it ultimately came short of the workers' initial demands and allowed many practices of management to continue despite the negative affects on workers. The two key provisions – the union due check-off and the elimination of wildcat strikes – require further analysis including their impact on the labour movement as a whole. While the Ford strike of 1945 produced the Rand Formula that allegedly led to improvements in the conditions of the working class, the Rand Formula ultimately reduced the ability of unskilled workers to control their labour power and also worked to divide unions, the labour movement, and the organized working class itself. Sam Gindin observed that in exchange for union security “victory also had an explicit price tag.” The price tag came in two forms: the implications of the dues check-off and the impact on the union's ability to strike when required.

The concerns with the union dues check-off are based on two separate arguments. First, when union organizers collected union dues they kept a close relation with their members. As a lumber camp manager observed, union

delegates collecting dues “kept the men stirred up” and “union agents with a steady income aren't trouble makers.” Although the union dues check-off saved unions an enormous amount of time and provided a stable source of funding, it ultimately tended to defuse union militancy and separate the leadership from its members.

The second associated problem with union dues check-off is the very practice of allowing a corporation to remove and direct union dues to unions themselves. Art Schultz, one of the founding members of UAW Local 222 in Oshawa, was not convinced that this new alliance and trust was beneficial to rank-and-file members: “when the company starts doing things for the union, like collecting dues, then you know that the union is in for some trouble.” The very fabric of unionization was created from the close ties union organizers and leaders had with the rank-and-file members that was established and held together by the strategies employed in the union dues collection practice.

As for the historic elimination of wildcat strikes, the negative aspects exist in many forms. To begin with, the elimination of wildcat strikes removed the power of shop floor militancy in resolving day to day issues in a timely and meaningful manner and eliminated shop floor involvement in such procedures. The elimination of

wildcat strikes disarmed unskilled labour's only true negotiating ability, their labour power. With the Rand Formula, once a contract was signed, any job action was considered illegal and any recourse over managements' decisions was left either to the long drawn out process of the grievance slip, or until a new contract was to be negotiated. The grievance slip, as many workers know, does not work well for us because it can take years to resolve an issue. Thus, the stability of union contracts allowed employers to use scientific management methods within the life of a contract with little or no recourse from workers. Before the elimination of wildcat



strikes, stoppages of work brought immediate results to disputes, mainly because management wanted to keep production moving. Now, disputes were to be handled by union officials rather than by the workers themselves and union leaders, under threat of losing checked-off dues would be the

watchdogs to ensure no job actions would take place.

Secondly the results of Justice Rand's decision to eliminate wildcat strikes would be felt by working class militants pursuing progressive goals for all workers. This provision eliminated the highly successful tactic of sympathy strikes that created such historic strikes as the Winnipeg General Strike and also was the true back bone of the 1945 Ford strike that lead to the Rand Formula itself. Historian Craig Heron in his analysis of the elimination of sympathy strikes stated that "the eagerness of Canadian workers to support each others struggles, which had been evident for decades, now had to be curtailed." Thus, any collective action by the working class had ultimately been defused and this had the culminating affect of destroying and eroding the cohesiveness of organized labour, shop floor militancy, and most importantly the working class movement itself.

Consequently the Rand Formula changed the direction and objectives of the labour movement in Canada. In pre-1945 the labour movement included the struggles of the entire working class and was the centre piece of the working class mobilization movement. Justice Rand constructed the Rand Formula to favor primarily industrial capital which is evident in his statement that "capital must in the long run be looked upon as occupying a dominant position." The Rand Formula served to defuse the rising strength and demands of the working class and to ensure the viability of industrial capitalism and the protection of property rights, the cornerstone of capitalism itself. Post-1945 and subsequently after the institutionalization of the Rand Formula across all industries in Canada, the labour movement was directed away from the totality of working class struggles and now was primarily premised on the union movement alone.

The Rand Formula therefore contributed to the transition of unions from its mobilizing, movement-oriented character of the early 1940s, into its legalistic, more business-like form of the



post-war period. Corporations were now partnered with their union counterparts to ensure the availability and complacency of workers in Canada. Essentially the *labour* movement was reduced to the *union* movement and no longer was leading in the struggle for increased standards for the whole Canadian working class.

The compromise unions made in settling for and accepting the Rand Formula culminated in better wages and benefits but it also allowed corporations to use Taylorist management and new technology to intensify work with little or no direct recourse by workers within the life of a contract. Worst of all, it now became the unions job to 'police' its own members to ensure they comply with the contract and Rand Formula provisions. This was another tool which was structured to divide union members from their leadership.

In short, the Rand Formula was not created to serve labour's needs, but was mainly created to serve the needs of capital (with some concessions to unions) as part of entrenching the leading role capital would have in Canadian society for many years. Justice Ivan Rand even in his decision recognized the rising tide of class relations and sided with capital as "in the long run" occupying a dominant position in Canadian society. There was no other legislation that contained and divided class

consciousness more effectively among Canadian workers in Canadian labour history than that of the Rand Formula. The 1945 Ford strike was a victory not from the bargaining table, but from working class solidarity that under the terms and conditions of the Rand Formula could never be repeated in Canadian history. Ultimately union dues check-off and the elimination of wildcat strikes have in the long run been worse for workers and the working class than initially perceived.

Again, this in no way is meant to diminish the importance the 1945 Ford strike has had for the development of unionization in Canada. The ninety-nine day Ford strike of 1945 was one of the most important strikes and creative acts of resistance in Canadian working class history as it solidified and legitimized unionization in Canada. Without the achievements of the Ford strikers the Canadian labour situation might have reverted to the highly oppressive conditions of the early 1930's. Unfortunately, however, the outcome of this historical development turned out to divide the working class struggles from the unionization movement. **R**

A fourth generation Ford employee and CAW member, Ron Drouillard is also pursuing a degree in Labour Studies at the University of Windsor.

Working Class Anniversaries: Celebrating Potential

Sam Gindin

Relay prints here the speech of Sam Gindin, former Assistant to the President of the CAW, and now professor of political economy at York University, from the CAW convention in Toronto in July 2005. The CAW decision to take its own direction in opposing concessions was an important marker in working class politics in Canada. Looking back to that event also allows us to take a hard look at where we are now.

It's exciting to celebrate the 20th Anniversary of the Canadian Autoworkers (CAW) split from the United Auto Workers (UAW) in 1985. It was an event that, for those of us directly involved, so profoundly defined our lives in the union movement. For those not directly involved – or who came to the union later – that event continues to both inspire with the potentials of the Canadian working class and, at the same time, pose the challenge to take that potential further.

All working class commemorations include a particular, often unspoken, tension. While there's great pride in what workers have collectively accomplished, somewhere in the back of the hall lurks a sober awareness of what workers have not as yet achieved. The formation of the CAW led to a 'high' that kept Canadian activists both inside and outside the union going, but it has remained only a *partial* victory – the attacks on workers that we faced then, are as aggressive today as they ever were. Because our successes are always inherently incomplete under capitalism, when we commemorate the past, we're also confronted with that question of how to continue the historical process which others began.

The issue, of course, isn't to tone down our celebrations in the face of that challenge. Quite obviously, the new possibilities those past struggles opened up are worthy of the greatest celebrations. But the celebrations are all the more meaningful if we can bring the content and spirit of what we're celebrating into our every-day activities and actions. How do we keep moving towards gaining real control over our lives and potentials? And what, in the case of the formation of the CAW, might we learn from the breakaway and subsequent experience that is relevant to today's struggles, whether we come from the traditional sectors of the union or from the sectors that subsequently joined this union?

It's not a matter of identifying 'THE' lesson, but of initiating a 20th anniversary discussion of the *many* lessons in that remarkable event. A few elements of such a discussion strike me as being of special importance.

1. Workers Can Say No to Neoliberalism

What we call 'neoliberalism' really came into its own in

the early 80s. Neoliberalism wasn't, as is sometimes thought, so much about taking government out of our lives, as it was about shifting what governments do and how they function. With neoliberalism, governments came to more clearly support corporate interests and to reinforce the role of markets in disciplining workers and shaping social priorities. The very things that used to be the measure of a democratic society's success – rising material standards of living, security, and growing equality – were redefined as *problems* that had to be overcome. Business, political leaders, and the media aggressively wrote off anyone who disagreed as 'living in the past', and increasingly even our own union, the UAW, began to accept this lowering of expectations as no more than 'being realistic.'

What was so impressive was that the Canadian section of the union had the independence of mind, even in the face of great uncertainty, to say 'No!' to what was the *real* step backward in time – very much like the 'No!' that recently came from so many in France against the further consolidation of neoliberalism in Europe.

2. Leadership Matters

The Canadian section of the UAW was angry and frustrated with what was going on in their parent union, but their ultimate reaction was never inevitable. It was one thing to complain; it was quite another matter to directly take on what had become the new common sense.

The CAW was not the first union in Canada to break away from an American parent. Other unions, including a number now within the CAW, had taken on that fight earlier. But that should in no way underplay how difficult it was for the Canadian section of the UAW to even contemplate the notion of breaking away from its parent.

In the early 80s, unemployment in Canada was over 11% and inflation was also in double-digits; the bulk of the Canadian UAW membership was in the sector that was the most integrated along Canada-USA lines; the U.S. section of the union had – in spite of very significant opposition from below – already accepted and legitimated concessions; and Chrysler was on the verge of bankruptcy. Moreover, the Canadian section of the union had a long tradition of both looking up to its American parent as the model of progressive unionism, and of dependency on its technical and financial resources. Not surprisingly, the idea of setting off at this particular time in a different direction than the Americans faced barriers that weren't just practical, but also psychological.

In this context, leadership was absolutely crucial. Bob White, Buzz Hargrove and Bob Nickerson could not guaran-

tee workers that rejecting the direction coming from the American parent would leave us better off. But what they clearly understood was the cost of *not* taking that risk. And even more crucial, they believed in the membership: their gut instincts told them that if workers were given an honest assessment of what they face; if workers' confidence in their collective ability to take on this fight was encouraged and developed; if workers were presented with a reasonable plan; they would be there when the time came.

And the membership *was* there. However nervous they were, the members quite generally came to understand what was at stake and what must be done. The discussions and debates that followed were widespread and sophisticated. At



Labour: Down but not out - yet

the urgings of Bob White, the workers stayed away from cheap nationalism – it wasn't good enough to blame the Americans and use them as an excuse; the question was would we accept responsibility for what could be done within Canada and go ahead and *do* it. That challenge brought out the best in the union at all levels. The staff, in spite of uncertainties about where their future pay checks would come from, stood as ready as the members to take on the fight against both the new corporate aggressiveness and their own parent union. This determination, in turn, reinforced the leadership's confidence that the Canadian section of the union really could move out on its own, and not only survive but expand its leadership role.

3. Union Culture Matters

As nice as it is to imagine that anything is possible, what *is* in fact possible at any moment is inseparable from earlier

history. In the mid-70s, tensions over an extremely tough strike outside of Montréal first put the possibility of a split on the agenda. As the UAW tried to cut off strike pay to the workers at United Aircraft, and Canadian UAW members mobilized support for the strike, a great irony emerged: a strike in Québec became a symbol for Québec nationalism and also sowed the seeds for a Canadian working class nationalism. From the mid-70s into the early 80s, the Canadian section of the union had rejected government mandated wage-controls even if it meant breaking the law, workers were taking over plants that employers were threatening to close, and the union went on strike against Chrysler undaunted by warnings from the UAW leadership and every commentator in the U.S. and Canada that a strike would mean the end of Chrysler.

Had the union *not* taken on these earlier struggles, the mood might later have been defeatist and very difficult to turn around. That previous experience in fighting and surviving on our own – and the education and culture of resistance that went along with this – made confronting not just GM in the 1984 strike, but also the UAW leadership, conceivable. And it made placing a new Canadian union on the agenda feasible. In contrast, in the U.S. the UAW was living the consequences of its transformation from a once great union, into one that had become bureaucratic, distant from its members, isolated from its community, and which rested on its laurels while the world passed it by.

4. Unintended Consequences

Struggles have a way of developing their own dynamic. The leadership and many of the activists were aware of the larger issues at stake. They knew that if the union had accepted the logic of neoliberalism and competitiveness, the stage would have been set for further concessionary demands and for subsequent worker disillusionment with both their union and collective action of any kind. Moreover, there was a sense that if we accepted the concessions, then given our profile, other unions would be hard pressed not to follow suit. So more was at stake than whether a group of workers lost some wages; it was also about retaining the credibility of working class organizations amongst their members, and about refusing to become the vehicle for bringing the cancer of neoliberalism into Canada – in this case via the U.S.

While there was a consciousness of this larger responsibility we had to the Canadian labour movement as a whole, we didn't appreciate the ultimate *scope* of that responsibility. As we moved to break away, the Canadian government moved in the opposite direction. It acted to cement ties to the US via free trade and in that way to reinforce the Canadian government's own drive to neoliberalism. Because Bob White in particular emerged out of the split with such a high profile, and because the members emerged with the confidence to take on broader struggles, the newly-formed CAW was able to play a leading role in the fight against even deeper integration with the United States. That fight was not →

conducted alone, but alongside other unions and a wide range of social movements that ranged across women, environmentalists, anti-poverty organizations, artists, and sympathetic students and academics. Fighting back, it turned out, not only made a difference inside the union; it also brought unintended consequences that reinforced and helped build the larger social movement we are part of.

5. Reinventing Unions

The very celebration of the birth of a new union is a reminder of the necessity of on-going change within unions. History is littered with unions that could not adapt to change. Adapting to change does not of course mean accommodating to the 'new realities' as defined by others; it means reorganizing ourselves, as we did leading up to and after the split, to develop our own vision and start creating, with others, our own truly-new realities. The difference between now and then is obviously not that the pressures on working people have at all receded since the split. The difference is that now the union *does* control its resources and has the ability to build new organizational and ideological capacities to continue and extend the struggle – including a base beyond manufacturing and one that reaches into all parts of Canada.

It was especially significant that the union's top two priorities immediately following the split were to rebuild Port Elgin and to expand the size of the organizing department. The Port Elgin structure symbolically declared we're here to say, we're not going away. But more important it was an assertion that the real strength of the union lay in creating a space where workers can develop their capacity to participate; where they can talk amongst themselves and with their leaders; where they can deepen their understandings of their history, place in the world, and who their allies are here and abroad; where workers can integrate their struggles with analysis; where they can strategize and develop leadership skills; and a space from which workers could return to their workplaces to share their excitement and ideas with the rest of their membership. It was only on that foundation of knowing what kind of union we wanted to build and how that fit into a larger vision of society, that we could effectively move on to invite others in and spread the power of unionization to more working people.

6. Working Class Potentials

What we are ultimately celebrating is, I think, not so much the birth of a new institution as the collective potentials of the workers that made the creation of that institution possible. The semi-colonial idea that Canadian workers could not decide and act for themselves without the Americans was finally laid to rest. So too was the notion that internationalism could only be expressed as part of an American-centered union – especially when the new union acted quickly, after the split, to increase its commitments to international ties and solidarity

with workers in England and Australia and those in struggle in South Africa, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Mexico and Brazil.

Canadian workers were right to see through neoliberalism and to refuse to give up on their expectations. In doing so, it was workers – and not business – who were acting in the 'national' interest. Or more accurately it was the working class, with the newly-formed CAW playing a central role, which had the resources, organizational capacity, and inclination to move towards defining a national interest that was based on values radically different from competitiveness, and a solidaristic internationalism that was radically distinct from corporate globalization.

And yet it is hard to escape the common perception that the working class has been in decline over the past quarter century. In spite of the labour movement's achievements, we should not take such observations lightly. The working class is, in fact, very much in a defensive mode, if not retreat, retreat across the globe – even if there are occasional and very important exceptions.

The nature of these setbacks is not so much the stagnating wages, erosion of social services and job losses (as costly as these have been), but the demoralization over possibilities and the accompanying lowering of expectations. Revisiting the story of the split means coming to grips with the fact that in spite of the specific attempt by the Canadian section of the UAW to buck the tide of neoliberal globalization, it could not block the subsequent overall relative decline that unions have suffered. And that implies the need to rethink again, and honestly discuss again, the character of the labour movement today, its current limits, and whether it can revive that confident sense of its capacity to shape history. This includes addressing the question of how we cope with the issue of democratic sovereignty in the face of the general power of global capitalism, and the specific power of the American empire.

The great crime of capitalism as a social system is that it wastes, blocks, and distorts the skills and potentials of working people. There is, in contrast, nothing as exhilarating as those moments, emerging during struggles, when we discover the individual and collective potentials we never thought we had. The period leading up to the split and the eventual outcome of the split was one of those magical moments; it confirmed why socialist thinkers have always placed their hope for social change in the working class. The chance to experience and share that special moment was something rare and energizing. The promise held out by that moment now belongs to – and challenges – all of us. **R**

This includes addressing the question of how we cope with the issue of democratic sovereignty in the face of the general power of global capitalism, and the specific power of the American empire.

Water Conspiracies

Matt Fodor and Samantha Fodor

Varda Burstyn, *Water, Inc.*
(London: Verso, 2005), 291 pp.

Water, Inc. is the first novel by Canadian writer and activist Varda Burstyn (*Women Against Censorship; The Rites of Men*). The initial premise of this work of fiction is an awful truth: the world is really running out of fresh water. Recently, the UN Millennium Task Force on Water and Sanitation warned that 60 percent of the world's ecological services are stressed beyond the level of replenishment. Of these resources, water fares worst of all.

In Burstyn's novel, a group of American CEOs, led by William Greele, and politicians conspire to build a pipeline from Québec to the mid and southwestern U.S. in an attempt to resolve their water shortages. Fearing widespread public opposition, the consortium makes a secret deal with Serge Lalonde, a minister in the Parti-Québécois government. Information about the deal is soon leaked to a Québec environmentalist organization and major public opposition develops. Desperate to insure that the pipeline project will move forward as planned, the consortium uses all means necessary to undermine its burgeoning opposition. A conspiracy unfolds.

The novel's protagonists are Malcolm Macpherson, a Seattle aerospace engineer-turned environmentalist critic of the U.S. military-industrial complex, and Claire Davidowicz, the leader of a major U.S. environmental organization. Macpherson obtains classified information from his boss, Colonel Nicholas Kemenev, a leading member of the consortium. After Macpherson and Davidowicz establish a personal and political relationship, together they build links of opposition to the pipeline

consortium with their Québec counterparts. In a classic riff, the movement of the just take on the conspirators.

Water, Inc. is an engaging novel, with a clear political message: the commodification of water, the world's most important natural resource, must be rejected. Access to water is an essential right, and must remain in public rather than private hands. Davidowicz's public speeches remind readers of the environmental danger and economic inequalities that have resulted from recent trade agreements such as NAFTA, given its prioritization of the rights of capital and privatization over the needs of people and ecology. Canada may, in some senses, be abundant in fresh water, and the U.S. clearly drying up from extravagant water usage for irrigation and individual usage. But *Water, Inc.*, unlike some positions on the Left, does not attempt to win readers to a nationalist politics. The book stresses the dangers of a corporate and commodity-producing water pipeline projects on both sides of the border so that Canada, and other geographically privileged nations, might share their vital natural resources to fulfill the needs of the world.

The activist tone of *Water, Inc.* may sometimes exceed the narrative, but Burstyn's well-crafted emotional subplots keep the reader invested in the political struggles and experiences of the novel's main characters. *Water, Inc.* leaves us with both aesthetic and political dilemmas: how do we adequately assess socio-political processes and the necessary adventure of social activism without detracting from realism through flights of fancy away from the actual challenges of our situation? A good read, with real dilemmas not easily resolved. **R**

Matt Fodor is a graduate student in political science at York University, and Samantha Fodor is a refugee from Bush's America.



Lakeside

Art Looks at Toronto's Beaches

Elaine Whittaker

Decades ago Toronto's beaches were a central part of the city's summertime. They were chock-full of people canoeing, swimming, strolling the boardwalk, and just hanging out. Today, the beaches are often far less inviting. The immense growth of the city and encroaching road system has left the lakefront inaccessible and polluted. The beaches are too often unsafe for swimming and not the most attractive part of Toronto as they once were.

Poor water quality continues to plague Toronto's beaches. This summer record heat and humidity levels have left citizen's in a quandary – cool down with a swim in the lake's polluted waters and risk getting infections from high counts of E.coli, or stay out of the water and remain healthy but hot. Even the Blue Flag programme, an internationally recognized eco-label awarded to beaches that achieve high standards in areas such as safety, water quality, and park restoration and revitalization, that now has flags flying at a number of Toronto's beaches this summer, isn't enough to entice residents back into the water. This programme allows for a certain level of E.coli, and does not guarantee a completely clean and safe beach environment. It is but one small step to ensure the health of Toronto's beaches.

To encourage critical reflection on Toronto's waterfront, the Toronto Environmental Alliance and Gallery 1313 collaborated on an art exhibit that asked artists to respond to the issues confronting Toronto's lakefront. **Lakeside: Art Looks at Toronto Beaches**, was presented for three weeks in July at Gallery 1313 on Queen Street West in Toronto.

In this thought-provoking exhibit, thirteen artists explored

all aspects of living with Toronto's beaches. Through performance, visual, sound, and video art, they presented artworks that captured such themes as fun at the beach to despair at the pollution. One presentation that highlighted the history of living by the lake was an opening night performance piece by **Iona Staples**. Bridging the gap between young and old, past and present, art and community, she taught gallery goers the finer aspects of dancing 'The Balmy' in honour of the 100th anniversary of The Balmy Beach Club.

Fedora Romita also presented a performance piece. It was documented visually by a list of measurements displayed in the gallery. The list was based on exploring the notion of 'shoreline', which she measured by locating the distance found between waves as they rushed and receded the beach. Her 'findings' were a reminder that the lakeside is in a constant state of change, from both natural and human transformations.

For photographers **Schuster Gindin**, **Paul Grajauskas** and **Dyan Marie**, Toronto's beaches were a reminder that we are organically and socially connected to the lake. By combining photography and text in the form of an accordion book, **Schuster Gindin** examined water as an essential and visceral part of us. A metaphor for what Toronto is and might be. **Dyan Marie** collected discarded liquid containers and cast them in cement. Her photographs depicted these 're-cycled'

containers strewn along the beach with ample irony. And for **Paul Grajauskas** the idea that a simple action, whether intentional or incidental, can have an altering effect on the environment, was the basis for his documented walks around Ward's Island Beach.

For several artists life on the waterfront informed their artmaking. **Wende Bartley**, a composer and sound artist,



debuted a new aural work at *Lakeside*. Her piece was an oral history of the Toronto Islands based on recorded interviews with Jimmy Jones, who has lived on the islands over 70 years.

Freddie Towe, Maria Pracz and Lois Schklar are collectors who use objects found in their walks along the beach in their artmaking. Their works ranged from close up photographs of organic forms, such as driftwood and feathers, to natural objects sculpted into human and animal forms, to a wall installation based on discarded materials. These works provide us with the opportunity to consider a lakeside that is still in tune with its natural setting.

The intersection between the built and natural environments was evident in other works. The videowork of **Catherine Lathwell and Paul Grajauskas** parodied the late Robert Smithson's earthwork 'Spiral Jetty', and depicted their own hand hewn jetty, fashioned with the aid of a toy bulldozer. **Katharine Harvey's** multi-layered painting portrayed an unrestrained waterscape that evoked the bodily sensation of being underwater. In contrast, **Rick Vincil's** photograph of a tiny island entirely surrounded by concrete that floats off Bluffer's Park in Scarborough, stood as a metaphor for a present day culture that attempts to constrain nature in absurd ways. And **The Lovely Guys**—Veronica Verkley, Gene Threndyle, Peggy Ann Berton, Mark Hazen and Tom Campbell—documented in video and installation the construction of a shelter of found materials at the Leslie Spit beach, inspired by Toronto's homeless.

Visitors to the Gallery were also encouraged to consider water issues beyond Toronto in a public forum that was co-sponsored by The Socialist Project and York University's International Political Economy and Ecology Summer School. **Water Wars: From Durban to Toronto** examined one of the most contested zones of contemporary capitalism, conflicts over water for recreation and for daily life. The speakers included Patrick Bond of The Centre for Civil Society at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in Durban; Tony Clarke, Director of the Ottawa-based Polaris Institute and author of the recent *Inside the Bottle* (2005) looking at the commodification of water; and Shelley Petrie, Executive Director and water campaigner for the Toronto Environmental Alliance. They pointed out that neoliberalism has

attempted to commodify all aspects of water, converting public needs and spaces into commercial goods regulated by private property rights and markets. Toronto has staved a range of privatization efforts—these having stalled in Ontario after the Walkerton water poisoning disaster. But there remains extensive pressure on other components of the water system, as well as general ecological constraints on water resources in the city and the province.

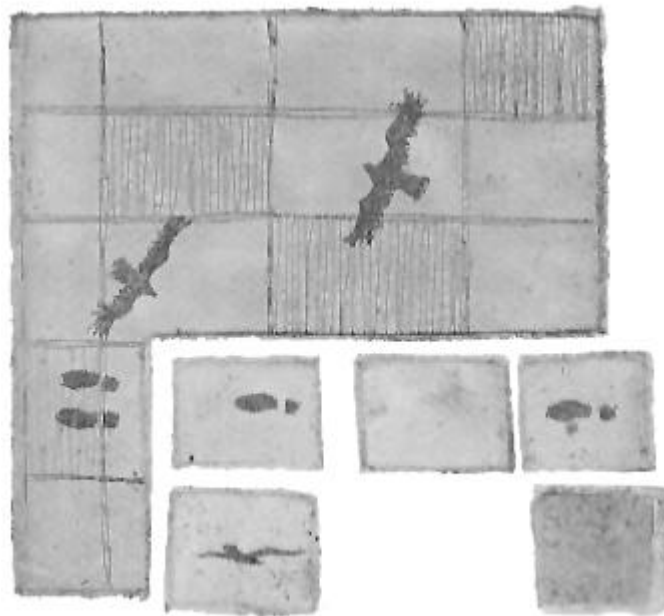
This brings us back to the politics of Toronto's waterfront. Toronto's residents are, indeed, enthusiastic about their waterfront and have been pressuring politicians to enforce a provincial policy that is already in place to regulate safe swimming at beaches. Guidelines for water quality are set out in provincial procedures introduced 10 years ago. Unfortunately the Liberal government is still allowing municipalities to by-pass the guidelines, and the entire Toronto waterfront restoration is stuck in neutral. Some of this is clearly the result of neo-liberal policies at both the provin-

cial and municipal levels. Environmental enforcement of pollution releases into the lake has been all but absent; building proper waterfront treatment and runoff infrastructure is still not a priority, although the funding is completely manageable for a city of Toronto's size; and waterfront re-development—now some twenty years promised!—only seems to benefit developers and the Liberal Party as it is only ever more condos that seem to get completed. Despite their progressive cast, leadership on the issue from the Mayor's office—although he ran on the anti-Island airport ticket—and city councilors with waterfront wards has been minimal. The

corporate and bureaucratic power structures ruling over the waterfront remain untouched. This has left Toronto's lakeshore, with its vast potential, one of the least attractive waterfronts of any of the major cities in the country.

Lakeside was a raw yet intriguing exhibit. The visual impact of art gave Toronto's citizens the opportunity to contemplate the ecological and social values of their urban beaches, encouraging them to re-make the lakeshore and re-imagine the future of Toronto's waterfront. But after so many shunted promises for the interests of commerce will such a politics emerge? **R**

Elaine Whittaker is a Toronto-based visual artist.



Live 8 for G8:

Musical Hegemony and “Hidden” Neoliberal Messages

Tanner Mirrlees

Today’s popular musical soundscape, with all the energies it releases and refracts, is a small but significant terrain on which political consent for various projects is built and destroyed. Popular music is a sonic field of cultural struggle over political interests and power. Condemnation of the musical cultural industry’s capitalist form, how it exploits its musical producers, and the way it imagines and reflects the world around it *without* an understanding of why so many people are attracted to its concerts, sounds and image-mixes, will not help socialists to change it. Popular music and musical events, no matter how politically impoverished or contradictory their messages, might even present contemporary socialists with a novel perspective on the political consciousness of mass audiences and why they may or may not identify with political causes, goals and projects. Bob Geldof’s Live 8 lends itself to such a socialist understanding of political hegemony and popular music.



In 1985, Bob Geldof launched Live Aid to raise world consciousness about the plight of the Third World and to raise funds for Ethiopian famine relief. Live Aid was a massive two-venue rock concert. Its television-mediated sounds and images of massive crowds gathered in Philadelphia and London for the shows made their way via satellites onto the screens of thousands of television sets. Geldof’s rock spectacle raised \$40 million for poverty relief. But as time passed, the economic impoverishment, political instability, and AIDS-

catastrophe within and between many states on the continent of Africa was exacerbated. Two decades later, Geldof, wanted again to ameliorate the economic, political, and environmental conditions of the continent. So he organized an even larger music festival than the last: Live 8, or, as its promotional material declared “the greatest concert ever.”

For Geldof, Live 8 was “not for charity but political justice. This is to finally, as much as we can, put a stop to that [poverty in Africa].” Live 8’s stated goal was to “create a wave of support, a mass lobby that communicated to the G8 governments what they should do: develop a historic plan to work with African governments in fighting AIDS, extreme poverty and corruption.” Live 8 sought to pressure the G8 leaders to do three things: cancel Africa’s financial debt to the IMF and World Bank; increase Africa’s foreign aid to .7 per cent of the G8 nations’ Gross National Product (GNP); fine-tune Africa’s domestic development strategy by cutting trade subsidies and protections that hamper export outflow. To alert the ears of the G8’s global elite to Live 8’s three demands and to generate the global soundwave that was heard by rockers and fans around the world, Live 8 performances were broadcast live from a number of major global cities. Appropriately, Live 8 happened one week prior to the G8 summit in Perthshire, Scotland (July 6-8, 2005).

Sound bites from star musical performers reflected Live 8’s resonance in the geo-political imagination of fans as a force for genuine global social justice and global economic change. The Canadian rocker Sam Roberts (known for his anthem track that spells out SOCIALISM), expressed the egalitarian impulse of the show: “hopefully if we

do a good enough job, the young people will just know that this is how we have to live: we have to care for each other, we have to look out for each other, and that’s not just about your immediate circle of friends.” Hollywood actor/rapper Will Smith appropriated the Bush Administration’s terror-war propaganda line and spun it with a more internationalist cause: “Today we hold this truth to be self-evident: We are all in this together.” The Cure’s gothic lead-man Robert Smith commented on the show’s potential to create a global social movement that would achieve a more equitable form of wealth redistribution: “By mobilizing millions of people, you’re effectively saying to a few very powerful people that there is a groundswell and it isn’t going to go away. There are too many people involved. There is too much anger for things to just remain as they are. The gulf between rich and poor isn’t unbridgeable. There is enough to go around.” U2’s Bono stated: “This is our chance to stand up for what’s right. We’re not looking for charity, we’re looking for justice.” Geldof conceded: “it strikes me as being morally repul-



sive and intellectually absurd that people die of want in a world of surplus. This concert is to finally, as much as we can, put a stop to that.”

Live 8's political soundscape, on a first listen, may globally reverberate like something composed by revolutionary socialists. Equitable wealth redistribution and the abolishment of the economic divide between rich and poor, social justice and egalitarianism, global cultural understanding and community – all are noble and revolutionary aspirations.

But here, an instructive urban myth should be recalled. Not so long ago, conservatives alleged that rock music contained barely audible messages that indoctrinated young listeners. It motivated susceptible audiences to act in a way that upheld the interests of certain groups – satanists, communists, whatever. Following this urban myth, rock music was an effective way of getting listeners to accept its composers' ideological message. The paranoia of urban mythology became an unintended yet audible reality at Live 8. Buried within Live 8's musical mix were a number of ideological messages that not only distorted a more complex reality but also upheld the ruling class interests of the G8's elite. The revolutionary potential of Live 8's seemingly dissonant musicians was neutralized by the corporations, political elite, and neoliberal instruments that *played them*.

Live 8's three political demands and effects didn't challenge the G8's existing neoliberal policy toward Africa. Though the G8 promised to forgive the debts of 18 of the continent's poorest countries, debt cancellation by the IMF, World Bank, and African Development Bank comes with costly strings (attached to the coffers of global creditors and corporations). To qualify for debt forgiveness, African states, like other impoverished nation-states, must abide by the criteria set out by G8 proposals for Highly Indebted Poor Country (HIPC). Every dollar of debt that global financial institutions cancel is matched by an eliminated dollar in foreign aid paid out by the G8. Thus debt and

foreign aid are eliminated while the IMF and the World Bank benefit from a debt reimbursement process and social safety net. The money paid back to global financial institutions on behalf of the impoverished countries by the G8 will be subtracted from their existing foreign aid budgets.

Live 8's political demand for the increase in foreign aid to .7 percent was largely met with silence. Italy, France, Britain and Germany promised to provide .7 per cent of their GDP by 2015, but Canada, Japan and the United States refused. Though an increase in foreign aid from \$25 billion to \$50 billion over a ten-or-so-year period was promised, after being subtracted from cancelled debts, this meagre amount will likely flow into African states on the condition that they abide by neoliberal structural adjustment policies crafted by the U.S. and the U.K on behalf of their global corporations (which already dominate Africa's economy). The U.S.'s African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) is exemplary. This act demands African states to establish a free-market, eliminate barriers to United States trade and investment, and build a political environment that is conducive to U.S. foreign policy. AGOA's implementation is the charge of the Corporate Council on Africa. This lobby group represents US corporations including Halliburton, Exxon Mobil, Coca-Cola, General Motors, Starbucks, Raytheon, Microsoft, Boeing, Cargill, and Citigroup.

The UK is taking a similar approach to structurally adjusting Africa with neoliberal policies and global corporations. A Business Action for Africa summit, for example, was held in London on July 5, 2005. To a crowd of speakers representing corporations including Shell, British American Tobacco, Standard Chartered Bank, and De Beers, UK Prime Minister Tony Blair declared: “The private sector is the engine for growth in Africa. Growth and development can only happen when governments and business work together.” The summit's purpose was to inaugurate the Investment Climate Facility, a \$550 million dollar fund

financed by the UK's foreign-aid budget, the World Bank and the other G8 nations. Launched by Niall FitzGerald, the top brass of Reuters, the Investment Climate Facility seeks to build an attractive business environment (ie. a cheap and disorganized labour force, tax breaks and incentives for the rich, a marketized public sector) for corporations.



These conditions make the success of export-based development strategy – Live 8's third political demand – improbable. Moreover, indigenous production for domestic consumption, the prioritization of local needs over global wants, and independence from the fetters of the global marketplace and its rulers were out of Live 8's musical and political range. The voices of subaltern Africans and black African musicians were also excluded until Live 8's organizers caved into public criticism about the dominance of white performers and staged The Africa Calling concert in Cornwall – the same day as larger Live 8 concerts.

Live 8's rock music carried messages that were in tune with the ideology of the G8, the global corporations, and the global financiers. Geldof nevertheless heralded Live 8's outcome as “a qualified triumph” and praised it as “a victory for the millions of people in the campaigns around the world.” “We've pulled this off,” Bono told reporters. “The world spoke, and the politicians listened.” But the world didn't speak (nor did Africans). It danced, listened, and sang along to a neoliberal message articulated through the smash-hits and affective vocal styles of Western rock celebrities. There was nothing in Live 8's chorus of political demands that the G8 elite hadn't already heard or planned a response to. This was why Bush, Blair, and Martin sang and danced along, smiles on their faces. →

Global media corporations capitalized on Live 8 by commodifying audiences and selling them to advertisers. AOL's Internet coverage established a new record for a live video cybercast with 5 million viewers logging on. The BBC averaged 7.8 million viewers between 6:00 p.m. and midnight. France's M6 recorded a peak number of 1.9 million. Canada's CTV had 10.5 million people tuned into at least part of its 18-hour telecast. In the U.S., ABC's two-hour telecast of Live 8 highlights drew 2.9 million viewers.

The millions of dollars of advertising revenues accumulated by the global media corporations behind Live 8 added to the event's licensing and commodification. AOL-Time Warner controlled and licensed the concert's online broadcasting to the Walt Disney Company for broadcast TV on ABC and affiliated TV and radio stations, including Premiere Radio Networks, XM Satellite Radio and Viacom's MTV Networks. Corporate sponsors that secured the intellectual property rights to commercialize Live 8's TV repeats, video-clips, and soon-to-be-released DVDs also benefited. Britain's EMI Music Group secured the exclusive rights on the DVDs of the concerts in six of the G8 countries including the USA, France, Britain, UK, Italy and Germany.

At the same time, Live 8 was a useful brand-building space for its corporate sponsors. The Ford Motor Company used the event to advertise and humanize its Volvo-car. "The Live 8 event," said Volvo's corporate spokesman Soren Johansson, "fits with the DNA of the company" and "appeals to people's emotions." One of Volvo's TV spots featured Volvo for Life award-winner Rosamond Carr, "who operates an orphanage in Rwanda, and two others talking about Volvo's values and their reasons for Live 8 involvement." To complete the branding campaign, Volvo vehicles were leased to Live 8 organizers to transport artists to and from the concert venues in both London and Philadelphia.

The bulk of the wealth generated

by the commodification of Live 8 and its audiences will not go to the people of Africa, but to the event's corporate sponsors, advertising firms, and TV networks. But Live 8's London commodified audiences didn't seem to know or care about their exploitation when enthusiastically welcoming Microsoft billionaire Bill Gates, escorted by Geldof, onto the stage. Audiences may have even nodded their heads in agreement with Gates' capitalist faith in a future technological utopia: "Some day in the future all people no matter where they are born will be able to lead a healthy life" declared Gates. "We can do this, and when we do it will be the best thing that humanity has ever done."



In retrospect, Live 8 can be understood as a hegemony-building musical event that performed important yet inadvertent ideological work on behalf of the G8 and global corporations.

First, Live 8 re-branded the G8, the IMF and the World Bank as a solution to (rather than a major cause of) global economic impoverishment, thus giving moral legitimacy to the neoliberalism.

Second, Live 8's media hype diverted global public attention away from the World Tribunal on Iraq, which took place in Istanbul, Turkey, around the same time. Here, the U.S. and UK invasion and occupation of Iraq was publicly condemned as a criminal act. The war's guilty conduct (the use of cluster bombs, depleted uranium, civilian killings), propaganda (military disinformation and information warfare campaigns), back-door economic beneficiaries (U.S. and UK corporations) and lying political leaders (Bush and Blair) all seemed to be forgotten with Live 8's feel-good media coverage.

Third, Live 8's manufacture of an atmosphere of hope, joy, and perceived political activism may have absolved its consumers' guilty conscience about their ruling elite's fraudulence and the

explicit militarism of Anglo-American capitalism. And by appearing to be part of a global struggle to change the effects of the system and ideology it actually buttressed, Live 8 potentially co-opted bits and pieces of the alternative globalization and anti-war movements (and neutralized these movements' anti-capitalist sentiments).

Fourth, Live 8 definitely profited, promoted, and pandered to global media corporations.

Fifth, Live 8 risked white-washing the other causes of Third World impoverishment: a history of colonial enslavement by the West, a present ruled by neo-imperial states and corporations through a corrupt comprador elite, and a future deprived of hope for political, economic, and cultural sovereignty.

These criticisms of Live 8's ideological messages and musical hegemony – and similar criticisms of other global political concerts for that matter – have been heard before.



A year following Geldof's Live Aid concert in 1985, a band called Chumbawumba released an album called "Pictures of Starving Children." This album criticized the hypocrisy of millionaire pop stars and multinational media corporations involved in rock and roll charity events. It argued that the world's people were impoverished because of multinational capitalism. Musical consciousness raising and acts of charity were not a sufficient political response or solution to the problem of global capitalism. Chumbawumba's socialist critique of musical charity events was met with a barrage of accusations that the band had succumbed to conspiracy theories and cynical negativity.

Today, criticisms of the economic and ideological work performed by Live 8 on behalf of G8 neoliberalism and global corporations are too, reduced to conspiracy theories and cynicism. Let's

be clear: scepticism about Live 8's likely political effects should not be confused with cynicism about the political intentions of Live 8's organizers. Geldof & Co's motivations for Live 8 were not intentionally bad or deliberately evil. Live 8 was not planned to perform the explicit function of duping global audiences, winning global consent to neo-imperialism, and bringing about a more impoverished Africa.

There is a difference between Live 8's political goals and those of neocon imperialists like Max Boot. For Boot, an American military solution to Africa's problems would work much better than Live 8's proposal for debt cancellation, foreign aid increases, and export-led development strategies. In "Mercenaries, Not Musicians, for Africa" Boot states:

"Africans continue to be tormented not by the G8, as anti-poverty campaigners imply, but by their own politicians, including Sudanese President Omar Hassan Ahmed Bashir, who is abetting genocide in Darfur, and Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe, who is turning his once-prosperous country into a famine-plagued basket case. Unless it's linked to specific good governance benchmarks (as with the new U.S. Millennium Challenge Account), more aid risks subsidizing dysfunctional regimes. Any real solution to Africa's problems must focus on the root causes of poverty – mainly misgovernment. Instead of pouring billions more down the same old rat holes, maybe the Live 8 crew should promote a more innovative approach: Use the G8's jillions 2 hire mercenaries 4 the overthrow of the 6 most thuggish regimes in Africa. That would do more to help ordinary Africans than any number of musical extravaganzas."

Outright attacks on or dismissals of Geldof's Live 8 and its effects risk playing into Right-wing hostility toward politicized artists and their work, gives conservatives another reason to claim that a liberal-left cultural elite dominates mainstream media and popular commercial culture, and fails to learn from the positive political energy

generated by the event itself.

Certainly, for all of its contradictions and hidden neoliberal messages, Live 8's political goals to raise global consciousness and abolish global poverty are certainly not the problem. Nor is the fact that the concert was experienced by millions of audiences that were galvanized to energetically act in joyful solidarity with these well-meaning goals.

That the means offered to achieve these goals were flawed: that the political consciousness of Live 8's rockers and audiences was limited by neoliberal ideology, and that the G8 and global media corporations capitalized on the event in numerous ways is unsurprising. The rock stars and audiences that participated in Live 8 are not revolutionary socialists, and revolutionary socialists did not intervene on the

musical terrain of Live 8 to impute an alternative global consciousness and an alternative strategy to abolish world poverty. The feelings of anger, joy, and hope generated by Live 8 and shared by its millions of audiences – many of them newcomers to the political world – could have been articulated to a revolutionary socialist vision, if only the capacities to do so were available.

To date, no other global political event (with exception of the initial protests against the invasion of Iraq) has been as large as Live 8 and drawn so many people together. The absence of a socialist organization capable of battling it out on the terrain of popular culture allows the neoliberal messages embedded in morally righteous and capitalist rock concerts such as Live 8 to be widely circulated, sometimes criticized and rarely learned from. **R**



Fighting For Reforms Without Becoming Reformist

Robin Hahnel

From a talk hosted by the New Socialist Group and Socialist Project at Ryerson University, Toronto, June 5 2005.

What To Avoid

We need look no further than to the history of twentieth century social democracy to see how fighting for reforms can make a movement reformist. Social democrats began the twentieth century determined to replace capitalism with socialism — which they understood to be a system of equitable cooperation based on democratic planning by workers, consumers, and citizens. Long before the century was over social democratic parties and movements throughout the world had accepted private enterprise and markets, and pledged to pursue only reforms to make a system driven by competition and greed more humane.

We need look no further than to the history of twentieth century libertarian socialism to see how failing to embrace reform struggles can isolate a movement and make it irrelevant. The principle failure of libertarian socialists during the twentieth century was their inability to understand the necessity and importance of reform organizing. When it turned out that anti-capitalist uprisings were few and far between, and libertarian socialists proved incapable of sustaining the few that did occur early in the twentieth century, their reticence to throw themselves into reform campaigns, and ineptness when they did, doomed libertarian socialists to more than a half century of decline after their devastating defeat during the Spanish Civil War of 1936-1939. What too many libertarian socialists failed to realize was that any transition to a democratic and equitable economy has no choice but to pass through reform campaigns, organizations, and institutions however tainted and corrupting they may be.

The Myth of the Non-Reformist Reform

The new left tried to exorcise the dilemma that reform work is necessary but corrupting with the concept of *non-reformist reforms*. According to this theory the solution to the dilemma is for activists to work on non-reformist reforms, i.e. reforms that improve people's lives while undermining the material, social, or ideological underpinnings of the capitalist system. There is nothing wrong with the notion of winning reforms while undermining capitalism. As a matter of fact, that is a concise description of precisely what we must be about! What was misleading was the notion that there are

particular reforms that are like silver bullets and accomplish this because of something special about the nature of those reforms themselves.

There is no such thing as a non-reformist reform. Social democrats and libertarian socialists did not err because they somehow failed to find and campaign for this miraculous kind of reform. Nor did we new leftists prove successful where others had failed before us because we found a special kind of reform different from those social democrats championed and libertarian socialists shied away from. Some reforms improve peoples lives more, and some less. Some reforms are easier to win, and some are harder to win. Some reforms are easier to defend, and some are less so. And of course, different reforms benefit different groups of people. Those are ways reforms, themselves, differ. On the other hand, there are crucial differences in how reforms are fought for. Reforms can be fought for by reformers preaching the virtues of capitalism. Or reforms can be fought for by anti-capitalists pointing out that only by replacing capitalism will it be possible to fully achieve what reformers want. Reforms can be fought for while leaving institutions of repression intact. Or a reform struggle can at least weaken repressive institutions, if not destroy them. Reforms can be fought for by hierarchical organizations that reinforce authoritarian, racist, and sexist dynamics and thereby weaken the overall movement for progressive change. Or reforms can be fought for by democratic organizations that uproot counter productive patterns of behavior and empower people to become masters and mistresses of their fates. Reforms can be fought for in ways that provide tempting possibilities for participants, and particularly leaders, to take unfair personal advantage of *group* success. Or they can be fought for in ways that minimize the likelihood of corrupting influences. Finally, reform organizing can be the entire program of organizations and movements. Or, recognizing that reform organizing within capitalism is prone to weaken the personal and political resolve of participants to pursue a full system of equitable cooperation, reform work can be combined with other kinds of activities, programs, and institutions that rejuvenate the battle weary and prevent burn out and sell out.

But if reforms are successful they will make capitalism less harmful to some extent. There is no way around this, and even if there were such a thing as a non-reformist reform, it would not change this fact. However, the fact that every success makes capitalism less harmful does not mean successful reforms necessarily prolong the life of capitalism — although it might, and this is something anti-capitalists must

simply learn to accept. But if winning a reform further empowers the reformers, and whets their appetite for more democracy, more economic justice, and more environmental protection than capitalism can provide, it can hasten the fall of capitalism.

In any case, it turns out we are a more cautious and social species than most twentieth century libertarian socialists realized. And it turns out that capitalism is far more resilient than libertarian socialists expected it to be. More than a half century of libertarian socialist failures belie the myth that it is possible for social revolutionaries committed to democracy to eschew reform work without becoming socially isolated. Avoidance of participation in reform work is simply not a viable option and only guarantees defeat for any who opt out. Moreover, no miraculous non-reformist reform is going to come riding to our rescue. Though many twentieth century libertarian socialists failed to realize it, their only hope was to throw themselves wholeheartedly into reform struggles while searching for ways to minimize the corrupting pressures that inevitably are brought to bear on them as a result.

Combine Reform Work with Experiments in Equitable Cooperation

If the answer does not lie in finding a special kind of reform, how are we to prevent reform work from weakening our rejection of capitalism and sabotaging our efforts to eventually replace it with a system of equitable cooperation? Beside working for reforms in ways that lead to demands for further progress, and besides working in ways that strengthen progressive movements and progressive voices within movements, I believe the answer lies in combining reform work with building what I call imperfect experiments in equitable cooperation.

Before we will be able to replace competition and greed with equitable cooperation, before we can replace private enterprise and markets with worker and consumer councils and participatory planning, we will have to devise intermediate means to prevent backsliding and regenerate forward momentum. For the foreseeable future most of this must be done by combining reform work with work to establish and expand imperfect experiments in equitable cooperation. Both kinds of work are necessary. Neither strategy is effective by itself.

Reforms alone cannot achieve equitable cooperation because as long as the institutions of private enterprise and markets are left in place to reinforce anti-social behavior based on greed and fear, progress toward equitable cooperation will be limited, and the danger of retrogression will be ever present. Moreover, reform campaigns undermine their leaders' commitment to full economic justice and democracy in a number of ways, and do little to demonstrate that equitable cooperation is possible, or establish new norms and expectations. On the other hand, concentrating exclusively on →

Democratic Economies

Greg Albo

The crisis which faced the authoritarian command economic systems in communist countries of the 1970s prompted a great deal of rethinking about economic planning and co-ordination in non-market societies within and outside the East Bloc. As well, the acceptance of capitalism by governing social democratic parties in the Western countries, and their accommodation to neoliberalism (including the NDP in Canada), encouraged numerous writers and movements to begin to pose alternative economic strategies. Interventions from the feminist, ecology and anti-colonial movements also added to critiques of all existing models and insistence that alternate economic strategies and models incorporate greater complexity. Much more than simply seizing the 'commanding heights' of the economy was needed.

From all these sides, there has been a proliferation of new models of socialism and alternate economic strategies. They have had in common an attempt to extend democratic participation in a decentralised fashion. This can be achieved by extending workers' control and user participation in the management of enterprises and organizations and to formulate new representative bodies, administrative means and strategies at the centre to control the economic surplus and redistribute it toward need and sustainable production. Although the neoliberal mantra that 'there is no alternative' sometimes blinds us, there has never been more creative thinking on possible socialist futures, concrete transitional strategies and specific egalitarian policy measures in history. With the end of the historical communist parties and the thorough integration of social democratic parties into capitalist market policies and values (the NDP being a telling example), there is a lack of political agencies with enough organizational capacity to put alternatives on the public agenda.

These strategic interventions have been numerous and important. They have provided some of the most innovative thinking on socialist strategies since the oddly called 'calculation debate' that, in a broad sense, spanned the 1920s-1940s, as theorists furiously waged war over the possibility and content of socialism, in light of the Russian Revolution and the emergence of mass working class movements demanding an alternative to capitalism. This debate was revisited in the dialogue between Paul Sweezy and Charles Bettelheim, collected in *On the Transition to Socialism* (1972), over the 'laws of motion' of Soviet societies. But new

Continued on page 33

we can work more effectively in the labor, consumer, anti-corporate, environmental, and global justice economic reform movements, and why we must prioritize building a poor peoples' movement. But we must make clear that the reason we work in reform campaigns is that we believe *everyone* should control their own economic destiny, and *everyone* should receive economic benefits commensurate with their effort and sacrifice. It is also important for activists working in reform campaigns to make clear that victories can only be partial and temporary as long as economic power is unequally dispersed and economic decisions are based on private gain and market competition. Otherwise, reform efforts give way to disillusionment, and weaken, rather than strengthen the movement for progressive economic change when victories prove partial and erode over time. Not only must activists working for reforms explain why those reforms will be temporary as long as capitalism survives, they must also take time in their reform work to explain concretely how victories can be fuller and more permanent if capitalism is replaced by a system designed to promote equitable economic cooperation in the first place.

Working in reform movements does not mean we must abandon, or play down our politics. When we work in the labor movement we must teach not only that profit income is unfair, but that the salaries of highly paid professionals are unfair as well when they are paid many times more than ordinary workers while making fewer personal sacrifices. In other words, when we work in the labor movement we must insist that the labor movement live up to its billing and become the hammer for justice in capitalism. When we work in the anti-corporate movement we must never tire of emphasizing that corporations and their unprecedented power are the major problem in the world today. We must make clear that every concession corporations make is because it is rung out of them by activists who convince them that the anti-corporate movement will inflict greater losses on their bottom line if they persist in their anti-social and environmentally destructive behavior than if they accede to our demands. When we

In an era of unprecedented and increasing corporate power, much of our energies must be devoted to reform campaigns and movements. In chapter 11 of *Economic Justice and Democracy* I discuss a number of reform campaigns we must throw ourselves into, body and soul: reform campaigns to tame finance, to secure full employment macroeconomic policies, to make taxes more fair and efficient, to win living wages, to establish a single-payer healthcare system, and to promote urban renewal and prevent suburban sprawl. In chapter 12 I discuss how



promote programs like pollution taxes that modify incentives for private corporations in the market system, we must also make clear that production for profit and market forces are the worst enemies of the environment, and that the environment will never be adequately protected until those economic institutions are replaced. Even while we work to protect consumers from price gouging and defective products we must make clear how the market system inefficiently promotes excessive individual consumption at the expense of social consumption and leisure. And finally, even while anti-globalization activists work to stop the spread of corporate-sponsored, neoliberal globalization, we must explain how a different kind of globalization from below can improve people's lives rather than destroy their livelihoods.

Strong economic reform movements are necessary — and in the United States not one of the above movements is nearly strong enough at present. But strong economic reform movements are not enough. Twenty-first century activists must also nurture, build, and begin to connect a variety of creative living experiments in equitable cooperation within capitalism if we want to avoid the fate of our twentieth century social democratic predecessors.

Build Experiments in Equitable Cooperation

The culture of capitalism is firmly rooted among citizens of the advanced economies. The only sense in which capitalism serves as midwife for its heir is by forcing people to learn to think and live non-capitalistically in order to meet needs it leaves unfulfilled. It falls to progressives to learn and teach others how to do this. And there can be no mistake about it, this is a monumental task. But where can the culture of equitable cooperation grow in modern capitalism? A variety of existing experiments in equitable cooperation need to be strengthened, new kinds of experiments must be created, and ways to link experiments together must be found — to offer an increasingly attractive alternative to capitalism. In chapter 13 of *Economic Justice and Democracy* I discuss important experiments in equitable cooperation that already exist like local currency systems, producer and consumer cooperatives, egalitarian and ecological intentional communities, citizen planning in places like Kerala India and Porto Alegre Brazil, and experiments in participatory economics.

I argue that it is important not to put any particular experiment in equitable cooperation on a pedestal and blind oneself to its limitations. It is also important not to focus exclusively on the limitations of a particular experiment and fail to recognize important ways in which it advances the cause of equitable cooperation. But it is most important not to underestimate the value of living experiments in equitable cooperation in general.

The glass will always be part full and part empty. All real world experiments in equitable cooperation in capitalist economies will not only be imperfect because →

Democratic Economies, *Continued*

parameters for the discussion of socialist alternatives really came with the debate over 'markets and plans' in the context of extending democratic economic coordination in the late 1970s. There were numerous interventions. A sampling of the more significant would include: Alec Nove, *The Economics of Feasible Socialism* (1983); Raymond Williams, *Toward 2000* (1985); Pat Devine, *Democracy and Economic Planning* (1988); Michael Ellman, *Socialist Planning* (1989); Robin Blackburn, *After the Fall* (1991); and Ernest Mandel, *Power and Money* (1992). More recently this line of thinking has been placed in the context of globalization and neoliberalism, with Walden Bello, *Deglobalization* (2002) and *Monthly Review's* 'Socialism for the 21st Century' issue of July-August 2005, being as representative of current approaches as any.

The contributions by Robin Hahnel to these debates have been significant reference points, reflective of the intersection between libertarian socialism and left-anarchism, if one has to try to label his standpoint. His writings have often been in collaboration with Michael Albert (and loosely in connection with *Z Magazine*, *Z-Net* and that element of the U.S. anti-globalization movement). The intellectual project has gone under the name 'participatory economics' or 'parecon'. The texts go back to Albert and Hahnel's 1981 *Socialism Today and Tomorrow*, but the most significant contributions have been their *The Political Economy of Participatory Economics* (1991) and *Looking Forward: Participatory Economics for the 21st Century* (1991), the latter being the more accessible text. Hahnel's recent book, *Economic Justice and Democracy: From Competition to Cooperation* (2005), extends the 'parecon' analysis, but also develops more immediate programmatic demands and orientations than the 'models' that characterize his previous work. Here, like so many other radical movements and efforts today, the question of political agency is as often asserted as adequately assessed, particularly in the American context, where further political fragmentation is hard to imagine and socialist ideas are not even on the margins.

Hahnel's writings on alternatives are a vital contribution to the global anti-capitalist movement. They have added an enormous amount to our re-imagining what socialism might be, and the insistence that we pursue 'practical utopias' today. The re-making of a viable Left today surely lies with critical engagement with these ideas, and the struggle they insist upon in moving from theory to practice. **R**

Greg Albo teaches political economy at York University.

human efforts are always imperfect, more importantly, they will be imperfect because they must survive within a capitalist economy and are subject to the serious limitations and pressures this entails. Of course it is important to evaluate how successfully any particular experiment advances the cause of equitable cooperation and resists pressures emanating from the capitalist economy to compromise principles of economic justice and democracy. But there is little point in either pretending experiments are flawless or vilifying those struggling to create something better. What is called for is to nurture and improve experiments that already exist, to build new ones that can reach out to people who continue to live in their traditional communities, and eventually to link experiments in cooperation together to form a visible alternative to capitalism in its midst.

Live Within the Movement

We need to begin to think differently about what “the movement” is and how it functions. But whereas in the past anti-capitalist activists identified primarily as members of particular radical political organizations, i.e. organizations defined by a particular political ideology and strategic program, I suspect in the future activists will more often be identified by their work in particular reform struggles *and* by how they express their willingness to live according to the principles of equitable cooperation. In other words, I suspect movement activists will increasingly come to have two different organizational reference points, instead of a single, all embracing political sect, pre-party, party, or group. Which reform struggle, or anti-capitalist educational project I work on, and what organization or caucus I belong to when doing that work will be one point of reference. How I choose to live according to the principles of cooperation, and which experiment in equitable cooperation I belong to will be my second point of reference as a movement activist. I detect a change toward dual allegiances instead of single allegiances among movement activists, and I think this is a fortuitous trend. I think activists who orient and work with a dual orientation and allegiances not only will be more effective, they will be able to sustain themselves longer as activists and enjoy themselves more in the process. Since I have long been of the opinion

that it is activists and organizers who make the world go round, anything that improves their effectiveness and enhances their numbers in my opinion greatly improves our chances of success.

In any case, movement activists need to preach what they practice. We must not only fight along side others for reforms that make capitalism more equitable and democratic and less environmentally destructive, we must prove by personal example that it is possible for people to live in ways that are more democratic, equitable, and sustainable than anything capitalism permits. Quite simply, we must show that people will want to choose equitable cooperation when given the chance. When we begin to do this the difference between

those who are committed to the cause of equitable cooperation and those who seek only limited reforms of capitalism will no longer be that the former espouse more militant strategies and tactics during reform campaigns than the latter. The measure of dedication to the cause of equitable cooperation will be willingness to enter into arrangements with others as they become available that better express the cooperative principles we espouse.

Standing Fast

The next century will prove no easy road for progressive organizers — in any of the movements in any of the spheres of social life.

Unfortunately for those of us working for progressive economic change, capitalism does not dig its own grave. Instead it charges us dearly for the shovels it sells us to dig our own graves. Only when enough of us come to our senses and put our shovels to better use will the increasing human misery and environmental destruction that marked the end of the century that should have been capitalism’s last, give way to a sustainable economy of equitable cooperation. Unfortunately, “coming to our senses” is easier said than done. It will come to pass only after more sweat and tears have flowed in more reform campaigns than we can yet imagine. It will require countless lives devoted to building experiments in equitable cooperation that swim against the current in the increasingly global cauldron of competition and greed. Fortunately, pouring sweat and tears into the cause of justice and democracy are at the center of the human spirit and make our lives fuller. **R**



The 6th Declaration of the Selva Lacandona

Richard Roman

The 6th Declaration of the Selva Lacandona is very clear and explicit in its anti-capitalist thrust and its call for a common struggle against neoliberalism, the ideology of global capitalism. It's also clear as to the protagonists of the struggle and the enemy. The protagonists are the indigenous peoples, the working class of city and countryside, and other oppressed groups. The enemy is capitalism and the political class (read elites, party functionaries, political careerists, etc.) that it sees as tools of global capital. What is not clear in the statement is the path of the struggle. The path, form and organization of the struggle is something that will be developed in the course of a structured series of bilateral dialogues that the Zapatistas will have with different sectors over the next 4-6 weeks. First, the Left, then the indigenous peoples, followed by social movements, NGOs, collectives, culminating in a general meeting on September 15, to decide the course of "the other campaign." It is not clear how the decisions will be made as to the programme and the character of the struggle, other than that it will be leftist, anti-capitalist, and non-electoral, and will continue beyond 2006.

The most heated debate unleashed in Mexico over the 6th Declaration and subsequent statements and letters by Subcommandante Marcos has been over the relationship between "the other campaign" and the 2006 electoral campaign, especially, over the strong attacks against the PRD and its probable candidate for President, López Obrador. The anger of the Zapatistas towards the PRD is warranted. López Obrador has increasingly sought to present himself as a centrist. He has appointed a committee of 6 to run his campaign, two of whom when members of the PRI, were bitter opponents of the Zapatistas. As well, there has been a constant exodus

of ambitious PRI-istas to the PRD in hopes of better career opportunities. This increasing PRI-ification of the PRD has, in the state of Chiapas, meant that some of the para-military groups that have attacked and assassinated Zapatistas, are made up of perredistas (PRD members). As well, the PRD Senators voted for the "indigenous rights" law of 2001 that betrayed the principles of the San Andrés Accords. Further, López Obrador's programme includes a plan to build a transoceanic rail link in Oaxaca, a component of Plan Puebla Panama, which is strongly opposed by indigenous groups.

The left critics of the Zapatistas' sharp attacks on López Obrador and the PRD share many, if not all, of the criticisms being made by the Zapatistas but they fear that this will pave the way for the victory of the PRI, a deepening of neoliberalism, and an intensification of repression. They argue that López Obrador and the PRD, with all of their serious flaws, are nevertheless critical of neoliberalism, committed to maintaining energy as nationally controlled resources, and will be more open, albeit reluctantly, to democratic reform in the union movement and elsewhere. Furthermore, they point out that many of the activists and the popular base of support of the PRD, are also people fighting for many of the same things as the Zapatistas and their allies. They say that the Zapatista initiative, insofar as it emphasizes an attack on the PRD, will bitterly divide the left rather than unite it.

The first bilateral meetings in the 6th Declaration process, held in Chiapas, on August 6th with the Left, illustrated this dilemma. Some of the participants called for critical support for the PRD in the election, while others expressed contempt for participation in any electoral process. The 6th

Declaration dialogues will have many bridges to cross. One of the most difficult will be this question of how to relate to the 2006 elections which have raised many hopes among the popular classes for progressive change. The biggest challenge is how to weld together so many different currents, perspectives, social groups, around a common campaign of struggle. What will be the content of the campaign, its tactics and strategy, its organization.? The next month should tell. **R**

There are three very important documents that have been translated into English and are available on the web:

- 1) "Complete EZLN-Sixth Declaration of the Selva Lacandona" at www.portland.indymedia.org/en/2005/07/320726.shtml
- 2) "A Penguin in the Selva Lacandona." Marcos' reply to criticisms and commentaries on the 6th Declaration at www.anarkismo.net/newswire.php?story_id=1054
- 3) "Wagers and Risks in the Sixth Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle" by Neil Harvey. This gives a good overview of the continuities and discontinuities between the 6th Declaration and the previous five, the first of which was in 1994. Available at www.narconews.com/print.php3?ArticleID=1386

Dick Roman taught Sociology at the University of Toronto for three decades. He is currently completing a book on the Mexican labour movement with Edur Velasco Arregui, a Mexican economist and trade unionist.

Zapatista Turn: One Step Forward

Phil Hearse

The Chiapas Red Alert called by the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) in mid-June set alarm bells ringing among the left and social movements in Latin America and beyond. In the event the Red Alert turned out to be a precautionary security measure, as the clandestine committee which leads the movement called the army, its political cadres and the leaders of the Chiapas autonomous municipalities to a 'consulta' – in effect a full-scale congress of the movement, to discuss a major political turn.

The outcome was a huge majority in favour of the 'Sixth Declaration of the Selva Lacondona', which sets the movement on a new course of trying to build unity with other sections of the left and global justice movement in Mexico and internationally. To that end the EZLN intends to send a delegation to all parts of Mexico to engage in a broad-scale dialogue, with the aim of trying to forge a movement "for a programme of the left and a new constitution."

What lies behind this new turn by the EZLN and what will its proposals mean? Above all, the turn is designed to get the Zapatista movement out of its political isolation that has led it into an impasse. To better understand that we have to look at what has happened to the movement in the last seven years.

Between March and July of 1997, there were many murders, kidnappings, detentions, tortures, and beatings in the civilian communities of the Zapatistas. On December 22, 1997, a paramilitary group raided the town of Acteal, largely populated by Zapatista sympathisers. In this incident 45 unarmed people were massacred. Nine of the victims were men, twenty-one were women, and fifteen were children. The worst part about this massacre was that it was carried out by troops that had been recruited by the military from that area.

The Mexican government used the

Acteal massacre as an excuse to heighten militarisation in Chiapas. On April 11 and May 1 of 1998, the Mexican government sent troops to violently dismantle two of the thirty-eight Zapatista autonomous zones. After these events, the Governor of Chiapas Roberto Albores Guillen stated, "I will finish off the autonomous municipalities."

The EZLN itself, deep in the selva, was unable to reach the villages quickly enough to prevent several dozens murders, rapes, beatings, destruction of crops and theft of the campesinos' money.

After a period of silence, in 1999 the EZLN signalled a political offensive to defeat the military attacks; Subcommandate Marcos published his famous text 'Masks and Silences' which called the Mexican left and 'civil society' to defend the Zapatistas. The EZLN launched a nation wide referendum for basic social change, and over a thousand Zapatistas toured the country. Marcos himself addressed crowds in Mexico City. The scene seemed set for a new dialogue with the incoming right-wing PAN¹ government and its president Vicente Fox, elected in 2000.

Despite election promises the Fox government refused to implement the provisions of the San Andreas accords, which had promised the Zapatista communities autonomy and land rights. The villages remain penned in by the militarisation of the area, and conflict with state authorities is frequent. Some of the Chiapas mountain communities are loyal to the PRI² and they form the

support basis of right-wing paramilitary groups, which themselves are a source of constant harassment and fear for the Zapatista municipalities.

As a consequence of the Fox government's refusal to negotiate the Zapatistas 'took their bat and ball and went home.' Despairing of a political breakthrough the EZLN leadership decided to concentrate on politico-military reorganisation and improving the lives of the Zapatista base communities.

Progressively the EZLN leadership has tried to hand decision-making over to local level, encouraging the autonomous municipalities and good government juntas to take the reigns of decision-making. According to Marcos the last few years have also involved an effort to develop a new generation of political cadres.

Self-organisation and egalitarian principles, as well as a considerable effort by Mexican and international NGOs, some of whom have permanent workers in the area, have achieved significant improvements in the health, education and nutrition of local people.

This social and political progress of course does not amount to solving the basic problems of the Chiapas indigenous peoples, which have their roots in the poverty and lack of democracy at an all-Mexico level, although historically these things have hit the doubly- and trebly-exploited indigenous communities particularly hard.

In fact the Zapatista movement has always recognised that its objectives can only be achieved at an all-Mexico level, and indeed that the EZLN struggle is part of the international fight against neoliberal capitalism. However the position of Marcos and the EZLN leadership in relation to the fight for a reconstituted and united Mexican left has been very mixed, if not broadly negative.

In 1995 the Zapatistas took the

1. National Action Party, a right-wing party formed in the 1950s. It is the most explicitly tied to neoliberalism, NAFTA and the USA.

2. The exquisitely named Institutional Revolutionary Party, the country's main governing party for more than 70 years in the 20th century.

initiative to form the nation wide Frente Zapatista (FZLN), which rapidly attracted many organised leftists as well as individuals. This could have become the basis for a new broad left party. But in the end the EZLN leadership vetoed such a development.

In a letter about the Sixth Declaration Marcos hints this was because the

turn the FZLN into a broad left party-type formation sounded its rapid death-knell as an effective political force. It survives as a “Zapatista solidarity campaign”, without much in the way of members or influence.

Mexican civil society has mobilised periodically to defend the Zapatistas, but it does not need the FZLN to do it.

not the responsibility of the Zapatistas, who in any case will find it very difficult to provide this from a small and isolated corner of the country. In a 1999 interview, Jaime Gonzalez said of the Zapatistas:

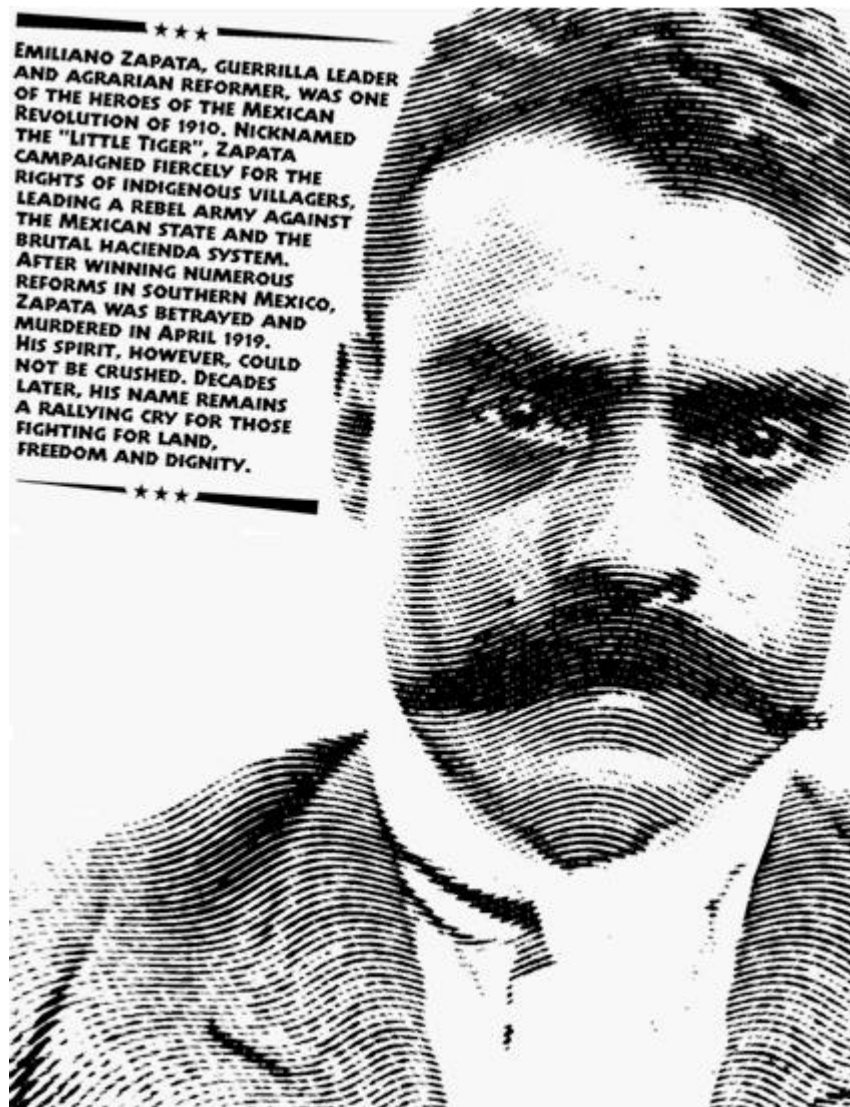
“Now, how is it that this enormously popular movement has not been able to sustain any of its more general political initiatives? In my opinion the answer is simple: they do not have a clear strategy to win. They don’t know what to do with the elections and they don’t have the slightest idea of a programme for the rest of Mexico. And let me say, that’s not their responsibility. How can an indigenous uprising in one corner of southern Mexico have an elaborated programme for the whole of Mexican society? For the people in the north, for the economy, for an anti-capitalist transition? You could say it like this: the Zapatistas pose problems which they are inherently incapable of solving themselves.”³

Jaime Gonzalez’s comments contain a hint of self-contradiction. If the Zapatistas are such an enormously popular movement, they do have the potential to begin to give overall political leadership to the Mexican left, at least in co-operation with others. If they have the will and political vision (‘programme’ of course, but also sensible unitary tactics).

In 1998-2000 the EZLN played a very active political role, part of its political counter-offensive against the government, in giving all-out political support to the student strikers at Mexico City’s giant university UNAM (100,000 students), in the struggle against the imposition of student fees. They refused to give 100% support for the UNAM strikers, even when it became clear the students’ ultra-left leadership was leading the struggle to defeat.

In addition, for the first time, masked Zapatistas participated in →

3. Interview with Manuel Aguiler Mora and Jaime Gonzalez.



EZLN had promised its base communities that the movement would always be of the indigenous peoples and for the indigenous peoples, not something broader that could lose its focus on their needs and demands. Some commentators say Marcos feared losing control of the movement.

Whatever the reason, the refusal to

On the contrary, as always, the fundamental loyalty of leftist activists and sympathisers will be to political organisations that put forward an overall and more-or-less coherent global political alternative. The tightly-controlled FZLN can never be that.

Some have argued that providing Mexico-wide left political leadership is

Mexico City demonstrations – that of the SME union electricity workers, battling to defeat privatisation and in the 1999 May Day march. These initiatives seemed to indicate a willingness to take on a broader political role, but this was never followed up after the failure of the Fox government to rekindle the peace process started by the San Andreas accords.

Building a new broad anti-capitalist party would be tremendously important in the Mexican context because of the complete dominance of the left by the centre-left Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD). A late-1980s split from the PRI, the PRD sucked in the Communist Party and its pressure indirectly helped to capsize the main Trotskyist organisation, the PRT⁴, in the early 1990s. The PRD is nostalgic for the old nationalist-corporatist traditions of the PRI in the 1930s and 1940s, and was formed in opposition to the slide by the PRI into pro-American neoliberalism under ex-president Carlos Salinas de Gortari.

But over the years the PRD had drifted rightwards. There is little hint of anything resembling a radical left within it. It remains a huge obstacle to any socialist or anti-capitalist representation of the workers, peasants and indigenous people. Only the Zapatistas have the popularity to be the driving force for the construction of an alternative. The main problem with the PRD – a very familiar one – is that despite drifting to the right and being recently caught up in a major corruption scandal, at an electoral level it is the only credible alternative to the right wing, the PRI and PAN.

Its candidate for president in 2006, the highly popular Manuel López Obrador, was the victim of an attempt by the PRI and the PAN to disqualify him because of the PRD's corruption scandal, a move defeated by a silent march of two million through the streets of the capital. The dominance of the PRD on the left cannot be defeated

without building a credible alternative.

How should we assess this new turn, in terms of the task of building a nationwide left alternative? The Sixth Declaration says:

“We are going to go to listen to, and talk directly with, without intermediaries or mediation, the simple and humble of the Mexican people, and, according to what we hear and learn, we are going to go about building, along with those people who, like us, are humble and simple, a national program of struggle, but a program which will



be clearly of the left, or anti-capitalist, or anti-neoliberal, or for justice, democracy and liberty for the Mexican people.”

So far, so good. The text continues:

“We are also letting you know that the EZLN will establish a policy of alliances with non-electoral organisations and movements which define themselves, in theory and practice, as being of the left, in accordance with the following conditions: Not to make agreements from above to be imposed below, but to make accords to go together to listen and to organise outrage.

“Not to raise movements which are later negotiated behind the backs of those who made them, but to always take into account the

opinions of those participating. Not to seek gifts, positions, advantages, public positions, from the Power or those who aspire to it, but to go beyond the election calendar. Not to try to resolve from above the problems of our Nation, but to build FROM BELOW AND FOR BELOW an alternative to neoliberal destruction, an alternative of the left for Mexico.

“Yes to reciprocal respect for the autonomy and independence of organisations, for their methods of struggle, for their ways of organising, for their internal decision making processes, for their legitimate representations. And yes to a clear commitment for joint and co-ordinated defense of national sovereignty, with intransigent opposition to privatisation attempts of electricity, oil, water and natural resources.

“In other words, we are inviting the unregistered political and social organizations of the left, and those persons who lay claim to the left and who do not belong to registered political parties, to meet with us, at the time, place and manner in which we shall propose at the proper time, to organize a national campaign, visiting all possible corners of our Patria, in order to listen to and organise the word of our people. It is like a campaign, then, but very otherly, because it is not electoral.”

This contains a lot that is very sensible, and it represents a new, giant and exciting opportunity for the Mexican left. Even if the objective were explicitly to build a new left party-type organisation, it would be sensible to start building it from the ‘bottom up’, by dialogue, alliances and consultation, and not by artificial diktat from above.

However, in Marcos' discourse, and that of his main advisors like former Trotskyist leader Sergio Rodríguez Lascano, there is a constant ambiguity about the notion of parties, programmes

4. The PRT had developed especially through its election campaigns, which were scuppered by the PRD taking the left-of-PRI electoral space.

and strategy. This revolves around the question of “changing the world without taking power.” Are all parties inherently corrupt and manipulative, just because of the party form? Is all participation in elections to be deplored and must the left be anti-electoral in principle? Should the left fight for the workers, peasants and indigenous people to form their own national government?

If the EZLN proceeds by building struggle alliances from below, but refuses to build a national political organisation and refuses to countenance any electoral challenge from the left, it will cede major political space to the PRD and the right-wing, fail in its ob-

jectives and lose another major opportunity. This is a political turn that could revitalise the left, or it could crumble into nothing.

An intriguing footnote is the ELZN’s promise to build closer links with the left internationally and its offer of material aid to militant activists worldwide. For example, the Declaration says:

“And we are also going to make an agreement with the women’s crafts co-operatives in order to send a good number of *bordados*, embroidered pieces, to the *Europeas* which are perhaps not yet *Union*, and perhaps we’ll also send some organic coffee from the *Zapatista*

co-operatives, so that they can sell it and get a little money for their struggle. And, if it isn’t sold, then they can always have a little cup of coffee and talk about the anti-neoliberal struggle, and if it’s a bit cold then they can cover themselves up with the *Zapatista* *bordados*, which do indeed resist quite well being laundered by hand and by rocks, and, besides, they don’t run in the wash.”

For sure the Subcommandante hasn’t lost his sense of humour! **R**

Phil Hearse is an editor of *Socialist Resistance*.

Thoughts on the Zapatistas

Fred Rosen

1. One of the interesting things about the Zapatistas is that they have never seemed all that interested in achieving, sharing or negotiating state power. As with their namesakes, their rebellion (as expressed by Marcos) have been mostly about the right to be left alone, the right to “autonomy,” the right to build a non-capitalist alternative to modern Mexican life. These rights, of course, have to be fought for and negotiated, but the Zapatistas have now achieved a certain area of influence and control. Since Zedillo reneged on the San Andrés Accords, they haven’t really trusted anyone to negotiate with.

So its not at all clear what they have in mind when they say they can go no further without uniting with other “social sectors” that have similar problems and needs. Do they have some broadening of autonomy in mind? Mutual aid? In Mexico? In the Hemisphere? They don’t say.

2. The Zapatistas will not “come in from the cold,” lay down their arms and integrate themselves into the Mexican political structure. They don’t trust any of the existing parties, of whom they say, “not only did they not defend us [but they] put themselves at the service of foreigners ... sold everything and kept the payment for themselves.” And they know they have nowhere near the national strength (even with “other social sectors”) to launch an electoral movement on their own.

3. The document declares that the fight is not simply against “bad” Mexican governments but against a global system whose center of power is outside of Mexico. The declaration presents the Zapatistas’ fight as a patriotic one, in de-

fense of “our Mexican homeland.” This is a broadening – to the level of the nation – of their demand for autonomy – read sovereignty.

4. But beyond autonomy and sovereignty, the Zapatistas have defined the struggle in class terms. It’s the world capitalist class (“neoliberalism”) against “people who are humble and simple” like us, not only in Chiapas, not only in Mexico, but all over: the humble and simple people of the world. And they have offered whatever aid they can afford to other humble and simple people. They are echoing the dominant position of the groups that participate in the World Social Forum: the need for a horizontal, transnational alliance from below against nationless, transnational capital, with the strong implication of the growing irrelevance of the nation state. On the other hand, they have offered to deliver a truckload of Chiapas corn (and gasoline!!) to the Cuban Embassy. Are they becoming a solidarity group?

5. Whether, with numerous new allies, they can begin to deal with the global structures of neoliberalism directly, bypassing the structures of all the “bad governments” present and future, remains to be seen. How they intend to try remains to be explained. **R**

Fred Rosen, a Mexico City-based political economist and writer, is an editor of the bimonthly magazine, *NACLA Report on the Americas*.

LIFE IN THE PALESTINIAN BANTUSTANS

Adam Hanieh

Over the last few months the international media has largely focused on the redeployment of Israeli settlers from the Gaza Strip. In the fashion typical of the corporate press, however, only one half of the story is usually recounted. Missing from the daily coverage of clashes between Israeli settlers and soldiers is the real story: accompanying redeployment from the Gaza Strip, Israel has pledged to annex the major settlement blocs from the West Bank into Israel itself. As the Gaza Strip is being converted into the largest open-air prison in the world – surrounded on all sides by electric fences and military checkpoints – the final stage of the *bantustanization* of the West Bank is now taking place. This is the stark fact that hangs over all aspects of Palestinian life today.

The same strategy that was used by apartheid South Africa to divide and weaken the popular movement has guided Israeli actions in the West Bank and Gaza Strip since the occupation of these areas in 1967. Successive plans have aimed at dividing the West Bank into isolated population centers, divided from one another politically and economically, and completely under Israeli control. Today the West Bank has been cut into four major areas, which, in turn, are divided into tens of smaller villages and towns. Each of these areas is encircled by concrete walls, electric fences and military checkpoints, and separated from one another by massive Israeli settlement blocs and Israeli-only highways. The Palestinian population is given illusionary ‘autonomy’ – sold to the rest of the world as peace – but in reality the occupation lives on.

Israel is replacing the current individual checkpoints at the entrance to each of the four major *bantustans* with massive security terminals similar to one

that stands at the entrance to the Gaza Strip. These terminals consist of sheds and turnstiles with different entrances depending on what permit/ID card you happen to hold. The young and old alike are forced to pass through these in order to move just a few kilometers. Hundreds of other smaller checkpoints regulate all movement through the West Bank. Around every checkpoint local ‘checkpoint economies’ have sprung up with children carrying everything from tissues to underwear to sell to people waiting to get through. Individual pedestrian transit may be allowed during ‘normal’ times but a permit – almost impossible to obtain – is required to take cars in and out. These checkpoints can be shut at anytime depending on the political situation. They thus represent an integral part of the system of control as movement can simply be halted by closing the checkpoints at any time.

Most importantly, Israel is in the final stages of constructing a massive wall that individually encircles each of the major Palestinian towns. ‘The Wall’ and its associated checkpoints – dubbed the ‘Apartheid Wall’ by the local population – means that every person has literally been imprisoned behind this concrete structure. Almost all of the agricultural land that Palestinian society used to rely upon for its collective livelihood has now been confiscated and lies outside the wall.

This strict control of movement is a deliberate and conscious policy of the Israeli occupation. It aims to restrict the daily life of every Palestinian to the few square kilometers of their immediate surroundings. No goods can move in or out without Israeli permission. You can’t maintain work, school or social relationships with anyone living more than a few kilometers away from you. Political, economic and social life

becomes narrowed to your immediate neighborhood.

There is no viable industry or internal Palestinian economic life in these *bantustans*. All wealth essentially originates as external flows from outside the country, channeled either through the Palestinian Authority (PA) or NGOs. Much of life therefore consists of trying to access one of these sources of wealth through getting a job with the PA or an NGO, or existing on meager welfare payments from the PA or other bodies.

On a practical level this has caused a massive internal migration to the city of Ramallah, just north of Jerusalem, where the PA is concentrated and NGOs (local and international) have their head offices. The population of Ramallah has rapidly expanded in recent years while other areas have stagnated. Families move to Ramallah if they can find employment because regular travel to-and-fro becomes an impossible task if you live outside of the city. Construction of new buildings and apartments is booming in the area along with associated small businesses such as furniture, electrical and home appliance shops. Many of these shops have moved to Ramallah from cities like Nablus which had previously sustained an economic life.

The gaps between those fortunate enough to have a well paying job and the rest of the population are stark. There exists a double-life in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Bars, expensive restaurants and a western lifestyle for a small minority mostly centered in Ramallah; poverty, refugee camps and the checkpoint economies for the vast majority elsewhere. In cities such as Bethlehem, which has traditionally had strong connections with overseas Palestinian and religious communities, thousands of families have chosen to

leave the country in search of work.

Political Fragmentation

Political life has also fragmented inside these small *bantustans*. In the aftermath of Yasser Arafat's death, the major Palestinian political faction, Fatah, has splintered into localized, small groups. Over the last few months Ramallah has witnessed a spate of high-profile armed clashes in the middle of the city between different groups associated with Fatah. Much of this fighting is driven by struggles over access to power and the sources of wealth that trickle in from the outside. In other areas, Fatah has fragmented along political lines largely based on class; those in refugee camps and poorer neighborhoods who have borne the brunt of the Intifada are unwilling to see the struggle compromised by Arafat's replacement, Abu Mazen.

Abu Mazen himself has a tenuous grip on power and appears to be afraid of spending much time in the area. His government is split between competing centers of power and is unable to deliver any improvement in the economic situation or a semblance of order. He is widely seen as willing to compromise on the 'red lines' of the Palestinian struggle, in particular the right of return of Palestinian refugees to their homes and villages from which they were expelled in 1948. There is widespread popular anger with the PA over the disorder and chaos in the cities, the worsening economic condition and the lack of attention given to the eight thousand Palestinians who are being held in Israeli prisons.

The other central political faction is the Islamic Resistance Movement – Hamas. While many of their activists have been killed or arrested by the occupation forces they remain a key political force. They have built a strong network of social institutions on which many Palestinians rely on for survival. Their leadership is widely respected and viewed as untainted by the corruption of the Palestinian Authority and their goal is to convert the gains they have

made during the Intifada into political power. They argue that there are essentially two sides to the Palestinian political landscape: those who continue to resist and those willing to accept bantustanization by going down the path of Oslo-type negotiations and normalizing relations with Israel.

For this reason the upcoming elections for the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) will have important significance. Abu Mazen and Fatah recognize their weakness and have postponed the elections until early next year. The elections will be evenly divided between a proportional representation system and an electorate-based structure. Unlike the presidential elections held earlier this year which Abu Mazen won, Hamas have decided to contest these elections and are investing a great deal of energy into preparations. It is quite likely that Hamas will win more seats than Fatah and this eventuality could significantly shift the nature of the PLC and the internal political landscape.

Under Arafat the PLC was largely composed of loyal Fatah members. Any point in which the PLC showed signs of political independence it was either ignored or shut-down by Arafat. With the weakness of Abu Mazen and the fragmentation of Fatah this situation could change and the PLC may become a space for oppositional politics to coalesce.

The main left faction, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), is organizationally weak but have also decided to contest the PLC elections. Their leadership is largely in prison – the General Secretary, Ahmed Saadat, in a Palestinian Authority prison at the behest of Israel and the U.S. and



the rest of the leadership in Israeli jails – but they retain some cadre on the ground. Their political program puts them squarely in opposition to Abu Mazen: opposed to the bantustanization process and maintaining all forms of resistance to the occupation including the use of armed struggle. On this point they are aligned with other factions such as Hamas, Islamic Jihad and the grassroots elements of Fatah. The PFLP is, however, a democratic and secular formation that opposes the Islamization of Palestinian politics. This configuration means that potential alliances in the PLC could be very interesting. The short-term future of the Palestinian left is very much tied to the evolution of the PLFP in the coming period.

NGOs and Palestinian Politics

Many commentators have remarked on the NGO-ization of →

Palestinian politics following the signing of the Oslo agreement in 1993 and throughout the remaining years of the 1990s. As one of the few sources of stable income, NGOs absorbed a significant layer of activists from the first Intifada in the late 1980s and appear to be playing the same role in this Intifada. Foreign funding and the political framework that accompanies it have been set by the advanced capitalist countries and can strongly affect the organizational dynamic and priorities of Palestinian organizations.

Much of the funding directed to Palestinian organizations from foreign governments has weakened the Palestinian left through shifting the political focus of a layer of activists towards top-down provision of services, counseling and legal advocacy and away from popular mobilization and political organizing. To give one example, recently there has been a large amount of funding for counseling and psycho-social projects designed to “reduce the effects of the wall” on the population. Instead of helping communities organize against the construction of the wall, NGOs actually end up reinforcing the status quo by attempting to ameliorate the Wall’s effects while accepting it as reality.

It was precisely this danger that led many Palestinian NGOs to boycott funds from the funding arm of the U.S. government, USAID. In order to circumvent this boycott USAID has focused on smaller NGOs or has channeled funds indirectly through larger international or governmental organizations such as the United Nations Development Program, Save the Children or the Palestinian Authority. Concurrently they have undertaken a massive public relations campaign claiming responsibility for providing clean water to Palestinian children, and building new roads and schools – naturally with no mention of the billions of dollars provided annually to Israel by the U.S. government to repeatedly destroy this infrastructure. Unfortunately, there are signs that the boycott of USAID is weakening and some of the

larger NGOs are beginning to accept funding from them.

Discussing the Way Forward

In the light of these political dynamics the Palestinian movement is beginning the process of rethinking its strategies and tactics for the next period. There are two main issues that demand attention. First, in light of the bantustanization process described above, much of the movement is shifting towards a mobilizing strategy based on the slogan of boycotting Israeli apartheid. The momentum for such a demand is building and is strongly supported at the international level. In the West Bank and Gaza Strip, calls for the solidarity movement to redouble its efforts in this direction have recently been issued by a wide range of Palestinian organizations.

The other major question facing the Palestinian movement is the role of the diaspora in the political process. Bantustanization is primarily aimed at fragmenting and dividing the Palestinian people. Since the beginning of the colonization of Palestine, Israel has aimed at destroying the Palestinian national identity by splitting the people into many different geographical pieces. For decades, the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) through its highest decision-making body, the Palestinian National Council (PNC), represented a counterpoint to this process by unifying the dispersed segments of the Palestinian nation. One of the outcomes of the 1993 Oslo Accords was a narrowing of the struggle to the West Bank and Gaza Strip in which the Palestinian Authority replaced the PLO as the reference point of the movement. The structures of the PLO have been largely moribund over the last decade.

There are many voices now calling for a renewal of Palestinian national structures along democratic and inclusive lines. In particular, elections are needed for a new Palestinian National Council with effective power. This will take a strong push from all parts of the Palestinian people, whether living in the

West Bank and Gaza Strip or in places such as Canada. One possible way to begin this process that has been raised by opposition factions in recent months is to link elections for the Palestinian Legislative Council with elections in the diaspora.

The importance of the solidarity movements and the Palestinian diaspora is critical at this juncture. On a practical level this means raising the demand to boycott Israeli apartheid in our schools, workplaces and communities. It means encouraging our unions, pension and other investment funds to divest from Israeli companies and those companies such as Caterpillar that directly sustain the structures of apartheid. It means refusing to work with Israeli universities and other organizations, and not allowing official representatives of this apartheid state to speak at our schools and in our communities.

These activities complement the traditional demands of the Palestinian liberation movement, most importantly, the struggle of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and land that they were expelled from in 1948. This expulsion goes to the heart of Israeli apartheid and the demand for the right of return remains central to the Palestinian struggle today.

The Israeli government fears the repercussions of an international anti-apartheid movement and is well aware that such efforts were integral to halting South African apartheid. One of the gains of this Intifada has been the enormous increase in solidarity and understanding of the Palestinian cause. For these reasons, our efforts to isolate Israeli apartheid at the international level matter enormously to people on the ground. Together with the struggle of the Palestinian people these efforts will one day bring true liberation and an end to the bantustans. **R**

Adam Hanieh is co-author of *Stolen Youth: The Politics of Israel's Detention of Palestinian Children* (Pluto Press: 2004) and a member of the Middle East Socialists Network of Canada.

Occupied Haiti is Bleeding – International Resistance is Growing

Kevin Skerrett

On July 6, a small army of some 350 UN military troops launched a massive assault on the poor Haitian neighborhood of Cite Soleil. The purported aim was to “arrest” a “gang leader.” This so-called “arrest” operation deployed some 20 APCs, helicopters, smoke bombs, tear gas, and automatic weaponry at four in the morning and lasted a few hours through till dawn.

As the smoke had cleared and the sun rose, the UN military commander declared the operation a “success”. Brazil’s General Augusto Heleno Ribeiro celebrated the killing of 5 “gang leaders,” including the well-known Emmanuel “Dred” Wilme. Ribeiro declared that no civilians were killed.

Fortunately, bits of the reality buried by Ribeiro and the UN mission’s propaganda was exposed. An independent labour and human rights team visited Cite Soleil the day after the assault, interviewed residents, and took extensive video footage. The group reported (see www.haitiaction.net) on the bloody reality of the UN’s attack: a horrifying massacre of innocent civilians. Some 23 dead bodies were directly witnessed by the observer team. In addition, staff at a nearby Doctors Without Borders-run hospital report treated at least 27 people (mostly women and children) the morning following the UN attack. All suffered from gunshot wounds. While still blocked from the mainstream media in Canada and the USA, this shocking massacre by UN forces in Haiti has been reported on Democracy Now, in the *Village Voice*, and most recently, in the *Toronto Star* and the *Halifax Daily News*. In other words, some parts of the truth are slipping through the usual filters.

While this July 6th massacre may only be the latest in a series of violent episodes in post-coup Haiti (following the February 29, 2004 Canada-backed coup d’état there), it has further galvanized what is now a growing solidarity movement in Canada. On July 21, 2005, solidarity activists, both Haitian and non-Haitian, demonstrated in at least 6 Canadian cities. These actions targeted in particular diplomatic representatives of the Government of Brazil, which leads the UN’s military operation in Haiti. In Ottawa, activists met with the charge d’affaires of the Brazilian Embassy for more than an hour, outlining their objections to Brazil’s policy of cooperation with the triumvirate of USA, France, and Canada.

This emergency international mobilization has already had an impact. Within days of the action, the UN announced that an investigation was being launched into the “events” of July 6, and acknowledged that there “may” have been civilian

casualties. While few have confidence in the UN mission’s capacity to investigate itself, the strength of the solidarity movement is now being recognized.

With parallel actions occurring in the USA, France, Brazil, and Haiti itself, this grassroots movement is now stronger than at any time since the coup. In Canada, groups have recently formed in Toronto, Hamilton, and Winnipeg. They have joined colleagues in Vancouver, Ottawa-Gatineau, Montréal, and Halifax that are affiliated through the “Canada Haiti Action Network” (www.canadahaitiaction.ca). Informal discussions among activists in this network are planning protest events and action in the fall of 2005. The focus is on the Canadian state’s lead role in “monitoring” (in fact, blessing and applauding) a sham election process that is being set up to legitimize the coup. Activists also demand the release of up to 1000 political prisoners, an end to severe repression, and the return of Haiti’s constitutionally-elected government. A recent (not yet ratified) proposal sets out Saturday October 8, 2005 (the day before the first round of sham elections) as a potential date for coordinated, pan-Canadian protest against Canada’s role in legitimizing the Haiti coup.

The protests will hopefully draw attention to Canada’s special contribution to the sham election process in Haiti. Canada’s own chief electoral officer Jean-Pierre Kingsley (who played a lead role in legitimizing the sham election process in occupied Iraq) is now assigned to oversee a similar pseudo-election exercise in the UN-occupied Haiti. With vast exclusions of the poor, and the boycott of the elections called by the Lavalas party (in response to the repression), the result is certain to be yet another illegitimate, elite-controlled government, more determined than ever to crush political opposition and advance the pro-privatization neoliberal agenda crafted for it in Washington, Ottawa, and Paris.

Fortunately, a rising anger and determination to prevent this outcome – and the violence sure to accompany it – is now becoming visible. Just in time, too. **R**

Kevin Skerrett is a trade union researcher and a member of the Ottawa Haiti Solidarity Committee and Nowar-paix. To join the Canada Haiti Action Network email list, or reach other Haiti solidarity activists in your area, email kskerrett@cupe.ca or check out www.canadahaitiaction.ca

Human Rights Denied: The Case Against Amparo Torres

nchamah miller

Despite a lifetime dedicated to trade-union activism, respect for human rights, and progressive political work, a woman from Colombia, Amparo Torres, is accused by the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) of association with the Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARC). Amparo's association with the work of her former partner, a member of FARC, brings forth the accusation of her complicity with this organization. As presented by CSIS before an Immigration and Refugee Board Member under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA), this is the basis upon which her rights to Canadian citizenship are being denied.

The question then is: why is this Colombian woman – the first Latin American to ever be charged under this legislation – being arraigned? Unfortunately, we have no way of knowing because one of the mechanisms of IRPA is that those accused do not have access to the information used against them. All that is stated are generalities such as “we have reason to believe, we have reasonable grounds that Torres is a member of the FARC.”* Therefore, Amparo Torres' defense rests on her ability to argue that her union activism is her own and to demonstrate that she cannot control the vocation of any member of her family.

Who is Amparo Torres? Why was she granted political refuge and Canadian Immigrant status by Canada under the United Nations High Commission for Refugee assistance in December of 1996 when she left Mexico where she had been residing? Why did she have to flee Colombia? This short article aims

at answering these basic questions. It will not delve into the deeper issues related to IRPA nor comment on the civil strife in Colombia, nor the failed peace talks in which the Canadian Government has participated along with the FARC during the 1990s, and FARC's recent inclusion in the list of terrorist organizations. I can only state that at this year's June convention of the Canadian Labour Congress resolution No. WD-9 was passed (submitted by the Vancouver and District Labour Council) resolving to pressure the Canadian Government against the inclusion of FARC in this list of terrorist organizations and the danger that this poses to legitimate



dissent of the “social and labour movements in Colombia.”

The life of Amparo Torres is emblematic of the political violence in Colombia and beyond its borders. I am not going to stress the fact that Amparo is a woman, because political violence is gender blind, but her story will demonstrate how this violence permeates society through different mechanisms in different countries.

In October 1992, the headlines broke out in the Colombian press: a member of the National Trade Union Organization (CUT) was missing and presumed abducted. This person was Amparo Torres. There is no way of verifying who were her abductors and at whose behest they were acting. Nevertheless, the main purpose of her physical and psychological torture sessions was to elicit information respecting her partner. However, this was not the only point that made Amparo fear for her life. She knew full well her devotion to social justice also made her a target for political violence. This was a woman who in a very “machista” country worked for eight years as the president of the union for the workers of the Santiago de Cali University and also held a position as board member of the National Trade Union Organization. Also, she had been one of the first members of the broad coalition political party of the left named Union Patriótica. At the time Amparo was captured, Union Patriótica members were being systematically assassinated because the party challenged the status quo in Colombia. The party represented a political alternative that was a model for democratic participation. Yet hundreds of party supporters had their voices silenced. To be precise, more than 4,000 lives were lost through direct political violence by anonymous assassins.

In fear of her life after being released by her abductors, Amparo fled to Mexico with her family. This happened at the same time Amparo would have been granted accreditation in Colombia as a lawyer. In Mexico, Amparo continued her work with trade unions. Although she could not practice law in Mexico, Amparo's time was devoted towards human and political rights

* From a curious article that appeared in the right-wing National Post on July 7.

work. Amparo has never denied that she was a leader of a trade union, something that in Colombia bears grave risks; she has never denied her ties to her family nor the affection she has for them; she has never denied her membership to the Union Patriótica, which at the very least marked her as a communist in Colombia (in Colombia, the right-wing often slurs any human rights or leftist activist by claiming they are FARC members or supporters). Amparo's former common-law spouse became a spokesperson for the FARC after she had decided to come to Canada. However, she has never been a member of the FARC. She has defined her own political views and identity, which are pacifist. On this basis, and with the full knowledge of who Amparo was, she was granted refuge in Canada.

In Canada, Amparo has spoken in defense of human rights, women's issues, democracy, and naturally – given her track record as a union leader – she has engaged in discussions relating to the perilous conditions of many union members in Colombia. One might prefer to believe that Amparo is being

marked because of her work, but this is not the case. The political identity she is associated with, due to the social position of her ex-partner, detracts from her own activism. It does not matter that she has a new partner in Canada – why is she not associated with his work? Instead, Amparo is marked by innuendo and, since her ex-partner has not been captured, it then stands to some perverse logic that once again she can be used as a pawn in a chauvinistic ploy to procure information. All the while Amparo is defending her rights in Canada. Having completed the required period of residency, she is entitled to Canadian citizenship, through which flow her rights to express a political opinion that questions Colombian society. This is a long shot from being a subversive under the terms of IRPA.

Guilty by association? Today it is Amparo – tomorrow, who knows? Is this not how fascism has raised its ugly inhuman gaze in other countries? Yes, her body bears the marks of political violence, repression and brutality. But we who have heard her speak are

witnesses that she stands for due process, the right of freedom of speech, the pleas for a peaceful resolution, the cries for participatory democracy, and the respect for human rights, which includes those of political dissenters and prisoners.

Since Amparo is not a terrorist, who stands to gain from her deportation? Surely some of us can raise a voice of protest. We must lend our solidarity towards an activist who should be considered an honorary Canadian union member. **R**

Website:

www.supportamparosrights.org
(is being built and will be functioning momentarily)

E-Mail: Committee to Support
Amparo Torres rights:
committee-chair@
supportamparosrights.org

The War Continues:

Solidarity With El Salvador's FMLN

Peter Graham

As an activist in Windsor during the early 1990s, I became acquainted with the tail end of the solidarity movement with Central America, of which El Salvador received special emphasis. For a mid-size city, Windsor's solidarity movement was quite active, but after the caravan to Windsor's twinned city had left and plans for a co-operative housing project for El Salvadorian migrants floundered, I heard little else about El Salvador. As with Nicaragua, El Salvador fell off the Left's radar as the nineties progressed. Periodic mass media reports on elections were thin gruel to try to glean what has been happening in this country since the 1992 peace accords between the Farabundo

Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) and El Salvador's governing party, the Nationalist Republican Alliance (ARENA), were signed.

So it was with much curiosity that a group of Socialist Project members met a delegation of FMLN representatives, including a member of parliament and the political officer for North American issues – both of whom are members of the FMLN's national directorate – this summer in Toronto. Following visits to Australia and the United States, they were touring Eastern Canada, which has Canada's largest concentration of El Salvadorians. Since the civil war ended, the FMLN's attention to activists outside of Latin →



America and the El Salvadorian diaspora waned. The FMLN has criticised their abandonment of solidarity work. With this visit to Canada, the FMLN is reaching out to new friends and reactivating old relationships.

The El Salvadorian diaspora, which includes two million El Salvadorians living in the United States – a majority there illegally – have a large impact on El Salvador's population of six million. Five to six hundred El Salvadorians leave the country daily. A third of these migrants are deported from Mexico to El Salvador every day. This outflow relieves pressure on El Salvador's social situation and the subsequent inflows of remittances are vital for the functioning of the national economy. Thirty percent of El Salvador's GNP is money derived from remittances.

During the 2004 national election, El Salvadorians living in the U.S. were threatened with deportation if the FMLN won, and people in El Salvador with a cut-off of remittances. ARENA, still the ruling party, did not play coy in flaming fears. A heavily aired television commercial leading up to last years vote featured a young man in Los Angeles calling his mother back home: "Mom, I wanted to let you know that I'm scared... Because if [FMLN candidate] Schafik becomes president of El Salvador, I may be deported and you won't be able to receive the remittances that I'm sending you." The FMLN views the remittance issue as having had the highest electoral cost to them.

Contributing to the FMLN's defeat in 2004 was the spread of Christian evangelicalism. During the counter-insurgency the U.S. invested huge sums of money in evangelist churches, which are now estimated to have 2 million adherents. These churches have become part of the ideological base for the Right. Reminiscent of last year's U.S. elections, hundreds of evangelists went around the country and were able to prompt their constituency, which usually doesn't vote, to the polls.

While the FMLN has increased its share of the vote in every election since 1994, ARENA has remained in power. Founded by death squad leader Roberto D'Aubuisson, ARENA perpetuates the economic interests of the old U.S.

backed oligarchy. The U.S. has strongly supported the government and ARENA has returned the favour. Although a strong majority of the country opposed sending troops to Iraq, El Salvador is the only Latin American country with troops still occupying Iraq. El Salvador also hosts a U.S. military base.

But the economic impact of neoliberalism is the main difficulty El Salvadorians now face. The FMLN member of parliament said "The government used to murder us with guns, now they're starving us to death." People are still being murdered, however. The country is second only to Colombia in levels of global violence. It is anticipated that by the end of the year conditions will worsen and repression will increase. This puts a lie to stories that there's full democracy in El Salvador. The accomplishments of the peace accords, for what they were worth, are being reversed.



While no longer a guerrilla movement, the FMLN is much more than an electoral party. As the cost of living increases, so does the radicalization of the social movements. FMLN members are in the midst of agitation against the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA). Opposing privatization is part of the strategy in opposing this trade agreement. If implemented, CAFTA would ensure that privatizations are not reversible. The FMLN has supported numerous demonstrations and strikes against the

privatization agenda. Protests and roadblocks are a daily occurrence. If CAFTA is accepted despite the strong resistance of EL Salvadorians, the FMLN will resist its implementation. The FMLN is also strengthening its links to the new wave or radicalization sweeping across Latin America, particularly amongst the indigenous peoples.

This year marks the 25th anniversary of Archbishop Oscar Romero's murder, which helped focus world attention on the gross human rights violations of the El Salvadorian government. Before his death the Archbishop campaigned for the U.S. to stop aiding the El Salvadorian government. Today, it is incumbent on activists, especially those living in the USA, to help put the brakes on imperialist involvement across the Americas. **R**

Promoting America's Strategic Interests with CAFTA

Peter Graham

On July 28th, the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) cleared its final hurdle when it was passed by a two-vote margin in the U.S. House of Representatives.

The debate on this agreement between Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and the United States was covered marginally in the American media. The agreement did bring much more attention in Central America,* where numerous demonstrations took place. A police assault on one protest resulted in the death of two Guatemalans.

Why the disparity in attention? Quite simply there is much more at stake for Central American workers than for their American counterparts. American workers may face some downward pressures on wages and benefits, but the effects upon the Central American signatories loom larger. Much like their Mexican counterparts under NAFTA, small farmers are sure to experience dislocation as American subsidized agricultural products further penetrate southern markets. Economic impacts include intellectual property rights – a roadblock to affordable generic pharmaceuticals – and the agreement's ability to lock in privatizations, affecting the well-being of millions in the Americas.

Despite its proponents' claims, CAFTA will not assist Central America in propping up its exports, especially the vital textile industry, against decline. CAFTA will eliminate more Central American tariffs than American ones,

although tariffs for all countries concerned are already substantially lower than they had been in the 1980s. The average tariff rate for CAFTA countries has dropped substantially in the previous two decades, making CAFTA reductions appear quite small in comparison. Most imports covered in the agreement already enter the US duty-free, or near duty-free. The agreement allows for transition periods in opening market access for some products – as much as 20 year periods for some goods



– but does not do away with protection for America's agricultural industry. Although Central America is a large producer of sugar, for example, U.S. markets are still largely closed to that industry.

Increases in regular trading growth often dwarf the effects of trade agreements. NAFTA might have deepened the trend toward expanded Mexico-USA trade, but most trading increases would likely have happened even without the agreement. For the first couple years of that agreement, increases in trade volume actually declined. Some duty reductions in NAFTA were made redundant with global trade agreements, such as when the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade came into effect in 1995. Mexicans have given up waiting for the prosperity promised them with

NAFTA's passage.

APPAREL INDUSTRY

The manufacture of clothing has become a vital part of Central America's economy, largely supplanting the coffee and sugar industries in Central America. The success of CAFTA, as with the region's economic growth, will largely be determined by the strength of apparel production.

In 1980, clothing accounted for 10% of exports to the United States from Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic. By the mid-nineties, clothing accounted for over a third of US imports from the former and over half of the latter's. Other Central American countries share similar growth rates.

Apparel and textiles were initially excluded from the Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI), a free trade agreement initiated in the early 1980's; they were added in 1986 with the provision that fabrics used are to be cut to shape in the US. The inclusion of textiles into the CBI helped push the expansion of Central America's textile industry. Many of the features of CBI are locked in with CAFTA, but in the meantime the old rules of the textile industry have been redrawn. To understand this we must look to this years' expiration of the World Trade Organization's Multi-Fibre Arrangement (MFA)** and the transformation of China into the world's →

* For the purposes of this article, Central America refers to the southern CAFTA signatories, even though Belize and Panama are not party to the agreement and the Dominican Republic is a Caribbean nation. Of the southern signatories, Costa Rica, Nicaragua and Dominican Republic have yet to ratify the agreement.

** (1) A provision in China's accession package to the WTO allows the U.S. to apply selective quotas on Chinese textiles and apparel for four additional years – from Jan 1, 2005 to Dec 31, 2008. According to this provision, quotas added in this period cannot last more than a year without the consent of China. However, this will only serve to lessen the shock of this transition period. (2) The MFA does not cover natural or manmade fibres.

workshop.

THE MFA, CHINA & FABRIC

The MFA had helped spread clothing production for export to many countries around the world. Countries without a “natural” advantage in apparel production were able to establish their own export industries on the basis of favourable quota advantages granted by developed countries. Under pressure from developing countries and garment manufacturers – to allow more production in the developing world – an agreement was reached to end the MFA. The agreement was reached in the mid-1990s, before China’s admission to the WTO. Thus the playing field was levelled, leading to China’s large advantage over its competitors.

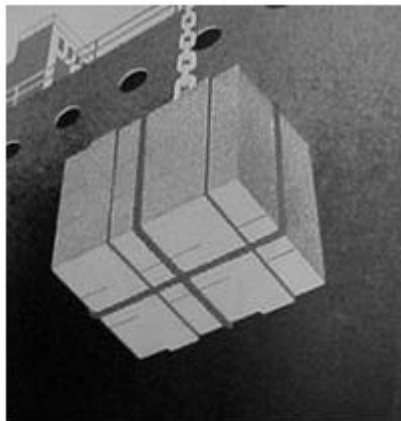
Looking at NAFTA member Mexico, we can see how free trade agreements are not a guarantee against apparel industry flight. Even before MFA expiry, in 2002, China supplanted Mexico as the US’s largest foreign supplier. US apparel companies have indicated that they have reduced or plan to eliminate their sourcing in Mexico, now that the MFA quotas have been removed. Mexico is seen to have lost much of its competitive advantage, the duty-free and quota-free motives that first attracted these companies.

Hourly wages for apparel workers in China are between 40 and 90 cents an hour. El Salvadorian textile workers, earning around \$1.58 an hour, are typical for Central America, with Nicaragua (92 cents) and Costa Rica (\$2.70) representing the low and high ends. China’s advantage is not only in the price of labour; labour productivity in China can be 50% higher than in Central America. China manufactures a wide variety of cheap parts such as buttons and zippers and also reaps other advantages from its scale of production. Central America’s geographic proximity to the American market is an asset, with shipping times to the US only 2-7 days, as opposed to 10-18 days from China.

The end of MFA quotas is already having a large effect on the region - and

CAFTA cannot prevent the devastating impact of MFA expiry. Perhaps in anticipation of MFA elimination, El Salvador’s 2004 clothing exports to the United States declined by 10%. The El Salvadorian government said that 6,000 jobs had been lost, while some industry managers say the real figure was twice as high. Other potential CAFTA countries suffered lesser blows last year, while exports from Nicaragua, which has lower wages than any other Central American country, continued to grow.

While Central America does have “competitive” labour prices and offers close proximity to the U.S. market, authors of a World Bank study concluded that there would have to be a tariff of 24% on Chinese textile imports in order for Central American countries to maintain their price advantage. A WTO-commissioned report estimated that the Mexican and Central American market share of textiles imported to the U.S. would decline by around 70% once businesses take advantage of the expired MFA.



Proponents of the trade agreement say that it ensures American fabrics and yarn will be used in CAFTA areas instead of Chinese textiles. Currently over 70% of the garments produced in Central America are made with American fabrics. In 2004, 25% of all U.S. fabrics and 40% of all U.S. yarn exports went to CAFTA countries. However, American textile firms say trade agreements that don’t require U.S. content are

beneficial because it allows them to use cheaper Asian fabrics, while giving them greater flexibility in fabric choice. According to a report by the U.S. Congressional Budget Office: “The U.S. firms stated that the benefit of trade preferences is diminished considerably or eliminated by U.S.-content rules because U.S. fabrics reportedly cost as much as 20 to 40 percent more than Asian fabrics.” These firms said that they would reduce sourcing from Central American countries if they were not able to use regional or third country fabrics. In a position shared by other Central American countries, Honduras prefers more flexible rules of origin, allowing fabric from anywhere in the western hemisphere, not just of American origin.

Advocates of CAFTA are unable to drag out any evidence – or even theory – suggesting that the trade agreement will protect Central America from garment flight. The Washington Post, in a recent editorial, claimed that 300,000 textile jobs will be created because of CAFTA, but I was not able to find a source for these fantastic numbers. Only faint hope remains for maintaining employment in garment manufacturing. As with countries in Africa, Asia and the Middle East that are beginning to lose their textile business, Central America is told to pin its hopes on boutique and niche fashion to stem this decline. But in addition to more limited production runs, these fashion areas often require delicate sewing skills where China, among other countries, has an edge.

TRADING AGAINST DECLINING INFLUENCE

Trade always has a strong linkage to foreign policy, perhaps most obvious in such agreements as the Andean Trade Promotion and Drug Eradication Act and the increase in textile quotas given to reward Pakistan for its role in the war against terrorism. CAFTA seeks to shore up support with America’s existing allies in Latin America by turning Central America and the Caribbean into

an integrated bloc of support.

It was once hoped that the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) would be this bloc - a hemispheric one at that - but it has badly stumbled. Mercosur, a trade block involving Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay, had been seen by trade liberalisers as an inevitable component part of the FTAA. Now it appears that Mercosur may prefer a trade deal with the EU. While European investment and trade with Central America is small, EU nations and the U.S. compete in South America, with European firms often edging out U.S. companies in foreign investment. As some Latin American countries reject American influence, the United States also finds itself increasingly competing with Chinese and even Russian influence in the region.

The U.S. appreciates the unilateral power it gains through bilateral agreements, even though it may threaten the successful passage of larger multinational agreements through the World Trade Organization (WTO). While bilateral trade agreements have a smaller overall impact than WTO agreements, they are more useful in promoting American foreign policy objectives. It is the anticipated "economic and democratic reforms" that inspire the agreement's defenders the most.

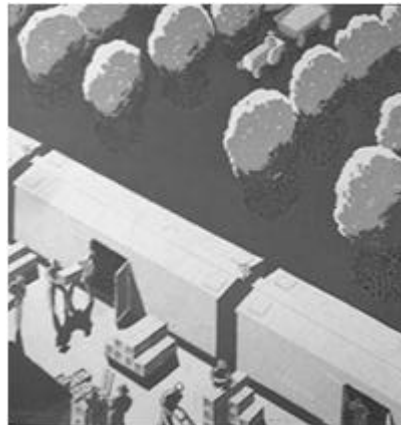
THE LEFTIST BOGEYMAN

Smarting after the Cuban revolution, President John Kennedy announced the Alliance for Progress, a development plan for Latin America. At the time it was believed to be an important weapon against both the expansion of economic ties between the Soviet Union and Latin America and the emergence of Cuba. The plan was largely forgotten until, rocked by the Nicaraguan revolution 20 years later, the United States devised the Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI) to contain communism by offering both aid and preferred access to U.S. markets.

The economics of CAFTA are submerged in arguments focusing on free-

dom, democracy and even the war against terrorism, with many calls for the US to carry over their good works in the Middle East to America's backyard. "In many ways, CAFTA is the culmination of democratic and social progress in Central America, nurtured and encouraged by the United States," say an array of officials from George Bush on down. A fruit of this labour is said to be the freedom spreading through the region. Robert Zoellick, U.S. Deputy Secretary of State, contends that El Salvador is now one of the most economically free countries in the world, with more freedom than France, Germany or Japan.

Indeed, CAFTA countries such as El Salvador have already been eliminating restrictions on foreign investment and providing additional means for investment with privatization. Newly



privatized industries in El Salvador, in electricity and telecommunications for example, have joined textiles as a significant area of foreign investment. When NAFTA was being debated in the U.S. Congress, a number of analysts argued that the main value of the agreement lay not in its removal of some remaining restrictions on trade and investment, but in fact that it would make previous Mexican liberalization more difficult for future governments to reverse. Indeed, CAFTA will similarly lock-in privatization.

Listening to the American administration and their think tank auxiliaries, CAFTA takes on the appearance of the

Marshall Plan or even a Berlin airlift. For Zoellick, the administration's point man on CAFTA, this trade agreement is an "historic opportunity to stabilize and support Central America while promoting America's strategic interests and values." According to Zoellick, part of this strategic interest is in "crushing the old enemies of reform [that] have not gone away... while [Sandinista leader] Ortega is a little older and greyer, he is still an opponent of freedom." Apparently, Ortega "recently tried to strip power from the country's freely elected president through a legislative coup." Have the Clinton impeachment proceedings been so quickly forgotten!

Peter Brookes, a senior fellow of the influential Heritage Foundation (former home to many administration officials), writes that Castro and Chavez oppose CAFTA because it undermines their efforts to spread revolution, adding, "Killing off CAFTA would play into the hands of these two false prophets, increase anti-Americanism and boost China's influence in the region." Press articles following CAFTA's passage were rife with references to Castro and Chavez. The line of argument in the U.S. House of Representatives often went along the lines of: 'If CAFTA is defeated, Chavez wins.'

Did Chavez lose the vote in the House of Representatives? It is true that the forces he represents in the minds of the U.S. administration didn't win. If CAFTA had been voted down, the White House and its Central American allies would have had much egg on their face. After having painted a future without CAFTA in such dark tones, Central American leaders would have been under the gun to explain how the agreement was defeated in America.

CONCLUSION

One thing left out of trade agreements is any real assistance for those dislocated by them. In Central America, most garment manufacturers are located in tax-free industrial parks and give little to the countries that support them. Now, while global apparel prices decline, →

The Bolivarian Alternative for Latin America and the Caribbean (ALBA), proposed by the Venezuelan government, is an important contribution to a new vision of relations between nations.

unemployment increases in the textile industry, putting even more downward pressure on the predominantly female workforce. There is also no help for the many farmers that will be forced off their land as competition increases with American agricultural products.

In America, textile companies do not believe that it will ever be economical to source production in America.

They argue that sewing jobs are replaced by higher paying white-collar jobs in product development and marketing. But just as the niche market can only replace a small percentage of jobs being lost in Central America, few blue-collar workers have been elevated to corporate office. Instead, they are often relegated to casual, lower paying jobs.

Though a few heady optimists believe that CAFTA will be a model, enticing holdouts from America's model of neoliberalism, it will more likely prove to be the proverbial stick, prompting Latin Americans to look for an alternative. Although the close vote on CAFTA may encourage unions and activists to continue their fight in the legislative arena, something more than congressional horse-trading is required to defeat neoliberal trade agreements.

The Bolivarian Alternative for Latin America and the Caribbean

(ALBA), proposed by the Venezuelan government, is an important contribution to a new vision of relations between nations. In contrast to the privatization of services and income insecurity with CAFTA, ALBA proposes that peoples needs be met before profits. As with any trade proposal, there's plenty of specifics: Special assistance to Latin America's economically weakest countries, endogenous development, food self-sufficiency and the establishment of generic medicine companies.

The anti-globalization movement had trouble articulating alternatives to neoliberal trade deals. ALBA belatedly fills this void, providing solutions easily grasped by both activists and those affected most by trade deals. Instead of opposing CAFTA on traditional protectionist grounds, we can synergize local and international struggles for a better world. **R**

The Left Party in Germany

Frederick Peters

"One step of real movement is more important than a dozen good programs," said Hans Lauter, delegate at the recent 9th Congress of the German PDS party in Berlin, quoting Marx. On July 17, 2005, three quarters of the elected delegates (74.6%) agreed to change the name of the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS) to 'The Left Party' (short form: the Left, or the Lefties). Elmar Altvater, a professor at the Free University in Berlin, commented recently in Toronto that this new formation was "a very positive development" in German politics. Unlike what critics saw as merely the rebranding of the old "communist" ruling party of the German Democratic Republic (GDR), from the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED) to the PDS in 1990, which went on to achieve a certain success (17 out of 662 seats in the Bundestag that year, though largely limited to former East German territory where its support remains), this decision comes as a move toward a unity

of east and west in German politics had not before been achieved on the left.

One key element in this new party formation is the splintering of unionists and the left wing of the ruling coalition member, the Social Democratic Party (SPD), as a result of disaffection for Chancellor Schröder and his neoliberal labour and welfare reform policy as enshrined in a formulation known as the Hartz Commission. The "Election Alternative for Employment and Social Justice" (WASG), as the splinter group is known, together with the leadership of the PDS, announced intentions to work together in a strategic alliance back in June 2005. This was in response to dramatic declines in the fortunes of the federal SPD: after a series of electoral losses for the SPD on the Länder, or provincial level, especially in North Rhine Westphalia on May 22, Chancellor Schröder called for an election. The federal election is now officially slated for September 18th. The

WASG membership was deemed unlikely to approve or support any strategic links to a party associated with the Stalinists of the GDR. Electoral law forbids merely electoral coalitions, so the key renaming of the PDS is a first step towards new party formation and a fusion process of unifying the old PDS with the WASG over the next two years, and in the meantime running candidates in non-competition under PDS open lists. While Schröder's strategic move is seen by many as a doomed effort to seek a legitimate mandate for his party and its platform of reform, it will most likely result in a CDU (Christian Democrat, the conservatives) or CDU-FDP (Federal Party or liberal) "Black-Yellow" coalition.

The Left Party, as a party that allies the PDS' 30% east German support with the WASG whose support base is in the west and is supported by Oskar Lafontaine, could oust the Greens and FDP as the third party in German poli-

tics. Lafontaine was a long time SPD party luminary, head of government in his province, the Saar, and party chair in 1998 and former SPD finance minister (1998 before his resignation from the post and the party after protesting against tax and interest rate policies of the *Bundesbank* in the newly elected SPD government of Schröder in 1999). With Lafontaine and the prominent, charming and respected PDS leader Gregor Gysi standing as joint-lead candidates – each committing his support if the two party entities agree to work together – there are only a few obstacles in the way of a strong bid for 3rd place in the German popular vote. In this new form, the Left could achieve popular support above the national minimum of 5% required by German electoral law for a party to achieve recognition, funding and representation in the Bundestag. Recent polls (July 25th) in the German political magazine *Der Spiegel* peg their national vote at 12%, against the Greens' 9%. The CDU numbers are in the mid 40s, while the SPD was at 27%.

Critical questions lie ahead. For one, is this love or a marriage of convenience? Critics such as Martin Klingst in the left-centre paper *Die Zeit* (*Die Zeit*, 14.07.2005 Nr.29) think the latter. Klingst accuses both sides of the new party fusion of political and economic isolationism, from their positions on Kosovo intervention back in the 1990s to globalization and reform of the German welfare state and labour laws. The more conservative *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ) suggests the "PDS-Functionaries" are using the new name, but have been shutting out as many WASG candidates from *Länder* elections in the west as they can get away with (F.A.Z., 01.08.2005, Nr. 176 / page 8). With the new name, the FAZ suggests, the party has positioned itself as voice and representative of the left in east *and* west. While they are



apparently against it (the left in general), the FAZ recognized something in this unity that is new: neither the CDU nor SPD nor the (neoliberal) Greens ever won over east German voters entirely, witness the strength of the PDS even as legal successor of the party the east Germans overthrew. Nor have party organizations from the west, including the Greens, managed to include the east at the party organizational level as much as co-opt or ignore it. Whether for love or otherwise, the Lefties have created an opportunity in this new organization to become the focus of some of the best left political minds in the whole country, scooping up the left wing of the SPD and the leftist Greens, both groups still smarting from dismal failures, as well as including the equally rhetorically gifted Lafontaine, party chief Lothar Byski, and of course Gysi among their leading lights. The news channel N-TV reports Bisky's reply to critics of the name change, that this was no

rebranding scam, but a chance to signal a renewal.

One major problem remains in the issue of a party platform. There is little mention of "green" issues in the platform statements, and Lafontaine is being accused of spouting a heinous anti-immigrant labour position in the mainstream press, in reference to statements he made in de-industrialized and depressed Chemnitz concerning wage squeezes and "foreign" labour. The mainstream media in Germany dwell on how the contents of the new party's platform sounds recycled: rejection of the Hartz commission reforms, a Keynesian taxation redistribution program from top earners downwards (a 1998 Lafontaine stance), minimum wage (1400 Euros a month), increases in what we might call a

baby bonus, no more compulsory military service, yes to Europe but no to the new European constitution. A more accurate portrait might suggest that the policy platform of the Left Party is in large part defensive, and it is trying to perform a judo throw on the neoliberal reform push of the Red-Green coalition. Or, as Elmar Altwater wrote recently in the *Monthly Review* online zine, picking off the cheap paint to show the black (CDU, or conservative) underneath the Red-Green coalition, the Left has hopes of turning the momentum of the neoliberalist social welfare dismantling efforts proposed by all the major parties. Judging by the current political climate, the Left Party is a strong step toward a real movement, if not yet a dozen good programs. **R**

Frederick Peters is a PhD candidate in political science at York University.

**TROOPS OUT
OF IRAQ**

**LET THE WAR
RESISTERS STAY**

2005 SEPT 24 1PM



US CONSULATE 360 UNIVERSITY AVE

Toronto Coalition to Stop the War www.nowar.ca • stopthewar@sympatico.ca • 416.795.5863